



Comment from the Incoming President

It is several years since I was last a member of the Institute's council and Vice-President and in that time there have been some very significant changes in forestry administration, structure and ownership in New Zealand.

This process commenced with the restructuring of the Forest Service in 1987 and has since included the progressive privatisation of the Crown's plantations starting in 1990, substantial changes in forestry company structure and ownership, major growth of the small forest owner sector, consolidation of the Department of Conservation's role as administrator of the Crown's conservation forest estate, and most recently the amalgamation of the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry.

Change on this scale is unsettling for most involved, and calamitous for those displaced by the process. It is therefore no surprise to find that over the last decade the fortunes of the Institute have varied significantly.

A strong focus on addressing the issues of greatest concern to members over this period, holding costs, and supporting the professional development of the organisation have been very successful and today the Institute is in very good heart. For this we should particularly thank the councils



of the last few years.

The breadth of endeavour that the last council maintained was frequently and favourably commented upon at last month's AGM. However those who looked more closely will also have noticed that this level of activity comes at some cost, and without the continued commitment of the members cannot be main-

tained. Nevertheless the leadership that the Institute provides in its professional capacity is important and, to the extent that we can afford to do so, should in my view, be maintained.

It is against this background that I have given some consideration to where the new council might best and most effectively place its endeavours over the next year or two. There are three areas that I will be stressing:

- support for the membership through the continued professional development of the Institute and its members;
- leadership on specific forestry issues where it is appropriate for the national professional forestry body to do so;
- encouraging growth in membership, especially from the significant ranks of experienced and qualified practising foresters not yet members of the organisation.

In many respects this approach continues and further develops the strategy of the former council, and I am satisfied continued strengthening of the Institute in this way will be of greatest long-term benefit.

Peter Berg

Where have all the foresters gone?

Another round of restructuring is sweeping through the New Zealand forest industry. And with this we see more foresters, often senior, experienced people, being laid off. And the era of a separate government forestry bureau, which began life in 1919, has disappeared with the merger of the Ministry of Forestry.

New Zealand forestry, particularly the highly developed plantation sector much admired by the rest of the world, was a direct result of the vision of Alex R Entrican, an engineer. He insisted on the NZ Forest Service developing a sophisticated three level training programme. At the top

was the highly trained forester group, trained in degree programmes around the world. These were the technical, planning people, many of whom were responsible for leading the second planting boom of the 1960's, encouraging the new forest industries and pushing more sophisticated silviculture and management. Some of these made their mark in the Forest Service Conservancies, others in the Forest Research Institute and in education, and still others went across to or were part of the private sector.

The second level were the rangers and below them the woodsmen. Many of these

became quite influential, rising to leading positions and becoming highly respected within the industry. These groups were trained in New Zealand by the Forest Service.

In 1970 we had the opening of the School of Forestry at Canterbury University under the direction of Professor Peter McKelvey. His contribution was recognised last month by the New Zealand Institute of Forestry with the award of the Kirk Horn Flask and Medal (see elsewhere in this issue). Since 1970 the School has produced almost 700 graduates.

The first major restructuring occurred in 1987 with the dissolution of the NZ Forest Service. Salaried staff with commercial responsibilities in the Forest Service were reduced from 1990 to 662 within the new Forestry Corporation. With privatisation of the Corporation in 1990 most of these staff became redundant, although a large number transferred to the new businesses. In 1987 other NZ Forest Service staff joined the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Forestry (which included the Forest Research Institute), but it is estimated that almost 900 salaried staff were made redundant.

In the 1990's we have continued to see further reductions within both the public and private sectors. In the latest round of restructuring within the public sector we have seen a reduction within the Department of Conservation and associated with the amalgamation of the Ministries of Forestry with Agriculture to form the new Department of Agriculture and Forestry. It is estimated that about 30% of professional forestry staff in policy and information in MOF have been lost since the middle of 1997, through non-replacement of resignations, redundancies at the time of the merger or internal transfers (some 24 staff between January and March 1998). Several of the larger forest companies have also been reducing their forestry staff (see Recent Events section).

Where have all these foresters gone? It is difficult to be sure as there have been no studies. Some will have taken the opportunity of redundancy packages to retire or to go into different lines of work. The steep rise in the number of registered forestry consultants within the Institute of Forestry illustrates that a number have followed this path (figure 1). The 1994

survey of Institute of Forestry members throws little light on the impact of the changes — only 5% described themselves as being either not in employment or employed outside the forest industry. Probably many who left the Institute between 1987 and 1994 were caught up in restructuring. One important conclusion is that we need a definitive study of the social impact of these changes focusing on both human and economic aspects.

