



Reforestation

Does the Institute of Foresters have a role in promoting reforestation of New Zealand?

The Institute has long fought and argued for limiting the destruction of our natural forests as well as for their protection and proper management. It has also supported the development of plantations to supply wood for the local and export based industries. Because of the Institute's low public profile its stance is generally not known to the public, some of whom have even portrayed us in a much more negative light.

The Institute has been and continues to be consistent in its stand against the reduction in forests. For example, 30 years ago, A. P. Thomson, writing on balanced land-use in the *N.Z. Journal of Forestry* (1958), argued that "there is the absolute necessity to retain - and in many places to restore - protection forests . . ." and then concluded:

"The Institute has drawn attention to these vital matters on numerous occasions, but it is obvious that thinking in many quarters is still at variance with the historical, physical and economic evidence . . . Correct appreciation of the facts would be a desirable first step towards wiser and more permanent land usage; and the Institute can play an important part in attaining this ideal. We could champion no more worthy cause."

In its latest submission on Westland's forests (summarized on page 27) the Institute again deplored the continued overcutting of these forests. It supported concepts such as additions to National Parks, new forest parks, World Heritage areas, as well as arguing for a small sustained use from limited forest areas.

The Institute's Council has also been involved in formulating a forestry policy for New Zealand. In it there is a strong emphasis on conservation and management for the multiple benefits of forests.

I would like to suggest that our thinking needs to be re-orientated towards a more positive stance on reforestation. Since man's arrival we have cleared forest from about half of New Zealand's land area and replaced about 5% in the form of plantations. To this needs to be added trees planted for amenity, soil erosion purposes, etc. but the total amount planted is only a fraction of that lost through deforestation. The traditional argument is that we need this land for agriculture or other uses, but the truth is that we have, as a nation, gone too far. There are many areas which should never have been cleared - Cyclone Bola's destruction on the East Coast illustrates this (see page 4). There is an interesting report by the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority (Streamland 632) which reports on the long-term rate of soil formation after landslides and the consequent loss of farming production. In some situations

hillslopes will never be able to sustain pastoral farming. In some areas farmers have failed several times, leaving the land to revert to scrub and fern on each occasion. Perhaps the ending of agricultural subsidies will now allow such areas to revert to forest.

P. F. J. Newsome (1987) in 'The Vegetative Cover of New Zealand' (see review page 30) comments that some vegetation communities "have cultural stability maintained by the continued activities of humans while others have achieved a degree of ecological stability independent of human influence. The remaining, still large, proportion is in a range of dynamic communities variously drawn towards one or other of these stable conditions". He quotes earlier work which suggests that about half of the earlier country is in this latter dynamic situation. The ecological potential for reforestation is great.

The aesthetic, recreational and other values of forests and trees in or near urban areas has become more important in recent years. Perhaps the call by urban people for a halting of the destruction of native forests is partly a reaction to their environment as well as their 'gut' feeling that we have gone too far with our deforestation. Most urban people do value trees whether native or introduced and would support a move to right past mistakes.

I believe that the time is therefore right for us to grasp a new positive vision. That vision should be to increase our forests, both in the countryside and in the urban areas.

What would this afforestation vision mean? First of all it would require us to develop clear policies, objectives and practical guidelines. These might include more plantations - they have their roles - but probably of greater importance would be forests for soil and water conservation recreation, landscape and other values. These forests should include native species both planted and by encouraging ecological succession towards forest or other 'stable' ecosystems. Secondly, it would mean the Institute being involved in actual projects. This involvement could give a sense of purpose and achievement for the individual, the local sections and the Institute as a whole. And finally by creating public awareness there would be more contact and involvement with people and groups outside our profession.

'Reforestation', I suggest, is the type of vision, the type of purpose, that the Institute of Foresters requires as we move into the last decade of the century. What do you think?

D. J. Mead
Editor

N.Z. Institute of Foresters Inc

ELMIA WOOD 89

Sweden's International Forestry Trade Fair in June 1989

This is a splendid opportunity to visit a fellow leading forestry nation.

We will visit the biennial Elmia Wood forestry fair in central Sweden. This major expo covers the whole range of forest management and processing in live displays on an extensive woodland site. Elmia Wood is also a great forum for forestry professionals from many countries.

In addition to the 4 day fair a comprehensive study tour in association with Swedish foresters is envisaged. Plan now for this exciting professional experience, travelling with your colleagues and representing NZ at Elmia Wood 89. If interested, please write by **30 June 1988** with your name, address, phone number and subjects of special interest (for study tour) to:

N.Z. Institute of Foresters,
Elmia Wood 89 Tour,
P.O. Box 12314,
Wellington North.