vice was an enthusiastic converter rather than conserver 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 ecological 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