

Institute's "independent" stance timely as forestry reaches new crossroads

Sir,

Congratulations on another excellent issue (N.Z. Journal of Forestry Vol 46(2)).

Your reporting of the May National Initiative meeting in Rotorua was valuable to those members who, like myself, were not clear on the issues involved. It is comforting to see that the Institute leadership is prepared to protect the wider forestry interests against the narrow preservationist point of view.

However it was your editorial that caught my main interest.

It has been difficult during the 20th century for the NZIF to provide an image of an independent representative body. The need for so many members, especially senior ones, to 'toe the line' or face redundancy has understandably shackled the organisation. Dennys Guild and Kit Richards are notable examples of what can happen if you do accept martyrdom. The profession is stronger due to their sacrifices and we should never forget them.

However, how could senior Forest Service officials blow the whistle on such ill-conceived projects as the 'Beech Scheme'. For those who have forgotten, this involved converting 60,000 hectares of lowland natural forest in the Buller and Grey Valleys from Beech Forest to Radiata Pine in order to feed a pulp mill. While there was some protestation from the more farsighted individual NZIF members the organisation as a representative body failed abysmally to stand up. The result was that Guy Salmon and 50,000 little old ladies in felt slippers were given a heaven-sent issue on which to build the preservationist lobby.

The alliance of this group with the Labour Party ultimately saw the demise of the once-proud Forest Service. Yet Salmon could not have caused such cataclysmic change by himself.

This example, of the passion of one man leading public opinion, is surely an example in favour of the Institute being a representative body which backs its chosen representatives to the hilt. It is therefore indeed heartening to see that there are enough independent members to stand up in Rotorua and fight for the wider interests of forestry to be heard on the certification issue.

Probably the most admired forests in any country are privately owned and debt-free entities. Whether natural or planted, they are usually already environmentally acceptable with or without the benefits of certification.

David Rhodes points out however that inter-

est in certification from small growers in certification has been low because of the cost. The NZIF could well put its weight behind any initiatives to solve this problem. Small growers, if supported as a pure-play group, are destined to become a more important force in this country, both politically because of numbers and as log suppliers. For too long they have been tolerated as profit-orientated growers by the N.Z. Farm Forestry Association, and unimportant members by the N.Z. Forest Owners Association.

It could be timely for the Institute to seek to become a representative body which speaks for both the professional foresters and the forest owners.

John Groome.

Rousing reception

Sir,

I was particularly taken with your original Editorial article, which I think is one of the best pieces you have written for the Journal recently. I hope that this standard will continue. My wife Prue has had no formal forestry training but knows a lot about it; my son also with no forestry training and knowing very little about forestry, both thought the Editorial quite excellent. This favourable tribute came from two people who are not always so complimentary about what they may have read. There are many other points of interest also in the Journal and I think it must rate as one of the best in recent years.

I was of course delighted to get the comments on the APT article [NZ J For 46(2):42-43] at the March Rotorua NFS meeting. There were 91 people present. I don't think my article was a particularly good one but it did get a rousing reception; the crowd of people present was very jolly and good-natured. Bits of the article had been delivered previously but never before gone on record. I had to wrack my brains to reassemble the comments on behind the scene matters that had also not previously been written up. I was particularly pleased to mention the effect that living in rough, untracked native bush had on the young men who took part and the subsequent quite marked beneficial effect this had on the operations of the Forest Service. This phenomenon was quite unexpected and its impact was not realised until many years afterwards.

Priestley Thomson.