

Department of Conservation is in the business of forestry – as pointed out by Dave Field in his letter in this issue.)

Jumping out of the Lifeboat

Farmers are becoming more and more aware that land needs to be considered in a broader concept than just the producer of commercial crops. Dr Morgan Williams reported on an international study tour to examine sustainable agricultural initiatives last year. In his report he mentioned the growing international concept that farmers have to view their land as being part of a wider environment, by which it is influenced, and which it, in turn, influences.

Farms produce multiple outputs, some good, some bad. They too must eventually embrace concepts of multiple use. The indications are that NZ farmers are part of a trend, a paradigm shift, that is embodied by such initiatives as the Resource Management Act and the Ministry of Agriculture's sustainable agriculture focus.

Currently, foresters may feel themselves subject to closer, and, relative to the environmental effects forests produce, unfair criticism when compared to our

land-use cousins. But that won't last. It may not be that the public completely turns its eyes away from forestry, but it is inevitable that it will increase its focus on agriculture.

To position our planted forests as 'crops' is to attempt to stake the ground on which agriculture is already leaving. It is like jumping from a rocking boat to swim with the white pointers.

Conclusion

The forestry industry has two options.

On the one hand, it can try to convince the public that its planted forests are crops, more analogous to a paddock of arable wheat than to an indigenous forest stand.

Alternatively, it can explain that planted forests represent an ecological whole, albeit usually, but not in every case, with the prime objective of producing a commercial timber harvest.

In the latter case, the timber, or fungi, or culled deer, may be viewed as a crop, but that remains a part of the integrated whole, and cannot be managed in isolation from that whole.

The former 'crop' option provides a

solution that is an overly simplistic, defensive, reactionary response, with potential only in the short term. It doesn't acknowledge that we may have problems, and as such represents the arrogant self-belief that we were, sometimes justifiably, accused of in the past. It doesn't provide an easy mechanism for identifying potential problems, or their solutions.

The industry needs a solution that is positive, proactive, and has integrity in the long term. The latter option of recognising our planted forests as integrated systems producing multiple, generally beneficial outputs provides such a solution. It allows foresters to manage with an openness to any problems we may have, and to continue to find workable management solutions to those problems.

Forests, whether 'planted' or 'natural', are systems. They may produce 'crops' but cannot be conceptualised as 'crops'. These are positive statements. They are proactive. They represent a long-term solution. They are the truth.

Chris Perley

The privatisation of State forests

The campaign of Lindsay Poole, Mick O'Neill and myself against the selling of Central North Island State Forests has continued for some months, though not with any great success. We have written several times to the Minister of Finance, Mr Birch, and got delayed replies to each letter. He has not accepted our repeated offers to talk. His replies have been bland and at first relatively uninformative, mainly just repeating his originally published reasons for selling.

He has, however, apparently accepted one of our major points – that there would be no need for the Forestry Corporation to raise money from the Government if it itself went into more local processing. And he has given us a few more facts. He has not told us, though, how much wood is for sale, and neither when it would become available, nor what terms and conditions the sales would have. We have not been told what specific arrangements have been made to guarantee the continuing sales to local sawmills or to guarantee some restriction on the massive log export trade. We do not know the terms and conditions of the revised Corporation – Tasman sale, although we assume they must be more favourable than they were. Finally, we do not know how the Maori claims for part ownership of the land have been resolved.

Our discussions have been mainly with

Mr Birch's adviser on this matter, Mr Paul Carpinter, Assistant Secretary of Treasury. He has had with him Dr John Valentine of the Ministry of Forestry and other officers either of Treasury or the Minister's office. We have been listened to courteously and at some length but we never felt we were making much progress. Mr Carpinter was adamant that he was putting a Government and not a Treasury view, but we were left with the impression that Treasury was, philosophically, completely against State ownership of production forests on the grounds that the private sector could manage them much better.

We also had statements published in *The Dominion* (in part already published in the February 1996 NZ Forestry and in *The Evening Post*). Some of these articles were repeated in other national dailies. We spoke to Radio NZ a couple of times and appeared on Capital City TV. Although there have been few letters to the editors, we feel that we have been successful in opening up the subject quite a bit and in forcing Mr Birch and his advisers to give out more information than they otherwise would have.

