

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FORESTRY TRAINING

Sir, — this letter is being sent to give the views of the NZFS bursars at the School of Forestry, University of Canterbury, on the move to amalgamate the Ranger and Forester groups and also the restructuring of the NZFS. We stress that it is the view of those who have signed this letter only. (Number signed = 34.)

(1) We see the amalgamation of the two groups as causing a loss in the professional status of the forestry degree. This is seen as a serious step. In the future the Forest Service must become more professional so as to keep pace with rapid developments in the forest industry and also to prove to the New Zealand public that our State forests are being managed in the best possible way.

(2) With the “generalist” person being favoured in the proposed group, fewer people will be willing to attend university when they can do the Ranger course, get paid full-time and have equal promotion opportunities with university graduates once qualified. This will lead to a decrease in the number of tertiary qualified forest managers in the Forest Service — the reverse of what is happening in the major forest industries of the world, *i.e.*, U.S.A.

(3) Graduates will have little incentive to specialise in areas of interest as it could harm future promotion prospects. Without people specialising in areas of interest, it means that the Forest Service will become more rigid in its operations as new ideas and systems will not be researched and tried. With the rapid changes in the technology of today and the future, this is totally unrealistic.

(4) Graduates will receive lower salaries over time. Already graduate foresters receive less than graduate rangers. This does not recognise the fact that foresters had had three years of unpaid service while in training (rangers are paid full-time while training). Recognition of the degree as a professional one and the time spent without pay training must be given in salaries. If there is a failure to do this it is most likely that the Forest Service will have great trouble in retaining graduate foresters.

(5) Restructuring is agreed to in principle. We have, however, strong reservations as to how it is currently being done. Future staff requirements and skills needed in the future must be examined first and then training schemes looked at to see if these staff and skills can be provided. The restructuring must be based upon these future needs and not today's as dramatic changes in forestry will

occur in the near future. It has been noted that some of the new job descriptions seem to be just new titles replacing old ones with little real change.

(6) It is also seen that with two main streams, *i.e.*, Management, Utilization, it could become hard for people to cross from one stream to the other. This will lead to two separate structures, divorced from each other. This is the direct opposite from what must be found, flexible structures that can meet the changes and increased demands of the future.

This is a summary of the main points that we, the undersigned, feel should be seriously considered when deciding upon how the NZFS will operate and be staffed in the future.

34 Students at the School of Forestry

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Mr Lange, — I consider myself fortunate to have been associated with forestry all my life, and, in view of this association, consider it necessary to approach you personally to acquaint you with some of the background of the New Zealand Forest Service, of which I am sure you are not aware.

The recently announced decision to establish a Conservation Department and a Forestry Corporation would indicate to those closely associated with forestry, like myself, that the New Zealand Forest Service, as a Department, will disappear. This is a tragic victory for the environmental people, who have virtually come out and claimed a victory in the media. Where was the victory won? I say this because it indicates a one-track approach, which is not in New Zealand's best interests.

The New Zealand Forest Service was established in 1920. Prior to this, all Crown lands in New Zealand were administered by the Lands and Survey Department. One of the major components of the Directors' Brief in 1920, was the conservation and management of our indigenous forests. Prior to this, forests in New Zealand had been slaughtered, not by sawmillers, but by persons wishing to establish farms.

We were indeed fortunate that someone saw the need to control this wholesale clearing of our indigenous forests, and even more fortunate that Mr McIntosh Ellis took it upon himself to introduce numerous pine species into New Zealand for the establishment of forests in other areas which were then wastelands.