

BOOK REVIEWS

KAURI TO RADIATA — ORIGIN AND EXPANSION OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY OF NEW ZEALAND, by Thomas E. Simpson. Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, Sydney and London, 1973. 442 pp., illus. Price \$10.50.

As New Zealand, throughout its history, has been best known in world timber and forestry circles by its kauri and radiata pine, the title is most appropriate. The book is a history of the timber industry, from the first tree felled by a European at the Bay of Islands in 1772 and the first pit-sawing at Dusky Sound in 1773, up to 1967 in great detail, with lesser detail for the following six years to the time of publishing. The author is to be congratulated for the enormous amount of painstaking research which must have gone into the balancing of figures and the preparation of the manuscript. There are some errors in proper name spelling and in some facts but these can be excused. One must remember that Tom Simpson was a practical man, essentially a logger, not trained to undertake historical research followed by the writing of such a detailed book. This book needed to be written, so an important section has been added to the consolidated recording of varied aspects of New Zealand's history. The timber industry contributed much.

If there is any criticism of this book it is that it contains too much detail ranging from history through technology, practical experience, stories from the bush and conjecture on the future. It therefore caters for a wide range of reading tastes, some of whom may find it heavy going. To counter this, the reader is strongly recommended to consult the extremely good table of contents in which the subject matter is listed in alphabetical order within the nine chapters, and also the index. In addition there is a list of illustrations (wide ranging in interest) and a glossary of tree names. If the reader follows this advice, he will find the subject matter of greatest interest to him. Otherwise he will have to wade through a book which contains some repetition, but without which it would not be possible to read sections in isolation and gain their full meaning. The inclusion of a map would have made it easier to relate the large number of places mentioned to each other as some are not well known today.

There are four chapters devoted to the history of logging and sawmilling in New Zealand. It began with the visits of early explorers, sealers and whalers who needed to repair their ships. There followed an export in spars and logs and then the advent of the missionary era with the need for sawn timber. The importance of the pit sawyer is emphasized. Or-

ganized settlement followed which at first depended on the forest for shelter in the broadest sense and later looked upon it as a hindrance to the pastoral development of New Zealand. Kauri sawn output volume reached its peak in 1905 and then quite rapidly declined. On the other hand, the total sawn output reached a peak in 1907 and that level was not reached again until 1949. Kauri was the predominant species harvested up until 1868 and radiata pine became predominant in 1958. The progress towards these significant dates and the ups and downs of the industry, as well as New Zealand's history, are well traced. In the various eras, much of the boom development has been linked with exports, both log and sawn timber. In many respects there is a great parallel in importance to New Zealand between kauri and radiata at the opposite ends of its history.

A chapter describes the important part the industry has played in New Zealand's history. A browse through the place names will bring back old memories to many and recall bustling little settlements, some of which are now only a patch of weeds in the wilderness or a collection of broken-down deserted buildings. In many instances, the requirements of the timber industry heralded other developments which continue to contribute towards the country's economy.

Both the layman and the expert will read with interest the two chapters on logging and milling methods which have evolved over the years. Only someone with the years of practical experience of the author could have given so much detail. This section of the book gives it textbook value to the student of logging and milling in a forestry course. Few bushmen today can fell a tree with the skill and care required for the valuable giant trees of yesteryears. The various other human skills required before the present days of sophisticated mechanization are well portrayed. The dangers in logging are noted and remind us of the poor safety record which the industry continues to have today. The human side is not overlooked with the description of bush shanties, wives employed as cooks, humorous stories of a few well-known identities, and the good record of industrial relations with the timber workers' unions over the years. Some readers will be surprised at the case put for the use of horses in plantation thinning operations today.

There are two short chapters on the importance of trees to man and some comments on the future of forestry and the industry in New Zealand. There are many examples quoted from the history of the industry which illustrate to the present-day conservationists that they are not the first to be concerned with the preservation of our forest resources, the elimination of waste and the protection of our soils. The Campbell-Walker report of 1877, the work of Thomas Kirk, Seddon's Timber Conference in 1896, the Perrin Report of 1897, and numerous other reports all dealt with the problem and helped to lay the foundation for New Zealand's forest policy. Today's critics of exotic forests should note the enormous contribution that radiata pine has made towards making it possible to preserve some native forests while the industry

continued to grow and play its part in a developing country. The author sounds a word of caution at what he sees as the risks of over-selling our exotic forest resource should the assessment surveys be incorrect, and draws a parallel with the kauri industry which cut itself out of existence.

New Zealand will be grateful to Tom Simpson for his valuable contribution to its recorded history, and those organizations who helped financially in its preparation should be thanked.

A.W.G.

BEECH FORESTS, by A. Kirkland and J. H. Johns, N.Z. Forest Service, Wellington 48 pp., photographs, diagrams. Price \$1.00.

Government, both in the executive and administrative branches, usually seeks to keep the electorate, or customers, within its confidence. The success is variable. Not infrequently, the electorate feels frustrated at the faceless bureaucracy in apparent conspiracy to keep them ill-informed.

Fortunately, a booklet like *Beech Forests* dispels some of this frustration. The brown White Paper on beech forest utilization was official, the style and format barely relieved by a couple of dark photographic prints and a few maps and tables. It was not very informative for the interested layman and subject to misinterpretation by the concerned environmentalist. *Beech Forests* has been produced for such an audience. Any forester reasonably familiar with beech silviculture and management may find points to question, but he needs to remind himself that this is not an exhaustive discussion of beech forests. Far from it, for this publication is concerned with the promotion of managed beech forests as a desirable activity.

Perhaps the case has been overstated in places such as the pair of photographs of Globe Hill, and is that "old West Coast sawmill" operational? But promotion involves cautious overstatement arising from a firm conviction that the cause is just, the product is good, or the message is correct. And in this case the message is improved by the photography, the exploded pie diagrams that admirably portray the various area relationships, and the two examples that illustrate the zoning principles used.

Timing is an important ingredient of promotion. *Beech Forests* would have made a greater impact if published 12 months earlier. This point could be noted for the next booklet required, entitled "Indigenous Logging". The time is already opportune for this.

Beech Forests sets the pattern for a more professional approach to the McLuhan dictum, "the medium is the message" [*sic*]. May it be the forerunner of numerous similar publications for informing and moulding public opinion.

B.D.McC.