

vre the Auckland University into setting up the first School of Forestry, as a result of which I joined his staff as Engineer in Forest Products, ultimately expanding this job after 18 years into the posts of Director and Director-General for 22 years.

### Enormous Potential

Ellis had already had experience in Europe as well as in North America and knew full well of the failures of exotics in various countries and the disasters which could well overtake them as a result of epidemic insect and fungal attack. Nevertheless, after studying for several years the growth of *Pinus radiata* throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand he came to the conclusion that the economic potential of success was so enormous for the extremely small cost involved that he had no choice but to recommend Government to establish a capital forest resource of *Pinus radiata* capable of meeting virtually the whole of the country's softwood timber requirements after 1965. By this time he had estimated that these would amount to about 700 million board feet, of which only 50 million would be supplied from the indigenous forests, 50 million by importations, 150 million from private and local body exotics and 450 million from the 300,000 acres which he recommended should be planted within ten years between 1925 and 1934. He had further estimated that even if the exotic effort was a complete failure its total cost would have been little more than the cost of one year's importation of the sustained yield for which he was striving. Clearly the risk was justified on the grounds that, if necessary, relatively large sums could be spent on research and protective measures to ensure survival against insect and fungal epidemics. Incidentally, Ellis's estimate of consumption has proved remarkably accurate.

Ellis's unorthodoxy lay in his recommendation to plant 30,000 acres annually for 10 years instead of 10,000 acres for 30 years. The reason given publicly for this decision was the urgency of establishment to allow of early treatment and management. Incidentally, it was the shortest period in which he thought it could be organised. Privately Ellis confided to me that he did not think that the wave of popularity which he had generated for forestry could be sustained for more than ten years. Even more startling was his further confidence that there would be such a reluctance on the part of the industry and of wood consumers to use rapidly-grown exotics after being accustomed for almost a century to using high-grade virgin softwoods that he was deliberately creating this enormous resource in as short a period

as possible so as to constitute an early and continuing challenge both to Governments and to his successors to export as soon as possible. It worked out exactly that way.

In actual fact Ellis underestimated his own capacity. The wave of popularity which he created for forestry still presses on almost 30 years longer than he had expected. He is still remembered as "that florid-cheeked Canadian in shirt sleeves". His colourful personality so appealed to the public that the "get-rich-Wallingford" type of promoters had no difficulty in persuading the public to get on the bandwagon and through their bond-selling companies to plant up another 300,000 acres of *Pinus radiata* at a cost of 70 dollars per acre to cover both establishment and 20 years' maintenance.

As Ellis anticipated, there have been several insect and fungal epidemics but the forests have survived and are protected by an extensive research and protective organisation for which New Zealand is indebted to another great Canadian – the late J.J. de Gryse, the eminent forest biologist from Ottawa who paid our own recently resigned pathologist, J.G. Rawlings, the distinction of ranking him as amongst the three maestros in the world of forest pathologists. New Zealand's experience proves beyond doubt that exotic forestry is not justified unless supported by both a Quarantine Service to arrest the introduction of harmful insects, etc., and a continuing National Biological

Survey to detect the early build-up of insect populations and initiate control measures before epidemics can fully develop.

As well as for his ten-year programme, Ellis was criticised for this adoption of an 8ft by 8ft planting espacement, but it was used by Owen Jones, the one-time Chairman of the Victorian Forestry Commission, for much of the private company planting of that period, and in retrospect there does not appear to have been any strong evidence against its use. It is equally certain that there is some evidence that had a 6ft espacement been adopted, the Sirex epidemic might have had much more disastrous consequences than eventuated.

It was a heartening experience to have our good friend Ed Stamm, the President of the American Forestry Association, in New Zealand some years ago to point out to carping critics that had it not been for Ellis's great courage, foresight and determination they would not have had any resource with which to expand the country's forest economy so effectively. Ellis transferred his activities in exotic forestry to Australia in 1928 and died as a relatively young man in 1941, and so he did not have the privilege of living to see how well he had planned and how he had inspired succeeding Governments and staff. I am privileged to have this opportunity of paying a tribute in Canada itself to his great achievement.

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## Forestry History News

The New Zealand forestry history steering group (Ron O'Reilly, Udo Benecke, Peter Smail and Peter McKelvey) met at the School of Forestry, University of Canterbury on June 21, 1996. Their first action was to attend the formal establishment of a forestry archive in the MacMillan Brown Collection of the University Library.

