



New Zealand Institute of Foresters PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 1987

"FORESTERS OUR JOB IS GROWING" is a bumper sticker used by the Society of American Foresters. In New Zealand today you could be forgiven for thinking that it may be more appropriate to have a sticker saying "FORESTERS OUR JOB IS shrinking".

The year 1987 is one of the most challenging ones ever faced by the profession of forestry in New Zealand. There are a number of matters, some more profound than others, which are affecting our Institute and its members. In my opinion the more important of these are:

1. The profession of forestry is poorly regarded by the public of this country. It is either seen as tending that "undesirable exotic", radiata pine, or as the desecrators of indigenous forest or BOTH. The conservation groups' success has generated a negative impact on the profession. Compare the situation in Germany as described in the January 22, 1987 issue of *New Scientist*. To quote: "...a quarter of the country is covered in trees. Most Germans believe the forests to be ancient. This is nonsense...there is not a square metre of virgin forest in Germany...that does not diminish the emotional ties that Germans feel toward the...forests... The country's surge in environmental sentiment arose almost entirely from the discovery that air pollution was killing its forests." The public there is behind its foresters.
2. The political consequences of the first matter has led to the greatest shake-up in government administration for many years and has involved many of our members. Some have new jobs in the Forestry Corporation, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Ministry of Forestry (MOF). Some now have no job in forestry at all. We have gone from a position where many people within the profession were employed as "foresters" to one where they are often now called something quite different, e.g. "Conservation Officers".
3. Council of the Institute, for the first time in its history, is not dominated numerically by New Zealand Forest Service (NZFS) personnel. The 11 members hail from nine different

organizations plus one with the exalted status "retired". Dr M.M. Roche of Massey University in a paper in press titled "Arnold Hansson and the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters", comments: "It is worth remembering that the Institute grew out of the wishes of the first qualified foresters in New Zealand to meet, and to promote their profession. The peculiar circumstances of the time in interplay with some of the personalities involved produced a different outcome... The end result was wide membership recruitment to offset the State Forest Service members and prevent the Institute becoming a surrogate state union." The original object of the Institute, "to further the development of technical forestry and the interests of the profession of forestry in the Dominion of New Zealand," was very quickly discarded as a consequence of these actions.

4. The extent of members' dissatisfaction with the Institute has reached another of its periodic peaks. It appears that a search for new direction is needed. What is in it for me?, what status does this organization have?, what do I get by being a part of it? are all cries that have reached new heights.
5. 1987 is the diamond jubilee year of the Institute of Foresters; however, as with most other subjects coming before us, we can argue over that too. Some believe that it is 1988. Happily this subject has not received the same attention that others have, allowing us to actually make some progress on celebrating it.

I intend to take these subjects, examine them in the light of our history and finally to tell you of the resolutions that this Council has made over the future of the Institute.

The public image of the profession and the Institute cannot be considered to be satisfactory at this time. Historical information suggests that this has long been a problem.

Geoff Sweet, when Editor of the *Journal* in 1978 (Vol. 23/1), wrote an article titled "The Institute — A Major Role at Last?". He wrote of requests to the NZIF from the Native Forest Action



Mr Peter Thode

Council and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society "to clarify the extent to which specific Government decisions were based on sound forestry principles". He said that "it was proper for the Institute both to be asked such questions and to provide the information and our role in this area can only increase".

Our role in this area has in fact decreased. I wonder if our reply to the request had anything to do with it. NFAC and the RFBPS have subsequently considered us to be among the ranks of the exploiters of forest and have sold this concept to the public. We are not seen as an independent Institute dedicated to the conservation and management of forested land. This is a terrible shame.

There was a letter to the Editor written by Priestley Thomson in 1945 and published in Vol. 5/2 of the *Journal* which shows that we were warned. "...at the present time, in New Zealand as in other parts of the world foresters are fighting a losing battle". He referred to the "large and vociferous body of protectionists and conservationists who...would protect and conserve so thoroughly that the forester himself would not be allowed into the forests. "...Their propaganda," he said, "results in a general antagonism to the professional forester...but whatever form (it) takes it has its origin in a genuine and deep-felt goodwill toward the forests."

Arnold Hanssen noted in his 1929 Presidential address that "our work is obscure... This is not desirable as we can only expect support to the extent the public finds that we deserve... It is not a case of what our own opinions are about ourselves, but what other people think of us and our work."

Malcolm Conway in his 1970 Presidential Address stated that "...the Institute is not as well known as it should be. It was not invited to participate in a Conference on "The Countryside in 1970" nor as a possible interested party by those responsible for the New Zealand Water Conference 1970. ...Whether or not the Institute is capable or willing to offer its views is not the point. What is of concern is that our very existence is sometimes not known in circles where it ought to be". Nothing seems to have changed; we were only invited to the Labour Government's environmental forum at the last minute. We were also not invited to be on the Blakeley committee, while it deliberated over North Westland and only obtained a place because the President was in the right place at the right time.

