

Appointment is a signal of Government's support

John Valentine's appointment as the new MOF chief is a signal of Government's support for Forestry.

John Valentine began his career as a Forest Service technical trainee in 1962. Between then and 1987 he accumulated a BSc (Victoria), a BSc Forestry (Aberdeen), and a PhD (Washington) as well as experience as a field forester, scientist, and forestry planner. In March this year he was promoted from Assistant Secretary (Policy), of MOF (i.e. the Ministry of Forestry) to Secretary, the title given to the Ministry's chief executive officer.

John's appointment gives good signals to the forestry sector.

The Institute of Forestry congratulates John, not just because he is an active member of the Institute, having served as both Treasurer and Councillor, or because he is well respected by the

forestry profession, but because it means that contrary to rumour a stand-alone Ministry of Forestry will continue to exist. The appointment of a trained forester from within instead of some "expert" from another discipline from outside confirms the Government's confidence in the existing Ministry of Forestry.*

Over the last few years forestry has suffered from much uninformed criticism and it is only now that the community is beginning to appreciate the potential that forestry offers. (The importance of a strong Ministry of Forestry is implied by our President, W.R.J. Sutton, in his article on page 22.)

John says he has two immediate priorities.

Strong links between new MOF and FRI are going to be needed.

The first is to ensure that the transition from MOF as it is now to a new MOF and a forestry Crown Research Institute

(CRI) or CRIs is managed in a way that ensures both organisations are well placed to serve the sector and benefit the country. The key measure of success will be the strength of the relationship that has developed between the new MOF and the CRI(s) in say a couple of years' time.

In future forestry must be seen as an integral part of both the economy and the environment.

John also says that the current proposal from the science task force for the bulk of the Forest and Wildlands Ecosystems Division of FRI to go to a Terrestrial Environment CRI fails to appreciate major issues for our forestry development over the next decade. Forestry must be seen to be an integral part of both the environment and the economy. FRI has always attributed part of its reputation to the synergies between the divisions. In the past this has been particularly so between the wood technologists and the silviculturists, but in the future it is the relationship between the ecologists and the technologists that will be the most critical.

John also wants to ensure that the Ministry is appreciated as a key part of the sector. MOF needs to work hard together with the rest of the sector to ensure that the public has a much better appreciation of what forestry is about, what the opportunities are and how they affect them. He sees a large part of the job as information brokerage. As well as getting information out, he says MOF needs to develop a network and credibility to enable it to be right up with what is going on in the sector. MOF needs to have an intelligence network which feeds through the Government system and around the sector. The Ministry needs to continue to develop a proactive, facilitating and catalytic role. Good luck John.

Hamish Levack, Editor

*** Footnote**

Government seems to be rating a forestry background highly these days, (maybe because of its connotations with pruning, cutting, and getting rid of dead wood). The chief executive of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Russ Ballard) and now the new head of the Department of Social Welfare (Andy Kirkland) are also NZIF members with wide forestry experience.



John Valentine