

an indigenous production silviculture for the future. But that was government policy, and the state employer of those days decisively had the last word.

Now, as far as possible, Government has washed its hands of the whole debate. It has sold off the nation's exotic forests, often to overseas interests, has shunted most of the indigenous forest conveniently out of the way into DOC, and has ensured that its own remaining indigenous forest is managed in accordance with a Deed of Appointment placed outside other forest legislation and which also includes public participation. (In the old NZFS days public participation was actually called for, though seldom seriously listened to!)

There is the Forests Amendment Act 1993, applying to most privately-owned forests, which is intended to promote the long-term sustainability of indigenous forest for both the production of timber and the maintenance of natural values.

To emphasise what is generally meant by natural values we can also turn to the Montreal Process Accord. Amongst the criteria and indicators for sustainable management agreed under this protocol are those appertaining to biological diversity. For instance, as an indicator of species diversity is "the status of forest-dependent species at risk of not maintaining viable breeding populations".

In New Zealand, indigenous sustained management systems for wood production are still essentially encouraging the conversion of the natural biodiversity of closed-canopy forest to an even-aged monoculture, or reduced species, open-canopy uniformity akin to that of clearfelled plantations. However, research has clearly shown, for example, that the maintenance of viable breeding populations of many native forest birds is very adversely affected by this type of management system.

Clearly, the management of indigenous forest provides an enormous challenge. Can the economic production of timber be obtained whilst at the same time maintaining the natural ecological values of such forest?

Are these conflicting aims of Forests Amendment Act 1993 and the Montreal Accord in fact really compatible, or are the legislation and the protocol merely sound bites or a smokescreen of make-believe? If the aims are incompatible, the primacy of economics is inevitable and biodiversity will continue to be compromised and degraded.

Further research into the conditions of our indigenous forests is surely urgent to determine whether the old European concept of near-natural, uneven-aged, continuous-canopy mixed species silviculture might provide an answer to this dilemma.

In view of its importance for the future

of indigenous forestry in New Zealand, the Government should be prepared to foster and support such research.

Eric Bennett

Forestry in its broadest sense

Sir,

I was interested to read Udo Benecke's article titled 'Ecological Silviculture: The application of age-old methods' in the August 1996 issue of NZ Forestry, in which he makes reference to our profession's fixation with plantation management at the expense of our indigenous forests. In particular, he refers to the Forestry Handbook providing "scant coverage" to indigenous management.

I feel compelled to comment as the Editor of the Handbook.

In its production there was a strong lobby to leave matters indigenous out completely. Reason prevailed that our profession is concerned with the management of forests in their broadest sense, and their contribution to the well-being of society and the planet. As such we should not be particularly concerned with how or when a particular species or group of species arrived in New Zealand; rather we should be concerned with their optimum management to maximise their contribution to the ideals above.

The Handbook tried to take that approach. Thus, several chapters, while apparently devoted to plantation management, are indeed of a more generic nature and it is left to the user of the Handbook to determine how the principles discussed are implemented. With this in mind, I feel Udo has fallen into the same trap as many others, in that he has assumed the Handbook is about plantations rather than forestry.

This is an important issue for our pro-

fession, especially as society places greater demands on our forests and the current political flavour does not accept a central concept foresters hold dear – that of multiple use. We must educate and lobby to ensure the well-being of all our forests and our society, the species they contain being of far less significance than their actual presence.

We should not succumb to the dichotomy ideology that some would preach and others accept. To do so significantly diminishes understanding of how essential forests are, regardless of their raison d'être.

Don Hammond

Conference Proceedings copy appreciated

Sir,

I have just received my copy of the NZ Institute of Forestry Conference Proceedings 1996.

It is an extremely interesting, thought-provoking document, well presented and professional. I have spent all morning reading it – most unusual!

Receipt of a copy of the Proceedings 1996 was a complete surprise. I could not attend the conference in Invercargill and so did not expect to receive a copy.

The move to send Proceedings to non-attending members is a brilliant PR job, let alone the other advantages. It has given me very good vibes about the future of the Institute and consideration for members.

The 1996 NZIF Conference Committee, and Chairperson John Edmonds in particular, must be congratulated for their initiative, as well as the Council for presumably backing such a move.

Neill Cooper

New Zealand Forestry

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