

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### *A change of emphasis in forest policy*

The Hon. Colin Moyle, Minister of Forests and Agriculture, set out his forest policy in an article in the February issue of the *N.Z. Timber Journal*. In keeping with the new Government's election policy, he stressed the importance of regional development, and the place forestry could play in this. Apart from the setting up of a new wood-using industry at Whirinaki in Hawke's Bay, the previous Government's interest seemed to be mainly the expansion of major forest enterprises where they already existed — in the Bay of Plenty. This policy was fortified by the cumbersome structure of national councils of one sort or another, set up for that dubious activity "indicative planning". Members of these councils were chosen for personal merit, but it is inevitable that such people would also be leaders in their own fields and thus tend to favour the *status quo*. It seemed to be forgotten that Ministers of the Crown should be in some sort umpires to see that a sound balance is struck, and that decisions should not be too trammelled by the counsels of experts who may or may not be able to take a nation-wide viewpoint. Moreover, it is the Minister who has to make decisions, and he should be able to rely on his department to provide the unbiased facts. The Minister must trust his departmental officers and reach a rapport with them, and it should be unnecessary to have a plethora of intermediate advisory bodies which inevitably devalue the importance of the department and hence reduce its responsibility — and probably its morale as well. It would appear, also, that the system set up by the previous Government tended to obfuscate issues and lead to delays and indecision. Could it be that this ponderous system, and the apparent lack of interest in major developments anywhere except in the Auckland and Bay of Plenty regions, had something to do with the ousting of able candidates at the last election?

The previous Government did expand national planting targets significantly, but this was to some extent fortuitous, because the large forestry companies decided they would plant much more forest, while the Forest Service was treated as a sort of stop-gap organization subject to unreasonable and frequent stop-go direction at frequent intervals.

The new Minister has spelled out his interest in regional forest development and the part it can play in stimulating regional activity generally, citing the Bay of Plenty and Hawke's Bay as examples. He has endorsed Nelson and

Otago as high priority areas and noted that, in the long term, development should take place in Northland, the King Country, Wairarapa, the Gisborne-East Cape area, Canterbury, Marlborough, western Southland and the West Coast. As regards the last two, special consideration is being given to the proposals for major development in the extensive beech forests. He also pointed out that "the Government has undertaken to foster industries using wood" and, again as a means of developing regions, stressed the importance of afforesting Maori land and of diversifying land use by the combination of farming and forestry; he felt that "we can no longer apportion land to forestry or farming on . . . traditional lines". He gave forest managers a pat on the back; the scope for development of forest industries is "because of the efficiency with which . . . our management skills produce the raw material". He pledged "to provide financial and technical assistance for increased State and private planting".

An important provision concerns small-scale forestry. "To extract the maximum advantage for forest owners and local communities . . . it will be desirable for the forest owners to co-operate in the development and utilization of their individual plantations and to share the services of expert management and marketing personnel." There is scope here for consultants and for setting up co-operatives.

It is refreshing to sense the underlying enthusiasm in this policy exposition, surely justified by the strong public endorsement of the present Government's election manifesto. Nevertheless, foresters have long been keen regional developers in this country, with the result that there are too many regional schemes, each being developed at an insufficient rate. Much more difficult will be the decision as to which should have priority to go ahead on a realistic basis, and which should be deferred, but it is a decision that ought to be made — indeed should have been made several years ago. As yet, no detailed comparative analysis of the many alternatives have been undertaken on the basis of resources (land, men, market outlets, infrastructure) that exist or that could be readily provided. This is not a matter of crystal-gazing, but of hard-headed evaluation and analysis, to provide the basis for any political decision. The new Government has the mandate and the strength to make such decisions without fear or favour; let us hope they will make them.

### *Are foresters good at planning?*

Such a query could be met with incredulous laughter, stern disapproval, or being shown the door: for if there is one thing the profession prides itself upon, it is its ability

to plan in the long term. The very basis of forestry has been the Forest Working Plan. What tremendous documents these were — and still are in some parts of the world! Forests of only a few hundred hectares could be managed under a meticulous plan of several scores of pages with a multiplicity of tables and maps, the joy of the classical forester's heart. There were good reasons for this. Forests were often complex, with a wide range of species and stand types; processes like conversion of coppice to high forest could take the lifetimes of several foresters, while rotations could be even longer; forests were strictly local supply areas with a plethora of products from bavins to barrel staves, handled mainly by idiosyncratic one-man industries. As foresters came and went, the bucolic tide moved slowly on, and it was essential to know roughly where one was at any particular time.

