

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: THE INSTITUTE'S IMAGE

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It is customary for the President in his address to discourse on some aspect of forest policy or of developments in forestry. There are occasions, however, when it is desirable and profitable to turn to domestic affairs, and to be self-critical if necessary. I believe this is one of these occasions, as it has been brought home to me recently that the Institute is not as well known as it should be. For example: it was not invited to participate in a conference on "The Countryside in 1970", organized by the Institution of Engineers; nor was it recognized as a possibly interested party by those responsible for the New Zealand Water Conference, 1970; nor by those who are campaigning to protect the forested shores of Lake Manapouri. Whether or not the Institute is capable or willing to offer its views is not the point. What is of concern is that our very existence is sometimes not known in circles where it ought to be.

Before we take more definite steps to acquaint the public with facts about the Institute, it may be as well to review what we know about it ourselves. We have doubled our membership in the last decade and there must be many new or younger members who have not had the opportunity to learn of our origins, to know our composition, and to be aware of what we have accomplished, however modest. The Institute is not yet 50 years old and what I have to say today will be a mere prelude to what I hope will be written when we reach that traditional milestone in 1977.

The inaugural meeting of the Institute was held in Wellington in April 1927, attended by 17 members, 12 of whom were from the State Forest Service. It is interesting to record that two of the original members, F. E. Hutchinson and S. A. C. Darby, are still with us as members. Paralleling the growth of forestry generally, membership increased to 150 in 1950, 250 in 1960 and is now in excess of 500 in all categories. A breakdown of current membership is approximately: 25% honorary members and members; 50% associate members; 15% affiliate members; and 10% student members.

It is sometimes mistakenly assumed that the Institute is the New Zealand Forest Service in disguise. This is far from the truth. In fact, while the Institute has been liberally assisted in the holding of its meetings and in other ways by the Forest Service, it has not been averse to criticizing departmental action. The Institute offers a platform where the dissident and at times the rebellious public servant can say his piece. To refute the tag of undue allegiance and alliance it must be pointed out that nearly half our members (45%) are

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from outside the Forest Service, that Council is normally elected in a way that avoids bias, and that eight of the 20 presidents to date have been from the private forestry sector. The strength of forest administration in New Zealand is based in large measure on the training and education of both its professional and non-professional personnel and the Institute may fairly be regarded as representative of this high standard. Forty per cent. of our members have professional qualifications, while most of the remainder have received a training which is the envy of forest authorities in other countries, or have obtained equivalent practical experience in the many fields embraced by forestry. Many of the professionally qualified members have dual degrees; a few have three. Taking major degrees only, the 216 professional members are graduates of more than a score of universities: New Zealand (48 graduates), Australia — mainly Canberra (46), Britain — mainly Edinburgh, Oxford, Aberdeen and Bangor (96), Europe (6), United States (7) and Canada (3).

In a country of this size, a body with such an array of talent could reasonably be expected to have a voice which would be heard in both professional and lay quarters. Have we been heard? A perusal of past action reveals a reasonable effort, particularly in recent years.

- 1932. Council drew attention of Government to the undesirability of granting long-term cutting rights in Kai-ngaroa Forest.
- 1933. Council (a) urged the continuation of the Canterbury School of Forestry,
 (b) sent a resolution to the Commissioner of State Forests urging that Southland beech forests be organized on a sustained yield basis.
- 1937. The Institute offered to co-operate with the Department of Internal affairs in framing a constitution for a proposed national organization of forest conservation.
- 1941. A resolution was sent to the University of New Zealand, the Commissioner of State Forests, and the Minister of Education on the subject of post-war forestry education.
- 1946. A terminology committee was appointed to compile a glossary of terms used in New Zealand forestry, and remained in being until 1954.
- 1947. A committee was set up to formulate the policy of the Institute in relation to postgraduate forestry training.
- 1950. The Institute supported the formation of the Nature Protection Council.

