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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.

**P.F. Olsen**  
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

educating the public about forestry and an historical perspective would be important for this.

An element of realism was introduced with the observation that it would be necessary to establish a forestry history publication fund. Many forestry history topics would tend inevitably to be narrowly focused, resulting in expensive short publication runs which would need some subsidy. Features like oral archives and historic films, both well suited to recording forestry history, would also be expensive. However, it should be possible to attract donations and bequests.

Several pointed out that forestry history is essentially an interdisciplinary field of study, and so it would be important to attract the interests of a wide field of workers, many of whom would be active outside forestry proper. One respondent thought that a newsletter would be important in this respect.

Many respondents thought that both the Institute of Forestry and the School of Forestry should be involved and there was a deal of support for the School of

Forestry undertaking a major coordinating role. The view was also expressed that the active involvement of the School would help ensure that the project enjoyed academic independence, and that this would be important if the revolutionary changes which have taken place in the forestry sector over the last decade or so are to be appraised with balance.

It was clear that most respondents had not had the time to mature their thoughts fully on a New Zealand Forestry History Society. It would seem to be prudent, therefore, to proceed slowly. However whether a fully-blown society eventuates or not, any progress made with forestry history studies will be assisted a great deal by collaboration between the Institute of Forestry and the School of Forestry. At this stage it would seem advisable not to be too precise about who does what but to let cooperative trends develop as enthusiasm mounts.

The Council of the Institute have offered their general support and have intimated that some financial assistance could be forthcoming. They suggest that

a working group of interested Institute members be formed to assist in the collection and collation of historical data. They pointed out too the role of New Zealand Forestry journal as a medium for news and views from any Institute groups.

Accordingly, a steering group (it was thought that "steering" was a more appropriate word) has been formed, comprising Ron O'Reilly (Chair), Peter Smail, Udo Benecke and Peter McKelvey. All live in Christchurch, which makes it easier to get together. When the group has met it will decide what should be done first. The University of Canterbury Librarian, Dick Hlavac, is prepared to establish a forestry archive; indeed he is enthusiastic about it. This would house a range of records and working material and would also contain a register of historical data held in other parts of the country. The group will keep members informed regularly about its activities, and any progress made, through New Zealand Forestry journal.

**Peter McKelvey**

## Obituary

# Neil Barr (1908-1996)

Neil Barr has been such a prominent figure in forestry and farm-forestry circles for so long that it is difficult to accept that he is no longer around to query our actions or prompt us to do better. Neil had been his usual self, busy to the very end, when he passed away peacefully on New Year's Day, 12 days short of his 88th birthday. One of his last actions had been the completion of the draft of his proposed book on growing eucalypts for timber on NZ farms, the topic that first launched him into farm forestry some 50 years ago.

To those who knew him well, Neil and his wife Rose will always be associated with the family farm, "Beresford", near Kaukapakapa on the shores of the Kaipara Harbour. Neil's father had settled there in 1916 when Neil was only eight years old. In those days it was backblocks farming, isolated and underdeveloped. After he had matriculated from Auckland Grammar, Neil and his brother John took over the management of the farm and for the next 20 years he was almost totally immersed in breaking it in, weathering the Great Depression of the 1930s, and improving their farming methods and breeds. It was his concern for the well-being of his stock that led him to planting shelterbelts, firstly with pine and then more successfully with eucalypts. Thus, his forestry education of the 1940s was essentially of the personal

experience and hard-knocks variety, combined with reading. He read everything he could lay his hands on but found most of what was available on forestry did not apply specifically to his farming situation. It was his realisation that other farmers must be faced with similar problems that led to his calling a meeting in June 1950 to form a local farm-forestry society.

This historic meeting, held at Frank Bartlett's farm at Silverdale, was the germinating seed that subsequently grew into the present NZ Farm Forestry Association with its 31 affiliated regional branches. Neil became its primary promoter through the regular column he wrote for the NZ Farmer and his travels throughout the country speaking to interested groups. In 1958, the National Association was formed, Neil becoming its first President, and subsequently its first honorary life member and patron. He is rightly recognised, therefore, as being the founder of the organised farm-forestry movement in New Zealand and its architect and leading advocate during its formative years. To the forestry fraternity as a whole he will be forever remembered and honoured as the man who put farm forestry well and truly on the map. The Association today is recognised as being the authoritative voice of the smaller grower, growing in stature year by year. Today, it is a com-

mon sight wherever you travel in New Zealand to see trees being planted on grassland. This acceptance by farmers, foresters and lending agencies alike of trees on pasture being a profitable and legitimate option was not easily won, there being resistance and prejudice at many levels to overcome. All credit, therefore, to those who succeeded in breaching such barriers. Neil Barr's name would figure prominently on that list.

### Sterling Qualities

How come "a cocky from Kaukapakapa" with no academic training in forestry became such a respected forestry advocate and an honorary member of our Institute? Obviously, Neil had to have some sterling qualities to do so. First and foremost was his long-sighted vision of integrating forestry with farming, utilising the strategic, economic and environmental benefits of both components. It was a goal which might require different approaches from the then orthodox practice. His key attribute was that he could define his goals and keep them in sharp focus. Best practice then in his book became the simplest, most direct, and efficient means of attaining those goals. In forestry, his emphasis was always on the target wood qualities to aim for.