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# FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Over the past decade, the New Zealand public have witnessed an extraordinary change in the attitude of Government to the welfare of the nation's forests. Previously, the NZ Forest Service was expected to provide all of the commercial forest management capability for indigenous (other than National Parks) and 50 per cent of plantation forest requirements. Now there is the perception that the State has no responsibility for plantation forests and a limited interest in the indigenous forest estate. This latter interest appears driven by the demands of the conservation organisations and it appears that the State's capability is funded at a level designed to satisfy the minimum expectation of these groups.

My impression is that there is a community sense that this attitude is inadequate to provide the majority of the New Zealand public with comfort about the control which Government should exercise for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

In the discussion on possible alienation of Department of Conservation lands, the Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) have drawn attention to the risk of this loss, should Maori interests and the Waitangi process be too high in Government priorities. Reports of Treasury attitudes during the current budget round do not appear to have given FMC comfort in this respect. Maori interests have laid some emphasis on sovereignty issues. This has caused disquiet among the public, anxious to be reassured as to access to public lands, particularly following the Mount Hikurangi alienation from Forest Park status. It has similar connotations for the State Owned Enterprise lands in plantation forests, and anxiety about Whakarewarewa, Kain-garoa and like plantation forests heavily used for public recreation, which are seen as probable casualties of the process of State withdrawal from stewardship. The offered sale of shares in Forestry Corporation of New Zealand recently announced is the latest step in this process.

## Publicly-owned forests

The recent publicity generated by NZ First Party pronouncements and apparent foreign penetration of New Zealand culture has highlighted that many people are worried about the issue. They appear to be less concerned with economic issues and more concerned about erosion of sovereignty, although many observers would have difficulty dealing with these separately. I suspect it is not so much an expression of xenophobia but more an expression that Government should be exercising greater

apparent control over publicly-owned forests.

The recent debate on DOC funding suggests that the condition of indigenous forest has suffered under the impact of pests and inadequate management, which is presumed to reflect inadequate funding. The conservation organisations who have deplored this are really commenting on their own handiwork. They created the environment that encouraged isolation of indigenous management and protection forest funding, and DOC have become a tethered goat for the sharpshooters of Government budgetary reductions in this area.

It appears timely for Government to realise that an indifference to the importance of forest issues is not a mandate they

were explicitly given. Many of the public are worried as "privatisation" becomes "foreignisation" despite the benefits that can be portrayed as accompanying the process.

The stewardship concept in the mind of many of the community, particularly Maori, presumes a benign concern of Government for the public interest in forests of Crown ownerships. There is a sense of increasing disquiet that properly acknowledged stewardship ought not to be given just lip service. It ought to be fully and responsibly accepted with the financial and cultural burdens that are concomitant with the concept.

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Immediate Past President

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## New Zealand forest history

Last October Ron O'Reilly, Dean of Forestry at the University of Canterbury, and I took the initiative of writing to a range of members and others to see if they were interested in, or had any views about, the formation of a New Zealand Forestry History Society. By the end of November some 18 responses had been received. Thirteen were strongly supportive while five were more cautious. Most were prepared to be helpful.

One point of view expressed was that the purview of our forestry history should extend right from the Polynesian era to contemporary times. Another was that our definition of forestry should be wide – including exotic and indigenous species, and commercial and non-commercial objectives.

There were prudent suggestions that it would be a good idea to get some early advice from professional historians, and also from professional librarians. The Turnbull Library could be especially helpful with its oral history unit; also it holds, for example, the Entrican papers and tapes on the development of the Forestry Corporation. Another organisation which was suggested as worth contacting is the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ). Mention was made too of the value of links with the American Forest History Society and with the recently formed Australian Forest History Society.

And if anybody did have any doubts about the intellectual worth of the exercise there was a reminder that in Europe,

forestry history is an important field of study, rating highly-respected university chairs.

There was virtually unanimous emphasis on the importance of collecting and safely storing basic historical data before some of it is lost. One respondent listed people who should be approached for their memoirs. Such historical data should include, in addition to the more conventional manuscripts and notes, such items as oral recordings, old photographs, old compartment records, old maps, and records of pivotal meetings such as the first Tokoroa Rural Fire Committee. Several suggested that the Canterbury School of Forestry would be a good repository. One thought that the best place to store much of the data would be in a forestry archive in the University of Canterbury Library, perhaps in the Macmillan-Brown Collection.

There were several suggestions of worthy historical projects: "Life of Entrican", "Life of Frank Hutchinson", "Carve-up of the Forest Service", "Rudolf Hohneck". More general objectives recognised were the vital importance of having a good historical record to help chart the future of New Zealand forestry, and the presentation of New Zealand forestry history as an integral part of the forestry history of the Pacific Basin. That respondent suggested that such a regional orientation could be catalytic for a globally-oriented text on forest policy, the time for which is ripe. Another general objective identified was the importance, now more than ever, of