Over the years the forests and the markets have changed, sometimes drastically. Now, even where forests are grown for local supplies, they also need scrutiny in a wider context. Forest industries have become large, complex and costly, and very many people are dependent upon them. The supply of raw material for such gargantuan consumers cannot be left to chance distribution of land patterns or the natural productivity of soils considered unsuitable for farming. In this context planning can no longer be based on the unchanging forest and what it can produce, and the emphasis has switched to the other end — what the market is likely to demand. Long-term strategy thus becomes not less, but more important.

Traditions die hard. How long did doctors and apothecaries continue to use those alchemic minims and drachms before at length succumbing to grams and litres? So the forester in new countries has continued to compile working plans even when dimly aware that the sort of plan he was preparing was at best an anachronism and at worst a time-consuming academic exercise.

The half-hearted efforts at compiling working plans, so evident in the Forest Service over the last half century, is at length to be discontinued. These plans often contained excellent descriptive matter, but their prescriptions were seldom better than pious hopes, and infrequently had any major impact on the direction of operations in the forest. In spite of their legal status under the Forest Act when signed by the Minister, they were readily ignored by everyone concerned if this appeared expedient. The over-riding control has always remained with those responsible for the flow of money. An unbiased assessment is that foresters' detailed planning has been on the whole conspicuously ineffective in New Zealand. An exception may

be N.Z. Forest Products Ltd., where Allison some years ago devised an entirely new system tied in with computer processing of data.

One cannot feel enthusiastic, either, about broader plans under the aegis of various national councils, based largely on demand projections, and lacking an enormous amount of pertinent fact and analysis on which to base decisions as to whether or not they should be implemented. Indeed, the whole difficulty arises because it is virtually impossible to obtain and collate all the necessary facts for the whole country; the sheer bulk is too much for the most competent council to digest and understand. Demand projections are only one basis of planning, and a pretty crude one.

In this issue of the *Journal* appears a description of the changed attitude of the Forest Service, with a new emphasis on regional and indicative planning, leaving the detail to the local executive staff. This appears to be a good move, but does it go far enough? The planners' dilemma is discussed cogently by Albert Waterson in a lecture presented to the American Society of Planning Officials\*. He advocates starting with the identification of the essential social problems to be resolved, and working towards the definition of objectives — a process exactly opposite to that based on demand projections. In his view the central authority should lay down broad strategies, and ensure that local authorities have sufficient resources and technical expertise to carry out the detailed planning and development. Thus, the planners and the executives are the same people, with power to act delegated from the central authority. In these days of greater centralization such delegation rarely occurs, but it is reasonable to suppose that a planner who has responsibility for putting his plans into action will be concerned with their success and his own personal prestige and satisfaction thereby. Advisory committees, on the other hand, having no responsibility, could well be irresponsible.

Rather gropingly, the Forest Service appears to be moving in this direction. National planning and regional planning are felt to be complementary. The regional plans will be collated to form the national plan. But the system still leaves a lot to the imagination, and does not spell out the role of the central authority. Because of the scale of forest-based industries, there is need to consider not only national requirements, but also international needs and markets. Moreover, regional planners must know something about adjoining regions. Nor can broader aspects of planning be strictly germane only to the forests and forest

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\*Planning, 1971.

industries, but must take into account other industries, people, money, transport, harbours, social amenities and the infrastructure generally. Clearly, foresters need to consult a number of other specialists to assist them in compiling realistic assessments of the local situation so that objectives can be formulated with sufficient authority to be implemented without undue or frequent changes in emphasis or direction.

Will the new system work better than the previous one? At the back of one's mind is Robert Burns: should it be "gang aft a-gley" or "gang ever a-gley"? The new system, like the old, is based on opinions on what planning is all about, while there seems to be a need for a scientific study of forest planning itself. Any rigid adherence to tight prescriptions is undesirable, as future changes in technology or demand must be met with flexibility. But there must be sufficient firmness to convince the public and the governmental agencies responsible that working plans can be tampered with only after critical examination. How can forest planners steer a course between the Scylla of rigidity and the Charybdis of permissiveness? Some would give up the unequal struggle and play it by ear, adjusting to the winds of change — or perhaps the breezes of passing fashion. Others would lay down detailed prescriptions to produce a defined end product for a specified industry. Neither is right. Basically the forester will always be faced with obtaining optimum production while maintaining the capital resource unimpaired. To do this intelligently over the long term there appear to be three desiderata. First, that regional situations should be adequately documented and analysed so that regional needs and possibilities can be defined. Secondly that, on the basis of these analyses, the central authority should lay down a firm strategy, including regional goals. Thirdly, that the forester should devise a simple system of short-term planning which allows latitude to meet changing circumstances, but still maintains direction towards the defined goals. Defining the goals thus becomes of major importance; a mere "planting target" is insufficient.

