EDITORIAL NOTES

Forest Research

Included in this number of the *Journal* is a summary of the symposium on thinning and pruning, held by the Forest Research Institute during July of last year. The papers and discussions at this meeting were so voluminous that, although they will be published in due course, it has been decided that the summary will provide earlier dissemination of its substance. This meeting was the third such to be organized by F.R.I., the previous ones being concerned with use of fertilizers in forestry and the chemical control of vegetation.

Attended only by active contributors, these symposia have proved to be an excellent innovation, providing a concentrated forum for discussion between research officers and those dealing with related problems of everyday practice. The benefits are mutual, and the provision for subsequent publication has ensured that they will also be general. This need for comprehensive contact between research and field will increase as our problems become concentrated and investigations are narrowed accordingly. Such symposia will themselves help to meet the need, expressed by a private forester last July, for a "scientific extension officer".

A more urgent requirement is some means of co-ordinating the numerous trials, investigations and formal research projects throughout New Zealand, whether under the control of private individuals, companies, conservancies, F.R.I., or other institutions. This need within New Zealand parallels the growing trend towards international co-operation and correlation of research programmes, which was a reiterated theme at the (1962) Tenth Pacific Science Congress symposium on organization and development of research in forestry in the Pacific Region. The need for co-ordination of effort has been emphasized likewise at the two latest Commonwealth Forestry Conferences.

Our Forest Service and Treasury have now acknowledged that the timber industry may sponsor specific research at F.R.I. This is a long-overdue advance: the funds allocated by Government for this purpose amount to but a fraction of one per cent. of the value produced by the industry at large. (It has been stated authoritatively that 2½ to 3½% of the turnover of any business should be spent on research.) A further advance during the last two years has been the grants made by the Forest Service to the universities for research in forestry and allied subjects. The economic study of land development, comparing agriculture and forestry as alternative uses, is the subject of one of the grants to Lincoln College, and should be the forerunner of similar projects in co-operation with the universities. Needs in a related field were emphasized by one of the resolutions at the 1963 annual conference of the N.Z. Farm Forestry Association. It was resolved "That the University Agri-

cultural Colleges should take a more realistic attitude to the relative importance of farm forestry in all its forms as an integral part of land use in agriculture, by effective practice on College farms, in order that lectures can be augmented by practical demonstrations and research work instituted".

This past lack of liaison between forestry and the centres of higher learning betokens, for a country as dependent as is New Zealand upon wise land management, an appalling lack of foresight on the part of several authorities. In the sphere of protection-forestry research, at least, there is hope of imminent improvement, with the proposed transfer of the Forest and Range Experiment Station from Rangiora to the Ilam campus of the University of Canterbury. Relations have been well established for several years, through the Tussock Grasslands and Mountain Lands Institute.

Increasing investment and co-operation from organizations outside the Forest Service will ultimately necessitate external consultation in formulating research policy. The 1962 annual report of the Director-General of Forests indicated that this might take the form of a committee advisory to the Minister of Forests. No further action has yet been announced, although a committee representing Head Office and the conservancies was briefly resurrected. It is of interest that the forest research advisory committee serving the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture comprises representatives of pastoral interests (2), forest industries (4), the state forest services (1), the Forest Farmers Association (1), the Institute of Wildlife Management (1), the American Forestry Association (1), and the Yale School of Forestry (1). It may still be premature to establish such a committee for forest research in New Zealand, although there is already a Forest Products Research Advisory Committee, comprising industrial representatives. Nevertheless, the Institute should be alert to make representations at the appropriate time lest through default it be ignored, as occurred in the case of the advisory committee on nature conservation.

In the wider field of general scientific research, a most welcome recent announcement has been the inclusion of A. W. Mackney in the new National Research Advisory Council. Mr Mackney's knowledge of forest utilization and industrial chemistry, as well as his directorship of N.Z. Forest Products Ltd., should ensure that the peculiar long-term needs of forest research receive due consideration by government. The Council comprises six appointed members and three *ex officio* members (including the Director-General of Agriculture, but not the Director-General of Forests). Its principal functions are to advise the Minister of Science on the promotion and development of scientific research and the co-ordination and planning of scientific research and services. We may also feel encouraged to know that the growing importance of forestry in the national economy has been recognized at a level which predetermines the resources to be allocated for technical progress.

