

ment has had to become more cost effective and there has been a switch from broadcast application to more spot or line application of herbicides. Newer chemicals, with very effective adjuvants developed in New Zealand for our specific problems, have reduced the range of products and rates required for good weed control. This is one instance where our more liberal registration laws have been to our advantage and allowed rapid introduction of these newer products and technologies.

### Three Avenues

As forestry still has the conspicuously highest use rates for herbicides, it can expect further criticisms and pressures to reduce them. There are three avenues that can be followed to overcome these criticisms.

The first is to inform and educate the public of the reasons for chemical use and the benefits and risks which may result. Good examples of such strategies will be found in the US and Forestry Canada programmes, and some chemical companies such as Monsanto NZ who produce very informative literature and host visits by overseas experts. A disastrous home example was the AGCARM "There's a greenie in your gumboot" type literature which was totally confrontational.

But you can't inform others or plead your innocence if your staff don't know what or why they are using specific chemicals. Aerial application is still essential at times, but what do the public know of the safety and risk assessments you have made? More promotion and explanation of present land management methods are needed. To achieve that, much better training of staff at all levels is essential. This is probably the single most cost-effective option possible at

present. So what are the forest owners doing about it? What is their annual budget? How many of their staff have been trained to specific levels? Do you know? I don't!

The long-term solution to reduced chemical use is either in more effective and efficient application or the use of more "natural" alternatives. There is potential in both these approaches and some research has been initiated, but the overwhelming message from last year's international meeting on "Alternatives to the chemical control of weeds" was how little we knew about these options and how much less was being done for forestry purposes. This may be a "national" interest but forest sector support could give it a much-needed boost to its image and ultimately reduce its operational costs.

So what will the public perception be of pesticide use in ten or 20 years' time?

And how will forestry be perceived?

A good question – and it's up to all of us to do something about it from now on.

**J.A. Zabkiewicz**  
**Plant Protection Chemistry**  
**Forest Research Institute**

### References

- (1) Chemophobia East and Holland. 1990, MAF Technology, Ruakura
- (2) Resource allocation for future weed control activities Combellack. 1989, Proc. 42nd NZ Weed and Pest Control Conf.
- (3) Pesticides: issues and options for New Zealand. MacIntyre, Allison and Penman. 1989, Ministry for the Environment
- (4) Weed control in New Zealand forests; costs, constraints and future options. Zabkiewicz and Richardson, 1990. Alternatives to the chemical control of weeds, FRI Bulletin No 155.

## Pray for a wet summer and keep your hoses crossed

There was plenty of promise in the Hensley Review (see NZ Forestry, Vol 34, No. 4, February 1990); an expanded Rural Fire Fighting Fund (RFFF), regional co-ordination of fire based on the new regional Government reorganisation, the setting up of a National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) as well as a National Rural Fire Advisory Committee (NRFAC) and immediate implementation of some supporting legislation. A new Forest Rural Fires Act would follow.

The establishment of the NRFA and the NRFAC with limited powers are the only two positive achievements to report

so far. The NRFA and NRFAC were set up by Cabinet and Ministerial decree rather than by legislative action.)

Staff have been appointed to the NRFA (New Zealand Forestry, August 1990. Vol. 35 No. 2). Rural fire records and training material have been transferred to the NRFA from the Ministry of Forestry (MOF). The responsibilities of the Secretary of Forestry and MOF contained in the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, Fire Service Amendment Act 1987 and various Regulations have been transferred to the Chairperson of the New Zealand Fire Service Commission by memorandum.

The Minister of Internal Affairs has appointed members to the NRFAC. Two meetings have been held to date with the objective of assisting the Fire Service Commission with the initial work of the NRFA.

There has been no progress with the introduction of the new RFFF for this fire season; no appointment of Regional Fire Co-ordinators by Regional Councils and no new legislation to back up the Hensley Review recommendations.

The original recommendation on the RFFF has been radically changed by a new proposal. There is no interim legislation or new Forest and Rural Fires Act.

### **NEW FIRE LEGISLATION IS BADLY NEEDED**

The lack of legislation will cause some serious concern in the rural fire sector

**New Zealand Forestry**  
invites you to submit material  
for inclusion in this publication

We accept:

- articles on a wide variety of forestry topics;
- comment on forestry or Institute of Forestry affairs;
- items on current events;
- letters to the editor;
- items from local sections;
- advertising.

Comments, letters, news items, and Institute news need to be with the Editor at the beginning of the month prior to publication.

unless the position can be remedied quickly.

It was intended that initial supporting legislation for the Hensley Review recommendations would be put in place in 1990.

The vehicle would have been the Fire Service Amendment Bill (No. 2) which had passed the first reading and Select Committee stages.