Guy Salmon, writing in the June 1983 edition of the *Canterbury Environment Journal* (Vol. 8), described foresters as no ordinary profession. "A small, close-knit group with a cohesive and almost impermeable ideology about forest management, they resemble a beleaguered religious sect more than anything else — (but lacking the humility)".

Whether we like it or not this has become the view of large sections of the community. There is only one good aspect of this comment, and that is that we are seen as a profession with professional standards.

The second and third matters I highlighted can be taken together. I suggest that in hindsight the passing of the Forest Service can be looked at as a blessing in disguise for two reasons special to the Institute.

1. While Forest Service employed Council members and members generally made valiant attempts to change hats as appropriate, this was rarely achieved. This was recognized by non Forest Service personnel such as Owen Jones in his Presidential address in 1948. He quoted from a statement made by Professor H.H. Chapman of Yale University and others dealing with professional apathy among the members of the Society of American Foresters. Chapman said: "No profession can survive as such when its ideas are regimented by the authority of any organization, and no society representing a profession can hold the respect of its members when freedom of discussion or criticism is banished".

You may consider this remark a little strong in terms of the Institute and the Forest Service but there have been very few occasions when the Institute criticized that organization. In comparison, submissions were made by the Institute in 1970 over the raising of Lake Manapouri. They

were very detailed and received an excellent hearing over two and a half hours from the Parliamentary Select Committee. That involved the actions of the then Electricity Department.

2. On a different but perhaps more important matter, in an internal sense, Bob Jackson's editorial notes in the 1966 *Journal* (Vol. 11/2) commented: "It is a matter that is important for the Institute, in seeking to establish its professional status, but which is clouded by the unfortunate distinctions drawn between professional and general divisions within the government services. ...the Institute may find itself bitterly divided over the future of foresters and rangers."

"May" has never been the correct word here. This distinction would appear to have vanished now with the change in organizations. Let's hope educational changes and job descriptions don't cause it to reappear in the future.

The remainder of my address deals with the last two subjects I introduced.

The changes in government administration present a golden opportunity for us to move to the type of independent role that professional organizations are normally seen to have. What that role should be has been something of a vexed question. The Institute's past deliberations have shown that this question has exercised members' minds throughout our history. A study of the *Journals* — editorial articles, Presidents' addresses and various questionnaires — demonstrates this.

1. In 1929 Arnold Hansson stated that "the field where we as technical men can make the surest mark and lead the way in the advance of forestry, is in research work". This task has largely been handled by the Forest Research Institute since its inception.

2. We have considered ourselves to represent forestry interests. But in 1982 John Rockell noted the Institute is not seen to represent forestry interest generally. He cited the Loggers Association, Forest Industries Engineering Association (FIEA), Forest Owners Association (FOA) and the Farm Forestry Association (NZFFA). He didn't mention others including NFAC or the RFBPS.

3. Publicizing forestry is another area seen by many as being an important task for the Institute. We have never had the funds or other resources to undertake such a task. We now have the FOA, the MOF and the DOC who are better organized and funded to do the task. They will, of course, promote forestry as an enterprise rather than as a profession.

4. Forestry education has always been a place where the Institute saw a role for itself and a study of other professional organizations suggests that this is realistic. There is a real danger at present that there will be a further proliferation of organizations offering courses on the management of forested land. There are already, at least, three.

4. We could provide members with services that others do not. There are awards, a *Journal*, Conferences and so on. Study of the services provided for members of the Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand (IPENZ), for instance, reveals a wide range that we might consider.

5. The setting of professional standards is another area where we might demonstrate a role for the Institute. There are foresters now in a wide range of organizations, all presumably with their own standards and nobody attempting to co-ordinate them.

What then is the New Zealand Institute of Foresters going to do?

It has been apparent to Council for some time that despite the fact that the Institute's activities generate a lot of work, the end results are not sufficient to sustain members' interest or to advance their interests.

During this past year for instance we have:

1. published six journals (two of the old format and four of the new),
 2. published a handbook,
 3. made a number of submissions to Parliament,
 4. made awards and planned the installation of new ones,
 5. produced a further report on Education and Training and,
 6. reviewed the membership provisions of the Constitution,
- to name but the more public of our activities, and yet I continue to get the message that despite all this the Institute is going down the tubes.

At its meeting in April this year, Council spent time discussing, in a brainstorming fashion, the future of the Institute. This entailed listing what was right and what was wrong about our organization, and then setting goals to help right the wrongs. Council listed seven goals and decided that in the short term they should concentrate on:

1. Becoming a professional organization of foresters, preferably with legal status.
2. Be an advocate for forestry.

By the first goal we mean seeking a Charter through an Act of Parliament. That is what this Council proposes spending the rest of its term pursuing, as well as continuing all current services.

Once again the history of our organization is worth looking at.

