

A VIEW OF NEW ZEALAND FORESTRY IN "MID-LIFE" TRANSITION

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INTRODUCTION

Western forestry thought and practice have been part of New Zealand for almost a century. As the 1980s begin, New Zealand forest managers can reflect with pride on achievement of early forestry dreams: wood self-sufficiency, stabilizing dunes and mountain sides, and a world-wide reputation in exotic silviculture. In the struggles of its youth, New Zealand forestry may have anticipated this golden era with visions of basking in public recognition and appreciation. For better or worse, New Zealand forestry in 1980 has not reached a period of content "mid-age" or arrived at a plateau of stable maturity.

New Zealand is no longer the rural nation in which forestry initially established itself as a profession and an important political-economic sector. As forest managers have over-achieved wood self-sufficiency goals (so important to a rural, utilitarian society) and now offer the country a new growth stock in its export portfolio, New Zealand has become a nation with expanded needs and new priorities. The 1980s appear not a time for forest managers to bask in past achievements; the time is more an invitation to the stress and promise of altering old dreams and concepts; it is a time to experience the tension and excitement of growth and renewal. Such an invitation to the pains and promises of change might seem poor reward for admirable forestry achievements of the past. Yet history and our personal lives are constant reminders that transitions are an unavoidable part of individual and collective growth.

This paper offers the concepts of adult life stages and transitions to help place past achievements and current dilemmas of New Zealand forestry in perspective. I propose that models of individual life stages and transitions, with some poetic licence, can have meaning to groups of people like forest managers. I also

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argue that New Zealand forestry's successes in its "youth and young adulthood" stage still leave some basic developmental tasks to be encountered and solved, if forestry is to pass successfully through "mid-life transitions" and move to more mature, integrated stages of development. These observations will apply to both private and public forestry, but with greater validity to the latter.

NEW ZEALAND FOREST MANAGERS AT MID-LIFE TRANSITION STAGE

Stages in childhood and adult development were first proposed by Carl Jung 60 years ago (Jung, 1964) and further developed by Erickson (1950). Recently these life stages have been re-affirmed by Levinson *et al.* (1978) and Vaillant (1977). Vaillant's study is based on a sample of over a hundred promising Harvard University students in graduation classes of 1942-44, who were annually monitored and surveyed for 30 years (all were male). Levinson's study examines the "seasons" in the lives of 40 men followed for several years, and is the best book to begin an interest in examining stages of male adult life. (Pointing out the male-bias of these studies is deliberate, for there is evidence that women may experience stages in their lives differently; see Gilligan, 1979).

Levinson *et al.* (1978:20) conceive human development as passing through four stages, each initiated by a transitional phase:

Early Childhood Transition (age 0-3)

STAGE I: CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE (age 0-17)

Early Adult Transition (age 17-22)

STAGE II: EARLY ADULTHOOD (age 17-40)

Mid-life Transition (age 40-45)

STAGE III: MIDDLE ADULTHOOD (age 40-60)

Late Adult Transition (age 60-65)

STAGE IV: LATE ADULTHOOD (age 60+)

Each stage builds up and links to others preceding it. Each stage and its transition phase have similar characteristics as well as unique developmental tasks that must be successfully faced. And the transition phases tend to be rich in pains and promise for the majority of 200-some males studied by Levinson and Vaillant.

Unlike an individual life, a group like New Zealand forest managers can live on past late adulthood. Yet the stages and transition periods that help explain the patterns of an individual's life may also help explain group processes. Let us look at New

Zealand forest managers in their early youthful development stages to test this assertion.

New Zealand Forestry in Adolescence and Young Adulthood Stages

According to Levinson *et al.* (1978), the important developmental tasks for a person making the transition from adolescence to young adulthood are: (1) forming and implementing a *dream* around which to pattern a life and career, (2) selecting and following an *occupation* that pursues this dream, and (3) forming sustained support *relationships* through marriage and friendship. (Not discussed is the important *mentor* relationship task.) Consider that New Zealand forestry initially pursued a youthful *dream* of bringing a strange and complex temperate rain-forest under management to prevent critical wood shortages. This became a more ambitious "young adult dream" of wood self-sufficiency and export surplus as reliance shifted to more promising exotic forestry. In 1921, Sir Francis Bell presented a glimpse of this "dream" and the task ahead for New Zealand forestry: "If we can keep a supply of timber for our children's children . . . That will affect my aim . . . the majority of people of New Zealand, and perhaps the majority of the House, do not care anything about forestry . . . we have got to be missionaries." (Quoted from Poole, 1969:4).