It will be interesting to see whether the new system improves the planning situation. Once having cut the umbilical connection with those fine old European foresters, there could be interesting innovations ahead.

### *Kauri forests and conservation*

Towards the end of 1972, the President of the N.Z. Conservation Society, Professor W. R. McGregor, with the support of the *N.Z. Herald*, appealed for the preservation of kauri stands in Warawara State Forest, and the im-

mediate cessation of logging there. (It is fair to say, however, that the *Herald*, in a leader on 5 February, 1973, noted the need to strike a balance between environmental preservation and orderly development, and warned conservationists not to overemphasize their arguments and so alienate public opinion.) The Professor's plea was: this is a matter of national importance, but local interests, to some extent of a political nature, have taken precedence. His expressed amazement that Hokianga County Council benefited from such logging implies that the Professor had not taken sufficient trouble to find out the facts — fifths and tenths, derived from stumpages of native timbers throughout New Zealand, have been paid to local bodies since the early days of pakeha settlement, and were once a most important form of local revenue.

If one takes the view that conservation means "wise use of resources", rather than mere preservation, then there could be good grounds for continuing to log kauri forests at a moderate level of production, provided that overall management of the resource is such that yield is in balance with growth of new kauri stands. This has been Forest Service policy for many years. But resources include not only the primaeval forest but also land, labour, plant and capital; thus, local considerations, not forgetting human welfare, must be accorded some importance. For example, although it may be in the national interest to concentrate all new exotic planting on the central North Island pumice country (and sturdy protagonists have argued strongly for this) yet a dozen other local communities have good grounds for asking for the continuance of planting in their own parishes. Similarly, if there are well-established wood-using industries in a particular district, should the State (through the Forest Service) stop supplies from nearby State Forest, thus leaving plant and capital idle and putting men out of work? Indeed, no State servant could close down an industry without the greatest difficulty.

If, on the other hand, conservationists in this country are more concerned with preservation (rather than wise use) then their motives and interests need careful scrutiny, for no one can control the desires of our posterity in this respect; and those who seriously think we should sterilize greater and greater areas of land may in time find themselves committed to zero growth which, on present showing, seems a most unlikely eventuality.

In fact, successive governments have shown themselves rather liberal in constituting reserves, National Parks, Forest Parks and the like. Nor has the Forest Service a bad record in this respect. For very many years it has been



the practice, for example, to leave wide strips of uncut forest along roads and highways. More recently there has been an acceleration in setting aside Forest Sanctuaries, while the Service has been quietly co-operating with the Lands Department and the National Parks Authority these ten years or more on study, amplification and acquisition of reserves in order to preserve as wide a range of forest types and forest habitats as possible throughout New Zealand. Some of this patient work is described in an article in this issue of the *Journal*. It has gone unheralded by the media, but one would hope that the N.Z. Conservation Society is not unaware of it.

Professor McGregor went on to complain that it would be a simple matter to revoke the setting aside of the Wai-poua Kauri Forest Sanctuary although, legally speaking, this area of some 9000 hectares is less vulnerable than National Park land. Many people would think that this reserve would be sufficient for posterity as an example of the once splendid and unique kauri forests of New Zealand, but it is only one such area. There are many other reserves, including Trounson Kauri Park and Coromandel Forest Park, containing healthy stands in all stages of growth from seedlings to veterans. The need to set aside other large areas in perpetuity appears to be arguable. Moreover, conservation is for people, not for its own sake. How many people will want to visit Warawara Forest? Do they not flock to beaches and river banks? And are not many of these fast being covered with a rash of cottages? How much shoreline is now in public ownership, and how much that is accessible will retain its pristine beauty in a few years' time? This is a subject on which conservationists do not widely comment. Perhaps the Forest Service, unlike a large number of private owners and local authorities, is a much easier target.

