

Cotton and sugar cane plantations established in developing countries during the last two centuries are good examples of this. Others saw plantations as monocultures lacking biological diversity.

These concerns were real. We realised that unless these issues were addressed there was no hope of the Conference accepting plantations as we saw them. In such an event the outcome of the Conference could have been far different and less productive. Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of UNCED, summed up the position well: "plantation forests, as described by New Zealand, are absolutely essential if we are to protect the natural forests: but if it is to be accepted by other countries we need to use a different term to describe them."

The role of the NZ Forest Industries Council in addressing the issue is commendable. The Council not only funded the production of a video on planted forests but also sent its own representative to attend the meetings. At the same time, the NZ Forest Owners' Association canvassed views on alternative terms. Although there was no complete agreement among members it was decided to use, for this purpose, the term **planted forests** instead of plantations. The video was shown to a large number of delegates at the 4th Precom in New York; a number of informal meetings were also held with delegates and NGOs to explain the role of planted forests and the history of forestry development in New Zealand.

This background work was very helpful in making many of the key delegates understand that planted forests are indeed an essential component of a durable solution to the problem of world deforestation and sustainable development. The results of these efforts were evident in that when the Forestry Principles came up for discussion towards the end of the New York Precom the role of planted forests was completely accepted. The Rio Summit endorsed it without any amendment.

The recognition of the role of planted forests is of immense importance for world forestry. The success of managing natural forests in a sustainable way depends essentially on the availability of an alternative source of wood.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW ZEALAND

The acceptance of the role of planted forests by the world community has major implications for New Zealand. Following are some of them:

1. It has laid the foundation for promoting radiata pine as a sustainably managed, environmentally favourable product.
2. It also has created the opportunity for New Zealand to utilise its forestry



This group at the UNCED Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro includes New Zealanders Philip Woolaston, Don Wije-Wardana, Beth Vaughan, Ken Shirley, John Adank, Simon Reeves, Hon. Rob Storey, Roger Blakeley, and Maori Queen Dame Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu.

expertise to help the developing countries establish planted forests. Our research capability and management experience are world recognised and the UNCED has created the market niche for them.

3. The third area of opportunity lies in education: New Zealand has developed in recent times modules for forestry education encompassing different levels of education and training.
4. The UNCED also agreed on the need for reduction and removal of tariff barriers and impediments to better market access for value added products. It may be some time before these provisions get incorporated, if at all, to GATT negotiations; but the acceptance by countries should strengthen our position in demanding tariff reductions, particularly in Japan and Korea.

CONCLUSION

5. The Rio Summit ended with the world community unanimously agreeing to a set of principles to govern the management of the world's forests and the Agenda 21 incorporating action for sustainable development for the rest of the century. Because of the need for unanimity, however, the final document had to be watered down.

But the significance of the Rio Summit is more in the coming together of both developed and developing countries and recognising the interrelationship between environment and development.

For New Zealand forestry the Conference had tremendous importance: for the first time the world community recognised the important role of planted forests as a means of protec-

ting the world's natural forests. This recognition is far reaching, for it gives us the opportunity to play a very important role in protecting the world environment while assisting sustainable development. It could also form the basis for the promotion of radiata pine as an environmentally friendly product. Additionally, it should also result in a growing market for New Zealand forestry technology and forestry educational services.

The UNCED outcome will also strengthen our hand in persuading countries such as Japan to lift tariffs on processed wood products. There is a lot that needs to be done. UNCED was the beginning; not the end.

New Zealand joins ITTO

In July Forestry Minister John Falloon announced New Zealand is to become a signatory to the International Tropical Timber Agreement.

"Although New Zealand is only a very minor importer of tropical timber, by joining the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) we can help contribute to work aimed at sustainable use of the resource," he said.

Membership documentation would be lodged with the United Nations in New York in the near future, Mr Falloon said.

The recent Earth Summit in Brazil highlighted the need for sustainable management of the world's forests, and ITTO has a key role in developing internationally acceptable ways of achieving this.

"The organisation provides a unique forum for constructive dialogue between

producing and consuming countries, aimed at securing a well-conducted and environmentally sound timber trade through cooperation," he said.

ITTO had recently issued guidelines for establishing the tropical timber trade on a sustainable basis by the year 2000, with a mechanism for consuming countries to assist producers to meet this target.

