

with clarity of purpose and accountability being in vogue, resource management laws are seen as lacking clear objectives and priorities. Lawyers, planners and interest groups have had a heyday promoting conflicting views and trying to achieve a consensus position. The process has been bureaucratic, slow and costly.

Geoffrey Palmer leads an eight-member Cabinet Committee trying to simplify and co-ordinate the resource management law reform exercise. Although he has on occasions talked about the exercise being "zero-based", meaning it would address fundamental issues – a sort of back to basics consideration of resource management – he has not been averse to dropping strong hints, from time to time, about the direction in which he wants the task to proceed. He has made some pointed comments about his desire to give local government more power over environmental planning issues. "We don't want central Government involved in making decisions under these laws," he told the National Business Review on January 28, 1988. He is reported further as having said that Rogernomics might indeed be the panacea that New Zealand seeks and suggests that he and his Cabinet colleagues would be focusing on basic issues such as whether or not environmental planning was needed at all and whether market mechanisms could be used to resolve planning issues.

Whilst Mr Palmer's calls for greater consistency and a reduction in complexity are laudable the reform work to date has failed to demonstrate any adherence to an environmental management ethic that embraces the principles of sustainability and wise use. Interestingly enough in an attempt to convince one and all that he has not been entirely sucked in by the Douglas doctrine, Mr Palmer finally qualified his comments to National Business Review with the rejoinder ". . . I have little doubt that we need a planning law of some sort. I can see no escape from it and I think it would be undesirable and wrong to suggest we need no planning laws at all." Nonetheless Mr Palmer has clearly shown his hand and come out in favour of freeing up and devolving resource management decision-making to lower levels of Government and exposing it to the vagaries of the market place.

The linkages between the resource management law reform exercise and the review of local government being conducted concurrently by the Local Government Commission are obvious. For example, the high-profile Local Government Commissioner, Brian Elwood, speaking on national radio's 'Insight' programme, on September 25,

1988 spoke of the relationship between the proposed new local government boundaries and the disposition of resources. New local governments, he said, could deal with conservation issues. Probably indicative of things to come has been the abolition of the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority and the devolution of its powers to Catchment Boards in July. There are strong suggestions that Catchment Boards are about to go the way of the former national body, with their responsibilities being transferred to new Regional Councils.

The essence of the issue relates to whether or not the current reviews will give rise to a system of environmental management that will promote sustainable development and environmental sensitivity. Or will it abdicate central Government's powers to parochial authorities driven, because of their short-term need for funds, by an exploit-

ation ethic? If the latter prevails forestry and other land-use activities that require long-term vision are likely to be relegated down the order. Will regional governments be reliable guardians of environmental values and sustainable land-use or will they not?

With the greatest upheaval in local government since the abolition of the provinces about to descend on the country, and with Geoffrey Palmer set on a course of action to simplify and devolve natural resource management, the future promises more uncertainty and change. The future role of those central government agencies involved in administering existing land use and resource statutes is problematic. There are strong indications that they are likely to be affected in a way that makes the recent turmoil in the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Forestry look like a ripple before the storm.

## RECENT EVENTS

# Changes at the School of Forestry

The School of Forestry's Advisory Committee has now met twice. Appointment to the committee was individual, not organizational. Members are: Dr S.D. Richardson (Chairman), Mrs H.R. Hughes, Mr K.C. Johnson, Dr J.M. Valentine and Mr D.G.K. Viles. The Head and the Dean of the School are also members *ex officio*. Having developed the necessary background to the School and the University at its first meeting, the Committee then settled very positively into a more specific advisory role on current School activities, at its second meeting. It plans to continue to meet twice a year.

### Significant

Several significant changes are likely to occur in the B.For.Sci. degree. It has been agreed that an introductory forestry course (Forestry and Societies) will be taught in the first year and open to all students on campus. Year three will largely be taught at Lincoln College. This will allow students to take some Lincoln courses as well as making available some forestry courses to agricultural students. Also jointly taught

'Agroforestry' and 'Resource Based Recreation' courses will be offered. In the fourth year there is a proposal to teach a new course called 'Land Resource Policy'. There are other smaller changes.

### Practical Courses

The practical courses have been altered. Students will have a basic skills course in their second year and before entering their third and fourth years will have month-long practical courses in February. The first of these will be held next year and is to be run at the Forest Training Centre in Rotorua. Compulsory vocation work experience has been dropped until the School can be sure sufficient employment is available. The students, with the help of Timberlands, have also trained themselves as an emergency fire-fighting team.

A careers video describing the B.For.Sci degree has recently been produced. It is available from the School of Forestry and will be of particular help to those talking to senior secondary school classes or career evenings.

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