A Supplementary Order Paper containing provisions to set up a new RFFF, enable Regional Councils to appoint fire co-ordinators and authorise the appointment of the NRFA officer by the Commission was to be attached to the Fire Service Amendment Bill (No. 2).

However, there has been no progress with this strategy, and the result had been that Chief Executives of new Regional Councils have refused to appoint regional fire co-ordinators. They were not bound by law and therefore saw no need to do anything.

Furthermore, proposals for an improved RFFF containing a larger fund, quicker access and less stringent criteria than the present fund have also failed to eventuate. This could have more serious consequences than the other legislative failings. More than anything else, the rural sector needs a better RFFF.

The New Zealand Fire Service Commission, correctly or not, invoked Section 14 of the Fire Service Act 1975 to set up the NRFA. The Commission will also use the same section to appoint four regional fire co-ordinators. This action is in lieu of the decision by Regional Councils not to appoint fire co-ordinators.

There is also a lack of legislative backup for the transfer of the responsibilities of the Secretary and Ministry of Forestry under the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 to the Chairman of the Fire Service Commission. Cabinet and Ministerial approval had been granted for these arrangements but these do not take precedence over law.

The Minister of Forestry could not legally transfer his responsibilities to the Minister of Internal Affairs (i/c New Zealand Fire Services) by a similar memo.

The administration of the Forest and Rural Fires Act remains a forestry issue.

Legal clout for rural fire administration at the national level is therefore almost non-existent.

Fortunately the responsibilities of Rural Fire Authorities (RFAs) for fire control on the ground are not affected and the voluntary Rural Fire Co-ordinating Committees are in place.

Amendments to both the Rural and Fire Service Acts are obviously needed urgently.

## RURAL FIRE FIGHTING FUND

There has been a radical change proposed for recommendation 9 of the Hensley Review. It was intended that "the Rural Fire Fighting Fund be financed 50:50 by the Fire Service Commission and by the special 'Section 60A' levy (Forest and Rural Fires Amendment Act 1989) on RFAs".

Following Cabinet approval of the Hensley Review recommendations, an officials Working Party was set up to ensure that an appropriate structure within the New Zealand Fire Service for representing the interests of rural people, fire fighters and forest owners was set up and appropriate funding arrangements were provided for the new structure.

Rural Fire Working Party (RFP) members considered that the use of levies on RFAs was not an appropriate way to increase the RFFF to \$1.2 million.

The RFP recommended that Fire Service levy contributions should be raised to \$800,000 from the present \$600,000 and that State contributions should come through DOC and total a further \$400,000, but uncertainty remains about whether or not DOC and Treasury agree to the provision of \$400,000 as a State contribution to the RFFF.

It was originally intended to introduce the new RFFF on October 1, 1990. The Minister of Internal Affairs then changed the date to January 1, 1991 to cater for the likely delay in the passage of the Fire Service Amendment Bill (No. 2).

The old limited 1986 RFFF will still therefore apply in the meantime.

## NATIONAL RURAL FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minister of Internal Affairs has approved the appointment of P. Burgout

(Federated Farmers), N. Cooper (MOF), M. Dudfield (NRFA), M. Edwards (Defence), N. Farrell (Local Government), K. Hilliard (DOC), P. Olsen (Forest Owners) and D. Woodward (Fire Services) to the Committee.

The NRFAC will have the job of advising the NRFA on the new rural fire system and this is obviously going to be a difficult task in the circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it appears that rural fire control systems will not be adequate for the 1990-91 summer.

All County Fire Authorities have gone. In their place are fewer District Councils which are feeling their way with new staff and have larger areas to administer.

Many of the new Regional Councils are not interested in fire responsibilities and will not appoint regional fire co-ordinators.

Contrary to hopes, there is no improved RFFF with increased funds yet. Commercial forest owners are excluded from the proposal and DOC may opt out.

Authority lines are confused because the legislation that is needed is not yet in place.

Finally, New Zealand Forestry Corporation, as an RFA, is disintegrating with the sale of Timberlands cutting rights.

Fortunately, the New Zealand companies Fletcher Challenge (Tasman Forestry) and Carter Holt Harvey have been major purchasers of State forests. This will assist greatly in maintaining some stability.

Established forest owners will again be the cornerstone of effective fire control in rural areas.

**Neill Cooper**

## LOGGING PROBLEMS?

- \* Low impact, multispan **SKYLINE** systems can eliminate costly roading and soil erosion problems on difficult terrain over long and short distances – uphill or downhill.
- \* A wide range of mobile haulers, sledge yarders and locking carriages is available with models to match every situation.
- \* These high quality units with proven work records in Europe and N.W. America are versatile, reliable, **LOW COST** and **ECONOMIC**.

Full information on costs, specifications and production rates from:-

**Ross Macarthur, SKYLOGS EQUIPMENT CO.**  
P.O. Box 273, Picton. Phone (057) 42-265 Fax 064 57 80313