Considerable emphasis is given in the 1963 report of the Forest Research Institute to the need for decentralizing the research establishment and to the Institute's responsibility for translating its

findings into practice. This warrants the most critical examination, considering particularly the responsibility delegated to F.R.I. for both fundamental and applied research. It is unfortunate that these two categories have so often been used to focus argument about research in the field — the real issue lies between formal research, involving long-term applications of the experimental method, and simple local investigation or short-term comparison of alternative techniques. Much has been made of the waste incurred by forest officers in establishing experiments that are improperly designed or, through staff transfers, have no likelihood of continuity and conclusion[1]. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that "some minor studies have quickly produced highly valuable information that dwarfed the importance of more elaborate and expensive research".[2] Co-ordination and some safeguard against poor individual judgment are both necessary, but to gather all inventive practice under the one term "research" and argue that it should be centrally controlled would, if acted upon, not only dissipate the efforts of research specialists, whose attention should be concentrated upon formal projects; it would also irreparably weaken one of the few fields which functionally distinguish the forester from other executives, and which permits him to develop that comprehensive intuition about a crop of trees to which the uninitiated administrator is blind. As a field for the exercise of professional intelligence it is vital, and to be cherished.

While foresters should be ready to forestall these encroachments, there must be unqualified support for the efforts that are being made to secure suitable laboratories and equipment for the Forest Research Institute. The opportunities latent in electronic data processing, in the use of radioisotopes, and in controlled environment studies, must be grasped and used. Under the Institute's new and stimulating leader we may expect a better comprehension and pursuit of these opportunities. May we also hope for a clearer definition of research objectives, better co-ordination of effort within the Institute, and a more prompt and vigorous dissemination of its findings?

Control of Timber Preservation

At a conference of Wood Preservers at Wairakei last year the Timber Preservation Authority's system of control was given a good airing and there was a considerable amount of discussion on possible alternative systems, particularly the "results-type" specification. One interested party that did not take part in these discussions was the small forest or woodlot owner. Yet he is one of the most vitally affected, in that the simple methods of treatment available to him are not, and probably never would be, authorized. The case

[1] Setten, G. G. K., 1962. Symposium: "Organisation and Development of Research in Forestry in the Pacific Region". Tenth Pacific Science Congress, p. 36.

[2] McArdle, R. E. (**op. cit.**, p. 10).

could be cited of one forest-owning farmer who treats his own dry radiata fence posts by cold soaking them in creosote; those which are surplus to his own requirements he sells. Because this method of preservative treatment is not a code of practice approved by the Authority, it might be considered illegal. This has not passed unnoticed by major commercial treating firms who, quite understandably, want to know why such a person is allowed to continue in this way without being subject to the same controls and inspections as the rest of the industry. But what can the T.P.A. do about him? They can hardly prosecute him for treating with a non-approved plant and process, because repeated applications for approval have been turned down with little or no consideration; they dare not prosecute him for selling inadequately treated produce because, under his present method of operations, his standards are amongst the highest in the country. (A parallel example, but on a much larger and more public scale, could be drawn for the N.Z. Railways Department.)

The only apparent reason for perpetuating this farcical situation is that the T.P.A., with its resources already strained to the limit, could not possibly cope with regular inspections of the numerous small plants that might spring up on farms all over the country once a precedent had been set. It is stated[3] that "The principal function of the Authority shall be to secure and maintain a high standard of timber preservation". The Authority's preoccupation with consolidating existing processes indicates a stick-in-the-mud interpretation of this function. Case-hardened by an unwieldy mechanism of control, there is danger of unjustifiably restricting practices that could lead to improved safety, performance or economy.

The practical alternative to the present deadlock would be to license plants regardless of the process adopted for treatment, and to impose fines of increasing severity on anyone selling treated wood (be it posts, battens or timber) that did not meet the specified standard when tested for preservative content and distribution. For repeated offenders, the T.P.A. could then quite legitimately withdraw individual approval to treat.

