

DANGERS WITH USER-PAY RESEARCH

The Government decision that its research organization should either obtain some of their finance on a user-pay basis or reduce in size is starting to change the nature of the Forest Research Institute. FRI eventually expect to find over 30% of their funds elsewhere and so have vigorously pursued a variety of techniques to earn money — for example, contract research, forming co-operatives in particular fields, consulting and charging for some information.

While it is probably true that there was a need for more accountability by research institutions and there are sometimes areas where obvious savings could be made, there are also dangers in applying the user-pay principle. Some of these dangers are now beginning to show.

First of all there is a danger of highly trained scientific staff spending valuable time and energy in pursuing sponsorship. How much is it costing to obtain and administer these new schemes? Is it justifiable to spend taxpayer research funds in this way?

Another danger is that research will begin to be dictated by the user perhaps stifling more basic or innovative lines of research. Already it is apparent that often industry tends to be interested in short-term specific problems rather than inputting funds to a general research programme. In 1983 NRAC in 'A review by Sectors of Science and Technology in New Zealand' warned that "there is a need to maintain sufficient independence from the industry to be entirely objective in research, in setting goals, and in having the ability to undertake some R and D of a speculative nature". We must avoid having the 30% dictating the efforts of the other 70%. In a user-pay environment there needs to be mechanisms for ensuring a balance between short-term investigations of low risk and longer-term more basic or strategic research.

Other real problems are associated with the flow of information and accountability in terms of evaluating the scientific worth of a piece of research.

Several examples of this have already emerged. An article sent to this journal for publication has been put 'on hold' until it has been cleared by the organization who contracted it. In one of the co-operatives it is proposed that research reports (along the lines of FRI Branch Reports or Bulletins)

(1) Key to Prosperity. Science and Technology. Report of the Ministerial Working Party (1986) Sir David Beattie, Chairman.

will be sent only to members of the co-operative. If the research is being **completely** financed by the user this may be reasonable, but if not then it should be available to the tax payer as of right. What has happened to 'freedom of information'?

Another interesting example is the sale of the video on Timberbelts. It has been made to promote this research yet is being sold for \$250. One wonders if the people involved really want to communicate.

More serious to the reputation of scientists, the FRI and to the nation is a tendency, partly caused by the hunt for funds, to produce less research which has been fully scrutinized prior to publication. Two examples of this will suffice. In one co-operative it has been stated the emphasis will be on 'inside' reports available only to members of the co-operative and less emphasis will be placed on communicating in scientific publications than in the past. This could lead to producing broad general publications that have been boiled down so much that a reviewer cannot be sure if it is soundly based. Some researchers may also see this as a way of keeping some of the information to themselves or their clients. This approach however could lead to a reduction in their international reputation.

A second example is the development of models as a method of communicating results. These are now being promoted and sold in such ways that the buyer or the scien-

tific community cannot scrutinize them. A review mechanism, which includes people from outside the organization, is necessary to ensure that their validity, strengths and weaknesses can be evaluated and documented.

Finally there is the danger that staff appointed to do research for the benefit of the country will be diverted to essentially consulting work. In the search for revenue it is important to keep in mind the objectives of the organizations and not allow consultancy to become a commonplace activity. There are many forestry consultants in this country and so consultancy, either within New Zealand or overseas, should only be entered into by research people when there is no other expertise available.

The dangers in applying the user-pay principle to research are acute and the comments and recommendations in the Beattie report (1) should be heeded by Government. They have stated that "a basically sound concept has been introduced in a manner which is having significantly counter-productive consequences". If Government is also to heed this Working Party's recommendation to double the research effort and at the same time wishes to cut its input, then these problems will multiply.

**Don Mead,
EDITOR**

Forest Service restructuring — the effect on people

The division of the Forest Service into three separate organizations, namely the Forestry Corporation, Department of Conservation and Ministry of Forests, has created considerable discussion as to the merits or otherwise of the changes that have been made.

However the separation has been made and regardless of which future political party is elected into office it is unlikely that the newly formed organizational structures which have been set in place will be dramatically altered.

Ultimate success of any organization is dependent on the people in it and it is evident that staff from the Forest Service who have secured positions in the new organizations will do their best to ensure the success of the new ventures.

The nature of restructuring is such, however, that many Forest Service staff will eventually find themselves without a position in one of the three new organizations. The current estimate is that approximately 1100 people (30% of existing Forest Service staff) will be in this situation. These people at the present time fill positions over the whole range of the forest management spectrum and are spread throughout the country, located on forest stations, and at district, conservancy and head offices.

Perhaps the greatest impact of the Government changes to the Forest Service will be to staff who are located on forest stations. The newly formed Forestry Corporation has indicated that the staffing numbers on the majority of forest stations will be considerably reduced in favour of a more

centralized district management structure. As an example, in the Hawkes Bay district the 43 staff who are currently living on the four forest stations will be reduced to 12.

Economic benefits of the Corporation's approach are obvious as the duplication of management and servicing functions which currently exist on each station within a district can be eliminated. Improved road and telecommunications also have made forest stations far more accessible than at the time of their inception.

Economic merits of reducing staff numbers on stations offer little consolation however to the people who find they have not secured a position. These people have real concerns about their situation, especially in relation to their job marketability outside of a forestry-related occupation, the adjustment to an urban environment which a new job may require and finding housing, which on station is generally provided by the Forest Service.

A question which many Forest Service staff have asked themselves recently is how marketable are my skills outside my chosen forestry career?