"Membership of the organisation also provides a chance for New Zealand's experience and technology in both conservation and production forestry to contribute toward achievement of the global goal," said the Minister.

ITTO was established in 1983 to promote trade in tropical timber, through research and development and improved market intelligence.

"Since 1983 the rate of tropical deforestation has risen sharply and is now estimated at 19 million hectares a year.

"As a result, ITTO has swung behind development of national policies for sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources, and maintenance of the ecological balance," said Mr Falloon.

Forestry honour for NZIF member

Dr Dennis Richardson is the first New Zealander to be awarded honorary membership of the Society of American Forestry.

The Society is the largest forestry society in the world. Usually one honorary membership is awarded a year to a forester outside the United States, Canada or Mexico.

A New Zealander has never been selected before and no memberships were awarded last year.

Dr Richardson said he found out his name had been put forward for consideration about two years ago.

"I had forgotten about it until I received the letter the other day."

His Specialty

Dr Richardson said most of his work is done overseas as he specialises in tropical forestry. He has written two books on forestry in China and recently gave lectures in North America on China.

The official presentation will be held in Virginia at the end of October. Dr Richardson said he would most probably attend as it was such an honour and he was "chuffed".

(See Page 3, Waiting for Waitangi.)

Forest products review

Dr Margriet Theron*

Forest products is a key industry, supplying the country with virtually all its timber requirements and currently earning over \$1.5 billion yearly in overseas exchange. A review of the research that is being undertaken in the sector says that despite New Zealand's impressive advantages in forestry, forest industries still face a major challenge in actually realising the sector's full potential as a key New Zealand industry.

An independent review report just released by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology says that the forestry sector stands at a crossroad between becoming a supplier of lower-value forest commodities such as logs and sawn lumber, or becoming a significant player in the international market for higher-valued softwood products.

Ministry of Research, Science and Technology Chief Executive Dr Basil Walker said that over the next decade the forestry sector had the potential to increase its annual foreign exchange earnings to over \$3 billion.

"The sector has a major challenge ahead to achieve its full potential. An essential component in the mix required to achieve this is a substantial and focused research effort by both the Government and industry," said Dr Walker.

The review facilitated by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, covers all New Zealand's government-funded forest products research. It includes new and improved processing and quality management methods and wood and paper products.

The report states that around \$31 million is spent each year on research in the forestry sector. Of this, approximately \$16 million is spent on plantation forestry research and \$15 million on forest products research. Of the \$15 million spent on forest products research, around \$7.5 million is spent by commercial firms and \$7.5 million is funded from the Government's public good science fund.

The report states that a recent strategy report by the Forest Industries Council has recognised the two most important issues facing New Zealand's forest industries:

- 1 The need for an industry strategy and associated action programme involving the cooperation of all par-

ticipants working for the common good of the whole sector and

- 2 The need for the whole forestry sector to recognise and support fully the pivotal role of the sawmilling industry. While various alternative development paths are recognised for the sector, the greatest impediment to collective industry growth is seen to be the lack of a strong, vibrant, innovative, internationally focused sawmilling industry.

The review team also noted that the New Zealand Forestry Research Institute (formerly the Forest Research Institute) is an internationally recognised centre of excellence for forestry and forest products research. It says that the various research organisations and the universities also have considerable forest products research capabilities and it is imperative that close links are maintained between scientists and engineers at the Institute and those in other organisations.

The report also notes that there is a persuasive argument for a major injection of funds into forest products research over the next decade and for this additional research to focus, to a large extent, on the solid wood industry. It says that this will require a commitment by both Government and industry to bolster the effort across the whole spectrum, from fundamental studies into wood properties to product development and marketing research.

The members of the review team were: Barry Ashwin, Technical Director, Fletcher Challenge Ltd; Dr Frank Beall, Professor and Director, Forest Products Laboratory, University of California at Berkeley; Dr David Bryant, General Manager, Scientific Services, Carter Holt Harvey; Dr Gordon Leary, Director, DSIR Chemistry; Mr John Turner, Director, Forestry Industry Services Ltd, Auckland.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- Sawmills provide the residues vital to the maintenance of competitive fibre-based forestry industries, and consequently, a vibrant and internationally focused sawmilling industry is pivotal to the future competitiveness of the whole forestry sector. Achieving this will require investment, and a research effort focusing on the needs of this industry and involving close collaboration between Government and industry.

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