No reflection is intended upon individual members of the T.P.A., yet nevertheless it must be stated that to have the timber-processors themselves, but neither the small forest-owners nor the ultimate consumers, directly represented on a controlling authority is thoroughly bad in principle. Possible abuses are already indicated in the control of terms such as "treated" and "preserved", which could readily become identified with certain well-advertised brand-names.

Preservation is simply one step in the sequence of conversion from tree to product-in-use; but precisely because New Zealand's timber industry of the future will be based upon non-durable species, it is a critical step. We cannot afford a stranglehold to be imposed at this juncture, under pretext that the fears of yesteryear are still relevant — they are not. The transition has been made — radiata pine is now the mainstay of our timber industry. Efficiency and economy will ensure that it remains so. A strangehold would stifle too many other developments — the evolution of small, mobile

[3] The Timber Preservation Regulations 1955, para. 8 (1).

preservation plants and techniques such as sap-displacement; the fostering of local marketing, so vital to small-scale timber-growers; commercial acceptance of water-borne and multi-salt preservatives for on-site treatment; and the national desideratum that large-scale centralized treatment plants should be weaned away from posts and on to the preservation of poles.

In short, the T.P.A. should consider well the objectives for which it was established, the extent to which the reasons for these have already altered — and its responsibility, in common with all authority, for encouraging progress and protecting the rights of those who are not represented. This is yet another authority on which a delegate from this Institute would be particularly fitted to serve: impartially preserving the rights of numerous small forest-owners and securing the advance of forest practice.

Farm Forestry Comes of Age

The 1963 annual meeting of the N.Z. Farm Forestry Association at Napier marked a turning point in the development of farm forestry in this country. A formal constitution was adopted preparatory to the national body and its constituent associations becoming an incorporated society. Perhaps this more formal organization may result in loss of some of the spontaneity, pioneering enthusiasm and delightful informality we have come to associate with farm forestry activities. However, such a development is inevitable. Although the oldest association is still far from its majority in years, the movement is showing maturity and a sense of responsibility in its approach to the problems which must be solved in making forestry a significant and financially sound part of the farm economy.

To most of us a change much more profound than that of form and legal niceties has been Neil Barr's decision to step down from the presidency of the N.Z. Farm Forestry Association which he has held since its inception. We confidently anticipate that the movement, so peculiarly the outcome of his vision, enthusiasm and example, will continue to advance with the momentum he has imparted to it.

However, that Neil Barr will never cease from "lighting fuses" in the cause of farm forestry was apparent in the paper he presented later at the Institute's symposium on "Extension Forestry", and which we have pleasure in printing in this number of the *Journal.*

The New Zealand Journal of Forestry

With this number our *Journal* also embarks upon a new phase of its existence. The intention henceforward is to publish two numbers each year, one at the end of April and the other at the end of October. Each year will now be represented by a new volume, continuing from Volume 9 for 1964. There have been five numbers per volume since 1936; but it is now desirable to anticipate the time when there will be several issues each year.

For those of our readers who do not possess a full set of the *Journal*, a brief résumé of its history might explain some apparent inconsistencies of numbering. Our first number and volume was published in 1925, as the journal of the Canterbury School of Forestry. In the following year, the second number (Vol. II, No. 1) came out under the title of *Te Kura Ngahere*. In 1934, with the closing of the Canterbury school, the journal was transferred to the Institute of Foresters, and in 1937 its title was altered to that it bears at present. The first number of volume IV was the 1936 issue, and the fifth number of that volume covered the two years 1940–41. Only one number was printed for the war years 1942–44 (Vol. V, No. 1) and the fifth number of Vol. V came out in 1948. Since then there has been one number each year, and five numbers to each volume — Volume VIII being completed in 1963. There have thus been 36 issues altogether.

It may also be mentioned that the content of the two numbers each year will differ: the second issue will generally contain the papers contributed at the Institute's annual symposium, together with summaries of Institute business and up-to-date membership lists. The first number, on the other hand, will contain as wide a variety of papers on forestry as we can secure. Editorial notes, reviews and correspondence will be contained in both issues.

We take this opportunity of expressing our appreciation to contributors for their support, and especially to those many members of the Institute who, unrecognized, give of their time and ability to make this *Journal* a readable, stimulating and, we hope, true reflection of forestry in New Zealand.