

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Recreational Use of Forest Land

A trend that must be viewed with concern by all who are dedicated to the full development and use of the nation's forest resources is the demagogic fashion for converting State forests under multiple-use management into national parks devoted to a limited group of uses.

Already 29% of the total forest area in New Zealand is in national parks, as compared with 2% in the U.S.A., which is the source of much of the emotional propaganda stimulating this trend. The prodigality of this allocation is further indicated by the *per capita* dedication of nature reserves and national parks — at less than one-hundredth of an acre in Great Britain, barely one-tenth of an acre in the U.S.A., but 1.8 acres in New Zealand. Can we afford this? However worthy the objectives of those who are agitating for the Kaimanawa Mountains, the Tararua Ranges, or portion of the Ruahines to be declared national parks, something must be done to persuade both them and our legislators of the dangers in such agitation. Their objectives can be attained equally well under the existing forest administration, and without sacrificing the equally important objectives of water yield, slope stabilization, erosion and flood control, or even the lesser objectives of recreational hunting and fishing. The hazards of departing from the traditional "multiple-use" concept of forestry lie in the legal establishment of exclusive groups of users or interests and in the loss of adaptability to future trends of public demand. The Tararua Forest Park provides a good example of the practical compromises which can be achieved under multiple-use management. The flexible and evolving character of such compromises is essential, and would be destroyed by legislating in favour of a privileged group of users.

The problem is to persuade the public that the trend is in fact not necessary. There is growing awareness that much of our forest heritage has been squandered. Forest management is identified with exploitation; and the Forest Administration too frequently has failed to implement, early enough, the injunction under paragraph 14 of the Forests Act, 1949, to manage at least some State forest land "for recreational or amenity purposes not prejudicial to forestry". Pre-occupation with immediate problems of forest practice has led to the neglect of two growing needs in modern society — namely, outdoor recreation, and the cultured awareness of nature conservation as a responsibility of civilization. An alliance between these two groups of interests is an extremely powerful one, being an altruistic blend of need and of idealism; and it is as a result of default on the part of the Forest Service that the National Parks Act, 1952, is being used as the sole effective channel for preserving forests for the composite purposes of recreation and conservation of nature. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Forest Service will give its fullest support next year to this Institute's annual symposium, which is to consider the topic of "Forest Recreation". It is also recommended to members

of the Institute that they devote some thought to the problems and implications of promoting more recreation in our forests — and, in particular, to such matters as fire and vandalism, the provision of access and other facilities, and the management of considerable numbers of people.

With a population that is growing at a rate of 2.31% per annum (versus 1.36% in the U.S.A. and 0.46% in Great Britain) we should not underestimate the difficulties of future control. An attempt could also be made to predict the future pattern of recreational use. An authoritative analysis of current and projected outdoor recreation in the U.S.A. showed that 25% of this was concerned with water (e.g., swimming, boating, and fishing); 26% with the use of roads or tracks (e.g., motoring, cycling, and riding); 22% with devised activities (sports, sightseeing, etc.); and 23% with appreciative use of the natural environment (i.e., camping, picnicking, hiking and nature-study). Only 4% of all users, it may be noted, were hunters. What may we expect will be the future demand on forest areas of New Zealand, and how will we cater for these uses?

It is to be hoped, in the name of economy at least, if not also of efficiency, that nobody will recommend setting up a national board of outdoor recreation. Yet such fractionated control is only too likely unless forest management on a multiple-use basis shifts from a merely tacit acknowledgement that outdoor recreation promotes the physical and spiritual wellbeing of people to an active promotion of recreational opportunities as a legitimate and worthwhile objective. Furthermore, the all-important asset of "the environment" demands that not only should there be an alertness to the potential value of recreational sites, but also that these should never be sacrificed to short-term expediencies in serving other values. Such sites, once destroyed, can seldom be restored, and any value they may currently possess in terms of timber or facility of access is generally negligible compared with their intangible value for future recreation.

One of the points most requiring discussion is the extent to which "active promotion" should include the provision of recreational facilities for the public at large. There is much to be said for not creating, too soon, too many precedents for further dependence upon the State. Conversely, a too-liberal policy regarding holiday homes and other private leases could lead to later profiteering and privileged use of choice sites as the pressure of demand increases.

Despite constantly improving communications, it may be stated that the people who make most use of individual forests (as distinct from national parks) are those in their immediate vicinity. Not only are they the ones who receive the greatest benefits, but they also have at their disposal the initiative, energy and funds required to develop recreational facilities *as they are demanded*. Indeed, one of the characteristic features of outdoor recreation in New Zealand, insofar as it concerns forest lands, is the prevalence of group activity — whether the groups be climbing parties, hunting groups, or skiing and tramping clubs. The initial affiliation is usually prompted by material need to construct certain facilities, and the process of construction usually provides the corporate sinews which bind their common interest. Provided that public areas are kept open to all, without discrimination, and that the primary objects of management are not contravened, there should be wide latitude for local organizations to determine the specific manner in which their

needs are developed. The extent of control and of prejudgement by the State are further topics worthy of close consideration in Nelson next year.

Finally, since members of this Institute are more fortunate than most men in knowing the unspoiled beauty of forest and of landscape, should we not incorporate in our deliberations on recreational use some reference to the control of that most noxious of our animals — the “litter-bug”?

Directory of Workers in the Economics of Forestry

The Division of Forest Economics and Policy of the Society of American Foresters is in process of compiling a world-wide directory of workers in the economics of forestry. The Division aims to include the names of all persons who have a major professional interest in economics as applied to producing, harvesting, processing, marketing, or consumption of forest products or services.

Registration forms for the directory were mailed during the first week in September to all forest and forest-industry economists on record. Those who do not receive forms but who wish to be included in the directory are asked to write to the chairman of the directory committee: William A. Duerr, State University College of Forestry, Syracuse, New York, U.S.A. 13210.

The purposes of the forestry economics directory are (1) to identify workers in the field so that they can communicate more readily with one another and thus promote the unity and the development of the field; (2) to help research workers, prospective employers, programme chairmen for professional meetings, government agencies or industrial concerns in search of advisers, and others who may need to know who is working in the field or in special parts of the field; and (3) to provide a mailing list for specialized professional material.