The initial materials deposited were old New Zealand Forest Service files which had been saved from destruction in 1981 by being sent to the late Geoff Chavasse of FRI for safe keeping. Shirley Chavasse sent them on to the forestry archive recently. They are now being examined and catalogued by a professional archivist. It is hoped that they will be the forerunner of much important material in the archive.

It is hoped too that people will advise Max Broadbent, MacMillan Brown Librarian, of other important forestry papers and where they are kept, as it is

planned for the archive to contain a register of all historically important forestry material in the country.

The steering group concentrated on a few pivotal issues emanating from the responses to the circular which was sent around at the end of last year. The first involved the nature of the subject and it was decided that "forestry history" is more apt than "forest history" because the former term covers more than the forest. It was decided also that most pre-history was out, but that anything to do with the impact of man on forests was in.

The most substantial item tackled was whether or not we should launch a formal forestry history society at this stage. In the end we were cautious and decided that one was not essential at the present time. We had in mind the tendency to proliferation of New Zealand forestry societies, with the danger of diffusing interest and support, and the unavoidable bureaucracy

which follows the setting up of any formal organisation. Instead we thought that the School of Forestry could take the initiative and, in collaboration with the Departments of History and Geography at Canterbury, introduce forestry history studies at the postgraduate level. We recommended accordingly and were pleased to learn later that the recommendation had been accepted. Perhaps other universities also may take an interest in forestry history.

It was decided too that we would ask the Institute of Forestry for a contact person on its Council whom we could approach directly on any general matter related to forestry history. Finally, as the steering group membership represents also the Farm Forestry Association which is developing an interest in historical aspects, it was thought that, in addition to reporting regularly to the Institute of Forestry membership via "New Zealand Forestry", we should report also to the Farm Forestry Association via "New Zealand Treegrower".



Inspecting the first donation to the library were (from left) Dean of Forestry Ron O'Reilly, consultant Udo Benecke, NZ Farm Forestry Association patron Peter Smail, University Librarian Dick Hlavac, Emeritus Professor Peter McKelvey, Engineering Librarian Heather McCarrigan and Macmillan Brown Librarian Max Broadbent.

We will continue to welcome hearing from anybody with an interest in New

Zealand-forestry history.  
**Peter McKelvey**



## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES



# Is the UK Forestry Commission selling forests?

The short answer is yes it is. However, the facts are that it has been selling forests since 1981 when the Commission was given a target of selling some 20% of its estate by the year 2000. The requirement was both to raise revenue and also to allow the Commission to rationalise its estate. This is not the recent privatisation review which considered whether the bulk of the Commission's estate should be privatised. The result of that review was that the Government decided against privatisation at the present time.

The Disposals Programme, as the 20% reduction of the estate is called, is under the control of the Commission. The forests sold are generally scattered, small woodlands, which are both difficult and costly to manage, although this has become increasingly difficult to confine to outliers, and some larger blocks have been sold in recent times. This programme is likely to continue until mid 1997, but if there is a change of Government in 1997, and this now appears very likely, the Labour party has said it will stop the disposals programme if they become the Government.

On the wider issue of privatising the Commission's estate of some 1,000,000 hectares, many Institute members must be puzzled that a Conservative Government with its record of privatisation should back off privatising the Commission's estate.

To find the answer one has to compare the situations of New Zealand, where privatisation took place, and the UK. Although forestry in both countries has followed a very similar path since 1920 when New Zealand got the NZFS and the UK its Forestry Commission. Both organisations were given similar mandates to mount and facilitate major afforestation programmes with fast-growing exotic species. The similarity ends there. The major differences which affected the result of the review were:

- The population of the UK is 55 million – NZ's is 3.5 million.
- Land areas are similar.
- NZ has a large area of indigenous forest. In the UK semi-natural woodland is less than 2% of total woodland area.
- There is very little publicly-owned

land in the UK. The Commission's estate is the largest area.

It is not difficult to understand why the NGOs mounted a huge campaign against the privatisation, as the Commission's estate is truly multi-purpose, catering for increasing demands for countryside recreation, amenity, conservation values, as well as wood.

The surprising dimension was that the forestry industry also came out strongly against privatisation, not because they get cheap wood, but because of reliable supplies of wood from the Commission as opposed to the private sector, which is fragmented and uncoordinated.

The end result, and I can speak frankly now, was in my view good for the public of the UK who want to have reasonable access to the countryside. Last year the Commission's forests made a profit for the first time.

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