

Green Lake's redwoods

Sir,

I was pleased to read Neil Cooper's (Feb. 94) response to my suggestions in NZ Forestry concerning redwood in New Zealand. His comment that I had failed to mention the Green Lake's redwoods was well taken. I had heard of this plantation, but had not visited it. So, upon my recent return to New Zealand, that is one of the first things I did.

The redwoods in this plantation, now about 80 years old, are mostly between the access road and the western shore of Green Lake, with some up a creek bottom beyond the picnic area. In this latter area, they are interplanted with and adjacent to Douglas firs, planted in 1912 according to the information sign on the trail. The redwoods were either planted at the same time, or about then.

The form and size of the redwoods, both absolutely and relative to the Douglas firs (and one apparently volunteer *radiata* pine), are instructive, although not surprising to this California forester. Both the redwoods and the Douglas firs are still healthy and continuing height growth in 1994.

I join Neil Cooper in admiring this redwood plantation, and recommend that folks interested in redwood in New Zealand take the opportunity to visit it when in or near Rotorua. It can be reached by driving toward Lake Taupo on State Highway 5, and taking the Green Lake exit to the left, about eight kilometres after leaving Rotorua. One enters the redwoods after about 2 km, shortly before reaching the picnic grounds above the lake.

Bill Libby
Ohope

Sustainability

Sir,

Recently in Britain, every time I touched anything made of wood, disintegrated or solid, I found a label saying either "recycled" or "from sustainable forests". From toilet paper to kitset stuff in the D.I.Y. shop I found it, and what if the manufacturers are discreet about what constitutes the terms – sometimes they will invite you to write for more information, but alas I never have.

In this atmosphere there is a clear place for forest products whose sustainability can be justified without prevarication and weasel words, a clear place for New Zealand forest products. But for success we need a national image.

We do this for kiwifruit and apples, labelling each fruit individually, every one, so it should be a simple matter to do it for our forest products.

Leaping coloured animals may distinguish one company from another, but could they not at least all carry a fern leaf?

John Purey-Cust

How public views plantation forestry

Sir,

I was saddened to read the O'Neil, Thomson, Poole triunity attack on Craig Potton's address (NZ Forestry, August 1994). Our struggle towards a more rational and sustainable use of this country's limited resources will not be advanced by a defence of the past, or by revisiting the same old arrogance that surely sank the Forest Service. Like it or not, the public of New Zealand, and I would be surprised if the Pottons and McSweeneys don't represent a goodly proportion of them, demand involvement in decisions affecting the management of our natural resources, and expect managers of public land to be responsive to their wishes. It seems churlish, to say the least, to attack what was essentially a broadly philosophical admission that the views of the wider community have changed, even within the conservation movement, in recognising the place of plantation forestry as an important land-use option, and one that has already benefited the conservation of our indigenous estate.

I too mourned the passing of the Forest Service, and the undeserved attacks that were made upon it, but in the management of our indigenous forests it was neither blameless nor, some would say, responsible. But most of all it showed a lack of responsiveness and an unwillingness to listen, bred of a professional arrogance towards the non-Forest Service community, and in particular the conservation movement.

I applaud Craig Potton's address and in general agree with the issues he identifies as still to be resolved. I deplore any suggestion that some spurious definition of 'professionalism' be used to purge NZ Forestry of views which may not be met by universal acclaim.

Gordon Hosking

Indigenous plantations

Sir,

"The need for New Zealand to develop industries based on its forest resources ... must be balanced by the equally compelling desire to preserve the environmental values of our forested lands." With these words A.P. Thomson, Director General of the Forest Service, in 1971, introduced his report "Utilisation of South Island Beech Forests".

Craig Potton's paper "A Public Perception of Plantation Forestry", and the responses it has provoked from the triunity of Fellows (NZ Forestry, November 1994), indicate that almost a quarter of a century later any meeting of minds on what can be agreed as representing this balance is as far away as ever.

It is claimed that for decades the Forest Service had been the undisputed leader of indigenous forest conservation in New Zealand. This, of course, is how it should be; do not foresters proclaim an ethic of stewardship, and has not professional education and training conditioned them to practise the sustained management of forest ecosystems?

In the face, however, of historical apathy from the general public, national policies and incentives to foster agriculture at the expense of forestry, and politicians determined for electoral advantage to promote short-term development rather than long-term sustainable options, it is not very surprising that the Forest Service largely failed in its efforts to halt the deliberate destruction of the greater part of the manageable indigenous resource.

Where were the conservationists then? It is asked. Certainly, it was only at about the time of the Forestry Development Conference in 1969 that an upsurge of interest in conservation began to be taken by the public at large. But, in the end, it was public opinion and not the Forest Service which succeeded in halting the destruction, although by then it was past the eleventh hour.