In a manner similar to a person selecting an *occupation*, New Zealand and the western world adopted the German-European model of professional forest management. Westoby (1978:74) and others have observed that, "The German's influence on the forestry profession can scarcely be exaggerated." This European forestry model gave needed direction and confidence to a fledgling New Zealand forestry profession in a strange, new forest. Such imitation is a common and healthy practice for young individuals or groups to *begin* their development. But imitation is usually healthy only at early development stages. Eventually individuals and groups must break away from copied models and create their own unique sense of identity and purpose.

New Zealand forest managers had their dreams; they had their professional role models and management practices. All that was needed to get on with "the mission" was supportive *relationships* equivalent to spouse-family-friends; New Zealand forestry needed peer and public support. Thus the New Zealand Institute of Foresters was formed in 1927. Through practical argument, the realities of wood shortages, and the energies of forestry mission-

ary zeal, New Zealand forest managers forged a legislative, public, and industry support base. Wood self-sufficiency arguments made sense to a practical, utilitarian, rural nation concerned with economic security and development. In early 1900 the mystique of science and professionalism was strong and lent credibility to the European forester-ranger model of forest management.

New Zealand Forestry at the Mid-life Transition Stage?

Young adulthood stage of human development (age 20-40) has largely been ignored, compared with extensive research on children and the aged. Unlike adolescents, young adults create few social disturbances worthy of notice by sociologists and psychologists. Erickson (1950) labelled this seldom studied era as "career consolidation" where energies are narrowly channelled to proving oneself and climbing the ladder to one's dreams.

After reviewing this stage in the lives of 200 men, Vaillant (1977:216) generalized: "From age twenty-five to thirty-five they tended to work hard, consolidate their careers . . . Poor at self-reflection . . . they were good at tasks, careful to follow the rules, anxious for promotion, and willing to accept all aspects of the system . . . adolescent idealism is sacrificed to 'making the grade' . . ." Does this single-minded devotion of establishing forestry and achieving wood self-sufficiency characterise New Zealand forestry's young adulthood of post-War 2 expansion days? There seems considerable fit; but as a visitor, I do not pretend to know as well as those who have lived through those decades.

Both successful and unsuccessful young adults seem to arrive at mid-life transition (age 40-45) with a need for reassessing their lives, restructuring their youthful dreams, and considering new patterns of development for their forties. This phase in one's life need not be a "mid-life crisis", but some painful reflection and choices are usually unavoidable. Vaillant (1977:222) describes this stage as: ". . . men at forty put aside the preconceptions and narrow establishment aims of their thirties and begin once again to feel gangly and uncertain about themselves. But always, such transitional periods in life provide a means of seizing one more chance and finding a new solution to old . . . needs." Consider for a moment that New Zealand forest managers and agencies like the New Zealand Forest Service (NZFS) have begun to respond to a turbulent "mid-life transition period" in the 1970s.

In the last decade many change forces have occurred within New Zealand forest managers and in the society they serve. The

counter-cultural challenges for a less material-oriented society introduced in the 1970s has been given more practicality as a national life style with energy-resources scarcity realities of the 1980s. Urban New Zealanders are no longer socialised on farms to view the only "valuable" use of animals, trees, and water as achieving individual and/or social wealth. Just when New Zealand forestry can offer its citizens an efficient exotic forest estate of genetically improved radiata pine planted at "attention" and awaiting a 30-year destiny, some in New Zealand society and the forestry profession are re-evaluating such old dreams of their youthful war and depression years. In a different time the laudable accomplishments of radiata pine silvicultural dreams would have been uncritically applauded by the nation. But not today. Not at this new stage of New Zealand society, where, if forestry views are no less diverse than 30 years ago, they seem to be of greater public interest and receive more press.

Let us consider New Zealand forestry at mid-life transition between young adulthood and adulthood. Having achieved many of its young adulthood dreams (dreams formulated and pursued in a rural society that is history), an unavoidable period of reflection and reassessment is in order. This mid-life transition cannot be ignored or superficially encountered if the accomplishments of past decades are to be carried forward, along with new dreams, to maturity.

