

The four impediments that the Ministry sees to efficiency of the sector are the labour market, the transport sector, the Commerce Act and the Town and Country Planning Act. I think I'd add to that list and certainly lower the priority for some of the four. People can make things work if they have the will to do so; thus, making legislative changes is **not** the important prerequisite that this document would have us believe – such patching of the latest loophole is never-ending.

Policy matters raised cover Maori leases, the East Coast Project, South Westland Management, Conservation of Native Forest, Taxation and resource use statutes. Only the first gives clear guidelines as to the Ministry's position, the views on which, in this case, I would lend my wholehearted support to. Discussion of the others lacks clarity and direction.

Section IV deals with the role of the Ministry of Forests and shows how it's spending the taxpayer's money. That is always contentious, and readers will themselves need to read the Ministry's own view of itself rather than rely on any reviewer's personal assessment. Curiously, the last section, comprising three pages and a diagram, was the bit that really sets the scene for what the briefing might have contained. I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiment expressed on page 51:

"The nature of the industry with its extensive plantations, huge capital investment and long time frame means that strategic rather than incremental decision making is required."

But the earlier main thrust of the briefing seems to favour the reverse, highlighting how the Corporation should be monitored rather than setting guidelines on how it should perform, bemoans the legislative impediments to efficiency of the sector rather than suggesting a forest sector policy to work to, and emphasizes the precariousness of New Zealand's share of the international and domestic markets for forest products while at the same time demonstrating how the Ministry can earn its keep in terms of budgeting rather than how the taxpayers' money should be spent efficaciously to the benefit of the nation. I agree with the writers, however, that time is running out for the sector in terms of real political support as against incremental propping up. This long-winded, repetitious and neutral briefing may not be the answer to such a prayer, but it is essential reading, nevertheless, for everyone involved in the sector, and also, let us hope, for the Minister, so that at least he has some prior knowledge to call upon in this age of intense lobbying.

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Department of Conservation's ministerial brief August 1987

This document of 100 pages gives a good superficial overview of what this very new government department is all about and the main issues it faces. Despite the document's size, there is no summary of key points and many of the statements have so little elaboration that they can only be described as tantalizing.

The first 40 pages profile the Department, and a major part of this is concerned with finance. In a budget of about \$100 m for this financial year, \$32.5 m is allocated to personnel, \$48 m to operating costs, \$13 m to capital and \$6 m to grants and loans. There is no discussion on why the ratio of operating costs to personnel costs is so high, whether the figure for capital is considered normal or whether there are special circumstances this first year, and where the grants and loans are going to. Half the latter are allocated under Science and Research, so presumably they include payments to FRI and others for research, but this is not mentioned.

An equally large section of the departmental profile is devoted to senior staff (with photos) and is very informative.

The next dozen pages are devoted to profiles of the component directorates. These profiles are brief but adequate, and are followed by a one page description of the general functions of a region.

The final section, almost one-half of the document, is given over to 'issues'. These are listed under the appropriate directorate, but are otherwise a very mixed bag. Of almost 100 issues listed, one-third are really only statements of function. Of the remainder, only half a dozen have clear position statements indicating the Department's views, although in many others opposition to changes in existing land use is implied. One of the clear statements expresses opposition to removal of export controls on indigenous timber, but again the issue is not discussed.

Other Issues

Other issues of direct concern to forestry which are mentioned include the proposal for a port at Shakespeare Bay to allow export of timber from the Marlborough Sounds, and protection of indigenous forest on private land (mentioned twice by different directorates).

One of the major issues facing FRI is

the future of research (and its funding) presently being carried out for DOC under a loop funding arrangement which expires in 1990. Apparently this is not even considered to be an issue by DOC, let alone discussed.

In short, this document is too long to be a useful summary, and too short to be an adequate statement of what the Department's current concerns are, what it intends doing about them, and why. However, it is well presented and looks impressive – perhaps it is an ideal ministerial brief.

Dudley Franklin

The QE II National Trust's ministerial brief

This short document very adequately describes the Trust's background, its functions, its achievements and its problems. The latter consist mainly of a greatly increasing workload (33% increase last year), a huge backlog of applications for open space covenants (currently six years' delay in processing to completion), the loss of goodwill with prospective clients these delays could engender, and grossly inadequate resources. The document would have been enhanced by a concise punchy summary and a slicker presentation, but perhaps their resources were already over-stretched!

Pertinent Questions

Few people could question the worth of having the Trust work efficiently and effectively. In view of this, perhaps the brief could have asked the Minister a few pertinent questions such as: "Does the Government accept the value of the Trust?" "Is it content to accept the present situation?" "Will it do anything about it?" Perhaps the Opposition could be prompted to raise these issues.

Dudley Franklin