

NELSON POLYTECHNIC

Graduating students looking for industry positions

The third year students are due to graduate at the end of June. They are an interesting mix of school leavers and mature students. There is increasing interest in identifying starting positions in the industry. Younger students are looking for positions that will provide relevant work experience. The older students are keen to start a little further up the ladder and use their people skills and life experience. There is also increasing interest from some in the contract workforce in accessing some of the business management and technical forestry units. The Diploma programme is providing opportunities for them to come in and take selected units.

There were insufficient enrolments to run the first year of the Diploma in Forestry course and this will start in February next year. Other forestry educational institutions have also had smaller numbers than before. It seems that the forest industry is not attracting keen young people in the way it has done in the past. There are a number of factors and these include:

- The adverse publicity from the restructuring and layoffs that followed the Asian downturn
- The adverse publicity from moves to improve health and safety in the industry
- The pressures to reduce operational costs
- The perception that the forest industry is not a high tech industry

To many, the forest industry is dirty, difficult, demanding and dangerous with long working hours. It is hard to project the image of an industry that offers young people a big future, when people see forestry workers returning home exhausted, in mud-covered boots and dirty, torn clothing, and often with hourly pay rates that are significantly less than those of their urban counterparts.

If the forest industry is to attract and retain a keen, enthusiastic and

well-trained workforce, it will have to offer terms and conditions that are comparable with other industries. Failure to do this will result in shortages of skilled labour in both silviculture and harvesting during the forthcoming expansion harvest in the new forestry regions.

-Lindsay Vaughan

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Practical skills on offer

In conjunction with Nelson Polytechnic, Lincoln University students will be offered the opportunity to undertake Unit Standards necessary for the General Requirements. The aim is for students to augment their university studies with practical skills and give

them access to employment in forestry operations as part of their work experience. The programme will be held at Lincoln University with instruction provided by Christchurch-based trainers from Nelson Polytechnic.

Hugh Bigsby will be taking a group of students to Sarawak for a field tour in April at the invitation of the Sarawak Timber Association. While students would normally visit operations in New Zealand, the opportunity for students to visit and experience the forest industry in Asia, given New Zealand's growing dependence on Asian markets, provides a great opportunity. The hope is that "in-country" experience in Asia will become a regular part of studies.

-Hugh Bigsby

WAIARIKI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Malaspina University College Visit

A group of staff and students from Malaspina University College on Vancouver Island, British Columbia recently spent 10 days at the Faculty of Forestry and Technology at Waiariki Institute of Technology in Rotorua.

One of the highlights of the group's time in Rotorua was a visit to the Tachikawa Sawmill site. The visitors were impressed with the extremely high accuracy of sawing, the very low mechanical downtime, and the wide range of sizes of wood produced.

In the group were 20 final year forest management students including one woman. This is unusual, as there are normally up to half a dozen women on this forest management course.

Malaspina teaches a two year Diploma of Forest Technology, and like Waiariki, has some 20 to 25 students who complete their qualification each year, with very good employment outcomes.

This is the second international trip Malaspina has done; two year ago staff and students visited a forestry school in Finland.



Malaspina University College lecturers, from row from left: David Smith, Tom Hedekar, Dr David Drakeford, Dean of Science and Technolog. Back: Michel Vallee, Barry Ostrand (who organised the tour to New Zealand) and Calvin Cook, a forestry consultant and contractor who has taught on Malaspina's forest management programme in the past.