The Professor was also critical of the acting Director-General of Forests for not disclosing the terms of the agreement with the sawmilling company logging in Warawara Forest. Here again he seems to have a lack of appreciation of the facts. If the Forest Service is to be considered a business (which surely must be the case) then normal business practice must be accepted. Would the Professor approach any large company and ask for full details of agreements with suppliers, financiers or purchasers of the company's products? Such a request could well be met with incredulity. Any agreement between the Forest Service and clients must be of the same character and subject to the same safeguards.

Nevertheless, the Professor has a point. The public has a right to know that the nation's forests are being properly managed in the national interest. There appears to be little

public knowledge about whether the kauri forests are being managed for sustained yield, or what the principal objects of management are for any particular tract. The same is largely true of all native forests; are they being managed according to sound technical principles? It would be invidious to question the integrity of the Forest Service, but it is apparent that it has failed to communicate its objectives and the reasons for them. Ignorance is as ever a hot bed for the rank growth of surmise and suspicion. There seems no reason to suppose that the Forest Service has anything to hide, and therefore good reason for the promulgation of the major provisions of plans drawn up for the management of State Forest areas. In addition, the Forest Service should carry out more detailed studies of all new areas, before they are offered for exploitation, to determine proper long-term use and objectives. The time for purely exploitive use of native forests is long since past. Although a more temperate approach would be preferable, Professor McGregor has rightly drawn attention to these points.

On 27 February, the Hon. Colin Moyle announced a new policy which, although it may not please users of kauri timber, must be received favourably by the conservationists; and, although couched in modest terms, it could have momentous and far-reaching effects. Briefly, the policy is to set aside further large areas of kauri associations as forest sanctuaries; to manage the rest of the kauri stands principally for perpetuation of the species, with incidental production of logs; to acquire all the significant areas of kauri regeneration not in Crown ownership; to plant kauri stands in certain circumstances; and to intensify research into the silviculture and ecology of kauri forests. Moreover (a cloud no bigger than a man's hand) similar policies may be introduced to protect other native species such as rimu.

In effect, at long last, there is to be a serious attempt to manage native forests, starting with kauri. New Zealand foresters must applaud this major departure.

### *Progress with metrication in forestry*

Progress in converting to the *Système International* of weights and measures in forestry in New Zealand continues at a leisurely pace. The New Zealand Forest Service published *Information Series No. 63* in December 1972, containing many useful conversion tables and an alphabetical index of conversion factors. The only oddity observed is that the Forest Service is using kilograms force per square centimetre (replacing pounds per square inch) while everyone else seems to be using kilopascals.

At about the same time the Metric Advisory Board released its *Circular No. 17* containing information on con-



ventions of measurement peculiar to forestry, and a recommended timetable for the period of conversion in the forest industry.

Ideas on the conventions were sought from a large number of people, the total achievement being to confirm a wide diversity of views. The final decisions will probably not be received enthusiastically by the majority of foresters. Breast height, it is decided, is to be precisely at 1.4 m above ground measured on the uphill side of the tree. This is unrelated to the convention in other countries, and was chosen presumably because it was the nearest point of a metre to the previous breast height. It appears that this is a fixed point. This has merit over the previous convention, which allowed subjective movement, but it will detract from the mensurational utility of modern techniques such as double sampling with regression.

In spite of pressure to adopt overbark volume as the standard, this has not been adopted. Any convention can now be used provided it is clearly stated. This compromise is hardly in keeping with the spirit of the S.I. system and is bound to lead to confusion. If this decision was made for the benefit of timber buyers, it is a sad commentary on existing mensurational practice.

A wide range of latitude is also accorded various other measurements such as height, length and diameter. The chance to simplify and streamline has not been taken, and may never arise again. "The British genius for compromise" seems to be a polite way of describing the perpetuation of muddle.

The value of the timetable given in the Circular can be judged by the fact that half the activities itemized should have been completed before it was published. Future movements are sketchily presented. One can scarcely believe, for example, that formal training and education will be completed by the end of 1973. And what do "conversion build-up" and "main conversion period" mean?

In effect, this is only a broad framework, and it is emphasized that individual organizations will arrange details of change-over to suit themselves. In a previous editorial note (Vol. 16 (2)) it was recommended that a few individuals should be working full time on conversion. This now appears even more necessary for the larger organizations, so that planning, retraining and phasing-in the new system can be undertaken without undue haste or disruption. Considerable costs will be incurred if everything is left to the last minute. Indeed, so far everyone concerned seems to have given much more thought to technicalities than to planning the conversion. Perhaps everyone is in favour of metrication so long as they are not caused any bother.