

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,
New Zealand Journal of Forestry.

CONTROL OF TIMBER PRESERVATION

Dear Sir,

In your editorial notes in Vol. 9, No. 1, the one entitled "Control of Timber Preservation" takes up the cudgels on behalf of the small forest or woodlot owner. Leaving aside meanwhile the number of unjustifiable assumptions which detract from the value of the note, it may well be questioned whether the main premise has received due consideration. It may be accepted that the small-forest owner needs all the help he can get from the Institute and other organizations concerned with forestry. His purpose in growing the forest is presumably to market the final crop and one or more intermediate crops of sawlogs or peeler logs, and to that end he, and other small-forest owners in the district, must at an early stage of forestry operations, be encouraged to work together towards ensuring that adequate log supplies will be available to justify the existence of a sawmill in the district. By working together in this manner, the group might equally market their thinnings for preservation or, alternatively, plan to operate a small treating plant to supply their own farm needs plus a surplus for sale, if the method of operation has been demonstrated to be effective and dependable enough to justify consideration by T.P.A. of specifications additional to those provided at present.

In championing the cause of the amateur producer, the Institute should not overlook its greater obligations to forestry which are not dissimilar from those of the T.P.A. in relation to the very important preservation industry. The parallel of the backyard poultry keeper, the home orchardist or bee keeper is not inept; they are to be encouraged within reasonable limits unless they fail to observe the basic rules of hygiene in so far as their neighbours are affected, and of disease control without which the commercial industry could be imperilled. One might well question the grounds upon which it is claimed that the forest owning farmer has standards of treatment among the highest in the country. Certainly one or two such units might be singled out as carrying out treatment of consistently high quality. It is an old story that the very good amateur may be better than the average professional but one would be foolish indeed to claim, therefore, that the amateur as a class is superior to the professional. The T.P.A. would be failing in its responsibility to the Government if it did not look after the vast majority of farmers' and other users' needs by imposing quality control standards which give the assurance of consistency. It is to the credit of the Authority that it has grappled with the exceedingly awkward problems imposed by treatment of farm timbers and it is incorrect to assume that the current specifications are designed to stultify efforts to introduce simple treatments such as sap displacement. The specifications currently cover the great bulk of material produced commercially and therefore have broadened the scope of commercial treating operations to the extent that the main forest owners can plan their silvicultural operations with confidence.

Statements about end product control and severe penalties to be imposed for failure to conform with acceptable standards betray a singular lack of appreciation of sound business practice which basically depends upon the good faith between buyer and seller. The system of control exercised over the preservation industry should certainly be one that does not undermine this basis for business practice.

The unjustifiable assumptions referred to are as follows:

- (a) The small-forest or woodlot owner could scarcely by any stretch of the imagination be considered as important a supplier as those concerned with large-scale forestry. Posts and farm timbers, in any case, are only a small proportion of the preservative output of the country.
- (b) It is unjustifiable to conclude that treatments within reach of the small-forest owner will not be authorized, but the T.P.A. must certainly have evidence of adequate quality control.
- (c) The suggestion to the effect that T.P.A. is pre-occupied with existing processes to the detriment of improved processes would carry more weight if instances could be quoted to support the dubious suggestion.
- (d) The ultimate consumers are well represented on the T.P.A. and the interests of the small-forest owner are not overlooked.
- (e) Various developments mentioned in the penultimate paragraph are by no means unfamiliar territory to the T.P.A. whose ability to see them in correct perspective is certainly unequalled in this country.
- (f) Finally, the Institute is represented on the T.P.A. by two members whose guidance might well have been sought before the editorial note appeared in print.

Yours faithfully,

J. S. REID.

160 Wadestown Rd.,
Wellington.
July 24, 1964.

[NOTE: It should be assumed by our readers, as a matter of general principle, that in all editorial notes where company, local body or Government administration and policy are under criticism, we will not have sought the guidance of any member who is likely to be embarrassed by subsequent identification with such criticism. This is a case in point.

We welcome Mr. Reid's reassurances. — Ed.]