knows that growing trees is a particular type of farming requiring deliberate, long-term planning. The produce from a tree crop does not materialise in the same sort of time frame as any other plant crop, and therein lies the significant difference. If a decision is made to get out of trees and into, say, corn, the would-be diversificationist is faced with compacted landings, hauling tracks and road networks, not to mention long enduring stumps and surface litter. Similarly, a sudden urge to produce merchantable wood fibre would not result in a significant pay back for a generation. Forestry just isn't a farming activity that can be turned on and off, and I am sure that Dennys would be the first to acknowledge that, knowing, as I do, his impeccable forestry whakapapa.

The past six years or so have seen the emergence of a free market culture that has been dedicated to treating all sectors of the economy in the same supposedly neutral way. Politicians and economists have been on about a non-interventionist approach and creating level playing fields and so on. Forestry had to be positioned on the same plane as everything else. But, of course, with discounted cash flow calculations being the determinant of commercial success, the bloody goal posts in respect to forestry enterprises are so far away that even super boot Grant Fox wouldn't be able to kick the proverbial three pointer.

Towards the end of his letter Dennys gets to the nub of the issue when he obliquely refers to the connection between plantation forests and national strategic needs. This issue must be central to any debate about whether or not replanting constraints should be a condition of Crown forestry licences. The matter also needs to be a focal point of the current formulation of the country-wide forest policy being master-minded by the Ministry of Forestry. Are we going to follow the course plotted by Sweden – a country widely considered to be at the leading edge of the international forest industry – or perhaps look towards Asia for a role model? Rogernomes might, perhaps, be surprised to learn of Sweden's strong emphasis on prescriptive forest policy, detailing requirements for restocking, tending, productivity and so on. On the other hand a country closer to home, like Indonesia, has a fairly unconstrained policy – such as it is – talking in terms of eking out resources and soliciting development aid money to protect remaining natural forest and to replant previously logged areas.

I have a clear idea in my mind as to what sort of tack we should be taking. I suggest that the Ministry of Forestry sponsors a study tour to Scandinavia and South East Asia for Dennys and myself. I am sure that I can speak for both of us and say that we guarantee to come back with a consensus report on the question of replanting conditions on Crown forestry licences or anything else on which the forest policy drafting team want an opinion.

John Halkett
Whangarei

A forest policy!

Sir,

"The time has come", the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes – and ships – and sealing-wax
– of cabbages – and kings –"

and the Public Discussion Paper prepared by the Advisory Group reporting to the Minister of Forests covers a series of topics somewhat similar for their range, and in omissions, and are equally indecipherable.

It is a travesty – using the word in the senses of burlesque and disguise – that the Minister of Forests in a Government that has gutted New Zealand forestry, sallies forth "to form a New Zealand Forest Policy".

One sensible thing the Advisory Group did was to set a datum line by giving quotes from Jack Westoby in which he emphasises the need for "informed public opinion" and "long-term continuity".

If the Group had looked back to 1969 – less than a rotation of radiata pine – they would have read what he said to the Forest Service Golden Jubilee, the Forestry Sector of the National Development Conference: "This Conference, the way it was prepared, the way it was conducted, impressed us deeply in FAO. We believe there are many countries in the world which, at the present stage in the development of their forest and timber economy, could greatly benefit from similar initiatives."

The gutting operation, accompanied by many snide remarks from senior Ministers of the Crown, saw the most extraordinary and rapid series of cataclysms that ever befell forestry in any country of the world.

The dissolution of a Forest Service that had gained many accolades; the dissolution soon after of the Forestry Corporation that partly followed it; cutting right selling – a politically criminal act – conducted partly behind the scenes and directed by an organisation that once was the chief concocter of the worst timber sale in the world; total disregard of the biological basis of forests; and, to cap it all, use of the sale money for current expenditure in the face of initial arguments that the sale was essential to reduce public debt.

So how can anybody hope to get continuity or an **informed public** when a Government perpetrates such actions?

It is a slimy slope for remoulding forest policy.

It is to be hoped that recipients of the Discussion Paper will judge the Minister's action for what it is – an unconscionable and cynical electioneering ploy.

A.L. Poole

Indigenous forest management

Sir,

Like Peter Allan, in his letter in the May issue, I too deplore the lack of management of our indigenous forests. According to T.C. Rowe of Salomon Brother Inc., in a paper presented to the Forest Industries conference at Rotorua in February 1990, some 95% of the world's timber usage is produced from indigenous forests. By comparison, in Southland just 12,000 hectares of cutover beech State forest, or approximately 1% of public indigenous forest in the region, has been allocated as production forest but at the time of writing the future of such management is not politically secure.

The New Zealand public has a perverse view of the sanctity of our native forests, due no doubt to pastoral farming motivated "scorched earth" felling. Nevertheless such wasteful practices have been widely curtailed and the recent Government announcements regarding the banning of wood exports had much less to do with genuine conservation than ruthless politics, i.e. marginal electoral seats in Auckland and Wellington.

It seems to be part of the human condition for popular opinion to swing to extremes and in this case led by the conservation movement. That politicians can make easy capital from such fashionable trends is no better illustrated than by the case of Senator Joe McCarthy and his destruction of the careers of many innocent people during his fanatical purge of suspected communist sympathisers in the USA during the 1960s. He would get little mileage out of that subject today, and thus the cycle goes.

Can it be that fellow travellers on the forest lock-up bandwagon are now being joined by the editorial board of NZ Forestry who are advertising propaganda of the Forest and Bird Society. I refer to the promotion of the article "Woodchipping – The Facts", as recommended reading in the May issue. Quite apart from any consideration of the

rights or wrongs of indigenous logging this two-page lurid spread cannot, by any professional standards, be judged factual. Many of the statements are no more than wild guesstimates without any justification or reference to source data.

What hope is there for public support of indigenous forest management when the Institute promotes such selective anti-logging comment. It should be realised that without woodchipping of forest and sawmill residues, beech management is uneconomic. I wonder too if all your readers realise that the paper on which this journal is printed is by content at least 50% hardwood fibre, i.e. such as beech. We should be actively seeking ways to increase our contribution to the global requirement of hardwood fibre at least to the level of our own domestic consumption. Or does conservation, NZ style, mean using up the scarce resources of other countries whilst smugly sitting on our own?

Laurie King
Invercargill

"In Our Contemporaries" is there to let members know about some of the things that other publications are printing about the forestry sector. Our editorial policy includes the intention to "present information of interest and practical use to readers". As the person who ferrets out the material for this section, I use my own judgement on what that might include. Perhaps I have cast the net too wide (I agree that the article Laurie takes exception to was unsupported by source data) but just because we mention an article doesn't mean that we are promoting the material in it, nor that it is "recommended reading".

Colin Bassett

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