Problems and promises loom in any personal or group transition period. But for many men of Vaillant's study who made successful mid-life transitions, the years of the forties and fifties were the happiest and most rewarding of their lives. For such a healthy transition into adulthood to occur, however, four major developmental tasks must be successfully encountered and resolved in a person's mid-life transition. These developmental tasks will be examined to see if they have any relevancy to New Zealand forestry in the 1980s.

POLARITIES OF THE MID-LIFE TRANSITION PERIOD

Levinson *et al.* (1978) develop and apply four tasks of mid-life transition that were a central part of Jung's human development thinking a half century earlier. These four tasks involve encountering and resolving the polarities within and around us of (1) young/old, (2) creation/destruction, (3) masculine/feminine, and (4) attachment/separateness. These polarities are not mutually exclusive human attributes; they coexist within all of us in

various forms of integration. Each of us is a mixture of what western society would label "masculine and feminine traits" in the rational-logical-aggressive parts of our personalities, and the sensitive-emotional-nurturing parts of ourselves. Likewise we have some youthful qualities at every age, while recognising the aging-death process we share with the flowers, deer and stars.

These four polarities are also interconnected. Imagine, for example, how all four polarities could dance and weave together as a retired ranger picnics and plays with his grandchildren in an exotic forest he helped establish 40 years earlier. Old age and the looming reality of destructive *death* are dampened by the legacy of grandchildren and a forest that will endure after one is gone. The *masculine* hard work and devotion-to-one's-occupation-days when these trees were planted might seem far-off and unreal as the children play in the grass, filling one with *attachment* and feelings.

The bravado of adolescence and the career-success myopia of the twenties and thirties usually allow most men to ignore or tolerate many personal inconsistencies that these polarities offer. But in mid-life these ignored inconsistencies often arise to demand attention. Let us examine in more detail how such polarities might loom before New Zealand forestry today, and how they might be better integrated and resolved in the decade ahead.

The Young/Old and Creation/Destruction Polarities

The young/old and creation/destruction polarities can be seen in any stage of New Zealand forestry. Since they are closely related both will be examined together.

There are many aspects of exotic forestry that display the young-creative side of polarities. In the early decades of this century, the challenge, excitement and accomplishment of establishing New Zealand's exotic forest estate generated much youthful vigor in rangers and foresters. Creating such a world precedent in silviculture and wood abundance often produced a rugby game atmosphere of challenge, triumph, and keeping score in planting statistics. Exotic forestry was also creative/life-giving in reducing harvest pressures on native forests. The New Zealand exotic forest estate is a proud legacy to outlive us all — an accomplishment that can dampen occasional individual and group fears of death and non-accomplishment.

In more single-minded stages of young adulthood, the creative aspects of establishing exotic forests and reducing harvest pressures on native forests distracted many forest managers from

facing the destruction inherent in some native forest conversion. Debate in the 1960s and '70s, within and around the forestry profession, raised this creation/destruction polarity to a national issue. Beginning to resolve these polarities in the Forest Amendment Act 1976) and subsequent changes in forest attitudes and practices, can be viewed as a major "mid-life" resolution for New Zealand forest managers.

We may look back at the West Coast Beech Utilisation Project as a moment of recognition that New Zealand forestry had changed. Initially perceived by some as imaginative development of under-utilised forest resources to achieve regional economic rejuvenation, the destructive aspects of the project soon became the *cause celebre* for a fledgling environmental community. The forestry profession eventually withdrew support after reviewing the projects traditional forestry economic development assumptions plus ecological-silvicultural evidence and finding them wanting. The project was an "old dream" that no longer fitted the times, and shocked many into realising that New Zealand society was developing a different world-view.

There are many challenges of the 1980s that still call forth youth and creative energy in forest managers, such as forest products to solve energy problems, practising multiple-use forestry, or stabilising eroding land with young forests. In contrast, there are also forces that *can* be viewed as aging, debilitating, and sapping the vitality of forestry: some poor press, threat of reduced budgets, and energy limitations. Poor press and self-doubt *can* sap individual and group energies, cause rethinking of habitual practices, and challenge one's ability to creatively deal with self and the environment. Note the emphasis on "can."

Forest managers' involvement in regional planning, adjustments to energy limitations, and greater dependence on different types of professionals *can* be viewed as expanding and youth-giving, or it *can* be seen as restricting and debilitating. The choice to favour the optimistic or pessimistic orientation is a personal decision. This decision can be based on some "outside realities", but the *critical factors are the attitudes and spirit involved*. Take restrictions on fuels as an example. Such restrictions can be viewed as "death" to old solutions of getting wood to markets or recreationists to forest settings. Such a change also carries the invitation to youthful-creative ways of using wood for fuel, or emphasis-consolidation of forests with product and/or recreational market advantages. Like so many things in life, there is no "natural"

right or wrong way to react to the four polarities. There are only invitations and individual choices.

