

a forest for 25-30 years contrasts strikingly with superannuation schemes subject to annual taxation. An estimated return of about 8% over and above the rate of inflation, compounded free of taxation (until the end), is not to be passed over lightly. If New Zealanders turn xenophobic preventing others owning land, then we encourage those inefficiencies that were seen in the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, long-term investment in forestry by overseas investors suits a country like New Zealand which is short of capital. Our own limited savings should be recycling more rapidly through the economy in immediately productive investments. Actually physical assets like forests are highly visible and so easy to tax; whereas many value-adding operations are free to vanish offshore to a low tax jurisdiction – as “virtual” distribution corporations located in many places concurrently.

Sadly, the historic record of the forest products sector is poor. The one notable success has been the medium density fibreboard (MDF) industry which was established by outsiders, a group of entrepreneurs under Dr Owen Haylock. They built one of the first MDF plants in the world at Sefton, Canterbury in 1975. The venture was high-risk: the banks sought to

close the mill before start-up unless the company pre-sold a significant proportion of its production. MDF processing has been singularly innovative and has been adopted enthusiastically by the mainstream players of the forest sector. However, the contrast with the large corporates couldn't be starker. The late 70s through to the late 80s saw the building of a plywood mill (NZFP), a resin-from-bark tannaphen plant (NZFP), a West Coast plywood venture, Karioi RMP mill (Winstone), RADA (NZFP) and a triboard mill (Northern Pulp), none of which was profitable to the original investors. Even Fletchers, which to its credit did not play in the Bear Pit of 1987, has shown the difficulties in anticipating the market correctly, especially in its North American paper operations. In this broader context the risks to the forest grower appear less severe, and they showed considerable foresight in investing in Latin America in the mid-1980s.

In the past some of the greatest fortunes were amassed by identifying a need and using technology to meet that need. Today the emphasis is reversed. The game is to create new needs from technologies that are still to be developed. New products will generate their own demand

because they will change the way people behave. Necessities will emerge that haven't been dreamed of as increasing affluence erases the distinction between luxuries and necessities: the automobile, telephone, TV and air travel were once luxuries. Much will change in 30 years. Even if the paperless office never materialises, it may be possible to synthesise paper fibres from a genetically modified soup without recourse to anything so beautiful and primitive as a tree. That is the kind of risk the forest grower faces – of unknown processes, products and markets 30 years hence.

Although the future lies in intellectual property rather than in resource-based products, that does not preclude profitable investment in less technologically exciting industries. However, it is important to recognise that one takes a position whether one cares to or not: so there is the need to capture the broad view and to take cognisance of changes in society at large. If that is all too much, it is time to plant another tree. Indeed, I've almost persuaded myself!

**John Walker,
School of Forestry,
University of Canterbury**



A potential threat to nursery health

Sir,

Tree health and nursery hygiene are never far from the nursery growers' minds when managing their crops. In recent years some forest nursery growers have become increasingly concerned at a potential threat to nursery health, with implication for the whole forest industry. The risk is created when empty tree cartons are returned to a nursery from the planting site containing soil from another nursery. The problem arises when the large consulting companies and tree buyers who like to reuse their cartons also draw trees from more than one nursery. One carton found this season had been used 14 times, through four different nurseries.

As well as the obvious impact for the nurseries concerned, the implications for the entire industry could be serious. A new pathogen entering the country could be quickly distributed nationwide before it was even detected. Even an existing organism which is harmless in one nursery environment could conceivably run

rampant when introduced to a new environment.

In bygone days nursery hygiene was an important priority with strict quarantine at entry points common. In recent years a comprehensive range of agrochemicals have controlled most of the major pests in forest nurseries and attitudes have relaxed. The 1992 Australia Nursery Tour, attended by most of our members, served as a timely warning that we were perhaps getting too complacent. The sight of a nursery rendered almost unproductive by soil nematodes was a sobering experience.

Tree stock buyers should be looking seriously at their tree-handling policies to avoid these potential cross-infections between their supplying nurseries. The best solution is for purchasers to look at managing their cartons in a tight local “loop”, utilising only one nursery per planting site. Other alternatives are one-trip cartons, or, dare I suggest, in some cases disposable bags.

Forest Health issues can never be over-estimated. Keeping our forest estate healthy will require the combined efforts of all industry participants working together.

