

coordination and cooperation was a recurring theme at the Summit. Proposals were made for the establishment of a "Network of Participants" to ensure that continuing coordination and cooperation occurred between DOC, Regional Councils, researchers, environmental organisations, Federated Farmers, MAF, Animal Health Board and other major players in pest management.

The importance of public perceptions about pest problems and their control and the possibilities for enabling communities to become more involved in pest management, received some attention. Recurring instances of strong public opposition to the use of 1080 despite scientific evidence that this compound rapidly bio-degrades and has low persistence in the environment, suggest that the dissemination of information about pest problems and their control has not been carried out effectively. Morgan Williams from MAF emphasised that public perceptions can be very influential in determining which

options will be viable in managing land and environmental problems. The Summit discussions indicated that not only should the level of community awareness about pest problems and their management be raised but also the pest managers need to properly understand community perceptions about pests and their control. The best mechanisms for improving awareness and understanding have yet to be determined.

Very little information appears to be available on the total extent of animal pest damage to New Zealand's production forest estate and its cost. However, the information that was presented at the Summit and the views of a number of forest managers suggest that possums alone cause damage to seedlings and young trees amounting to millions of dollars per year. It appears that a comprehensive evaluation of pest damage to nursery seedlings and plantation forests and the costs to the forest industry of this damage is required to assist the development of control strate-

gies and setting of priorities for future control actions.

The Great Lake Pest Summit was a successful multi-disciplinary conference where participants were encouraged to air their views and concerns. Probably the most valuable outcome was a consolidation of ideas about the way forward. Although, there remain some differences between organisations and individuals in views about the details of future pest management and control, there was a strong indication that there is a growing willingness to cooperate and work together. The successful way forward depends on creating a pest management and control working environment which is underpinned by cooperation and coordination of effort rather than competition and organisational and individual prejudices. The Pest Summit certainly provided a kick start to the creation of a cooperative working environment.

Colin O'Loughlin

Overcutting and the rotation age

The debate on overcutting has got a bit out of hand. Some foresters are saying that without definition there is no such thing. Others, including a group of senior members of the NZ Institute of Forestry, believe that in some instances it is happening. Surely in its simplest form overcutting merely means continuously taking more of the annual harvest than can be permanently sustained. Overcutting has a time factor; one can overcut without disaster for a year or two or for a few years, but not for so long that the productive potential of the forest is permanently lowered or even extinguished. I had this concept firmly in mind when I first suggested that the Institute should investigate whether or not overcutting of NZ's radiata forests was taking place. Other commentators, and they include a group equally as important as the senior members, somehow managed to miss it.

My hope is that the Institute will still adopt a policy line on commercial or institutional or local or regional overcutting. The purpose of this note though is not to stress this. It is rather to stress that some apologists for overcutting cite a reduction of the rotation age almost as an excuse or a justification. This is a worrying matter. Surely the annual cut can be increased for many years perhaps even permanently if the rotation age is reduced. But even if the rotation age is lowered for a period, short

or long, the economic and financial consequences can be disturbing. Every forester knows that the success of marketing increasing quantities of radiata timber overseas depends on an improvement in timber quality, and every forester should know that this is not to be achieved with a lower rotation age. In his report in the August 1992 issue of NZ Forestry A.W.Grayburn said: There is an increasing tendency for ... the average age of clearfell to come down below 30 years for radiata pine in many forests over the next five years. This removes many harvesting options and lowers the yield quality and size of logs."

"On the ideal rotation age FRI does not have a position."

Grayburn's report, if anything, understates the position. There is a big difference in the quality of wood between a tree of 25 and 27 years and a 30-year-old or plus tree, as he instanced; in the former case the density is lower, the fibre length is shorter, there is a lesser proportion of wide boards and of most importance there is much less clear wood. And quite apart from wood quality there is a difference in

the economics of handling. The older tree is larger and the logging costs should be smaller, the transport and handling costs lower, and the conversion more efficient.

I have asked FRI for its views on the effects of a lower rotation age on wood quality. FRI stated: "On the ideal rotation age FRI does not have a position. The harvest decision is one for the owner taking into account financial, technical and other criteria. FRI's role is to provide technical information." Fair enough! FRI also stated: "The difficulties with lowering rotation ages have to be traded off against other considerations such as required rates of return. While wood properties for solid wood are not as favourable at 27 years as at 30 years, the industry is able to utilise the younger stands. Indeed the demand for logs over the last few years suggests that the industry world wide can accept harvest ages lower than 30 years."

FRI has done a lot of good work on the wood properties of younger stands but it has done less in analysing the economic benefits of a lower rotation age compared with the economic losses of lower wood quality. This latter work does indicate much higher internal rates of return for lower rotations and maybe individual forest owners will consider this the most important criterion and act on it ... but maybe some won't. The new editor of NZ Forestry after all stresses that internal rate

of return in the wrong hands can be a lethal weapon. There is a strong case, however, to maintain what good quality we have in *P. radiata* and in order to optimise marketing to improve it. The State here should show a lead. It is not doing so either through advice from the Ministry of Forestry or example by the Forestry Corporation. Some foresters in the latter organisation are worried that permitting a rotation age of 27 years or less will adversely affect marketing opportunities, just as some foresters at NZ Forest Products Ltd are worried at the shorter fibres and the lower pulping properties of their 25-year-old stands.