The Masculine/Feminine Polarity

The masculine/feminine polarity contrasts attitudes and attributes that vary between cultures and are changing dramatically in countries like the U.S.A. and New Zealand. Its gender use in this polarity by Jung and Levinson recognises masculine and feminine attributes in both sexes. The masculine gender extreme is characterised by behaviour depicting physical and mental toughness, achievement orientation, ambitious desire for power-control, and rational thought dominating emotions-feelings. The feminine polarity represents emotional sensitivity and openness, greater reliance upon feelings and intuition, and attraction to mutual relationships versus control-domination.

Forestry in New Zealand and the western world has traditionally been a male profession dominated by masculine attitudes, assumptions, and role models. Forester and ranger initiates must be successful in educational rites of passage that select people for the analytical-rational abilities (*e.g.*, maths, chemistry, economics) more than for abilities in history, literature, or feelings toward the resources to be managed. Toughness in physical and intellectual matters is highly esteemed. Discussion of feelings about the amount or relevancy of academic work, a stressful summer job, or facing a public hearing are rarely encouraged or tolerated. A good professional focuses on techniques of manipulating the external environment while controlling self. The toughness and logical consistency of science and economics become the dominant management guide and behavioural norm. The first director of what was to become the U.S. Forest Service (Bernhard Fernow) provides an example of this masculine, logical toughness: "... The main service, the principle object of the forest has nothing to do with beauty or pleasure. It is not, except incidentally, an object of aesthetics, but an object of economics." (Fernow 1896:45).

Social evolution in western cultures is resolving the traditional inconsistencies between the feminine and masculine. Women are moving into professions once the monopoly of men, and men are sharing more in child-rearing and homemaking roles. Forestry classes at Utah State University are 25 to 40% women; it is becoming OK for male forestry students to take art classes, not care to hunt, and be concerned with the landscape amenity consequences of silviculture.

In traditional tough-minded production forestry times, the concern for outdoor recreation, landscape amenities, non-game wildlife species, or vegetative diversity was often viewed as weak, emotionally-based and unloyal-to-the-"mission" thinking (i.e., feminine or childish behaviour). Peers generally responded to such attitudes with wit and humour that ridiculed in a gentle but effective manner. As youths, the desire to be part of the boys was strong enough to repress such sloppy thinking, and deviants soon joined the practical-thinking mainstream of respected forest managers.

One wonders if public mistrust of professionals like forest managers, lawyers, educators, physicians and civil engineers is based primarily on their doubt of "masculine prowess" in our scientific-logical thinking, cost-benefit analysis, or planning abilities. Or does the public fear we do not care about the people and land society has entrusted to us. Do they question our brains and skills or our hearts?

We rarely communicate our concern for the land to ourselves or the public. The respected behavioural norm for forest managers is to be analytical, detached, and in control. Yet most forestland managers are attracted to and pursue their careers because they care about conservation and feel more alive in the forest. Our adversaries employ their forest feelings/concerns as major justification of the righteousness of their cause. Why should we not be more open and proud of our love of forests. Forests, with our care, knowledge and concern, can endure our human needs — forever.

This is not an argument to abandon important, logical, and rational considerations and to have feelings dominate professional forestry behaviour. It is a plea to expand the traditional limits of admired professional behaviour and role models to include the feeling parts of our humanity — a part that makes us better parents, spouses, and teachers, as well as forest managers. And to do this in university, professional gatherings and in public.

By becoming less Victorian about the emotional-feeling parts of our humanity and professionalism, forest managers might also have more empathy with their urban clients who have strong emotional attachments to forests. In the past, rural children in New Zealand learned that forests existed to provide goods or to be converted to more valuable pasture land; their exposure to forests were on practical, utilitarian, product levels. Urbanites usually have their childhood contacts with forests in books, media, or recreational outings. They learn to view forests in an

idealistic, romantic mode — not in the practical-utilitarian mode. Perhaps it is time for more healthy and equitable integration of rural and urban needs to form a new dream for the '80s and '90s (a new "mission") around which to focus the same creative energies that made forestry in the past decades so vibrant and relevant to New Zealand.

