

Concerns Over Forestry and Border Protection

Sir,

The present unsatisfactory protection of our forests from foreign pests should be of particular concern to those in the forest industry.

Back in 1948 the forest administrators had a clear understanding of the danger to our forests of imported destructive forest pests and had vision to establish a separate, effective forest quarantine (border control) service even though the economic conditions in the country were poor following World War II. This service continued to effectively exist until the recent merger (take over) with the agriculture service. Most unfortunately this so-called merger has resulted in a near cancellation of effective forest border control. Some agriculture officers not interested in forest quarantine, dominated the Forest officers and treated them with contempt to the extent that most of the experienced Forest officers left out of sheer frustration.

In 1948 when we had only 350,000 ha of plantation forests, effective quarantine (border control) was considered to be necessary. Alarming we now have over 1,700,000 ha of such forests (i.e. a 500% increase) and we do not now have a satisfactory or adequate forest quarantine service.

If we seriously intend to protect our forests we need to have separately focused and trained border control people most preferably with an experienced forest background and understanding of the asset they are protecting. Also good officers need to be good practical and dedicated people who are not dominated by inexperienced academics as is apparently in vogue at present.

Protection of our forests from fires is recognised and correctly provided for at considerable expense. Even though overseas countries may have many times more forests destroyed by insects than from fires, we expend very little at our border which is the site of greatest control over importing these and other pests.

If all this is too difficult for our present leaders to understand and correct, then I am afraid that only a disaster in our forests with tremendous expense will awake them to the need for proper protection.

J. A. Smith

Forestry's Influencers Remembered

Sir,

It is interesting to look back over the last millennium to see who were the forestry figures who were responsible for the things that influenced New Zealand forestry over this period.

While many have played important parts over this time I have selected six who I consider had the greatest lasting influence.

First on my list is L. Macintosh Ellis who set up and developed the State Forest Service. His efforts secured land for the huge State planting of exotic forests throughout the country. His enthusiasms inspired the private sector to also start a large planting programme.

Two men played a significant part in transforming Ellis's ideas into reality. They were Roderick McCrae and Owen Jones. McCrae was Officer-in-Charge of what was to become the great Kaingaroa State Forest. He was responsible for organising and carrying out the planting operations in the 1925-1935 period when a huge area was planted. The work force was housed in temporary camps spread over the area. He endeared himself to all who worked under him for his efforts to ensure that supplies and mail reached them over the poor roads that were there then. Owen Jones was a graduate of Oxford and trained in Germany, was Forest Administrator for Perpetual Trusts at Putaruru. He had similar problems as those faced by McCrae. He was also highly respected by those under him. He fought a continual battle with his financial controllers who wanted the cheapest possible job done. Jones stood his ground and maintained a high standard of professionalism throughout.

Next is the one who I believe has had the greatest long-term effect on New Zealand forestry in the century. This is A.R. Entrican. Of lasting importance was his establishment of a Professional Division in the Forest Service. Up until then graduate foresters were not welcome in the Service. He appointed all available graduates from the then defunct New Zealand forestry schools to professional positions in the Service and after the war recruited experienced graduates from the Colonial forests services that were then being disbanded.

In 1945 Entrican established the Forest Experiment and Research Station at Rotorua. This went on to later become the Forest Research Institute of world fame. At the same time he started the National Forest Survey which was also a first in the Commonwealth. To run both these he appointed A.P. Thomson who is the next on my list. The survey was notable not only for its magnitude and thoroughness but for the number of young men who passed through its ranks and then went on to become leaders in New Zealand forestry and in a number of other professions. He introduced statistical method and the use of aerial photographs into New Zealand forestry.

Finally I would nominate John Groome to my list. He was the first in this country to risk all and set out as a consulting forester. This is now a flourishing group with a worldwide recognition for the quality of their services.

It would be interesting to see whom others would have on their list.

J.E. Henry