**Peter Harington
Secretary, New Zealand Forest
Nursery Growers Association**

How Greenpeace sets out its priorities

Sir,

In response to John Purey-Cust's request for “an explanation of how Greenpeace sets out its priorities and arrives at its opinions”, I'm happy to explain further. (However, just as an aside to begin with, I doubt whether plantation corporates have ever explained openly to the public and their shareholders why they are pursuing particular forestry strategies.)

Firstly, on Greenpeace's organisational structure and accountability. Greenpeace NZ is funded by individual subscriptions from 35,000 New Zealanders and does not receive money from corporations or governments. Annual accounts are published and made available to members and the media. Its decision-making structures are open to scrutiny and include a Voting Assembly drawn from its membership which elects the Greenpeace NZ board. The GPNZ board approves policies for the organisation. Annual campaign planning involving Greenpeace staff and peers, using criteria that include ecological imperatives, potential for change and progress, and member and public concern over an issue, determine international and national priorities.

Secondly, I would like to clarify some aspects of Greenpeace's attitude and approach to plantations, both internationally and nationally. John wrongly claimed that "Greenpeace is pursuing a one-world solution". We have different solutions for each different national situation, and even regions and local areas within countries. What all the national solutions do have in common is a set of overarching internationally agreed principles and guidelines, and in a certification framework, this means the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Principles and Criteria for Forest Management.

I think it is important to point out that the New Zealand plantation model cannot be separated from the international context, especially when the NZ industry employs evangelical industrial monoculture pushers to travel the world and preach their doctrine at international fora. New Zealand is probably the leading proponent of exotic monoculture plantations, includ-

ing inappropriately in tropical countries where in some parts plantation establishment is driving the conversion of natural forests. To promote plantations on degraded pastureland in Aotearoa is one thing, but to push the NZ-style plantation model as the saviour quick fix to hypothetical future world wood shortfalls is ecological folly. Herein lies the importance and the link of the New Zealand plantation situation to the global forestry scene, and thus Greenpeace's efforts to reform the industry here to take account of broader society values.

Greenpeace views tree systems as the key to our sustainable land-use future in New Zealand. We encourage tree planting and reforestation. However, the inadequacies of the monoculture model lead us to look at the potential of what could be achieved with modifications to this model, which is nothing short of exciting. Certification through the FSC offers recognition and rewards for these modifications.

Our biodiversity goals and vision are developed and are being put to land users as a whole, whether they be foresters, farmers, urban developers or horticulturists. Our 1995 "Biodiversity and Landuse" information sheet attests to this. It is not correct to claim that we are just targeting forestry, even though we are putting more effort into transforming forestry because we have a positive outlook for it, and we are being forced by the industry that is making spurious greenwash claims. We are engaged also through the certification process where principles, criteria and performance standards on plantations are being defined that can be communicated and are a credible assurance to a growing number of environmentally sensitive wood consumers.

Grant Rosoman
Forests Campaigner
Greenpeace New Zealand



EDUCATION NEWS



School of Forestry News

Another expansion of the School of Forestry building

As the photo shows, the School of Forestry is undergoing yet another expansion, this time at the north end of the existing building. The new two-storey extension will house the School Administration offices, plus study offices for staff and postgraduates, as well as a large lecture room with all the modern audio-visual facilities. The staff of the South Island Unit of the Forest Research Institute will also be housed in the new extension, which is due to be completed in time for the beginning of term in 1998. The excavation has also revealed totara stumps estimated to be 1500 years old, pieces of which are now safely stored in Karl's office.

New lecturer to join the staff

Dr Kenneth Hobson, who has a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, has accepted a lecturing position with the School of Forestry. Dr Hobson is a specialist in forest entomology, forest ecology and insect ecology, and has carried out research work involving forest pathology. At present a Post Doctoral Research Associate at the University of Wisconsin, Dr Hobson will be lecturing in the final-year Forest Health course as well



as at the postgraduate level. Ken, who is married with one small son, will be taking up his post in time to lecture in the second half of this year. Welcome aboard, Ken!

Commerce - Forestry conjoint degrees attracting students

The conjoint degree programme, whereby a student can obtain a full Bachelor of Commerce degree and a full Bachelor of Forestry Science degree in five years of

university study, has started to prove popular with both new entrants and students who have partially completed their forestry degree. At last count, close to 10 students had enrolled in the programme, which takes advantage of Commerce's ability to credit outside courses and Forestry's recent emphasis on "business" courses as options within the degree. A spin-off of the conjoint programme is the increased ability of students in the regu-