

RECENT EVENTS

Forest industries initiatives

Paul Quinn*

In December 1990 the New Zealand Forest Industries Council, as a first step in accepting the challenge of developing a strategic plan for the New Zealand forest industry, convened a day-long conference with the theme "Industry Initiatives for the Future". The main objectives of the conference were:

- to identify and action several immediate working party initiatives which focus on improving the competitive advantage of the forest industry;
- to progress the development of a long-term vision and strategic direction for the industry.

The conference was stimulated by the urgency which both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Forestry placed on developing such a plan of action following the Leaders Summit convened by the Prime Minister earlier in December.

A wide cross-section of industry personnel were invited, not on the basis of representing a particular sectional interest but as individuals who could provide an independent view. In all 26 people attended.

By the end of the day's discussions five

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Tough treatment

(continued)

with other alkyd molecules. This causes large, tough polymers to grow within the wood. When the alkyd is applied to dry wood with its knots removed and its holes and cracks filled, the wood becomes as durable as tropical hardwood. The problem with alkyls is that they can take a whole day to dry.

DSM combined the alkyls with acrylic polymer, the material used to make standard water-based paints. The acrylic does not form chemical bonds during drying, so it is not as strong as the alkyd but it does dry quickly. A mixture of the two chemicals dries fast enough at the surface to allow the wood to be handled within an hour of treatment, while the alkyd goes on drying within the wood.

DSM chemists are now trying to add reactive sites to acrylic polymers that will allow them to cross-link with the alkyd, creating a tough complex of the two within the wood.

Debora MacKenzie writing in the New Scientist

principle initiatives emerged as projects Council could immediately pursue. These were:

- FRI - Centre of Excellence
- Industry Co-operation - A Shared Vision
- Education and Training
- Funding
- Radiata Pine Promotion.

Working groups have been established to pursue each of these initiatives

Labour spokesperson on Forestry

The Labour Party spokesperson on Forestry, Paul Swain, MP, has announced that he is going to embark on the preparation of a plan which will develop a forestry strategy that will take New Zealand into the 21st Century.



Paul Swain

In late April 1990 he began work on his plan, which may take two years to complete, by consulting a range of people with forestry interests in the Rotorua area. Over the next few months he intends to talk to key people in the sector at Gisborne, Nelson and in Southland. He says you can phone him at Parliament (04) 719379, or home (04) 676842 and he would welcome any ideas you might have.

See if you can sway Swain!

H. Levack

and already positive feedback has resulted. Within the FRI - Centre of Excellence initiative a number of smaller sub-groups have been formed to develop specific ideas, including the promotion of forestry tourism activities around Rotorua, developing closer linkages between FRI, educationalists and corporates, and of course the overall objective of FRI as the world centre of excellence for radiata pine research.

Council has already accepted the recommendation of the Shared Vision working group to commission an appropriate group to undertake the co-ordination of an industry strategic plan.

Progress is continuing on the other initiatives, two of which are in conjunction with other work being undertaken by sector association.

In supporting these working group initiatives, Council does not of itself necessarily seek their management control. Rather it has encouraged a whole process of networking so that as many industry people as possible can contribute. This is an exciting project and one the Council believes must be given the highest priority. The Minister of Forestry, Hon. J. Falloon, is strongly supportive of the project, as is the NZ Trade Development Board.

Robin Cutler to split British Forestry Commission powers

Don Mead

The Forestry Commission, Britain's largest land-owner, is to be drastically reformed by the Government. The Commission was bitterly criticised by a House of Commons select committee last year for "conflict of interest" between its twin roles as regulatory body and nationalised industry for forestry.

Since its foundation in 1919, the Commission has been responsible for the planting of millions of acres of alien conifer trees on the most ecologically sensitive parts of Britain and, latterly, for promoting and funding planting by the private sector.

The destruction caused to the landscape in the process, whether the destruction of views, the eradication of moorland birds, or the changes in the ecology and acidity of rivers, has been a source of continual criticism from environmentalists. They have found the Commission's internal method of vetting planting applications unsatisfactory.

Reorganisation of the Commission is likely to form a key "green" element in the Conservatives' election manifesto, now being drawn up by Central Office. It builds on the reforms of forestry finance in the 1988 Budget.

A plan for reforming the Commission has been drawn up by Mr Robin Cutler, its new Director General, and his plan for Britain has been approved in principle by Ministers.

He has recommended separating the two parts of the Commission: the Forestry Authority, the regulatory body that examines planting applications, and the Forestry Enterprise, the nationalised industry which owns more than two million acres of woodland all over the country and is responsible for promoting planting in the private sector.

The separation of the regulatory body from the rest of the Commission could prepare the way for privatisation of the nationalised industry side within a few years.