1. In the 1948 AGM notes, as reported in Vol. 5/5 of the Journal, it was the opinion of the meeting that the time was opportune to proceed toward obtaining legislation granting a Charter to the NZIF and a motion instructing the Council to move accordingly was passed. I wonder what happened to it?
2. Tony Grayburn in his 1967 Presidential Address commented: "...it can be said that the Institute's main aim is the protection and development of the "professionalism" of forestry in New Zealand. If the Institute is to advance its professional status, such a move is ultimately inevitable (the obtaining of a Charter).
3. Bob Jackson, when Editor of the Journal in 1968 (Vol. 13/2), said "...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".

We have international role models to follow, in British Columbia, California and Great Britain where foresters either have a Charter or a Registration procedure. Within New Zealand there are other professions that we can look to for advice and assistance.

I suggest to you that the time is now ripe to pursue a Charter and we must grasp the opportunity before it gets away.

There will need to be grandfathering provisions. An Editor of the Journal once wrote: "...The strength of a professional Institute does not (wholly) rest upon the academic qualifications of its members, but upon their proven calibre, and the vigour and wisdom with which they pursue common professional aims." I agree wholeheartedly with this.

There will need to be a setting of educational standards and experience for future registration of professional foresters as well as a whole host of other matters which will need to be addressed as we move in this direction. This should not dismay members; many other orga-

nizations have headed down this path.

Perhaps there will need to be a change of name but if, as I believe, foresters are people involved in the management of forested lands of all types and in many different organizations under different names, this will be unnecessary. There may well need to be a change to the Object of the Institute to focus on those matters of real concern rather than to take a holistic approach that ends up being fuzzy around the edges.

In conclusion, I believe that there needs to be an organization setting "across the board" professional standards. It has been commented in a number of places before that "the interests of its members is the rightful concern of any professional society but what distinguishes a professional from other occupational groups is its primary concern with providing the public with the highest standards of service". The Institute is uniquely placed for such tasks.

**P.J. Thode,
President**

Lessons of history — unheeded?

Obliteration of the New Zealand Forest Service is producing a spate of *instant* historians. The last number (May 1987) of New Zealand Forestry is evidence of this, and other articles are appearing in various journals and newspapers.

We are so close to the scene that most of these scribblings lack objectivity; some are deliberately subjective, thus carrying on the slanted campaigns conducted prior to the 1984 elections; or they are political statements justifying the obliteration engineered by the Labour Government. Moreover, the process hasn't stopped. The School of Forestry in particular, the Ministry itself and the Forest Research Institute are all in the line of fire.

All I have read usually omit the most important parts of any historical account of a Government Department — the guiding influences, checks and balances provided by Parliament, its Members and Ministers, and the reports of its chief advisers, Treasury. No historical account could pretend to be complete, or even begin, without reference to these. It is galling to read "The Forest Service did this." "The Forest Service did that...therefore it went wrong."

It is true that the Service was founded by a Director of unusual vision who had the vigour to develop that vision. But he operated under an Act, and his performance was closely watched by Members of Parliament all over the country. Throughout its 68 years the Ser-

vice has been noteworthy for employing many exceptionally able officers, from the highest to the lowest ranks, but in their work they could not depart far from the ground rules set down by their masters.

If anyone doubts the effect of politics and politicians then just remember that they introduced the Forest Service in 1919 with a fanfare of trumpets and ended it in 1987 with a devious exercise.

I would dearly love to join the ranks of the *instant* historians and take up the theme of "what went wrong". But I will resist that and instead keep to the theme emphasized above: the circumscription imposed by politicians and politics.

We could take the list of Forest Service achievements so poignantly set out in Alan Familton's "...last official communication that will ever be written by a Director-General of the New Zealand Forest Service".

"We have created a first-class resource of commercial plantations..."

World War II put an end finally to the first 'planting boom'. By the time some large exotic-log-based mills had been built and the sale to Tasman finalized on the yields created by that planting, it was clear that the potential for plantation forestry was considerable. So the second 'planting boom' got under way. In the beginning much more encouragement came from politicians than came from the Service itself. Backing

also soon became based on regional aspirations. At estimates time in the House, the first thing MPs looked at in the annual report were the tables of planting. Then questions directed to the Minister of Forests had the flavour: "I note that only ? acres were planted in ? during the past year — a poor effort."

For a number of years, on top of this push, came urgent demands to take on men, usually a large number, for winter employment. This direction became so insistent that it was safe to budget for a small planting programme, knowing full well that it would be augmented later by special winter programmes.

Politicians sometimes took matters into their own hands. An example of this was Aupouri in North Auckland. By the late 1950s all the older exotic forests in the Auckland Conservancy were being expanded or improved and new ones started up. The great stretch of sand at Aupouri always looked tempting for afforestation and some sand stabilization had started years earlier. However, complete afforestation would be a big project, and Auckland's resources were fully extended. Discussions took place from time to time but then the Minister of Forests took a trip around the north and by the time he arrived back the commitment had been made to commence planting at Aupouri. No advice was sought from Head Office and no approval obtained from Parliament.