# LETTERS

## Indigenous forest management

Sir,

Thank you to Colin Bassett for explaining editorial policy (November issue). I could perhaps agree with it if the editor, of the article to which I objected, extended the same courtesy to others. Not only do they not do this, but their quarterly magazine makes no provision for the publication of letters and I have positive knowledge of one member of their society receiving no response to a registered letter critical of their indigenous forest policy.

It would be nice to think that conflicts between environmentalists and industry could be solved by a policy of openness, but it should be two-way, which it is not. For instance, the Rainforest Coalition have consistently avoided direct talks with the timber industry in Southland except under Government duress on one occasion. They have their agenda and that is that. For some other views on the intransigence of environmental zealots three articles come to mind:–

(a) World Wood June 1990, a report on the views of Ron Woznow, Vice President, Environment, Fletcher Challenge Canada.
(b) National Business Review, (NZ) weekly magazine, October 26, 1990
(c) The Bulletin (Australia) August 14, 1990.

The last article talks about economic sabotage and political infiltration. Alarmist talk, some would say, but I was able to note an instance of the far-reaching insidious effect of the environmental movement on a visit to Queensland last July. There, a multinational company (not Asian) spent over $A2 million on trials contracted to the Queensland Department of Forestry to document the feasibility of, and best species for, short-rotation hardwood fibre production. The trials I saw were brilliantly conceived and executed on a number of sites spanning the length of coastal Queensland. The results were conclusive and land is available, but the company eventually walked away from the proposal. The only rational explanation I could deduce was the business risk involved in the expenditure of millions of dollars in a venture which, come harvest time, may face opposition by environmentalists because of a perceived industrial effluent threat to the Great Barrier Reef. Visiting Professor Richard Epstein certainly created a furore in Cairns when he expressed the view that the Barrier Reef could withstand more than 10 times the present level of controlled tourist traffic.

One has to ask the question whether the same fear of future business risk was the reason the company negotiating with Forestry Corporation for cutting rights in the 77,000 ha West Coast/Reefton beech forests finally dropped their proposal. They would hardly be encouraged by the fate of the Southland beech industry. Since my previous letter it has now been ascertained that the allocation of 12,000 ha of State cutover beech forest (inclusive of Rowallan areas regenerated since 1950) can only provide wood production on about 4300 ha over the next 60 years at an annual sustainable level of 3000 $m^3$ of sawlogs, which is just some 13% of the annual beech sawlog usage by the local industry in recent years.

The Government-approved beech management allocation of Western Southland State forest in 1982 was 25,600 ha. When stewardship of these areas passed from NZFS to DOC in 1987 all but the 12,000 ha, as mentioned, were progressively declared Conservation Areas and included in the Te Wahipounamu proposal for World Heritage status by September 1989. This was done in contravention of Sections 10 and 11 of the 1987 Conservation Act which required the preparation of management plans for public notification and discussion. I repeat that these statutory requirements were not fulfilled, but the subsequent 1990 National Conservation Law Reform Act presumably is seen as validation in retrospect of DOC's previous lack of compliance, as these requirements are now discretionary to the Minister.

Anyway, whereas the old NZ Forest Service was wrongfully accused of favouring commercial interests, now the Department of Conservation can be rightfully accused of favouring their own vested conservation interests. What happened to the concept of objective stewardship?

**Laurie King**

## Forestry terms

Sir,

A few years back I protested, to no avail, at the way some FRI scientists misused the precise forestry term "silviculture" to mean "tending" only. One might as well call "topdressing" (as a farming term) "agriculture". It would make as much sense.

I see now, in NZ Forestry, Vol. 35(3), that foresters are using the word "conservation" to mean "preservation". So there is now no forestry term to denote conservation in the long-accepted forestry sense.

There is also the lunatic suggestion that a plantation of trees is not a forest. If that is so, you can scrub all the forests of Israel and the North African littoral, practically all the forests of Britain and Germany, a great part of the forests of Japan, something like 80% of the forests of Europe other than Britain and Germany, large chunks of the forests of the USSR, India, China, North America, some African and South American countries and Australia.

To afforest means precisely to plant forest trees. It is neither here nor there whether they are native or exotic trees, or whether they are managed intensively or extensively. It has astonished me to note that several of our eminent foresters seem to think that only those planting radiata pine have created plantations. After all, the Japanese have planted something like 12.5 million hectares of forest since 1948.

If foresters are unable to use their own technical terms precisely they can't blame the public for believing them to lack credibility.

**C.G.R. Chavasse**

## Rural fire control

Sir,

Government has taken notice of our plea for action to cement in place the present 'ad hoc' arrangements for rural fire control (article in our November 1990 issue 'Pray for a wet summer and keep your hoses crossed').

At 9.30 pm on Thursday, December 20, 1990, before breaking for the summer recess, Government passed the Fire Service Amendment Bill (No.2) and accompanying Forest and Rural Fires Act amendments through all second and third Committee and Reading Stages with the agreement of the Opposition.

The Forest and Rural Fires Amendments came into force at 1 am on January 1, 1991. The Ministry of Forestry now has no responsibilities under the Act as these are all legally transferred to the NZ Fire Service Commission.

The biggest advantage will be a new Rural Fire Fighting Fund and members will be interested to know that claims on the Fund will be retrospective to October 1, 1990.

**Neill Cooper**