

age. It was, I was assured, referred to as "the time of the wheel barrow" in memory of the vehicle in which the few remaining male dotards were wheeled round the country to do their duty if they could.

Now this story may well have been a little elaborated for my benefit, but I have heard the general synopsis elsewhere sufficiently often to believe it. Such a situation of second growth certainly does not condone exploitative practice, but neither does it support Dr Thies' pre-lapsian ramblings and implication of a primeval paradise lost.

A rather similar attitude prevails in Britain where the natural forest has been so long destroyed that treelessness is taken in many areas as the natural state. The result is bizarre: conservation groups and learned societies, confusing cultural values with ecological values, stand like St George, sword in hand to repel the forces of development, only to be assaulted from the rear by the virgin Nature whom they claim to defend.

For as the processes of biological degradation which formed most moorland and heathland are checked, and burning and over-grazing become less common, so the forest surges forth. But many of these degraded sites, mistakenly seen as in natural equilibrium, have been declared "sites of special scientific interest" where changes of the order which nature now requires may not be tolerated. So a literature has grown up on "maintaining infertility", on control of over-exuberant hardwood regrowth by "scrub bashing" (over-grazing by cattle), and burning.

The general antipathy towards trees (or perhaps more correctly a general confusion over the natural state of the landscape) lies deep. In their national forest policy of a year or two back the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds declared Britain's timber deficit an irrelevant argument in the cause of tree-planting because the import share from rain forest is small.

Yet Britain imports per capita three times as much as the Japanese and as such cannot help being a significant contributor to world deforestation.

Perhaps the whole thing was best expressed by Simon Jenkins in *The Times* (October 23, 1993) when he expressed his opinion of fox-hunting by setting it alongside afforestation and child abuse.

Now the point of all this is quite simple: just how relevant to us (or to anything except local prejudice) are such opinions? Are they expressions of universal truth, urban isolation or an excess of righteousness where talking and abstraction rather than listening and looking hold the floor?

Are the people who hold these views

role models for us, heralds of the wrath to come, or have they simply eaten too many beans? Are they, to us in our search for truth, just irrelevant?

I think they are largely irrelevant: the problem with all this global village stuff is that it starts with the unadmitted assumption that someone else carries the can as aware and caring richer societies reform their ways. Inevitably the bearers of that burden live in the third world. The problem is that the global village is upstairs/downstairs and its proponents live upstairs.

H.G. Wells describes it in "The Time Machine" when his time traveller lands in a future society where the beautiful people lead elegant lives in the sun only to be dragged out at night by the deprived and ape-like people who toil for them under-

ground. They end up in the pot. Is that sustainability? I suppose it is, of a kind, but is it Dr Thies' vision?

We have come a long way very fast. We have in fact done a great deal better than most in the field of forestry – disagree? Well, who has done better?

Are we not confident enough to seek out those countries, learn what we can from them and then formulate our own path towards sustainable forest management?

Away with colonial cringe!

John Purey-Cust

The Editor humbly requests that any executions be performed with a minimum of pain and mess – Ed.

'Trees are good, Trees work'

Laurie McDowall*

The establishment of exotic forest in New Zealand has been a brilliant technical success. In other respects it has been a major failure. This conclusion is based partly on hindsight but also reflects some long-held misgivings about our approach to forestry in New Zealand.

Long ago the late Sir Reginald Smythe said that his company (NZFP) should stick to trees. In fact he was saying: "Stay with the core business and do it better." My company and others in the sector did not follow this advice. In answer to a question, Reg Smythe also said that "planting trees is an act of faith". Again he was saying something that he, and others, instinctively knew to be correct but which could not be supported by a logical analysis of the investment economics involved. Reg Smythe's "act of faith" comment was made long before we knew anything about the depletion of tropical forests, before acid rain in the northern hemisphere, before the advent of ozone layer holes and the theory of the greenhouse effect. These subsequent events tend to justify his intuitive conviction about planting trees.

If you saw the movie "Wall Street" you may recall the remarks of Gordon Gecko as he addressed the stockholders of a pulp and paper company in a takeover situation. He said "greed is good, greed works". That may be so, but I found myself, when thinking about forests, paraphrasing Mr Gecko and saying "trees are

good, trees work". Few people would disagree. But if you want a forest you must plant it. Nature gave the world forests for nothing but that was a "one off" deal and won't be repeated. All sorts of things have made it possible for us to plant exotic forests; technically our forests are a great achievement and we are very fortunate to have them.

Where we have failed is in our conception of forests as part of our economy; what the real need for them would be, and in our conception of their appropriate size.

When Britain joined the EC we were given a clear signal that our economy was going to change in a fundamental way. Loss of the lucrative British markets reduced our overseas income and made it impossible to protect our inefficient secondary industry any longer. This in turn destroyed the so-called full employment situation. In the 20 years since that time we have done little about our situation. Farm exports still provide our hard currency. We survive by being price takers for commodities in over supply and by successive devaluations which mostly increase overseas debt, increase on-shore costs and over capitalises the investment in farming land, thus perpetuating the cycle.

