

T. H. Webb, replies:

The main point raised by Mr Somerville is the possibility that the pattern of tree damage may reflect different wind characteristics rather than soil properties. It seems unlikely to us that wind pattern alone will account for the pattern of tree damage. The strips of damaged and undamaged trees which we studied were commonly about 500 m in width. It seems unlikely that wind issuing from the gorge and hills 1 to 2.5 km away would remain confined to such narrow pathways. Also our detailed study site which was only 30 m \times 30 m showed a similar relationship of soil depth and windthrow as was found on the longer transects.

Our statement "younger trees are more wind-firm" was made mainly to indicate that trees of different age can have varying stability. This understanding induced us to limit our study to trees of a similar age. If Mr Somerville can improve the statement we have made then we would accept his suggestion.

Broken trees were not excluded from the analysis. They were included with standing trees as is stated on page 100. It was our view that trees which had been broken could be considered as wind-firm because they had resisted the wind's effort to topple them.

TREVOR WEBB

Interpretation of a Forest

Sir

I would welcome the opportunity to comment on the Member's Comment, in which C. Ansley attempts through his "The Interpretation of a Forest" (Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 150-5) to aid "forest managers who are suffering the alienation of being misunderstood". Rather than advise managers to moderate or stop their destructive use of native forest, the primary cause of this alienation (see I. L. Baumgart's article in the same issue), he argues instead that forest interpretation courses should be designed to engender public acceptance of this destruction. Foresters are portrayed as paying the sacrifice for the necessary destruction on which our "creative culture" is based.

I do not accept the validity of the arguments advocating the narrow propagandist role for forest interpretation or accept the implicit belief that society benefits from further exploitation of Mount Victoria State Forest Park's native forests. Apart from transient local social benefits, present indigenous production forestry incurs significant environmental, economic and broader social costs. Growing public awareness of this contributes to the negative image our society has of forest managers.

It is not true, as Mr Ansley claims, that all land uses are destructive and it is illogical to equate destructive land uses with "creative culture" in which ecological processes operate. For example, man's use of forests for soil and water conservation, wildlife preservation or recreation are not destructive uses. The impacts associated with production forestry, mining, etc., do not represent creation, but rather its antithesis. Things are removed not brought into existence. As to the primacy of culture or

ecology, man is a product of nature and not vice versa as Mr Anstey suggests.

Forest managers are therefore not the innocent sacrificial victims of a non-seeing, over-materialistic society. Their unbalanced emphasis on production places them among the propopponents of such a society. By continuing to press for the exploitation of forests nationally important because of their wider values such as the West Bank of the Maruia, they are the architects of their current public alienation.

P. S. GRANT,
14 Elliott Street,
Nelson.

C. Anstey replies:

Sir

I was delighted to have a response to my article "The Interpretation of a Forest". I value Dr Grant's comments first because I respect the sincerity of his concerns for our native forests, and secondly because his comments contribute to the debate on balance and illustrate the problems of perception. Dr Grant's perception of balance in interpretation is obviously influenced by what he regards as his primary concern, the protection of remaining indigenous forests. I, too, am concerned about our native forests and do not personally support any form of use which is likely to result in their further demise as sustainable systems. This is the threat to which Dr Grant's remarks are a response.

Personally I see the "destruction of native forests" as only one of a number of problems in relation to man's balanced use of nature. This is not to belittle the cause of native forests but only to establish that the issue is part of some larger dilemma. From Dr Grant's point of view it would be highly desirable to curtail what he perceives as the exploitive activities in native forests. I am more concerned with understanding the underlying impetus to such activities and their redirection.

Whether man is a product of nature or vice versa is irrelevant. The fact is that man cannot exist without nature's support systems and that he now has it in his power to choose, wrongly if he so desires. The arena of choice is cultural not ecological. Ecological considerations must be fundamental to the choices we make but such values as are ascribed must be translated into terms acknowledged as important to the human context. If they are not, then cultural processes will ignore them. What we must do is establish a system of values to which both man and nature can be related. Somehow we must demonstrate that it is possible for man to act creatively with nature in a manner which satisfies needs in man without riding rough-shod over the needs of nature.

At least one of the problems as I see it is that at present we have a grave cultural aberration which separates creative processes from work processes; work is about surviving and creativity is associated with leisure. Creativity is recognised as a need for only a few and acknowledged in culture as "Art". To function in this way may not matter in urban society but to do so in the rural environment where in work man acts, not on goods and services but on essential natural systems, it certainly does. But action must continue; urban society demands it. To split the rural environment broadly into areas in which productive action can occur