

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IN DEFENCE OF PLANNING

Sir,

In responding to Geoff Chavasse's criticism of the Central North Island Planning Study (*N.Z.Jl For.*, 27 (1)) I too will quote a view expressed earlier in this *Journal* (Vol. 24 (1)). On that occasion I was provoked by an editorial warning that "there is a need to recognise that the social sciences are very poorly developed relative to the physical and biological sciences" (Vol. 23 (2)). Now we are being warned that "foresters would be most unwise to place too much trust in them (*i.e.*, planners), and I must repeat my previous exhortation; "let us stop being suspicious of experts, youth and eco-freaks; talk to them, work with them, join them and use them". Above all, "we have no need to feel professionally inadequate".

In Vol. 27 (1) JRPC summarises Chavasse's outstanding contribution to forestry and the profession. Both he and our new President have actively promoted a higher profile for the Institute. The challenges from both these leaders must be accepted.

My impression has to be that as a profession we are happiest talking to those of like ilk or trees or computers. None of them can answer back. There are even hints of jealousies within, attitudes that drive a considerable wariness (and I make no judgement on the healthiness of any wariness) of, for example, the findings of the Radiata Pine Task Force. As one of the oldest professions, surely we are big enough to be able to engage in open, honest and other than recriminatory debate.

Before we start closing ranks, exhorting distrust, and discrediting others, perhaps we might look at ourselves. Why haven't we taken up Geoff Chavasse's challenge? Why are planners moving into forestry? Why are foresters "suspect as they are present"? Two very commonly expressed fears about the proposed merger of the N.Z. Forest Service and the Department of Lands and Survey are relevant in answering the latter question. They come from what are, sadly, diametrically opposed groups. The environmentalists oppose the merger, because they do not trust foresters, the foresters oppose the merger because they are scared of being taken over by other professionals or, even worse, non-professionals.

The planning philosophy driving the Central North Island Forestry and Transport Planning Study is directed towards getting the various parties together, talking and understanding each other

in an environment of trust and respect. Philosophically at least, it is precisely to avoid a centrally or corporate planned economy that the regional planning process is being promoted by the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Works and Development. The foresters' attitude to this study has ranged from wariness and distrust to active and hostile condemnation. The response is reminiscent of that from the sector when the Development Finance Corporation published its Forestry Industry Study.

In addressing our Institute's Annual General Meeting, the Central North Island Forestry and Transport Planning Study team provided an opportunity for discussion. Their exercise certainly sympathises with the 1973 editorial assertion that "planning . . . must take into account other industries, people, money, transport, harbours, social amenities and the infrastructure generally." Planning will not go away. Cannot we be willing, active and influential partners?

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