

NATIVE FORESTS: A NATIONAL POLICY

Ministers have made public an intention to develop a policy on the management and protection of indigenous forests, particularly on private land. At the time of going to press a group of officials from the Ministry of Forestry, the Department of Conservation, and the Ministry for the Environment had been established to examine the issue and advise their Ministers. It is understood that the group will be consulting with key people and organisations. A major issue will be what sort of compensation, if any, should private owners be entitled to.

MAORI LEASE MANAGEMENT

For some time the Ministry of Forestry has had responsibility for managing the Crown's interest in Maori leases of land for plantations. On July 10, 1989 the operational responsibilities were also transferred from the Forestry Corporation to the Ministry of Forestry.

The Crown has agreed to pay for the Maori lessors to get their forests valued to help them decide whether they want to buy out the Crown's interest in the leases. It is understood that at least two major lessors are keen to purchase the Crown's interest in their leases.

GREEN LIGHT FOR STATE FOREST SALES

A Crown-Maori agreement which will allow the sale of the 540,000 hectares of Crown exotic production forests was signed in mid-July.

Under the agreement the Crown would sell the tree crop. Buyers would also pay an annual rental for the use of the land. If the Waitangi Tribunal found that a claim for land was well founded and a return of the land to a Maori iwi was called for the buyer would retain the cutting rights but the land would be vested with the rightful Maori owners who would also be compensated for restrictions on the title during the waiting period.

An important clause is at the start of the agreement, defining the period of a

cutting right to be sold to a purchaser as "evergreen", automatically extended annually by one year until termination.

The evergreen term and the termination period will be of sufficient length to permit any tree crop purchased by, or established by, the purchaser to reach maturity and be harvested in accordance

with accepted forestry business practice.

This agreement clears the way for Government to net up to \$7 billion, and once new owners have secured their cutting rights major investment in new processing plants and further afforestation to ensure sustained woodflow into them should follow.

COVENANTS ON THE SALE OF STATE FORESTS ON UNSTABLE SOILS

Forestry Corporation staff and Government officials have been discussing the need for special replanting covenants on exotic forests which are to be sold but are on very unstable soils.

It had been thought that replanting could be enforced where necessary (e.g. Mangatu, or coastal sand dune forest strips) by invoking section 34 of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1959, but section 37 of the same Act requires that owners receiving a section 34 enforcement notice are entitled to full compensation. This explains why section

34 has never yet been used! The issues that still need to be resolved are:

- (a) To what extent should central government subsidise regional government for soil stabilisation works? and
- (b) Whether central government should meet this cost by covenanting (and thereby discounting the sale price of) the forests or by agreeing to pick up the expense later by paying for section 37 compensations.

CONSERVATIONISTS IN CONTROL OF TASMANIAN NATIVE FOREST POLITICS

With its vast sustainable resource of high-grade eucalypt pulpwood Tasmania currently supplies nearly 60% of Australia's exports of papermaking materials and supplies 30% of Japan's hardwood pulpwood requirements, but influenced by the conservationist movement, the Federal Government denied NBH the opportunity to build an international scale pulp mill at Wesley Vale. The State's Liberal Government indignation about the Federal Government's interference was muted by a subsequent election which left the Liberals with only 17 seats out of a Lower House total of 35. The Labour Opposition has 13 and the Conservationists 5.

The Conservationists have forced three key decisions upon the Labour Party as a condition of their continued co-operation: cessation of logging in all National Estate areas, no bleached pulp mills, and withdrawal of the approval given by the previous Government to Huon Forest Products to access 425,000 tonnes of eucalypt pulpwood from Tasmania's Southern Forests.

Does this foreshadow more political strength for the New Zealand conservationists too?

The above items on this page have been contributed by H. Levack

SORTING TIMBER BY COMPUTER

AT TOKOROA SAWMILL

Pinex Timber Products Ltd has commissioned a new computerised bin sorter at its Tokoroa sawmill, completing one further stage in a \$21.7 million sawmill modernisation programme.

Sorting sawn lengths of timber by computer, instead of manually, has increased output by about 30 cubic metres per day, enabling the expanded sawmill to run up to its full capacity of 540 cubic metres.

Pinex Timber Products is the sawmilling and processing arm of Elders Resources NZFP Ltd's Forest Products Group. Its multi-million-dollar investment in upgrading the Tokoroa, Putaruru, Rotorua and Tauranga sawmills has been carried out over the last 18 months. The modernisation programme is aimed at making the sawmills' production fully competitive on overseas markets.