New Zealand’s Contributions to International Forestry

The first international forestry conference to be held in New Zealand took place in Rotorua when the Seventh Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission met there from 22 September to 2 October 1964. The Commission is one of several regional organizations under the Forestry and Forest Products Division of FAO in different parts of the world. Participants numbering over 60 from fourteen of the member nations in the region attended: Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan were major countries not represented.

In accepting the invitation from the New Zealand Government to hold the Session in this country, the Director-General of FAO made the suggestion that countries outside the Asia-Pacific region with interests in softwood plantations might be glad of the opportunity to attend. Agreement to this proposal was readily given, but in the event Sudan was the only country to take advantage of it. The Director of the Forestry and Forest Products Division of FAO, Dr N. A. Osara, attended as representative of the Director-General of FAO and made a noteworthy contribution to the success of the Session.

The main business of the Session consisted of a review of the biennial national progress reports on forestry and forest industries development, a study of regional timber trends and prospects (preparatory to the FAO World Survey intended for the Sixth World Forestry Congress in Spain in 1966) and a discussion of the role of fast-growing softwoods in meeting wood requirements and the development of industries based on them.

Virtually all member countries provided national progress reports which showed that forest inventory had been undertaken more widely since the 1962 Session and more use was being made of the results in preparing country-wide management plans. However, it was revealed that improvement in statistical services and coverages was slower than desired and, in spite of a strengthening of institutions for education and research, sufficient attention was still not being given to the training of forest economists and forest products engineers and technicians. This latter deficiency was again the subject of comment when regional timber trends and prospects were under discussion. It is noteworthy that, while this subject was being considered, the Commission accepted the suggestion that, to help redress the present imbalance between regional resources on the one hand and requirements on the other, the help of trade interests should be enlisted in developing a demand for many timbers not at present used. This applies particularly to tropical countries with floristically rich forests of which only a few species, representing a small proportion of the total wood available, are now merchantable. It was thought it would be of advantage if trade interests from the countries concerned were invited to take part in future deliberations of the Commission on this subject.

Although New Zealand was the only country to present papers on fast-growing conifers and their use, there was great interest
both in the conference room and in the forests and industries visited during the study tours, in all aspects of our exotic forestry. In the discussion it was recognized that economics must largely govern the establishment, management and utilization of forests, hence industrial planning should be a very early, if not the first, step in considering the reservation and management of existing forests or the establishment of plantations. This led the Commission to endorse a proposal that FAO should investigate the possibility of organizing a training course in Forest and Forest Industry Development Planning, and giving consideration among the Special Fund and Technical Assistance Programme projects to complementary training courses on more limited aspects.

Prior to the Session there were slight hopes that it might be possible to convene meetings, which occur only rarely, of at least some of its subsidiary bodies:

1. Teak Sub-commission.
2. Committee on Silvicultural and Forest Management Research.
3. Committee on Forest Products Research.
4. Committee on Forest Working Techniques and Training of Forest Workers.

As almost invariably happens, there were present insufficient members of any of these bodies for meetings to be arranged, but representatives were able to report to the Commission and receive endorsement of their proposals for the future.

The Session ran with satisfactory smoothness during its formal meetings, on its study tours and at its social functions. The excellent co-operation from all concerned in organizing every aspect earned the greatest credit. The immediate achievement in advancement of forestry in the region was perhaps not spectacular but dividends will accrue from personal contacts virtually impossible except through international conferences.

Outside interest in the progress forestry has made in New Zealand has certainly been stimulated and the impression of its vitality, already established by our delegates to previous conferences under United Nations and other sponsorship, has been intensified.

The confidence this has created leads to a steady flow of requests for deputation of personnel to help other countries and for us to receive visitors anxious to see what we are doing. The policy of releasing officers for FAO assignments has been continued and a new form of help has been devised by sending a small team of forest rangers to inculcate into their East African counterparts our ideas of a ranger's duties and responsibilities and the way they should be performed. The team has found plenty of scope for introducing reforms and has suggested that we receive Africans for training in logging. Advantage has been taken by both Asian and African countries of schemes for study tours and a trainee from Hong Kong, which has too small a cadre to support its own training centre, has entered the Ranger Training Course.
Forest Management and Local Politics

The consortium comprising N.Z. Forest Products, the Bowater Paper Corporation, Fletcher Industries, and Baigents Limited of Nelson has recently appointed a New Zealand Wood Supply Committee, whose principal function will be to assess and report on the actual and potential yield from exotic forests in various regions, beginning in Nelson province. This may be taken as an indication that the forest-based industries are at last coming to regard forests as a resource capable of sustained yield management, instead of fit only for short-term exploitation. That the five appointments to the committee are all members of this Institute is an equally welcome reassurance that, whatever the immediate commercial interests the Committee is directed to serve, its recommendations will be formulated in accordance with sound forestry principles.