In April we were approached by Mr Con Devitt of the Trades Union Federation and asked to join him in talking with all the major political parties. This we did. We met Jim Sutton of Labour (a second time), Mr Winston Peters of NZ First, and

Mr Jim Anderton of the NZ Alliance.

At our earlier meeting Jim Sutton had accepted our plan for a fact-finding committee of enquiry and wrote to the appropriate Minister accordingly, but there was no reaction from the Labour Party. Winston Peters gave us a very good hearing. His spokesman on State Assets, Terry Hefernan, had already put out a press release demanding an enquiry into the sale and stating that NZ First would not be bound by any sale agreement, if the enquiry showed that the sale was a bad one.

Jim Anderton was even more emphatic and condemned the Government's plan strongly. He said that the NZ Alliance would press for a national referendum on the sales. He claimed that "our forests are not for the Government to sell because it has no political mandate from the people to do so". He said "we will lose opportunities for new jobs, we will lose the opportunity to lead the world markets, ... we will lose a steady flow of dividends to the Government and we will lose yet more of New Zealand's control of our own economy".

A Permanent Authority

In the earlier statements and discussions we stressed the importance of having permanent Government forest authority and we claimed that almost every country in the world growing pro-

duction forests, except as far as we know, Chile, had one, with some of their forests under State ownership. We found it inconceivable to imagine the European countries resorting to privatisation. We claimed that forests were very long-term in nature and that for this reason forest-growing countries did not approve of politicians, who are short-term in office, or accountants and economists who are often short-term in thinking, making irrevocable decisions about the future of publicly-owned forests. These considerations did not appear to influence those with whom we talked.

Short-term Disadvantages

More recently we have concentrated on the short-term disadvantages of selling. In brief, these include the following:

- The 1990 and 1992 sales were far from being wholly successful economically. There is no evidence that currently Treasury would do any better. The sales have not resulted in major new industries in New Zealand; there have been some, but compared with the earlier pulp and paper industries, they have been minor.
- With low world market prices for pulp, sawn timber and export logs, 1996 could be a bad year for selling.
- Both the two likely NZ contenders are currently having economic problems and are, though not to a large extent, reducing production.
- There is no surplus of wood available for sale until the year 2005, unless the sales are at the expense of local sawmills or export logs.

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The last point is a vital one. Of the 3,400,000 cubic metres that the Corporation produces, more than one-quarter goes out as export logs. Production from the forest is expected to be virtually static for the next eight to nine years. The only major independent analysis of the proposed sale, by Michael Smith of Rotorua, concluded: "Cutting rights in themselves may not be the only initiative required by the Government to attract further investment in the industry". We agree with this; yet Mr Birch has currently refused to give any indication that there will be "initiatives" to reduce log exports or to curtail local sales. He may be absolutely right in his stance but he cannot then claim, as he does, that the proposed sale would lead to major local processing developments in New Zealand. What he has said is: "The best answer is to create a climate where it

is attractive to invest in further processing". This is a most nebulous statement.

Going Ahead

On April 3, 1996 Mr Birch announced that the Government had decided to go ahead with the sale. Tenderers would be required to outline their processing plans and their intentions for supplying logs to local industries. They will have demonstrated their ability to manage and develop the forest and they would be required to replant.

It is expected that the sale process will take four to five months. Therefore, the closeness of the forthcoming General Election will ensure that politics will influence whether any sale is made.

Priestley Thomson

Clarity – A comparison of Forest Policies a century apart

(Courtesy of the Commonwealth Forestry Review, Vol 74(1), 1995)

1894

"The whole policy is based on the main object of the greatest good to the greatest number, and, from the forestry point of view, this is attained by the following general principles:

- (a) that first and foremost the preservation of the climatic and physical conditions of the country comes before everything else;
- (b) that the preservation of the minimum amount of forest necessary for the general well-being of the country is second only to (a) above.

Provided the above two conditions are fulfilled, then:

- (a) agriculture comes before forestry;
- (b) the satisfaction of the wants of the local population at free, or at non-competitive rates, comes before revenue; and
- (c) after all the above conditions are satisfied, the realisation of revenue to the greatest possible extent (compatible with sustained yield) is permitted."

Forest Policy for India, 1894

or

1993

"Sustainable management means the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems."

Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 16-17 June 1993

Forgiving some sentiments of an earlier age, who gets the prize for clarity?

John Purey-Cust