

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### *1978 Government Decisions on West Coast and West Taupo Forestry*

Foresters are likely to accept the recent decisions with at least a measure of equanimity. The broad base of each decision was predictable — dictated by social, contractual and political considerations — but the fine print was uncertain, and there are still aspects which are not clearly defined.

On the West Coast the main spheres of doubt concerned the *source* of the extra timber it was necessary to find to maintain the West Coast industry, and thus the social fabric of the region, until exotics could substitute. The decision to take most of it from the beech forests, despite the lack of an economic outlet for beech chipwood, represents technically a defeat for forestry principles. But there is no ideal solution to the West Coast problem, and along with the defeat is the very substantial challenge to foresters of successfully managing the beech forests and processing and marketing the sawn timber. Those who feared a total denial of the opportunity to manage indigenous forests should be relieved.

Similarly, in west Taupo and the central North Island generally, Government's decision allows the prospect (after a settling period) for sustained yield management of a small-volume, high value resource, the product price of which should justify the necessary intensity of management. As an Institute we have come very close to getting what we sought in this region. But again, if the prospects eventuate, the onus will be on us as foresters to demonstrate our claims that central North Island forests *can* be managed for wood production without detriment to their other values.

Some 90% of the forest managers responding to the recent Institute questionnaire reported that they enjoyed the challenge of their jobs. The prospect of demonstrating in the next decade that we are capable of successfully managing indigenous forests can only increase that challenge.

### *A New Zealand Land-use Policy*

The subtitle of a paper on land presented to the 1974 Forestry Development Conference — "They don't make any more of it" — may not be quite correct in terms of plate tectonic theory. But it is near enough for a country such as New Zealand whose economy and way of life are largely dependent on the land resource and what comes from it.

Because the use of land "dictates the pace and shape of economic growth, the character and severity of social problems and the extent to which the environment is preserved or destroyed" (*N.Z. Jl For.*, 20 (2): 191), the Government clearly recognises a stake in land-use planning. Following proposals from at least two advisory bodies, the New Zealand Planning Council and the Land Use Advisory Council, Government recently announced that it will initiate a National Land Use Policy — something which a number of other developed countries already have.

The Land Use Advisory Council, a body of 5 *ex officio* and 4 private members chaired by the Director-General of Lands, has been given the task of assisting Government to develop such a policy. The intent of the policy is "to provide guidelines for deciding appropriate land use in order to meet the foreseeable needs and aspirations of New Zealanders". Among other things it is required to provide the national criteria for evaluating regional planning alternatives, and it will thus have to include Government and private lands, both rural and urban.

Public involvement in developing the Policy is recognised as necessary, and the proposed format envisages public meetings on specific topics from October 1978 to April 1979. During that time a working group will prepare broadly based material for a major National Land Use Conference to be convened for July or August 1979.

After a six-month adjournment for public discussion of its findings, the Conference will reconvene in March/April 1980 to produce recommended guidelines for Government to consider and adopt as a New Zealand Land Use Policy.

With the availability of land a critical factor determining the future direction and scope of New Zealand forestry, and with the preponderance of agricultural land users on county and regional land-use planning bodies, it is mandatory that the forestry view be heard both loudly and clearly during the preparation stages of the proposed Policy. The fact that forestry is represented on the Land Use Advisory Council is a valuable start, but it is not enough. During the next 18 months, the Institute, forest owners and individual foresters must be prepared to become heavily involved in influencing the development of a policy which will critically affect not only our future, but the future of all New Zealanders.

### *Forest Recreation Planning*

Historically, the Government has perhaps been slow to recognise the need for positive management requirements of State lands for recreational purposes. And it has certainly

been slow to sort out its fragmented and often overlapping administration of recreational land.

The Forests Amendment Act 1976 recognises the increasing importance of recreational use of forests; and the topic of the Institute's 1978 AGM (The many uses of indigenous forests) and the papers presented there have indicated an increasing awareness by foresters of this role. The awareness was extended by the holding of a Forest Service workshop on recreation at the Forest Research Institute in May of this year, the proceedings of which are summarised in this issue.

Recommendations to the Forest Service from the Workshop appear in the main to be logical and appropriate to the present stage of recreation development. They find a need for a Forest Service policy on recreation. Within the framework of this policy, they see planning as requiring information which must be available and used on an "all-tenure" regional and national basis. Trained personnel will be required and an increased and assured availability of finance. And finally they believe that a measure of research is required — primarily to establish the demand for recreation and to improve the data base for recreation planning.

Despite the general sanity of these recommendations, however, it is clear that the Workshop participants are placing recreation in a special category, rather than accepting it as simply one of a number of legitimate forest products. Such a placement can easily lead to the belief that recreation planning is outside the scope of forestry expertise.

The discipline concerned specifically with people, and thus important to recreation, is that of the sociologist — an area of study with its own language and customs. Papers in this issue and those associated with the Workshop introduce considerable sociological jargon: user-oriented, resource based, conceptual model, social-institutional factors, over-stimulation, supply manipulation, etc. Faced with this new discipline, and with the belief that recreation may differ from other forms of forest usage, it would be easy for foresters to feel professionally inadequate to continue making decisions concerning people.

We should be careful to resist this. There is a need to recognise that the social sciences are very poorly developed relative to the physical and biological sciences. Before becoming over-impressed with the work of environmental sociologists, recreational psychologists, and travel and leisure geographers (all disciplines referred to in the Workshop recommendations) there is a need to analyse carefully some of the sociologically-oriented papers written on recreation, and critically to equate any findings that may emerge with those provided by common sense.

Foresters have in fact dealt with and planned for people for many years; with hindsight not always in the best way, but usually with common sense and intelligence within the values held by society at the time. While the expanding uses of forests may necessitate our drawing on the skills of other disciplines, it is important that we not be over-awed by them, but examine their findings critically and implement only those which in our experience seem reasonable and sensible.

### *New Zealand Forestry Council*

The Forestry Development Council, set up in 1969 as a Sector Council to the National Development Council, received both a change of name and revised terms of reference a year ago. No longer specifically charged with reviewing targets and objectives, the reconstituted Council has the role of advising Government on exotic and indigenous forestry management, the development of forest industries, and ways and means of improving public involvement in forestry.

With the intent that its advice should be — and should be seen to be — independent of that given Government by the Forest Service, it has moved its offices to a separate building and in addition is now funded directly by Government. To be truly independent of the Forest Service, however, it must also have its own sources of technical information. To do this it intends to increase its secretarial staff, to appoint a research officer, and to make contractual use of outside organisations for research and investigative work.

To examine wide-ranging topics with expertise, the Council will operate a system of *ad hoc* committees incorporating people outside its own membership. So far some 8 of these committees have been set up, each with a specific task together with a time limit to report back to Council.

The composition of the Council, apart from the addition of the Commissioner for the Environment as an *ex officio* member, remains unchanged. Appointed members have specific membership terms, however, and to confirm the new look the choice of members replacing those retiring by rote will be important.

The format of the new Council is similar to that of a number of others, such as the National Research Advisory Council, New Zealand Planning Council, and Land Use Advisory Council. In large part it appears to reflect the belief by Government that some aspects of planning, particularly those with implications outside the sphere of a single department, can best be carried out by a flexible organisation with *ex*

*officio* and appointed members, set up specifically for the purpose.

The topics being examined by present *ad hoc* committees indicate that the new Council has the potential to foresee problem areas, to examine them in depth, and to offer Government guidelines for their solution. It will be to the benefit of forestry if that potential is fully realised.