



## NEW INFORMATION



### BOOK REVIEWS

## Forestry and Logging workforces

**Selected Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Forestry and Logging Workforces and Comments on their Possible Social Significance** — Charles Crothers, Cluny Macpherson and Martin O'Connor, Department of Sociology, University of Auckland. *Working Papers in Comparative Sociology*, No. 13, 1984. ISSN 0110-6864, \$6.00 plus GST. 75 pages.

The research reported on in this book has three objectives: to determine the present geographical distribution of forestry and logging workforces, to identify distribution (and recent changes) of occupations within the industry, and to establish the main socio-demographic characteristics of forestry and logging workforces.

Because of the impending increase in demand for forest labour, especially in harvesting, and because of the scarcity of this type of information, this book should be valuable to many administrators and planners in the forestry industry. There are, however, two obstacles which reduce the value of the findings — the effect of time (1981 data have lost much of their relevance), and the major changes in the structure and administration of the industry that have just taken place.

Based on census data and summary tables, it is not a book to read for enjoyment. Still, it is interesting to learn that the total number of persons involved in full-time employment in logging and forestry almost doubled from 5377 to 9663 between 1971 and 1981, that "unskilled" occupations grew faster than "skilled" occupations in forestry and also in logging (with logging planners and logging contractors being the exceptions), that the average age dropped from 32.6 in 1971 to 29.7 in 1981, and the percentage of females in forestry and logging increased from 0.7 to 3.8 over the same time. Age structure, educational qualifications, income distribution (well out of date), ethnic composition, marital status, type of dwelling and household amenities, all have been extracted from past census data.

The authors conclude that the workforce is "youthful, rural, Maori and unskilled". This is obviously a broad generalization, and should have been followed by the words "compared to other industries", as their own data show that full Europeans make up 55% of the logging workforce and 65% of the forestry workforce. They also say that the workforce is "subject to particular sets of housing and working conditions which are shared by few other groups of workers". They observe that, for the potential worker, the industry offers "relatively unskilled work, for moderate wages and with some opportunities for overtime. However, much of the work is arduous, and not without physical risk, and unless opportunities are created for those in their forties and beyond to be re-trained or involved in management, it is likely that there will continue to be a high turnover of people over 40 and a consequent loss of skill to the industry." Good stuff, and there is more of the same hidden amongst the tables.

While it is still to be determined how to attract people into the industry, this report does identify some aspects which are useful concerning the workforce, and gives some clues to the question "where do we go to from here?"

R. O'Reilly

## World of the kauri

**'The world of the kauri', by John Halkett and E.V. Sale. Published by Reed Methuen in association with the New Zealand Forest Service. 256 pages, 97 black and white photographs, 31 colour photographs, 1 map, 4 other illustrative plates. Price \$35, including GST.**

This is a well written and well presented book which makes an important contribution to New Zealand forestry. It provides the layman, as well as the professional, with a lucid and interesting account of the nature of kauri forests, the properties of the species itself, how the forests were devastated during a long exploitive phase and why, now, the preservation objective dominates. Commandingly, the environmental battles are dealt with objectively and without the intrusion of judgements on the part of the authors. The human aspect receives due attention. Life in the bush and on the gum-fields in the latter part of last century and the

early part of this century is described with riveting detail, made especially vivid by the reproduction of many superb old photographs.

The book commences, arrestingly, with descriptions of notably huge kauri trees and recent attempts to find more of the giants. Then it deals with the palaeogeography and current distribution of the genus *Agathis* before describing the ecology of the sole New Zealand representative. It is significant that the pathways of kauri regeneration are dealt with only briefly and generally, significant because insufficient is still known in a detailed sense about how the replacement of kauri is influenced by soil condition and other factors.

There is an absorbing account of the exploitation of kauri growing apace until it had achieved such momentum that foresters, botanists and some politicians warned of impending disaster, but with little effect until so much timber had been wastefully used or just destroyed to make room for pasture. Foresters made attempts to introduce sustained yield management but before the necessary research could be undertaken the Depression intervened, and then World War II. Before such management could commence after the war there arose a groundswell of public discontent about logging at Waipoua. Later, as related graphically by the authors, public disquiet was to focus on Warawara and Manaia. The Forest Service seemed constantly to have been on the back foot in these crises. Gradually Government policy changed to one of protection and preservation of the species. Eventually, in 1985, the felling of living mature kauri in State forest was prohibited, although there is the prospect of regrowth stands being managed for timber in the future on a modest scale.

The book is full of fascinating detail. For instance, the timber-jack was not really a New Zealand invention. Again, what an entrepreneur one Sam Skelton must have been, to have established a market for his gum spade, not only on the Northland gum-fields but also in Australia, Malaysia, Ceylon and South Africa!

The central, partly tacit theme of the book is that political and commercial pressures to liquidate what was a renewable resource operated so forcefully that, before foresters could establish a regimen of sustained yield, there was too little left of the resource to do much other than preserve it.

This book is a valuable and comprehensive reference for anybody wanting to learn about the kauri forests. It represents also an important component of New Zealand social history.

P.J. McKelvey