For many, initial enquiries have not been encouraging. Although opportunities do exist, potential positions are often in an indoor environment, or lack the variety and remuneration that a career in the Forest Service has had to offer.

A number of staff are in the mid 40-50s age group where they are too young to retire but are often passed over by a prospective employer in favour of a younger person with a longer career life.

The uncertainty of their employment situation has had a noticeable effect on staff. Initially there was dismay and anger expressed at the nature and size of the changes that were being made to the Forest Service.

This was followed by a drop in morale and depression as individuals became aware of how the changes affected them personally coupled with the uncertainty of their futures.

Recently there is growing optimism among staff who have been appointed to the new organizations. Others have become resigned to the prospect of early retirement or of pursuing alternative employment options. Others are experiencing anxiety and distress as they and their families face what they see as bleak, uncertain futures.

Undoubtedly the majority of staff who are displaced will find alternative employment if they are prepared to relocate or are willing to accept employment in a position that may initially be quite alien to them. Provision is being made by the State Services Commission, the Government employing body, to assist staff in this area.

Many staff do not realize that they have positive skills which can be useful for a wide range of employment opportunities — a stable work record, flexibility and adaptability, ability to organize people and

An impressive 50-year record — A.P. Thomson

Young Priestley (A.P.) Thomson, hot off the press from the short-lived Christchurch forestry school, was based in Palmerston North with the State Forest Service in 1936. He succeeded in having two articles published in the *Journal of Forestry* that year (Vol. 4 [11].) One discussed the recovery of native forest in the Mangakao and Ohau valleys of the Tararua following severe storm damage and the other noted the impact of gale-force winds on various exotic tree species. These were the first of a veritable flood of articles which Priestley has had published in the journal over the years.

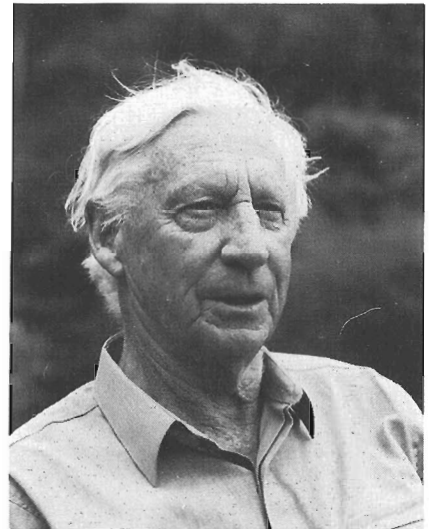
In addition to its abundance his writing has been especially notable for its diversity — forest layout and survey design, scientific reservation, plantation forestry, forest utilization, pulp and paper industrial development, marketing, multiple use forestry, comparative economics of farming and forestry — space precludes a more exhaustive tabulation. Last year, 50 years after he first featured in the journal, Priestley penned a two-part series on the exploits of his distinguished grandfather (Vol. 30 [1]: 18 – 27, and Vol. 30 [2]: 186 – 193). G.M. Thomson, notable scientist turned politician, played an influential role in mobilizing scientific opinion and in persuading Parliament to embody some rudimentary forest conservation principles in forest legislation.

Priestley's involvement with the Institute has not been confined just to occupying journal space. He did a stint as editor between 1955 and 1958, and is currently a member of the editorial board of this publication. He remains very active in forestry circles. Last year he participated in several forums debating Government's environmental administration restructuring proposals, and delivered a paper to a seminar which examined future forestry prospects for the East Cape region, (see Vol. 31 [3]: 10 – 11). Already this year he has chaired forestry sessions at the 56th Australian and New Zealand Association for the advancement of Science (ANZAAS) conference.

manage budgets to name a few — though whether the same job satisfaction in alternative employment is achieved remains to be seen.

For those staff who have secured positions in the new organizations there are exciting challenges ahead. Those who have not been successful will need the support of friends and colleagues in the months ahead as they plan for their futures and seek new career options.

S.G. Chandler



Mr Priestley Thomson

When he finds a moment or two to spare he is likely to be tending his native forest corner at home in Khandallah, Wellington, or having a roll-up at the local bowling club. It is doubtful whether any other person had had such a long, continuous and distinguished involvement with the journal. Well done, Priestley, and long may it continue.

J. Halkett

CHAIR IN FOREST MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

The School of Forestry is seeking an internationally recognized scientist for its Chair in Forest Management and Policy. The chair, endowed with \$1 million by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, provides funding for a professorship and associated research program.

Lakehead University is located in Thunder Bay, an active community of 120,000 people located within the Boreal and Great-Lakes St. Lawrence forest regions on the shore of Lake Superior. Thunder Bay is the centre for forest based industries, regional and district government offices and research laboratories, agricultural and forest nursery stations, and it is the cultural centre of northwestern Ontario.

The School of Forestry offers academic programs to the master of science level. Facilities include a regional library, extensive forest properties, computer networks, the Centre for the Application of Resources Information Systems (CARIS), a scientific instrumentation laboratory, recently renovated forestry teaching and research laboratories, and a new forest biology research institute.

The successful applicant will be expected to carry a moderate teaching load, develop a strong research program in forest management and policy, and interact with all sectors of the forest community.

In compliance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada. Applications should be sent before March 15, 1987 to: Dr. A.J. Kayll, R.F.P., Director, School of Forestry, Lakehead University, THUNDER BAY, Ontario, Canada, P7B 5B1.

Lakehead University