

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Change

This volume of the *N.Z. Journal of Forestry* is the first under a new editor and one of the last in this shape. The two events are unconnected. John Holloway has been editor since 1980 — itself no mean achievement — during which time the *Journal* has addressed in its editorial and content all the forestry issues of the day.

For some time there has been discussion amongst members about the kind of journal that they want. Given the range of interest and background of members, opinion has been widely spread over a range of ideas.

However, there has been general agreement that a change in format is needed, and amongst points seen to be important are:

- a more frequent issue
- more reader appeal
- more discussion and opinion.

This situation was recognised by John Holloway and the Council of the Institute, and the incoming editor inherits the instruction for change. He also inherits, and takes to heart, Margaret Theron's letter on "Readability" in Vol. 29 No. 1 where she sets out the relative clarity of various publications, including our *Journal*. We are not flattered by the comparison, being fourth out of five in her list, and well beaten by the *Scientific American*, which some of our members would regard as itself incomprehensible.

So we are planning to publish the *Journal* quarterly in A4 size by a process which will allow easier inclusion of photographs and diagrams. The final product should be something like the farm forestry journal, about 32 pages long but at first without advertisements. These may follow after reaction to the first change.

There has also been discussion on the need for a newsletter and whether it could not be included in a more frequent journal. It will be included, but as a detachable centrefold and under a separate editor as now. The selection of the appropriate material for the centrefold will remain the prerogative of the newsletter editor.

Some members will regret the change. The *Journal* as it is records well the history of New Zealand forestry, and has often acted as a sounding board for new and radical ideas long before they became accepted. But there is also no doubt that it has tended to reflect the importance of some sectors of the profession above others, and some have seen it as a scientific journal where fact and exactitude were more important than opinion. This is an old-established principle for such publications, but the changes in forestry over the past few years have often not been changes of fact, but of opinion and attitude, and maybe that has not come through.

So maybe the change is opportune. There will continue to be a need for factual articles on the practice of forestry, but if trees are to be restored to their place in our national life then we need ideas and discussion as well. Hopefully the first of the new format will be out before the next AGM in Wellington, from whence a response will no doubt come.

The End of the World?

The debate on the administration of public land has now come to a temporary close while people ponder how to put things together again.

Following on from the report *Environment 1986*, the government has decided that there will be a Ministry for the Environment and a Department of Conservation. The role of the first is still a bit fuzzy, being described in the limited information available so far as "monitoring and reporting to Government".

The new Department of Conservation will have a more defined responsibility for

- national parks.
- reserves and protected natural areas.
- protected indigenous forest.
- protected inland waters.
- wild and scenic rivers.
- wildlife.
- historic places.
- forest parks and other multiple-use State forestry areas not used for wood production.
- unalienated rural Crown lands not used mainly for agriculture or forestry.

Both the Ministry and the Department are to be established by 1 April, 1986.

Also to be established are:

- a Land Development and Management Corporation having responsibility for land development and farming by the Crown, and for Crown leasehold land.
- a commercial forestry corporation.
- an office of Survey and Land Information.

Given both the public identification of conservation with native forest and the government commitment to change, most of this was predictable, and in fact the changes so far made commit very little on the environmental side. The Department of Conservation has been considerably reduced from the original proposal in terms of responsibility and is now large in hectares but bereft of muscle. It will receive much praise but have to fight for financial support. The Ministry of Environment, too, is reduced from the original responsible office to what looks like a monitoring role only and it will have to fight hard if more is to be seen to have happened than a mere inflation of titles and staff.

But conservation is a great deal more than just the setting aside of largely unused natural lands. It is the sustained balance between man and the environment, and in this respect the changes made are little more than cosmetic. The challenges lie, as they always have and always will, where people live, work, and play, and nothing much effective can be seen to have been done to improve matters here.

Thus, apart from some regrets over mendacious and often personal criticism and the cavalier attitude with which the government dismissed two long serving departments, the forestry profession and the Institute of Foresters should look forward, not back.

The future of most of the publicly owned indigenous forest estate has changed little except that it is now the responsibility of a body with many other responsibilities beyond forested land, and only one budget. The Department of Conservation must be both supported by the Institute of Foresters and also watched lest, in its straightened circumstance, forested land receives less priority than it should.

On the production side, New Zealand is again entering an era when forest will be one of the country's greatest resources.