We have not developed a response to these problems. We are 20 years down the track and we don't have an effective forest policy that could turn things around.

We have no real concept of the optimum size of our forests and how they might be used to change our basic econ-

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omy. We have not developed a way to fund the planting and care of major forests and we have no entrenched policies that encompass the time horizons necessary for forestry development. We have confused the nature of forest funding by trying to use inappropriate investment criteria, and we have (particularly since 1972) failed to establish priorities for land use.

These have been our failures. How incredible it is, that because of an unforeseen boom in export log prices our domestic saw log supply is under pressure and there is a possible shortage of wood fibre for processing. The reason for this is that as a nation we have not been serious about planting forests. In the present situation we have a risk that our forests will be overcut. We could be left with a mess in our forests when the Japanese decide they are paying too much for wood.

Some of our major and debt-ridden corporates may not be thinking beyond the next financial year balance date. The 1993 log price spike situation was nothing more than an unseemly lolly scramble and the results could have been serious for our

mature forests. After 60 years of modern forestry we have come to be spot suppliers in a spot market. We are simply price takers and looking more like the NZ Dairy Board every day. Our forests are too small for us to be significant players. Our lack of effective long-term plans and philosophies leaves us still in the same position we were 20 years ago. If we overcut again this time we will have another 20 years to deplore the lack of a national forest policy.

There is not time to develop the proposal of doubling or trebling our forests. Like many of you I have seen exotic forests in other countries, in particular, pines and *Eucalyptus*. I have seen no significant example of a forest established without the assistance of funding directly or indirectly by Central Government.

We have to be bold surely. If we sort out some of our land-use inhibitions we could establish vast forests in the right places. Why should Government not fund a 60-year forestry programme, contracting out the services required? This is the only way the barrier posed by conventional economic criteria can be overcome. Cross

subsidies from other government expenditure (e.g. Welfare) might be utilised. A world-scale forest established with public money means that future taxpayers receive the benefits of ownership. Surely this is an elegant solution to the philosophical objections to such a course, and the trees will be planted.

Why can we not have a forest policy aimed initially at a sustained yield of 40 million m³? A clever forest policy would fund the first rotation, sell mature unprocessed wood to fund the second rotation and finance the capital expenditure required for "added-value" processing at an appropriate level.

Gordon Gecko and Reg Smythe were both correct. Trees are good, trees work. If you want trees you won't get them in vast volumes by orthodox financing. If we are not to rely upon future lolly scrambles we need a long-term forest policy that transcends Governments and produces real market power. Why should we not have say 35% of our GDP based on forests?

And why have we wasted the last 20 years literally doing nothing about it?

Which road to take? Enforced regulations or voluntary compliance? A view from the Southeast, USA

Andrew W. Ezell*

In the Southeastern United States, forest land managers have arrived at a critical crossroads. The management activities of the future will be conducted in such a manner as to reduce and/or eliminate water pollution. There are US federal and state laws that require maintenance of water quality, and pressure from active "preservationist" groups is increasing.

The concept of clean water is fully supported by the forest land owners and managers in the region. The "end" is not in question; it is the "means" that is focussing the minds. Of major concern to this group is the concept of enforced regulations as opposed to voluntary compliance.

To promote the voluntary solution and avoid the prospect of enforcement, Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been formulated as guidelines to control non-point source water pollution originating

from forest activities. Currently, less than five per cent of all water pollution in the Southeast results from forestry operations, but the ultimate goal is zero pollution.

Options

In reviewing this situation, one cannot help but think of the classic poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. Forestry management is poised at a point of divergence, with two distinct options, and a choice must be made: in Frost's language, one well worn (the status quo), the other overgrown from lack of use. Unlike the traveller in Frost's poem, foresters know where both roads lead, and to most observers, the choice should be quite easy.

If we travel down the "old and well-worn trail", the first part of the journey will be much the same as our prevailing conditions. However, conditions will change; soon, and drastically, and the journey risks becoming a highly regulated undertaking, as is occurring in the Pacific Northwest. We might be told where to travel, when to travel, and how we may

proceed. In many cases, it is quite probable that travel may even be stopped. There are residents along that way who do not like forest managers (as a group) and our journey will meet with an uncomfortable or even hostile reception.

Hopefully, the industry will proceed like the traveller in Frost's poem and take "the one less travelled by" of voluntary compliance. Down this less-used way will be new experiences and different ways of travel. We may find the route difficult and cumbersome at first, and we undoubtedly shall have to be adaptable and make changes: such is normally the case with new and different modes of activity. However, this "means" is both more flexible and more pleasant.

For forest managers in the Southeast, our choice is to either adopt and implement Best Management Practices or not. Incorporating these guidelines into our management strategies should result in better maintenance of site productivity, less negative impact on water quality, reduced social opposition to managing

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