

LETTERS

P. contorta as an alternative

Sir,

In the article on alternative species (NZ Forestry 40(2)) I note the following statement: *Pinus contorta* "must be a leading contender" as a contingency species to replace radiata pine "where out-of-season frosts are a significant hazard".

I have not come across any properly-conducted experiments to substantiate this assertion. Is it an example of "it stands-to-reason" folklore?

The means for establishing radiata pine on the highest frost flats in Kaingaroa Forest were demonstrated by the FRI Forest Establishment section over 20 years ago. As a component of these trials, radiata pine, muricata pine and *P. contorta* were compared. It caused a good deal of surprise to find that *P. contorta* were significantly damaged by a frost in early December. I believe the temperature was -8°C. Radiata pine withstood this temperature rather well.

C.G.R. Chavasse

Sustainability of planted forests

Sir,

I was interested to read the report by A.G.D. White (NZF, Aug. 95 p.41) that Mr Rosoman "pleaded journalistic licence for overstating his case in order to capture the attention of the public" and I also agree with him that Colin O'Loughlin's reply (NZF, Feb. 95) was too gentlemanly.

Greenpeace deals in half truths and to call it "journalistic licence" is a cop out. In the school of irreverent logic a half truth is by definition a half lie. If we refer to the Fair Trading Legislation, half truths are lies and are regarded as deliberate attempts to mislead.

The attacks by Greenpeace and similar organisations are something that should not be dismissed lightly. They should be rebutted strongly by foresters and forest owners at every opportunity.

Rosoman (NZF, Feb. 95 p. 10) lumps the wood utilisation industries with "plantation forestry". No matter what species of trees that are grown, including indigenous species, there will be a utilisation industry somewhere and these should be considered separately from "plantation forestry".

These industries are big enough to fight their own battles.

The arguments on biodiversity ignore the effects that have been made over the last 100 years to find as many species as possible that could be grown for timber in New Zealand and, in particular in the last 50 years, to find species that could take the place of *P. radiata*, should that species strike trouble. The now most unjustly maligned NZ Forest Service planted many acres of other conifers and broadleaf species. Farm foresters have tried even wider ranges of species; I myself have been involved in big expenditures investigating the use of eucalypt spp., acacia spp., *Pinus attenuata* hybrids, hemlock and some native species including *Phormium tenax*.

Greenpeace prefers to make out that forest owners have done nothing in this way. They have put forward "ecoforestry solutions for a responsible plantation industry" which includes "the diversification of species that are being planted, including natives". This could only be done by the investment of public funds at the time when the Department of Conservation has difficulty getting sufficient allocated to it for its present works. Wasn't the chief reason for axing the Forest Service that it was uneconomic?

New Zealand forestry is of a very high standard. The moves that are being made to impose monitoring and certification by a "quasi" body will lead to less forest being planted. This would be undesirable for both the country's economic well-being and as a means of bringing about an "ecoforestry solution".

The Institute should stay well clear of all commitments to bodies with high-sounding names and stick with the proven ones such as Farm Forestry, Royal Society, Royal Forest and Bird and Federated Mountain Clubs, and avoid all those that have political (and often hidden) agendas. These can be too easily infiltrated by people with ulterior motives. The Institute must stay a professional body and not be dragged into quasi-political associations.

J.E. Henry

Native bush and biodiversity

Sir,

Firstly, I would like to commend the New Zealand Forestry magazine editorial board for welcoming open debate of issues in the columns of the magazine. It is a strength that few resource management or conservation magazines can match.

In the August 1995 issue of NZ

Forestry, Graeme Jespersen of Far North Afforestation claims they have never cleared "... what any reasonable person would recognise as New Zealand native bush or forest." Mr Jespersen conveniently failed to define what he refers to as native forest and what he refers to as scrub. I have visited the area near Waitahue twice, and the photo in the May NZ Forestry shows an aerial view of the extent of the clearance. It is a sight reminiscent of the bad old days of forest crushing that most plantation managers now cringe at. It was not young manuka/kanuka regeneration but mixed broadleaf/podocarps/tall kanuka/manuka. If this is not forest, then Aotearoa's forest cover has just taken a big dive.

The NZ Forest Accord definition of native forest is as quoted by Mr Jespersen, and therefore does include closed-canopy kanuka stands and emergent podocarp areas. It strikes me as ironic that plantation planters are willing to call two-year-old, one-metre-high pine trees a forest but object to considerably older and taller native trees being called a forest. The Accord also gives recognition to habitat of threatened native species such as kiwi. The Waitahue block crushed by Far North Afforestation included kiwi habitat.

Furthermore, Mr Jespersen should read my May letter again. I never claimed that FNA was a signatory of the Accord. Indeed, that FNA is not a signatory is the main problem. And what nonsense for him to suggest that adherence to the Forest Accord would cause "... the national economy to be devastated ...". Then in the next sentence he requests "... we must start talking common sense."

It is commendable that Kohntrol have 1012% of the areas they manage in native vegetation, but crushing 18 ha mixed podocarp/kanuka regeneration to marginally raise the IRR and therefore investor attractiveness is not commendable. The green market of the future, where selling wood products from land cleared on native forest will be difficult, will undoubtedly expose the short-sighted "poor advice" by any forest consultant who recommends this practice. It was not only the "green" groups that signed the NZ Forest Accord but most of the plantation growers in the country. I wait with interest to see if the NZ Institute of Forestry will ratify the Accord.

I welcome the raising of the biodiversity issues on the central plateau by J.E. Henry in the May issue of NZ Forestry. My understanding of the central plateau is that ecologically it was in a successional shrubland phase on the way to indigenous forest. Recent raw pumice layers generally overlay previously developed forest soils. The pumice areas were on their way to