It is well that this reassurance comes at a juncture when the profession is faced with a series of decisions-under-pressure that will test not only its own estimate of its maturity but even its faith in the classical precepts of sound forest management.

There are several current and potential developments which promote this crisis. The foremost of these is a common misapprehension of the implications of the Eyrewell gale disaster, and the even more dangerous consequences that are likely to follow from a prevailing mood of disillusion. It is cogent to ask “Disillusion with what?” Let it be clearly understood that the circumstances which led to the original allocation, for afforestation, of land prone to wind-throw were such that the forester had no alternative choice, at Eyrewell or Balmoral — just as the availability of land then sub-marginal for pastoral use elsewhere provided the foundations for Golden Downs, Kaingaroa or Riverhead.

The further circumstances which led, in the brief span of the Depression years, to the establishment of large tracts of even-aged forest on these soils were, likewise, beyond the control of forest management — since the decisions initiating the work were political. The readily-available labour of the Depression certainly created a great forest estate, but it also consolidated the necessary conditions for extreme vulnerability to the hazards of fire, wind and insect attack — i.e., extensive, even-aged monocultures.

In these circumstances, the Canterbury experiences cannot be construed as a failure of forest management: if anything, they confirm its classical principles. If, however, the illusions were those of complacent optimism then it was high time they were destroyed.

Our future jeopardy lies in overlooking the fact that these pressures of circumstance still exist today, although in different guise.

On a national scale they exist in the expression of Cabinet policy that the forest estate shall be increased to two million acres by 2000 A.D. We have in this number of the Journal an authoritative article describing the reliance that will have to be placed on degraded lands during the next phase of the reafforestation programme. Yet it is on precisely such lands that the risks of climatic damage or of attack by pathogens are greatest. Unless there is a steadfast application of proven methods of managing forests on such lands, New Zealand will suffer further repetitions of the Sirex and Selidosema epidemics, and the Canterbury wind-throw, or worse.
Yet is it practicable to initiate such methods of management? At Eyrewell, for example, where there is already pressure to release much of the land for pastoral use? All who have had to do with forests in the early stages of establishment will feel apprehensive of the outcome—in their certain knowledge of the devious means needed to hold land for future planting; in their awareness of the political difficulties faced by ministers of the Crown; in their sympathy for those officials who must ride the whirlwinds of policy, they will feel apprehensive.

The fundamental handicap hindering the profession is that we still have not communicated to the public at large and to those, particularly the farmers, with whom we must achieve the necessary balance in use of our land, the basic essentials of proper forest management.

Just what does the slogan "Forestry is Forever" mean to the average member of the public? Does it leave any impression at all on his advertisement-raped consciousness? If it does, it probably conjures up the indefinite proliferation of little Kaingaroas—hardly an appealing image. It almost certainly does not communicate the essentials of sustained yield—a proper age-class distribution, re-establishment of annual coupes, and the initial necessity, during reafforestation, for much of the land to remain unplanted.

Until these principles have been communicated, the execution of forest management, by the State at least, will remain at the mercy of political pressure; forest land will remain vulnerable to piecemeal acquisition; and it will be impossible to devise, in a climate of sympathetic understanding, methods of temporarily utilizing forest land for pastoral or other forms of short-term production.

Proposed Re-establishment of the School of Forestry

There is considerable uneasiness within this Institute about the Minister of Forest's announcement that it is proposed to re-establish a New Zealand School of Forestry at the University of Canterbury. This disquiet issues from doubts about whether the decision was premature, whether it was taken for the right reasons, and above all for the stealthy manner in which it was made.

