

and we need them, but we must never forget that if their ancient wisdom had been heeded in the past the money would have gone into more commercially correct activities elsewhere and we probably would not now have a plantation forest resource; or if we did, it would be untended and aimed resolutely at the bottom of the market.

The expansion of interest in forestry syndicates pushes up the area planted outside the corporate fold but adds even less to the evolution of ideas. Forestry as an investment is the nearest thing we have to a cast-iron superannuation scheme, but the members of syndicates want a guarantee of their money in 30 years' time, not a glorious adventure into uncharted seas – which they can get readily enough in the conventional marketplace.

And over the whole thing lies the fact that land barons, whether corporate or individual, have never been popular in New Zealand.

So how do we spread forest ownership? In fact it is probably happening without any need for help as more and more farmers do seem to be realising that trees are a respectable crop, and that if they had planted more, earlier, fewer of them might have gone down the plughole in hard times. The challenge will be to turn them from farm foresters to forest farmers, as they would be, for example, in Scandinavia.

This has been suggested before, by Neil Barr I think, and picked up by some Maori incorporations, but the mechanisms which would have started it on its way for the pakeha farmer are now gone, untested. New ways have to be found, and most of course will begin with radiata pine. Nothing wrong with that, so long as there is exploration of silvicultural opportunities and a share of effort spent on other species. The revolutionary move, from grass back to trees, has been made; from now on it is evolution we need.

There are two professional bodies in the field to assist – the Farm Forestry Association and the Institute of Forestry, but so far they do not seem to have worked well together, regarding each other respectively as hobbyists or electronic modellers intent on knowing more and more about less and less.

Both attitudes have an element of truth in them, but the fact remains that both organisations have qualities that are needed, though not necessarily as now under separate umbrellas. The expansion of farm forestry needs the conventional skills of professional foresters working as consultants, and forest farmers will need that help more in the future when they get into cooperative marketing organisations, as they surely will.

But I doubt very much that these professional skills will be of much help in the move on from radiata. For one thing, consultants service a demand and they should not, by definition, lead, unless, like a horse in a cart, they are merely in front. They operate best when working to very clear terms of reference, to explore exactly what the client specifies he wants done. Left to themselves they will only make money vanish like snow in summer.

The problem is that we are on uncharted ground here. Providing for the needs of future generations is central to the concept of sustainable forestry, yet the needs of future generations are not known, so how do we know what sort of forest to aim at? What numbers can we pop into the spreadsheet?

The conventional economist's answer to that of course would be to head off difficult questions by popping in a high rate of interest, thus aborting the exercise, and then to wander off to other pastures, remembering only that our two original forestry corporates began their lives without the need for any such justification. One began as an investment scam and the other started on the back of a long-term peppercorn stumpage, yet both would be considered a success.

This is the field where farm foresters generally hold the ring, through experience and intuition, and they, helped by the Forest Research Institute, will probably be the ones who mark out the paths away from convention for others to follow.

But in the end the two groups are complementary, and there should be closer contact between them, though I am not sure now of the overwhelming advantage of marriage. I still feel that overall the advantage lies with the Institute, if it cares to take up the opportunity to lead forestry in new directions, but if in the end its members prefer the comforts of number crunching for the corporates, then so be it; the Farm Forestry Association will probably fill the gap, and those professional foresters more attuned by temperament to variety will be there too.

John Purey-Cust

The bankrupting of science

Sir,

I concur with the observations of H.A.I. Madgwick (NZ Forestry, February '93) and echo his concern at the loss of some of the NZFRI's most able staff. But it is the wider view of changes to science in New Zealand which gives me even greater concern. The loss of staff from

other CRIs and research organisations through resignations and redundancies is, in many instances, even greater than at NZFRI.

The New Zealand science community is a small one with a high degree of interdependency; changes in one group can drastically affect the ability of others to carry out effective research. A good example is the Forest Health Group at NZFRI, which supports a number of entomological research programmes, all to some degree dependent on the fundamental taxonomic research of Landcare's Insect Taxonomy Group. These taxonomists, and the associated National Arthropod Collection, provide the foundation for entomological research in this country. The recent science 'reforms' have seen the group decimated by redundancies and retirements, showing an appalling ignorance by those responsible of the fundamental role of taxonomy in the natural sciences. This lack of appreciation for research that underpins the science that is supposed to drive this country into the 21st Century, could well anchor us in the 20th. Forest entomologists, like most other science groups, draw the solutions for today's problems from the fundamental knowledge and understanding generated by taxonomists, physiologists, ecologists and many others whose work is in turn underpinned by such resources as the National Arthropod Collection. Such collections, databases and fundamental research should be nurtured, added to, and valued as national resources, and in some cases as national treasures.

It is a sad fact that the mindless excesses of egocentric politicians, corporate junkies and flash Harrys of today will be paid for by the scientific community, and ultimately the people of New Zealand, tomorrow. The price will be extracted through poor science, poor decisions, and an inability to grapple with increasingly complex scientific issues which affect the prosperity and quality of life of all New Zealanders.

Gordon Hosking

Nothofagus seed request

Sir,

I have received correspondence from Andrew Jackson, of Kew Gardens, requesting seed of different provenances of New Zealand *Nothofagus* species and any notable hybrids.

If readers are able to aid him with seed collection it would be appreciated if data