

# The Institute and the individual

## J.G. Groome

I was recently invited to comment on a well-thought-out analysis of the present condition of the NZ Institute of Foresters, what ails it and what should now be done. While this was an honest assessment and presented some positive steps which Council could take I fear it missed the essential point.

Suddenly a great number of the Institute's members have found their careers changed or at stake. The impressive performance by a dedicated and unified group of people which caused the changes to environmental administration cannot have been missed by anybody involved with forestry in New Zealand. It is to be hoped that the result will be a new attitude towards the Institute by many who in the past thought and acted as public servants or company employees, only, and failed to take the opportunity provided through membership of a professional body to express their concern or when necessary an anti-official view.

### Main Purpose

The main purpose of the Institute has been and will continue to be the provision of a forum or record through which members can express their individual or collective view — verbally or in print — without the constraints imposed by company loyalty or the Official Secrets Act. It is the vigour with which such an opportunity is supported and utilized by individuals which gives any organization its strength.

A strong organization cannot be sustained solely by the efforts of those who are elected for a period to Council or other positions — yet the analysis referred to earlier saw the Institute's performance as being "highly dependent on a well motivated President" and "local sections dependent on an enthusiastic Chairman". Perhaps that has been true in the past but more will be required in the future than a "top down" approach which was suggested as the way "to achieve a higher profile".

No longer do we have the luxury of a dominant (or dominating?) department of state nurturing the profession and being very successful in promoting the impression that forestry, like motherhood, was inviolate. Those who chose to offer their services to a Government or Company which practised such a noble pursuit were guaranteed protection from politicians, competing professions, pernicious forest lovers and little old ladies in felt slippers.

Where was the need to support an independent professional association with one's own time or cash? A useful medium for having one's thoughts or scientific papers

published perhaps or an enjoyable trip to an AGM when one's turn came around? For many members this was all the Institute offered and all that was required. Employment was secure, and since the days of Entrican and David Henry forestry has enjoyed a growing place in the economy and a relatively high status in an increasing number of locations including the stock exchange.

### The Holocaust

And then came the holocaust! Mishandled and ineffectively promoted multiple use concepts together with the rising cost of capital and the need for earlier returns have combined to depreciate forestry as a popular investment for business or as a legitimate use of public funds. Is it, however, necessary for the profession to suffer in the same way? Perhaps the Institute, stripped of the swaddling clothes which have protected its members for 60 years, can now rise phoenix-like, fuelled by the individual efforts of all its members.

Examples abound, should anybody wonder what can be done to build a stronger body. The herculean efforts of Journal Editors over the years were seldom carried out in the "firm's" time. Birch, Forbes, Hocking, Hinds, Thomson, Poole, Jackson, Chavasse, Sweet, Holloway, Purey-Cust and Mead devoted long nights of their own time on their own typewriters, extracting articles from reluctant authors and editing these to make them readable. How many members appreciated the efforts behind that annual, then biannual (thanks to Jack Henry's forceful efforts) and now colourful quarterly publication which in many ways was the very Institute itself for so many

years? Presidential office perhaps brings its own lasting rewards but lesser beings such as long-serving councillors, members of sub-committees painfully putting together the Institute's collective view, treasurers, secretaries, Newsletter Editors and local officers, all make sustained personal effort and sacrifice. And yet the rewards are there, as all those who have served will agree, whether it be in the shape of a bound volume, a successful and informative AGM or simply in developing close companionships with colleagues which last well beyond retirement. Even the investment of paying one's own way to the annual conference engenders an important independence from one's employer.

### Greatest Reward

But still the greatest reward of all to those who have been privileged to provide personal commitment to the profession will be to see the NZ Institute of Foresters not only survive when the practice of forestry is under so much challenge but to take over many of the roles formally handled by the NZ Forest Service. Without the Institute, its AGM and its publications what could we as foresters claim as a profession at the present time? There should be no doubt on this point by those who consider themselves to be protected still by "permanent" tenure of their positions. Voluntary membership of an independent professional organization not only lasts as long as the individual himself wishes, but also accords in the eyes of the public a certain credibility usually reserved only for academics and the clergy.

(Institute News continued on page 40)

## Frith Gleason thanks Institute

In a letter to the Institute President, Mrs Frith Gleason writes as follows:

I would like to thank the Institute for the words of sympathy and comfort expressed through Dennis Guild at Curt's funeral.

The Institute was an important part of Curt's life. I remember the first meeting that we went to in Auckland (1973); meeting people there that were to become good friends and colleagues over the years.

Curt's involvement with the Institute, and forestry in general, stemmed from his love of trees. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity Curt had to share his enthusiasm with you all.

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— Review papers by Peter B. Lavery

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