This time, hopefully, it will be a sustained resource, not an exploited one, but that cannot be assumed just because it is planted rather than natural.

So one of the Institute's roles will be to see that the production forest estate is sustained, enlarged and diversified. It must be ready to speak on policies for wood industry development that do not allow for sustained yield or profit to the grower or which it feels are otherwise not in the local or national interest, and it must cogently argue for a national forest policy.

The split between conservation and development that appeared first in *Environment 1986* rests on the confusion between preservation and conservation that has run right through this debate and this, too, carries over into the two development corporations and the economic thrust behind them.

It is certainly surprising that just at the time when agriculture and forestry are coming together in a better balance of diversified land use, and when there is opportunity to enforce the trend, the two should be set up as separate agencies as though never the twain shall meet.

Similarly the quest for a more commercial approach, while welcome on some counts, leads straight into the debate on how profit is to be defined. The conventional approach via discounting and internal rates of return makes any form of long-term sustained yield unlikely and is itself everywhere one of the driving forces of resource exploitation and the demise of forests.

So one of the most obvious effects of this restructuring will be a less conservation minded approach to land use where land is being used, which, of course, is where people live. Inevitably there will be a lack of diversity, of sensitivity to local feelings and needs, and a concentration of tree planting in the new forestry corporation and the large forestry companies. The opportunity for the small landholder is gone, all for accounting convenience.

One obvious result of this may be resentment, reaction and conflict of the sort that farming and forestry as separate entities were just beginning to grow away from. The new Ministry for the Environment is supposed to deal with this sort of thing, indeed the whole exercise of change was trumpeted as a cure for strife, but it has no power, and anyway how to prevent two cats tied together by the tail from fighting?

The Institute of Foresters will have a job to do here.

Training in forestry and the management of forested land lags well behind. About a third of New Zealand is forested and forest

products from the small part of that which is productive have the potential to provide a quarter of the national export income by the end of the century, up from 10% now. Yet there is no functioning national apprenticeship scheme in forestry, diploma training is essentially in-house, and professional training small in capacity and narrow in scope. These all need vast improvement, but by whom? There is no longer any government sectoral responsibility.

Research has flourished and borne fruit and done a lot to make New Zealand plantation forestry the force that it is in the world. But research is expensive and its effect is not always immediately obvious in field or economic success. Who will guide forestry research in future — or who, indeed, will see that it stays alive at all? Economists often seem to be natural enemies of originality, and their philosophy now rules.

The Institute of Foresters will have to concern itself with all these things.

New Zealanders have always been ambivalent about trees. The Maori accepted them and gave honour to individuals that were needed for a specific purpose, but did not care overmuch where his fires went. The pakeha worshipped the bush in poem and painting — and burnt it. Scientists are all for native plants — but they must be genetically pure or their interest wanes, and conservationists get bothered if they are not naturally regenerated. Arboreal apartheid flourishes.

The Institute of Foresters has a part to play in helping New Zealanders to live with trees, not just to put them on a pedestal. Forests are more than just a Lord's day observance society.

The New Zealand Forest Service was borne in an effort to end the wastage of native timbers on land being cleared for pasture. As far as the political pressures of the time allowed, it succeeded. It was charged also with sustention of the national timber supply and New Zealand is now one of the few countries in the world with a self-sufficient and expanding forest economy.

In the process of achieving this, foresters were continually doing battle with different sectors of the community — settlers who saw forest as an encumbrance, politicians who saw only cheap houses, farmers who saw only competition for land, and the sportsman who cared little for the forest as long as it bristled with antlers.

Borne on conflict, forestry has always been a very close-knit profession. Accused of disregarding public opinion, foresters

can truthfully reply that if they had heeded it New Zealand would now lack most of its forest and be a timber importer as well.

The comfort of that close association has led to the present impasse, where the profession has only heard the background of criticism and failed to notice that for a change it did not threaten the forest estate itself, but only established perceptions of it. Misinterpreting that pressure, the Forest Service as it was is gone, perhaps its role fulfilled.

But its absence leaves a gap which has not been filled. The place of trees in our national life has been humbled by people more skilled at pulling down than building up, and that rebuilding remains to be done. The prescribed structure of a monopolistic monoculture state corporation and industries that the change prescribes probably fulfils its authors' wish for a devil, but it is not what the country wants or deserves. There is a great deal to do and just as great an opportunity to do it. That is where the Institute of Foresters has to be.