



The long road to professionalism in New Zealand Forestry

In November 1996 the first foresters will be registered in New Zealand. This may not be seen as a momentous event by all Institute of Forestry members. The recognition of a tertiary degree, or outstanding practical performance with internal peer review, has come to be accepted as automatically warranting professional recognition. To its credit, the Institute is now taking the required steps to have those who are prepared to achieve and maintain the necessary level of competence and standards registered as professional foresters. If we accept the Protestant ethic, that it takes a long time to achieve anything worthwhile and durable, this will indeed be a memorable milestone in the history of the Institute.

Following a four-year period of doubt and debate, the first Forestry Consultant was recognised exactly 30 years ago, in December 1966. This honour went to Ross McArthur, who, following years of service to the FRI and the Marlborough Catchment Board, went on to promote innovative haulers to the Sounds and to produce a comprehensive record of Cork Oak in New Zealand.

Indeed, the opportunity to continue to be involved in one's chosen profession beyond the normal time of retirement appears to be one of the unheralded benefits of becoming a consultant. In the 1960s a number of very experienced ex-Forest Service and company people overcame the handicaps of age or technical qualification, by becoming "consultants for consultants", using their influence and contacts to open doors for their younger colleagues. The latter were often more brash than effective when they stepped out of their comfortable corporate or Government shoes. These elder statesmen included Norm Dolamore (first boss of Waipa), Roy Buckett (the only NZFP person to challenge David Henry), and Jim Perham (at various times the chief in four different conservancies).

However, even before the 1960s foresters had been paid professional fees rather than salaries for their services. The most notable exponent was Owen Jones. He was responsible for the outstanding technical foundation and high establish-

ment standards achieved by New Zealand Forest Products before Frank Hutchinson and Jack Henry took over and the FRI also became slowly available to the private sector. The independence of thought and direction granted Jones, who was not a company staffer, may well have been a major factor in NZFP's success, with the rates of planting not being dominated by bureaucratic intervention. His place in early forest history has proven to be unique, as until the 1960s most graduate foresters were employed by the Government (national or local). Too often this meant that they were forced as servants to toe the party line when their professional instincts may have dictated otherwise. This probably delayed the recognition of forestry as a profession in New Zealand more than any other factor. No matter how active the Institute became in opposing Government policies through the columns of the Journal of Forestry (price control on timber; caution on the Beech Scheme and native logging in general), its voice lacked strength in select committees and in the media because its senior members were gagged. To step out of line meant certain ministerial disapproval.

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The initial moves towards recognition of forestry consultants began in 1962. The prevailing attitude at the time was reflected in the early drafts of the rules which were to govern recognition. The protection of the public's interest was given more importance than the protection or promotion of the practitioner. For over half a century Government agencies had been expected to support the rural sector in the provision of advisory services. The thought of foresters actually charging for their services rather than giving them away for free was a little too ahead of "user pays" to be welcomed by all. Even at the going rate of two guineas an hour

consultants were accused of somehow prostituting their profession.

A closed shop for those lucky enough to have acquired a tertiary degree was never envisaged. Neither was recognition restricted to foresters. Economists, scientists and even engineers gained recognition through proof of their ability to act independently in fields closely allied to forestry.

Two important restrictions built into the initial rules have, however, stood the tests of time and challenge. The procedure for nomination and "the publishing of the bans" in the Newsletter have forced likely aspirants into critical self-examination before facing their peers. There has been at least one rejection resulting from this procedure.

In the early 1980s a very strong move to have companies "recognised" was also forestalled in favour of individuals only having to bear full responsibility for their advice. The justification for this became starkly apparent when it was found that innocent farmers were being offered consulting services by Institute members, woodlot valuations by real estate companies and contracts to log and purchase, all by employees of branches of the same corporate!!!

The Consultants Committee, made up of foresters employed by a variety of organisations, has been guided by a series of very well-balanced chairmen. Representatives from the Valuation profession have also been of inestimable help. This is reflected in the Exposure Draft of the Forest Valuation Standards released in October 1996. This timely and comprehensive addition to the growing library of indigenous forestry publications is a credit both to the Institute and to the voluntary efforts of the compiling team. It is noteworthy that in the same month the Securities Commission cancelled registration of a forest investment prospectus because it was misleading! Continuing efforts will be needed to ensure that the use of forests as securities is above suspicion by a public which is becoming increasingly interested in this form of asset. After decades of generally ineffective (except for companies) soft loans, incentive schemes and

tax breaks, forestry as an investment for individuals has taken off. This phenomenon is without doubt due to the withdrawal of the State as a major but non-commercial player in the forestry sector. Social and political imperatives have always negated any genuine attempts by

Government foresters to manage and market commercial forestry at a profit.