What are the broader forestry implications of these losses of trained forestry people? Again we can only speculate, but in my opinion we are in danger of losing the long-term vision of the forestry development path built in earlier years. There is now no longer a separate Ministry to advise government on how the country can best capture the value of the 'green gold' it helped develop. Not only are the numbers of forestry people concerned with such services down within the new Ministry, but they are likely to be subsumed in the dominant agricultural culture. Only one of the senior management team of 12 within MAF is a professional forestry person, although the head of Finance also came from the Ministry of Forestry. Will the forestry people find their focus becoming diluted as they are expected to address other issues and will we find agricultural people dispensing forestry advice from an inadequate background? Plantation forestry and agricultural ecosystems are very different; they work within different time-frames; have different investment / cash flow patterns; have different ownership structures and different international profiles. There are also a number of questions that need to be addressed on the continued management of our indigenous forests and the multiple-use aspects of forestry. While there is

some obvious overlap, such as biosecurity and farm forestry, the key needs of the two sectors over the next decade tend to differ.

Even the vision of the plantation forests providing long-term wealth and other social values seems to be under attack. Forest companies appear to be looking at short-term profits or reacting to the down-turn in the log market. Today's market-driven culture seems to be about cutting costs and not creating wealth; in some companies the trend is not only to remove management staff but to reduce silvicultural inputs. The loss of experienced trained forestry staff does not seem to suggest more careful long-term planning linking forest growing closer to the markets requirements. Are we seeing a fundamental shift in plantation management in this country driven by short-term market forces? Only time will tell.

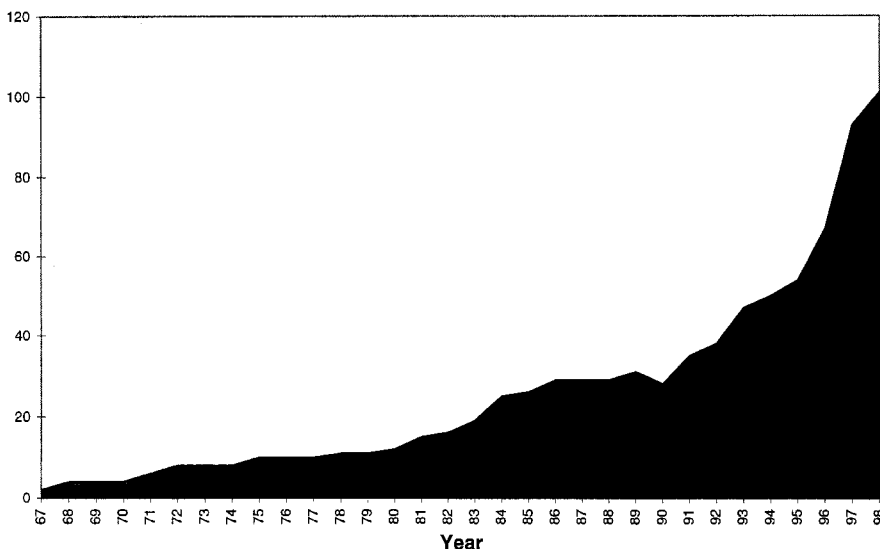
Again we need to ask how will the loss of forestry trained people within the Department of Conservation impact on the management of the conservation estate.

The growing membership of the Institute of Forestry is positive, however. The Annual General Meeting in Wanganui demonstrated that the Institute is now taking a leading role in providing professional support to its members and being an independent advocate for forestry. The development and approval of an Indigenous Forest Policy, the acceptance of a definition of forestry and a biodiversity statement, the ratification of an improved code of ethics and the changes to membership structures are all positive signs that the Institute is ready to meet the challenges.

I hope that the Institute actively fills the voids being created and increase its monitoring role. Development of a forest policy for New Zealand could be useful in this regard, as it will provide a standard by which to judge the changes that occur in forestry.

Don Mead
Acting Editor

Fig. 1 Registered Forestry Consultants & Registered Members



Apology

NZ Forestry apologises to N. Ledgard and M. Giller for publishing their ANZIF Conference Paper "Deciduous hardwood species — early silvicultural options for growing timber on farms" when they had not released it for publication. It apologises for any upset this has occurred.