The Attachment/Separateness Polarity

Like all the polarities so far discussed, attachment/separateness is not an either/or argument, but choices of each to be integrated into wholesome, growth-enhancing attitudes and behaviour. One needs to be attached to (to embrace) a dream like exotic forest establishment and management for achievements to happen. But managers can become so attached to planting radiata seedlings that one fails to see the whole forest: its place in the landscape and society, its eventual uses, and other land-capital options forgone. One must have the ability to pull away occasionally — to separate oneself from the immediate task, reflect on past achievements and future possibilities, and forge new direction (new attachments). Separateness is essential for long-run creativity and growth versus myopic stagnation. Separateness is also critical for good, long-run planning.

Strategic planning for locating new exotic "export forests" must consider more than traditional criteria of cheap, available land for planting. One must become "distant" enough to see the new forest in relation to future tending and transportation costs, port facilities, regional planning interrelationships, and other multiple-use considerations. In examining old NZFS annual reports, it appears that hectares of exotic forest planting was the major criterion of a forest conservator's management prowess and organisational prestige. Some separateness may be required to reassess such traditional indicators of professional accomplishment in a world of more varied and changing forest values.

Introspection and detached appraisal of oneself is not a blessing of youth. As individuals and groups mature, it often becomes easier and more urgent to reappraise old dreams and methods. The 1980s are bringing many internal and external pressures to look at forestry anew relative to: location-transportation factors in exotic forest placement, forests and forest manager roles in regional planning, location and management of exotic forest for urban needs, sincere integration of multiple use management into exotic and native forestry, and the amount of power forest

managers will share with the public and other professionals. At mid-life most men in the Levinson and Vaillant studies paused to take stock of current realities and future possibilities. Those reflective, introspective, and new direction years were ripe with pain and promise; but *no* men became successful, fulfilled adults by charging past the developmental tasks of mid-life in a vain attempt to cling to old dreams, past behaviour, or established positions.

The internal and external pressures on the New Zealand forestry profession may not allow forest managers to continue trajectories established in young adulthood — even if there were a professional desire to do so. A good test of the deep strength and vitality of an individual or a group is not only what was done yesterday, but also what is being done today to successfully encounter tomorrow. Being successful today requires attachment and devotion to immediate tasks; being successful tomorrow requires some separateness and imaginative planning to devise new options to cope with a changing world.

CLOSING COMMENT

This paper is not offered because internal reflection and reassessment are currently lacking within New Zealand forestry. Current review of professional meetings and publications reveals the soul-searching of a group facing-up to a transition period (*e.g.*, see the Childs, the Thomson, the Cameron, the Newell, the Fraser, and the Newhook articles in one issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, 22 (2), 1977). The major purpose of this paper is to offer concepts that might provide structure and pattern to the change forces confronting New Zealand forestry. In employing life stage concepts, I have attempted to place what might appear uncertain times for New Zealand forestry in a context that, hopefully, is *relevant* and *confidence enhancing*.

Life stage concepts confront us with evidence that transition phases cannot be ignored or superficially encountered without undesirable future consequences. Dealing with the above polarities in a token, insincere manner is never enough to long delude ourselves and others. The long-run promise of a healthy mid-life transition is not in *balancing one* polarity against the other in a new tension-based equilibrium. The task is to *integrate* the polarities, reduce their inconsistencies, and develop new views of life that stand on their own merit. Token, insincere sharing of decision power with the public or other professionals will not long endure

or promote future trust and healthy relationships. Attempting to "balance" single-minded production forestry with token amenity plantings thoughtlessly "tacked on" to noticeable fringes of exotic forests is false, not integrated, and will suffer the eventual rewards of hypocrisy.

Personal and group attitudes based on distinct, separate dichotomies of good/evil, black/white, saint/sinner characterise primitive, insecure thinking. As individuals and groups mature, shades of grey are easier to see and appreciate — ambiguity becomes more tolerable and our youthful, safe dichotomies are found too poor to deal with the richness of life. From a different perspective, superficial dichotomies of protection/production forestry, forester-ranger, conservation/preservation, production/amenity, or urban/country forestry may be more apparent than real. The future promise for New Zealand forestry might lie not in balancing some production forestry with some amenity forestry, or lots of country forestry with some urban forestry, but in integrating the apparent inconsistencies of the two into a new view (new dream) of a more wholesome, mature forestry that has enduring relevancy to an evolving nation.

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