

to see Andy Kirkland's Guest Editorial which gave positive and intelligent analysis in the usually polarised debate on the sale of State Forest assets. In particular, in a few words he encapsulated some of the real and creditable achievements of the Forest Service in its all-too-brief existence. Politicians of the day used NZFS as a whipping horse to justify reforms and sale of State assets (yes, I Have Been Thinking, too!), and never gave credit where it was due. Cheers, Andy.

Equally, Ian Spellerberg's thoughtful analysis on plantations and biodiversity was a good read. No doubt his cost-benefit table was not intended to be exhaustive, and I would add at least one further benefit of plantations to his list. This is the capacity to absorb and provide for public recreation, especially those pursuits of a nature less compatible with national parks and other more natural areas. I would include mountain biking, ORVs and other intensive and frequently motorised elements of the recreation spectrum. The value of plantations as a buffer to natural forests, and the value of artificial habitat to some wildlife, are probably understated.

The third item to catch my eye was the typically metaphor-rich prose of John Purey-Cust, which castigates Rosoman's audacity to challenge some of the shibboleths of plantation forestry. Rosoman's article was described as "... a sheet of pastry, flat and featureless ...", by contrast J.P.-C's note is a plum duff, rich in raisened metaphor, and equally bloating. Sorry, but this article, stripped to bare bones, seems to ask how dare an outsider challenge the modern maxims of foresters? While Rosoman's 1995 article was not perfect, it did generate useful debate which is not helped by *ad hominem* vituperation. One of the best roles New Zealand Forestry can play is to provide the forum for constructive debate on issues such as biodiversity, conservation and sustainability – issues which are of vital interest and concern to us all. More pastry and less plum duff, please.

Murray Hosking

Ministry's role in State asset sale

Sir,

It is a pity that the Ministry of Forestry appears to be so convinced that privatisation of State forests is the right course. It is hard to know how much of this is a real and deeply-felt emotion and how much it is just a reflection of the wishes of particular Ministers. Certainly it is almost

impossible to imagine that senior officers of the Ministry, who were recruited, trained and employed by the Forest Service, should now have no loyalty whatsoever to that organisation. We note though that never have Ministry of Forestry officers defended the Forest Service, even against such widely inaccurate and even vicious attacks as have been made recently by Mr Prebble.

The saddest part of the Ministry of Forestry's philosophy, or rather of the legislation underlining it, is that the Ministry does not seem to be able to give any independent political advice to the Government. The Government can, of course, seek the views of organisations such as the Forest Owners Association, the Timber Industry Federation, and the Farm Forestry Association, all of whom have their own axes to grind.

We have always thought that the Institute should have a role in this issue but we have been reluctant to recommend that the Institute take it up; there are too many Institute members with job or other affiliations to make this course practicable. There is still, though, a school of thought that believes that the Institute, without lessening its independence or its objectivity, could itself launch a committee of enquiry into the pros and cons of the sale and could perhaps establish some of the relevant facts which the Government cannot, or in some cases, will not, give us.

Priestley Thomson and Lindsay Poole

MOF response

Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Priestley Thomson and Lindsay Poole.

In the policy arena the Ministry of Forestry's responsibility is very straightforward. The Ministry provides its best professional advice, consistent with its mission of working to ensure forestry makes the best possible contribution to New Zealand's sustainable development and economic growth. Accountability is equally straightforward – our advice is available for public scrutiny.

The Ministry's position on the sale of FCNZ was made perfectly clear in our 1993 election brief, "the sale of FCNZ needs to proceed". That was not the Government's position in the lead up to the 1993 election.

The New Zealand Forest Service's performance speaks for itself. Detractors simply can't deny what was achieved between 1919 and 1987.

I would welcome the views of the Institute, on any issue.

**John Valentine
Chief Executive
Ministry of Forestry**

INDIGENOUS FORESTRY CONSULTANTS – SEMINARS –

The Ministry of Forestry is inviting expressions of interest from Forestry Consultants in a Seminar on the Export and Sawmilling of Indigenous Timber and Sustainable Management of Indigenous Forests pursuant to the Forests Acts 1949 as amended in 1993.

Subject to sufficient interest, it is proposed that two Seminars (approx. 1/2 day in duration) be held, one in Rotorua and one in Christchurch, early in July.

Expressions of interest should be forwarded to:

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