

PRESIDENTIAL REVIEW 1960

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If during the next few minutes I trespass on time that could more profitably be devoted to discussing forest research I do so because the last twelve months have seen the emergence of a number of significant events.

For instance, there was the announcement made in September last year that forest policy will aim at increasing New Zealand's exotic forest estate by another two million acres during the next 65 years. Foresters are probably more conscious than most groups of the need for a more widely based land economy, and of the possibilities offered by exotic forestry for attaining this greater diversification. Thus the projected major increase in the size of the exotic forest estate is certain to find wholehearted endorsement by the profession; though we must not lose sight of the additional demands it will make in research, training, and all other fields. And not the least onerous part of the task could well be the convincing of the man in the street, and through him those who control the public purse, that New Zealand's future timber needs will not take care of themselves; they must be provided for NOW; and failure by this generation to provide adequate financial and material resources for forest development will cost the country dear in the future. The Institute and its individual members can play no small part by keeping these facts constantly before the public.

It is gratifying to note that the farm-forestry movement continues on its virile way, every year seeing new associations formed in various parts of the country. Apart from its ultimate potential of meeting a significant proportion of national timber requirements, forestry combined with farming can give classic examples of the benefits of fully integrated land use. And practised as it usually is on good soils and in favourable market conditions, farm forestry often attains standards of technical excellence which are a stimulus, a challenge – and let us admit it – the envy of those engaged in full-time large-scale operations. At a time when the public view tends to be confused by the present temporary surplus of exotic-forest produce, the burgeoning of the farm-forestry movement has been a welcome development, and one for which the Institute and the country can be grateful.

In the past year we have seen an upsurge of concern, culminating in a petition to Parliament, over the exploitation of indigenous forests

occupying the headwaters of several North Island rivers, which regularly cause great flood damage on their lowland reaches. The remedial measures suggested were simple in the extreme, though hardly practical: cease all exploitation of indigenous forests. And at the opposite end of the scale we had the spectacle of a great number of undoubtedly well intentioned people petitioning Parliament to prevent the poisoning of deer, which are menacing the very existence of all types of forest in many parts of the country. It would be difficult to conceive two more widely divergent demands – each with considerable public support – emerging simultaneously. Hands off the protection forests, say Group A; hands off the greatest enemy of the protection forests, say Group B.

If there be a lesson for the forester in the peculiar situation just described, it would undoubtedly be the urgent need for public enlightenment on all phases of resource management. But if the forester is honest he will have to admit that in the biological upheaval forced on New Zealand through a century's occupation by exotic humans, animals, and plants, many of the answers have not yet been discovered. And with profound ecological changes still occurring it is doubtful whether the problems they engender can even be outlined in absolute terms at this stage.

Two other developments during the year are of importance to foresters. First steps have been taken to form a Conservation Society, with the object of providing an independent and impartial voice on all matters pertaining to the conservation of New Zealand resources. One need only read the daily Press to know there is wide interest as well as widely divergent thinking on this broad subject. And foresters know to their cost that practically any facet of the natural-resource complex, be it scenery, wildlife, or timber, can trigger off torrents of emotionalism in which first principles readily become obscured. Thus any such society which can help in securing better public appreciation of the meaning of the term "conservation" should be welcomed and assisted to the fullest by the Institute.

The second matter of particular interest is the recent announcement of the setting up of a Tussock Grasslands and Mountain Lands Institute. So far as I am aware, no details of the composition or functions of this new body have yet been published; but the Institute of Foresters, both editorially and in the writings of its individual members, has long advocated the urgent and demonstrable need for competent research on mountain-land problems, and the placement of responsibility for this research in a central authority. It is to be hoped that the setting up of the new Institute reflects appreciation of the fact that comprehensive research is needed on the problem mountain lands, whether the cover on these be forest, scrub, tussock, scree, or even snow and ice, that damage to any

type of mountain land is a threat to the whole area, and thus to the lowlands and their human population below.

This brief round-up has attempted to cover aspects of forestry which, though not new, have shown some change in status during the past year. They are matters of legitimate interest to foresters, matters on which we as an Institute have every right to hold definite views. And in the belief that our views are firmly based in fact, we have not only the right, but indeed the duty to promulgate them as widely as possible for guidance of the public. All the matters I have touched on pose administrative problems, but it could be said in truth that research and more research is the only avenue to which we can look for satisfactory and permanent solutions.

During the next few days I hope with you to hear and see much of what has been done and is still proceeding in the research field. I am confident that from this experience each one of us will derive a better understanding and thus become a more competent performer in his own sphere of forestry endeavour.