If as a country we want to get back to

a 30- or 35-year-old rotation we haven't got much time to do so. Under present legislation private owners can do what the owners decide, unlike privately owned forests in Europe which are still under a firm degree of State control. The legislation in New Zealand should and I think will be changed to correct this but it may not happen for some years. Meantime overcutting and lowering the rotation age will continue; unless of course we foresters somehow manage to dissuade the owners. There is a very big challenge to the Institute.

For publicly owned forests the solution may be easier. The Corporation forests, still entirely publicly owned, can be sub-

ject to political pressure. The professional pressure should come from the Ministry of Forestry which at the moment is hampered by the fact that representations to the Corporation must go from the Minister of Forests to the Minister of State Owned Enterprises. This difficulty of getting a forester's view on the management of what was about 40% of NZ's State exotic forests is one of the bigger current challenges to the Institute. The most important thing though is to mobilise public opinion and to influence both Ministers about the genuine and so far largely ignored dangers of persistent overcutting.

A. P. Thomson

Why protect endangered species?

Relatively recently, we in the Western world have come to realise that our quality of life is markedly affected by the way we treat the environment in which we live – indeed, that the very future of our existence on this planet requires that we make sustainable use of our resources.

Through a variety of circumstances, I have been involved with the administration of our environmental laws for nearly 40 years. As a Planning Judge, I had the opportunity to conduct hearings in over 50 different places in New Zealand.

I have therefore been a participant in the growth and development of a new branch of the law; to use an appropriate figure of speech, in New Zealand it is a tree which has literally grown up in my lifetime.

I was born in August 1926. The first Town Planning Act was passed on September 9, 1926. For 25 years, town planning law was a small and insignificant sapling.

But the sapling burst into vigorous growth in 1953, with the passage of a new Town and Country Planning Act. That was the year I was first elected to local government, and commenced my involvement with what is now called "resource management".

However, it still took nearly 30 years more before that Act caught up with the forestry industry. I have looked up the records, and found that during the 1980s there were three Planning Tribunal decisions of particular interest to those involved with forestry. It is appropriate that I comment briefly on them. They were:

1 **1981 – Fletcher Forests Ltd versus Taumarunui County**

The issue in this case was the social effects of the planting of exotic forest

**Address to the Annual Conference
of the NZ Institute of Forestry Inc
Napier – May 13, 1993**

in areas which had historically been devoted to pastoral farming – loss of resident rural population, loss of services, etc.

With the dramatic change that has come in the farming economy over the last 12 years, I wonder if that would be a live issue today.

2 **1985 – Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society versus Clutha County**

The issue in this case was the conservation of areas of native bush that contributed to wider landscape qualities, and which were of value because of their association with other plant or animal life; in other words, with the preservation of important ecosystems for environmental reasons.

3 **1988 – Nelson Pine Forest Ltd versus Waimea County**

The dispute in this case was the conservation of remnant native forest areas on private land, and whether conversion of native forest land to pasture was a wise use of the land resource. But there is a paragraph in this decision that is of more general significance. It reads: "Any form of forest felling can result in total destruction of bird life in the affected areas, because birds may find themselves unable to establish in other areas already territorially occupied by similar species. It will almost certainly affect many other forms of flora and fauna ...".

For completeness, I bring the record up-to-date by mentioning that in April 1992 an application was made to the

Planning Tribunal under the Resource Management Act 1991, for an order enforcing the effect of the Nelson Pine Forest decision. Gibbons Holdings Ltd wished to establish an exotic forest in the Waimea area, and the Maruia Society believed that Gibbons would be clearing native forest to do so. The Judge found that the company's operations would not involve the clearing of native forest. The application failed. But the case illustrates the extent of the legal controls to which the forest industry can now be subject.

I said that it took a long time for the Town Planning Act to catch up with the operations of the forest industry. That was because the controls exercisable under the Town Planning Act were directed primarily to control the use of private land; and because environmental concern (as it has related to forestry) has been directed primarily at the protection of our remaining areas of native forest, much of which is in public ownership.

The environmental movement perceived very early that protection and management of native forest in public ownership could more easily be influenced by protest action and political measures.

Thus the 1970s saw Stephen King and his friends perching in old totara trees in the Pureora Forest to prevent them being logged, and to preserve the habitat of the kokako – to preserve an 'ecosystem' – a new word, not in the S.O.E.D. 1956.

'Ecosystem' – a system of interacting living organisms and their environment (and we should not overlook the fact that human beings are part of ecosystems).

The 1970s also saw the presentation of the Maruia petition, which sought protec-