

- 5) An increase in number and popular acceptance of the ways to demonstrate value of forest management and use of forest products and services for individuals, communities and societies;
- 6) An increase in the ability of individuals, companies and governments to think more globally and make robust decisions - those that are good for a range of possible futures.

Let us hope that the next NZIF conference will provide an opportunity to present some more of success stories and that the positive “buzz” I felt at Nelson will be repeated. There is no doubt that there is a “problem” with the current business scenario and many of our natural environments as well as with the foreseeable climate. But there must be no doubt in people’s minds that the establishment and use of forests and forest products is part of any “answer”.

## Letter

### Restore the Forest Service?

Sir,

I must comment on Hamish Levack’s article on the NZ forestry League and his calls to resurrect an independent forestry agency. I share his views that the disestablishment of the Forest Service has had a damaging effect on forest policy and practice, allowing both Chile and most recently Australia to overtake us in terms of area of managed planted forests and value of wood product exports. In the mid 1980’s, neither Ronald Reagan nor Margaret Thatcher sold their state forests, only the labour governments of New Zealand and Sweden. (Thatcher tried and the Forestry Commission even sold a few woodlots before a revolt by the ladies who supported the Conservative Party persuaded their local MP’s with threats of boycotts of the afternoon teas and “bring and buys”. Particularly in England, the ladies used the forests for walks and privatisation would restrict access - the power of the non timber values of forests). Sweden realised its mistake and re-nationalised much of its former state forests that are now managed by Sveaskog (4.2 million ha, net profit NZ\$275 million).

Hamish states that NZ’s indigenous forests continue to degrade but the magnitude is unknown because DOC is not required to monitor them (How then does Hamish know that they are degrading?). However, supervised by MfE, a National Forest Inventory of the indigenous forests has just been completed and the data analysed. Some 1200 PSPs have been installed on an 8 x 8 km grid over all indigenous forest and all shrubland. By incorporating some 170 existing NVS plots into the sample frame, it has been possible to estimate change since 1990. The PSPs will be remeasured over the next 5 years as a Continuous Forest Inventory. The first year’s remeasurement was completed this year and hopefully the current, agreed budget will be maintained.

NZ is too small a country for the village elders to admit their mistake in closing the Forest Service. It will take a new generation before they do. The best that is likely to be achieved is to create a model similar to that of the US Department of Agriculture, with a clear, distinct forestry organisation within MAF. It would require a manager reporting directly to the CEO of MAF and

responsible for all forestry matters, excluding managing the conservation estate. The functions that are common to agriculture and forest production, (e.g. biosecurity, tariff negotiations) could continue with sufficient critical mass within the larger organisation while having a well resourced and enthusiastic forestry organisation, capable of giving good policy advice based on technical expertise and practical experience. This way, an unwinnable battle with environmentalist could be avoided and “face” could be saved.

Chris Goulding

(These comments are the writer’s own and do not necessarily represent those of his employer)