1951. (a) The President appeared before the Lands Committee of the House of Representatives to present the Institute's support for partial reservation of Wai-poua Forest.
(b) An Institute member was appointed to the Forestry and Forest Products Advisory Committee.
(c) A standing committee on soil and water conservation was formed
1955. A forest sanctuaries committee was set up and its report sent to the Forest Service the following year.
1957. The soil conservation report was put before the Parliamentary Select Committee by the President.
1964. The President submitted the Institute's case to the Parliamentary Committee on Noxious Animals.
1965. (a) A report on local body forestry was sent to the Minister of Forests.
(b) The Institute proposed maintaining a register of forest consultants.
1966. The education committee's report on forest education with particular reference to the proposed revival of the School of Forestry was sent to the authorities concerned.
1967. (a) Council took an interest in the Technician Certification Authority's syllabus for Ranger and Technician training.
(b) The Institute accepted an invitation to be represented on the Forest Diseases Advisory Committee.
1968. Submissions were forwarded to the Forestry Development Conference working parties in respect of forest recreation, noxious animals and forestry education.
1969. (a) At the invitation of the Minister of Forests, nominations were submitted for membership of the Forestry Development Council.
(b) The Institute's views were conveyed to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Place and Role of the Commercial Division of the Forest Service.

To sum up, the Institute has, in the last 20 years, made several substantial representations in high places on such diverse subjects as forestry education, forest sanctuaries, soil and water conservation, recreation, noxious animals and departmental functions. Although it cannot be said that every opportunity has been seized, successive Councils, largely through the efforts of hard-working and virtually self-appointed committees, have acted responsibly in terms of the objects of the Institute, I do not think we deserve the condemnation of one member (who has yet to accept high office) in describing us as "that timid and rather useless body".

The above outline of our activities bears witness to our being known in official circles, but it is less certain that we are adequately recognized in the scientific and professional world. There are conflicts developing in both the exotic and indigenous forest spheres and the Institute could well be expected to provide an independent and balanced viewpoint. Its opinions and findings would be more acceptable and carry more weight if its professional standing were higher. Council has been corresponding with the Royal Society of New Zealand on the question of affiliation. While there are some advantages in becoming a member body, Council is not as yet convinced that they outweigh the financial commitments and constitutional restraints involved. However, affiliation could be a step in the right direction and would be far less complicated to achieve than obtaining a charter, as has been suggested from time to time.

Perhaps I have stressed too much the professional outlook and have used the word in the restricted academic sense. We are living in a technological age whether we like it or not, and despite the current revolt against this order of things, progress and status are being measured in scientific terms. Let us face the issue squarely — our Institute is not an exclusive scientific society; rather is it one composed of people whose vocation and calling is forestry. We have opened our doors wide and have thereby gained strength in one direction and lost it in the other. We cannot turn back the clock, and must make the most of what we are, by moving in scientific and official circles where we can and by keeping in touch with the community.

Council cannot do this alone. For a few years we had a Public Relations Officer who was not very effective. (I happened to be that person.) It was finally decided to leave it to the President of the day to express the opinions of the Institute as and when he thought fit, notwithstanding the impracticability of obtaining a consensus of opinion of Councilors, let alone of members, in the inevitably short time available. It cannot be claimed that this practice has been particularly successful. Given adequate notice of an issue we have demonstrated that we are capable of expressing a considered viewpoint; it is the immediate reaction so essential in publicity that presents the problem. I offer no solution to this dilemma but I do draw your attention to it.

Contact with the community is best made and developed at the local section level. We have some particularly strong sections. Others are not as alive as they might be, and I find this surprising in view of the many topics open to debate, the world-wide travels of individual members, the presence of many overseas experts, and the upsurge in activities suitable for field days. If we are to make our presence felt, if we are to maintain our role as an independent spokesman and as a professional conscience-keeper, we shall have to meet more often, widen our contacts, engage in more dialogue and enhance our standing. Let us see to it, individually and collectively, that these things are done.