Could it have been a different story had the Institute in earlier years, by education and explaining the importance of the indigenous resource, tried to get the public on its side to help improve the chances of influencing the politicians? In 1971, for instance, the public still had no access to the working plans of State forests, and those who would try to show an interest were positively discouraged from knowing too much – on the assumption presumably that they might ask inconvenient questions of the Forest Service rather than the politicians.

As a result, almost by default, the perception gained ground that the Forest Ser-

vice was an enthusiastic converter rather than conservator of indigenous forest, and this perception was easily worked on by certain leaders of the conservation movement.

Clearly, in 1995, the education of the nation's political masters and of the public at large, as to the full range of values and opportunities still provided by the surviving indigenous forest, is as relevant as ever. Hopefully, the report to Council of the Working Groups reviewing the policy of the Institute on indigenous forests will have something positive to suggest in this respect.

I was surprised not to find in the responses of the triunity to Craig Potton any reference to the views expressed on the beech utilisation proposals by either the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) or the New Zealand Ecological Society.

The NCC was a well respected body – at that time under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Falloy which had been established by Act of Parliament in 1962. It provided as near an unbiased viewpoint on the issues as the Government was likely to obtain from any source. The NZ Ecological Society itself, of course, numbered many Government scientists amongst its membership.

Both bodies were greatly exercised by what they believed were insufficient consideration given to the “intrinsic values of forest ecosystems” (as defined by Chris Perley, Editorial, NZ Forestry, November 1994). For example, they found a lack of research into the likely ecological effects of such a large programme of conversion and exotic enrichment under West Coast soil and climatic conditions; they regretted imprecision in the description of the nature of the forests to be converted or enriched (was it indeed only poor beech or did it also include podocarp stands?); they wondered at what density of enrichment beech management became exotic conversion; they criticised the degree of eco-

logical diversity retained in the proposed biological reserves, which seemed to be determined rather by the commercial status of the forest land.

The NCC concluded that to go ahead with the Westland scheme with such a lack of information would be “ecologically, aesthetically and economically unwise”. Of course, the views of the NCC and of the Ecological Society are as contestable as any other. But their arguments were reasoned and not emotional. The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and the Beech Forest Action Committee were not the only bodies who were highly critical of the beech forest utilisation proposals, at least as far as those for the West Coast if not for Southland were concerned.

It will never again be politically acceptable to propose a project which, to be of economically viable size, would have to rely on a supplementary exotic resource created by clearfelling existing beech forest. However, as Chris Perley observes (in the Editorial referred to above): “We live in a world of scarce and diminishing resources, with a rapidly expanding population ... True ‘conservation’, meaning use in perpetuity, is our only hope in the long run”. Can preservation itself in these circumstances be actually sustainable?

Sooner or later Priestley Thomson's balance will have to be found. Yes, wide debate is what is wanted!

Eric Bennett

Rosoman comment in this issue

Sir,

Rosoman's summary of *The Plantation Effect* published in this issue (Ecoforestry – towards a responsible plantation industry) appears to present a somewhat

more reasonable and balanced viewpoint than the original *The Plantation Effect*. This might simply arise because much of the hardcore details contained in *The Plantation Effect* could not be included in the summary.

On the matter of my comments on *The Plantation Effect* selectively ignoring toxic pollution issues, I did so for a good reason. In general terms, I believed that *The Plantation Effect* was not very wide of the mark in its treatment of the toxic pollution issues and, as stated in the introduction to my comments, I intended to focus only on those areas where research evidence and accumulated knowledge and Rosoman's views were at odds.

Furthermore, there are industry and research people with very good knowledge about the extent and seriousness of past and present wood processing impacts on water and soil pollution and the forest industry's response to concerns about toxic pollution, who are in a much better position to comment on this issue than I.

Colin O'Loughlin

Pining for pine

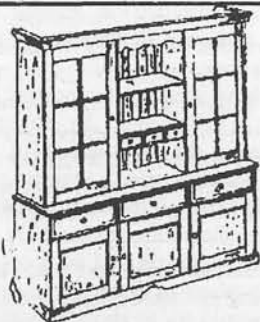
Sir,

Things have changed in Britain – 30 years ago the discerning householder was wooed with oak, solid oak for the discriminating who despised disintegrated wood disguised under a plastic photograph.

But as the advertisement shows (but one of many) the cry is now for pine, quality pine, ancient pine. The trouble is when you get it, characterless, splintery, full of small dead knots, close-ringed and easy to split.

Radiata would win hands down, but it isn't there.

John Purey-Cust



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