

EDITORIAL NOTES

Forestry and the National Development Conference, 1969

In February, 1968, the Prime Minister announced that a National Development Conference would be convened, with the following objectives: "To outline a programme and set targets for national development which over the next decade will give the necessary guidance and stimulus and provide the fullest opportunities and facilities for all sections of the community to develop and direct their resources, skills, 'know-how' and productive effort into those channels which can best promote economic growth and social development. In these ways to achieve a rate of economic progress which will ensure adequate employment opportunities for a growing population, maintain high levels of social welfare and promote a rising standard of living."

It is stated* that the National Development Conference will undertake a series of sector studies culminating in the establishment, where appropriate, of sector targets that are compatible with practicable estimates of overall national growth. National and sectoral targets will then be recommended by the Conference to Government for consideration.

As one of these sectors, Forestry is represented by a Committee with the following terms of reference: "In the light of:

- (a) the objectives of the National Development Conference;
 - (b) prospects for expanding and diversifying markets and production to meet export and domestic requirements;
 - (c) the desirability of optimum economic processing within the country of New Zealand's forest resources; and
 - (d) the social aspects of forest development and the use of forests not only for industry but also for conservation and recreation purposes.
- (1) To indicate desirable and practicable economic growth rates and targets for the development of New Zealand's forest resources and processing industries, during the periods ending 1972/73 and 1978/79, and in the longer term to the year 2000 or beyond.
 - (2) To report on possible ways of improving the efficiency of growing and managing forests and of converting, processing and marketing forest products, and to indicate, over the periods covered, the likely requirements of the sector for manpower, land, capital, research effort and other resources of facilities.
 - (3) To make recommendations to the National Development Conference on the above subjects and such other matters as the Committee may deem relevant."

* "A Guide to the National Development Conference", May 1968. R. E. Owen, Govt. Printer, Wellington.

Members of the Committee are:

- A. L. Poole, Director-General of Forests (Chairman)
- K. G. Fraser, Managing Director, Fletcher Group Services Ltd.
- F. W. Holmes, Economics Manager, Tasman Pulp and Paper Co. Ltd.
- H. G. Lang, Deputy Secretary to the Treasury
- M. J. Moriarty, Secretary of Industries and Commerce
- G. J. Schmitt, Senior Lecturer, Dept of Economics, Victoria University
- A. P. Thomson, Assistant Director-General of Forests
- D. O. Walker, Marketing Director, N.Z. Forest Products Ltd.

In order to implement and amplify the terms of reference, the Minister of Forests, Mr Duncan MacIntyre, has called for a Forestry Development Conference, to be held in Wellington on 18-20 February, 1969. It is being steered by a committee which differs from the above only in its secretariat. This Steering Committee has established seven individual working parties, in which about 50 people from organizations outside the Public Service are participating. They are to be concerned with: Marketing; Production Forestry; Forest Industries; Multiple-use Forestry; Finance; Manpower; and Education, training and research.

By the time this note appears in print, the Targets Committee of N.D.C. will have specified not only a level of overall national growth (probably somewhere between 4 and 6½%), but also how the necessary investment is to be apportioned between the major sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, fishing and forestry. This will provide the framework within which the forestry working parties are scheduled to make their final recommendations to their Steering Committee, by November. From this stage onward they will be preoccupied with analysing the particular consequences that follow for forestry—may it be done with sufficient realism to compel both attention and assent by the second plenary session of N.D.C. in April, 1969. There is danger latent in the timing of this to occur not long before the Government returns to the country for re-election: forestry and forest produce exports are much in the news of late, but the last thing we want is for forestry to become a political issue. If our targets become too ambitious and upset too many apple-carts, a major re-apportioning of investment resources might be demanded, that would make nonsense of this whole exercise.

There is, however, also another reason for the working parties to make theirs a cautious and cool-headed appraisal, since the thoroughness with which they cull and present their evidence, and the cogency of their findings, will temper not only any immediate "indicative planning" but also the authority of the reports, as references affecting future "action committees" for many years to come. The Director-General of Forests has specified the need to investigate and to innovate, and the value of the Forestry Development Conference is that it will secure a most timely concentration of effort in just these activities, as a basis for the recommendations to be laid before the N.D.C. and the people of New Zealand. In the words of our Minister of Forests, this is "potentially the most sig-

nificant event for forestry since the 1913 Royal Commission on Forestry recommended that the New Zealand Forest Service should be established as a separate department of Government."

