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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