

## REVIEWS

FORESTRY HANDBOOK 1977, edited by C. G. R. Chavasse. 224 pages, published by the New Zealand Institute of Foresters (Inc.). Price \$3.85.

To mark its first 50 years of activity the New Zealand Institute of Foresters, through its governing Council, has commissioned a *Forestry Handbook*. This book is provided free to all members of the Institute and is on sale to the public. A handbook is defined in my dictionary as a "short treatise or guidebook" and the purpose of distributing such a book within an organisation whose membership already has, by definition, a detailed knowledge of forestry could well be queried. The defence must lie in the breadth of the subject (no one can be an expert on all aspects of forestry) and the fact that the information it contains is assembled for the first time in one handy reference volume.

The book is directed into eleven sections: Names and Addresses, Acts and Regulations, General References, Ecology, Environment and Recreation, Forest Health, Water and Soil Conservation, Private and Local Body Forestry, Silviculture, Forest Management, and Logging and Utilisation. Under these headings some forty authors with special knowledge of their subjects have combined to produce 48 chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect of New Zealand forestry practice. In covering such a field it is impossible to delve deeply into each subject, and I doubt whether any forestry practitioner will learn much about his own special field from the handbook. Its value, in my opinion, will be as a handy reference to subjects outside his field. If someone asks me how to identify the different species of deer, the correct botanical citation for Norway spruce or what volume tables are available for radiata pine, I now know where to look.

Inevitably much of the material is simply reprinted from other sources; I would question the inclusion of some items. The Forest Service address list seems to be superfluous — you can look up your local office in the phone book — but if included should also have contained the Timber Preservation Authority. I would have preferred a list of addresses for the head offices of the major forest owners — only two companies, who have provided financial support for the handbook, are listed at present. Again, if statistics are to be quoted, as on page 6, they should be more recent than 1974 to be included in a 1977 publication. There is also an unwarranted coyness about the Institute itself. The names and addresses of office

bearers are given, but no details of the aims and achievements of the Institute itself. Here was a chance to publicise the activities of the Institute and its involvement with public issues connected with forestry. After all, the *Handbook* is on sale to the public.

This brings me to consider the concept of a 50th Anniversary Handbook. It is clear from the Foreword that the idea of a Handbook came first, and an "audience" second. The editor has rightly conceded that to satisfy everyone is impossible and clearly has had to compromise. Who will benefit most from the *Handbook* in its present form? For my money not the professional already in the business (though he will find it very useful as I have already), but the people on the fringe. I see this book fulfilling an extremely useful role as a first book of reference for anybody wishing to find out about New Zealand forestry — the student, the farmer, the businessman who deals with forestry, the "general public" who do not know much about forestry but who vaguely think it is a "good thing" and the member of the pressure group with perhaps the opposite opinion. Now for the first time when they want an independent and authoritative reference work dealing with New Zealand forestry, they have one.

It would be pleasant to report that the valuable information in this book was handsomely printed and illustrated. It is not. The offset printing process is like photocopying; good results require good master copies and this has not always been the case here. To my eye there are too many distracting changes in type face and ink intensity, and the Table rulings on page 106 are a mess. Although the present format is adequate, I do think that for a prestigious 50th Jubilee publication the Institute could have spent a little more on the trimmings. There is not even a single half-tone photograph to enhance the appearance.

However, I readily concede that judgement of appearance is very much a personal viewpoint, and lest I seem to be carping let me record my unstinting admiration for the editor, Geoff Chavasse. I doubt whether anyone else would have had the patience and tenacity to prise so many chapters out of 40 authors and then find the time and energy to assemble them in book form. As Mr Chavasse noted, this is the first attempt at a New Zealand Forestry Handbook, and if people find it useful he will be satisfied. I am sure it will be used and by a wider audience than just the professionals alone. For creating what may be the most publicly visible monument to the existence of the Institute, Mr Chavasse and the contributing authors deserve our gratitude.

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