Incredible ministerial statement on native forestry

Sir,

I read with incredulity the joint statement on indigenous forest policy attributed to three Ministers of the Crown, namely John Falloon, Simon Upton, and Denis Marshall. Their statement starts off by saying that "the Government is committed to maintaining and enhancing existing areas of indigenous forest in New Zealand". They go on to say that any future production from indigenous forests must be on a sustainable basis, and with this in mind, the tight operating prescriptions that Government has determined will apply in future, are:

***The rotation period within a sustained management plan must be 20% greater than the age of the fully mature forest to ensure that some mature forest is always maintained for wildlife habitat.**

What, pray, is the age of a fully mature forest in relation to our indigenous forests? Is it the average age of all species in the canopy, the age of the oldest

individual on each hectare, the average life-span of the dominant species, the life-span of the most numerous merchantable species?

Given that the age of a fully mature forest can be based on some arbitrary criteria, how can the age then be measured? Ring counting on most old indigenous trees is usually impossible unless a complete disc (without heartrot) is available, and an accuracy of $\pm 20\%$ would be quite normal.

If it is desired to always retain some fully mature (= natural?) forest for wildlife habitat, why not specify this? Why not state that 20% of any forest area shall be reserved from logging, at least until the first-logged area has returned to its original state?

***In indigenous podocarp forest and virgin or substantially unmodified beech forest, harvesting can only be by single tree or small group harvesting with low impact techniques such as helicopter logging or use of chainsaw mills and wooden tramways.**

Most red and mountain beech forests are not in an all-aged steady-state condition, but instead suffer periodic catastrophes which result in waves of regeneration which are more or less even-aged over areas which can be up to several hectares in extent. The concept of virgin forest in this situation is thus obscure. Does virgin mean untouched by man or does it mean in a steady state? Likewise, does substantially unmodified mean modifications by humans alone, or by any natural agency? Should forest severely affected by pinhole or *Inglisia* be regarded as less unmodified than forest selectively logged for podocarps or sawlogs, for instance?

If single trees or small groups are harvested within beech forest, there is a high risk that pinhole borers will breed in the stumps and damaged trees, and later kill or damage surrounding trees. Average timber quality, already low in most beech forests because of pinhole, will be further depressed in future. Does this matter? Or should it be a requirement that all stumps and other potential breeding material be removed from the site or rendered unsuitable (how?) for pinhole?

The examples given of low impact logging imply that hauling logs along the ground does not qualify as low impact logging. Yet surely most of the logging done in European selection forests involves ground hauling, and this is low impact par excellence. The main reason for this is that there are long-established access tracks through the forest, and substantial new tracking is not involved, but the tracks had to be put in initially. Does the selective logging done by tractor at Pureora 30 years ago qualify as low-impact? Does the group logging

done by tractor at Whirinaki 10 years ago qualify? Would relogging these areas now by tractor, extracting just a few valuable logs, qualify?

***In already significantly modified (for example, previously logged, mined or fire-damaged) beech forests, coupe (clearing) size shall be determined on a case-by-case basis taking account of ecological values.**

Why should some form of coupe felling be allowed in significantly modified beech forest but not elsewhere? What is the rationale behind this requirement? Is it because of the high levels of pinhole borers in modified forest? Or is this forest considered to be of such less value to wildlife that coupe logging is permissible? Has this been verified by studies of the wildlife values of modified forest and the effects of coupe logging on wildlife?

***The rate of extraction of species of indigenous trees shall be less than the net gross increment.**

What is a net gross increment? Previous statements have referred to the net increment, but in an all-aged forest the average net increment is zero. So is this another way of saying that these forests can't be logged? Or does it mean that in years when there is little natural mortality, logging is permitted, but in years when natural mortality is high, some trees have to be restored?

If the Government is serious about its commitment to maintain and enhance existing areas of indigenous forest in New Zealand, then whether any future production is sustainable or not is a relatively unimportant issue. The main requirement is to ensure that the forests are regenerated, but this isn't even mentioned in the joint statement.

It is highly likely that far more privately owned indigenous forest will be lost in future because it has failed to regenerate, than would ever be lost from unsustainable logging. This is not to suggest that logging should be uncontrolled – only that there are a lot more important actions required if Government is serious in its commitment.

For a start, it could require all landowners to protect any indigenous forest on their land from all agencies that could jeopardise the future existence of that forest. In particular, domestic and feral stock would need to be excluded, wild animals and weeds would need to be controlled to the extent that adequate regeneration occurred and could develop to maturity, and adequate fire protection would be needed. Is the Government prepared to take the necessary action?

If Government wants to allow some harvesting of indigenous forest but also wants to ensure that some old forest is