Whither the Institute of Foresters?

There are few enterprises that so consistently demand long-term planning as the business of forestry. Cynics may decry the concepts of "rotation" and "yield-in-perpetuity", yet they remain fundamental ideas in the exercise of forest management, qualify them as we must, or may.

Yet, in its own particular business of caring for the welfare of forestry and the profession of forestry in New Zealand, this Institute shows an astonishing improvidence and lack of foresight. Each time our Treasurer presents the annual general meeting with a favourable credit balance for the year, there are those who cry for a reduction in fees, and trot out the familiar gibe that the Institute is not intended to be a profit-making organization.

It would seem that, in the past, there have been only two or three accepted reasons for the Institute to accumulate funds—*i.e.*, to purchase a printing-press (for producing a newsletter); to provide for increasing *Journal* costs, as the number of issues per annum increases; and in anticipation of the time when we must employ our own staff. The first of these objectives would be most inefficient, and is now redundant; the second is unnecessary, as the *Journal* price should be directly related to its net cost of production; and only the third reason has any cogency.

However, surely we should be looking beyond this?—there are broader issues and opportunities that it is now timely for the Institute to consider. Timely, because they are appropriate to the increasing stature of the Institute as a professional body, but particularly because the possession of funds in itself provides opportunities which it has been fruitless to discuss hitherto. Several alternatives have already been discussed in Council, and it is considered worth while to recapitulate these, and others, in order that members may come to some conclusion prior to the next annual general meeting.

Short-term proposals include subsidizing members of the Institute to attend various overseas conferences as our representatives. This would certainly provide a ready means of liquidating surplus funds, but the benefits are unlikely to extend much beyond the individuals concerned, while the representation would be purely nominal, since such individuals usually attend conferences in some other, official, capacity. A more original suggestion is that the Institute should, from time to time, invite particular speakers and contributors from overseas to attend our annual symposia as guests of the Institute. (A similar thing was done last year at the Rotorua symposium.) This would not only be of benefit and usefulness to all our members: it would also promote closer ties with our overseas colleagues, at just that level of fellowship where mutual understanding has its roots. One might particularly envisage a reciprocal arrangement with the Australian Institute of Foresters.

Alternatively, we might support more actively such organizations as the International Union of Forestry Societies or the International

Union for the Conservation of Nature. However, any financial contribution that we could afford would be negligible in comparison with other sources of their funds; and effectiveness is better secured by putting forward the right representatives, with zeal and determination to impel such causes. Thinking internationally, our 1965 Presidential Address focused attention on aid to the underdeveloped countries: what has the Institute done about it? We need look no further afield than our own front door for forests and foresters that need our support—in Fiji, Niue or Samoa. Moreover, the scale of their needs is more commensurate with our resources, than something as grandiose as the Colombo Plan. It has been suggested, for example, that we could start by donating a nucleus of practical forestry texts to Avele Agricultural College.

Some may consider that there are still worthy causes enough, within New Zealand, that demand our consideration. What of the proposals for closer affiliation with the Royal Society, and financial support for its major building project? And although the Institute has already done much to ensure the establishment of a strong School of Forestry at Canterbury, it is imperative, for the good of the profession, that we continue to take an active interest in developments there. At the very least we should establish one or more annual prizes, perhaps in conjunction with the award of the Schlich Medal, to encourage outstanding students. It will also be recollected that one of the strongest criticisms, with which we opposed the intention to re-establish any New Zealand School of Forestry, was that it would eliminate the diversity of outlook we had hitherto obtained by sending foresters to be trained in different overseas countries. Should we not aim to endow a travelling scholarship to send young graduate foresters overseas?

And finally, we should not overlook the heavy costs involved in becoming a Chartered Society—as we must aim to do, if the Institute is to speak with full legal authority on matters concerning our profession. That need may be closer than we realize.

The funds now available are, of course, still nowhere near adequate to provide for the more ambitious projects—but the sooner we embark on such a course, the sooner will we achieve them. The Institute should set up a general Endowment Fund to finance future projects that will promote the best interests of forestry and the profession of forestry in New Zealand. Not only should a specified minimum percentage of net annual income and interest be set aside in this fund, but it would also provide a focal point for bequests and donations by individuals. So long as we continue to quibble about annual surpluses and deficits, with no clear and acknowledged aim for our resources, so long will this Institute lack concrete examples of that foresight and altruistic purpose that are one of the hallmarks of any worthwhile society.