Now that we are no longer burdened by such constraints our profession should hasten to protect both itself and the thousands of people who now depend on our knowledge. Formal registration of profes-

sional foresters having now been achieved, the next step is to ensure that the public are well informed of their existence.

J. G. Groome

Forestry History Report

We should not overlook the importance attached to forestry history in other parts of the world. Indeed, Forest History is a Subject Group in IUFRO Division 6 (Social and Economic Aspects of Forestry, Group 6.07). The Forest History Subject Group is divided into four different working parties on the following subjects: ecological forest history, timber and timber industries, tropical forest history, and history of hunting culture. The Group holds global meetings in conjunction with the five-yearly meetings of the umbrella IUFRO World Group, the next being in Malaysia in 2000. There are over 300 members at present and membership of the subject group is free, to encourage people to take part. If New Zealanders wish to participate in Group 6.07, they should send their addresses to Dr Elisabeth Johann, AG Forstgeschichte im OFA, A-1130, Wien, Wlassakstrasse 56, Austria.

While in Vienna earlier this year the Dean of Forestry at Canterbury, Ron O'Reilly, took the initiative to contact Dr Johann and tell her of the developing interest in this country in New Zealand forestry history, leaving some published historical material with her. Dr Johann offers a forestry history course at the University of Freiburg. There are other forestry history courses at universities in Vienna and Munich. In all these courses emphasis is placed on both the social and the economic implications of forestry policy and forest management; the modern perspective is the comprehensive link between mankind and the forests.

Our steering group has continued to promote the forestry archive in the MacMillan-Brown Collection and has alerted a major forestry company holding historical records to its potential use. The steering group is not, and should not be, "pushy" in such approaches; the main objective is to emphasise the importance of records being kept in safe places. Material in the MacMillan-Brown forestry archive is kept in a secure library store which is heated and so maintains a fairly even temperature, has a fire alarm and contains spacious, high-quality mobile

shelving. The University is able to secure experienced archivists from time to time to order and catalogue the material. Organisations depositing material in the archive can retain control over it in various ways. They can stipulate conditions of access to it. For instance, they can arrange to be told about all research enquiries and can refuse to release any commercially sensitive data. (The MacMillan-Brown Collection already contains records of some commercial organisations.) Also depositors can continue to have access themselves to the materials they provided. The University would send faxes or photocopies to them of any records desired.

Over the last few months we have received several welcome approaches from people who possess, or know of, historical records or sources. We hope such contacts will keep on coming. Also it is gratifying to report from the farm forestry

scene that J.J. (Joll) Hosking is writing the history of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association.

It is possible to speculate on one – doubtless there will be several – possible sequence in the continued development of New Zealand forestry history. One step is the deposit of records in safe, publicised places. A next step could be the interpretation of such records and the publication of accounts on circumscribed forestry subjects by well-informed specialists who would usually not be professional historians. The latter could come in later and fit these vignettes into larger historical pictures which would often extend beyond forestry *per se*. But first things come first; hence the current emphasis on safeguarding the records.

Peter McKelvey



Observations on New Zealand forest policy

E.F. Bruenig*

In May, 1996 I had the opportunity to make a brief visit to New Zealand, visiting different forests and learning about forestry in this country. For me, the visit highlighted two outstanding features of New Zealand forest policy. The first is the privatisation of much of the forest activities. The second is the change in attitude towards the indigenous forests on private land, from seeing them as an obstacle to development to acknowledging their value as heritage and renewable resource (Ministry of Forestry, 1993). The forest policy,

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although obviously in a dynamic phase of adaptation and development, raises an important issue in terms of forest uses.

Within New Zealand, it appears that there has been a change from "multiple" use or "multiple purpose" forestry to "dominant purpose" forestry. The control of most indigenous forests has been transferred to the new Department of Conservation, while the productive plantation forestry was privatised. Naturally, opinions among the various interest groups are controversial. The plantation group wants "predominant purpose" to be interpreted as excluding any production function from the indigenous forest. This is supported