



PRIVATIZATION?

Sir,

So Mr Kirkland is now in favour of privatization of the Forestry Corporation! I continue to be astounded by the suppleness of his views. His brain has certainly not lignified! Is this the same Kirkland who, in 1985, so staunchly defended the performance of the NZFS and the concept of multiple use? The one that opposed the carve-up of the NZFS? (See, for example, the NZIF newsletter of July 1985, page 16). Let us hope that another wind-shift will swivel him round again.

I ask the question: who will buy the nation's forests? Perhaps it will be Fletcher-Challenge, which one upon a time was a New Zealand company. Trouble is, they will expect to pay a price that guarantees a profit to the forest-grower. No such restraint will restrict the bids of, say, a Japanese company. In a vertically integrated forestry enterprise, it makes good sense to run forests at a loss. The big money is made in processing wood, not in growing the stuff. Yet forests have a strategic value in that they guarantee a continuity of supply, and ensure that supplier cartels will fail. Like some New Zealand processors, Japan has good reason to be worried about its sources of raw materials, including wood.

In the light of the Petrocorp and NZFP fiascos, let's not naively assume that Government would reject foreign bids. Like the ladies of Rotorua who specialize in selling their natural assets to tourists, the Government is happy to accept anyone's money.

Does it matter if Japan owns half a million hectares of New Zealand? The Maori tribes who sold land for tobacco now think their ancestors were short-sighted. So do the Russians who once sold Alaska to the USA for \$US7.2 million back in 1867. But no doubt the Russian economists of the time calculated that it was a bargain.

Land is at such a premium in Japan that it is conceivable that in time forestry may not be seen as the best land use for their new colony. Build an airstrip, ring-fence the "forest" to keep out uncouth locals, and set up a holiday camp or retirement village. The only time the owners must interact with the natives is when passing through Customs.

A generation ago, Japan planned to take control of New Zealand by force of arms. Their first priorities were to capture the strategic infrastructure of railway yards, post office buildings, hydroelectric dams, etc. Now they have come to their senses. Such things can be controlled without loss of blood, and probably at a far cheaper cost, without leaving the Tokyo stockmarket.

Unfortunately, the problem runs deeper still. The Government has a forced collectivization programme reminiscent of Stalin, whereby country-dwellers are to be herded into the cities. Who will own the countryside? The lending agencies, of course. Who will own the lending agencies? Alas, the Japanese again.

You don't have to be anti-Japanese to stand in awe of their commercial ability. They are extremely honest and polite. Nevertheless, we may still end up spending our twilight years in some sort of reservation trying to sell handicrafts to the colonial masters. Mr Kirkland, do you have a clear picture of where privatization will lead us?

Piers Maclaren
Rotorua

QUEEN ELIZABETH II NATIONAL TRUST

Sir,

Your November 1987 issue contained an article by Dudley Franklin, on the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust's Briefing Paper for the Minister of Conservation following the 1987 General Election.

While it is always pleasing for a small organization like ours to receive the attentions of journals such as yours, I feel I should clarify what appears to me to be misinterpretations of some of the points contained in the briefing paper.

Like many organizations today we have fewer financial resources than we would like, or indeed require, to totally satisfy the demands on our services. Indeed, as your article correctly notes, demand for our services has increased by 33% last year.

This demand, if not matched by an increase in resources to process covenants, could lead to delays in the order of the six years mentioned. However, currently, no backlog exists. Covenants can be completed in as little as six

months, although typically the process takes 2-3 years by the time the documents are prepared and agreed to, the area is fenced and surveyed, mortgagee consents are obtained and the covenant registered on the title.

Rarely do covenants take longer than this to complete and any delays are normally the result of the landowner facing, for example, changed financial circumstances.

Subsequent discussions with the Minister of Conservation and her department have left us with no doubt that they see a valuable role for the Trust and we are confident that the processing of covenants will not become the subject of delays due to inadequate Trust resources.

Peter Elworthy
Chairman
Queen Elizabeth II National Trust

RURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Sir,

Under Section 7 of the Handbook "Forestry as a Business", as item 10 we have listed Forest Industry Communications. The item outlines procedure for future communications planning and highlights the fact that Forest Service telecommunications engineers have assumed responsibility on behalf of the industry.

Reference to the Forest Service is, of course, no longer applicable, but the Department of Conservation have kindly made Commander David Davies, their senior communications officer, available to continue this planning and to deal with enquiries. This is really a most satisfactory outcome as Commander Davies was the architect of the original rural communications plan. Another development is that Telecom did not pick up radio spectrum management and this has been handed to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Director-General of Conservation, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington, telephone (04) 710-726, attention Senior Communications Officer.

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