As far as this Institute is concerned, the political issue of location for the school is of only incidental consequence. What is far more pertinent to our responsibility for the standards of professional forestry in New Zealand is that no consultation was held with our representatives; that no reasons have been forthcoming for such a reversal of earlier statements of official policy regarding professional training; and that assurances have been neither given, nor sought from the University of Canterbury, regarding the status and staffing of such a school. The history of the ill-fated earlier schools at Auckland and Christchurch is well known, and there are grounds for believing that the "Faculty" envisaged for the proposed School would still consist of only two full-time foresters.

Were the University Grants Committee, at the time of their decision, aware of the full implications of the authoritative recommendation by the 1947 British Empire Forestry Conference "... that

1 Vide N.Z. Forest Service annual reports for 1948 (p. 10, 87); 1950 (p. 10); 1951 (p. 10); 1964 (p. 21).
forestry schools should be created or maintained only under conditions providing the full-time services of an adequate staff with field experience”? The passage of time has served only to confirm this statement. Just as our Commonwealth colleagues have endeavoured to provide “some standards for those who would unwittingly establish inadequately staffed forestry schools”, so the Society of American Foresters has stipulated that one of the main criteria for accreditation of a school is that its faculty must include at least five men “trained in forestry and teaching an adequate curriculum in professional forestry, which must include the areas of silviculture, protection, management, economics and utilization; plus the equivalent of at least one additional man teaching courses within this curriculum and designed specifically for foresters”.

That this is a minimum standard, Birch’s1950 survey of European experience makes very clear. In the United States the size of the average forestry school faculty had increased from 6.3 men in 1929 to 11.9 men in 1958; and in the accredited schools there was an average of 16.7 men engaged in full-time teaching, research and administration—and nearly half of them held doctorate degrees. How can New Zealand justify even a minimum faculty of six men?—despite the upward revision of the Forest Service’s estimate of this country’s desirable annual recruitment of professional officers—from 6 (in 1951, when overseas training was still being advocated) to 10 as implied by the official statement. Yet no less an authority than Sir Harry Champion has stated categorically that “It is absurd to set up a school when the annual rate of absorption of recruits is less than a dozen at the minimum”. One cannot avoid inferring that the authorities concerned have either grossly underestimated the requirements for adequate professional training in forestry or that they hope to improvise with existing staff, supplemented by a skeleton faculty. Birch’s prescience in writing that “the primary lesson which should be learnt from long European experience is . . . to avoid the temptation of establishing an inadequately staffed forestry faculty” should reinforce our anxieties now, and compel us to seek immediate reassurance.

On the other hand, if these fears prove to be groundless, there are several very real benefits to be anticipated from the proposed location.

First, there are the obvious possibilities of building up a strong school of protection forestry and watershed management, in close association with the existing courses on conservation and range management. This has been foreshadowed in the transfer of the Forest and Range Experiment Station to the Ilam campus.

Secondly, there are the opportunities for research on native beech forests (in the Buller region) and on podocarp management (in Westland). There is an element of irony in the fact that these opportunities would be developing at a time when all too many foresters are tending to regard indigenous forest research as of largely academic interest. Furthermore, apart from this attitude, the biggest single handicap from which such research has suffered

---

1950 N.Z. Parliamentary Paper C-3A, p. 67, 68.

Dana, S. T., and Johnson, E. W., 1963: “Forestry Education in America Today and Tomorrow.”

in New Zealand has been a lack of continuity in personnel. Greater stability may be expected of any university engagement.

Thirdly, there are the less tangible but powerful benefits to be expected of a New Zealand forestry school, at whatever university it may be located. These influences, developing through mutual intercourse with other disciplines, have too long been missing from their proper place in higher education. This absence of forestry concepts and ideals from the university environment is in large part responsible for the misunderstanding which New Zealand foresters have faced for so many years.

There are thus good grounds for welcoming our own School of Forestry in Canterbury, and the authorities may be assured that the Institute would support it to the utmost of its ability, provided that it is soundly conceived and adequately staffed. Otherwise New Zealand and our profession would be far better served by continuing to train our foresters at those overseas schools which can support a faculty of the highest calibre.

**Institute Responsibilities**

In this number of the *Journal* we publish on page 103 a copy of the evidence submitted by our President to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Deer Control, together with the official record of cross-examination of our representatives by the Committee on 23 April 1964. No comment upon the proceedings is permissible at this stage, as further hearings of evidence still remain to be held.

We also include herein (page 118) a report by the subcommittee on local body forestry, appointed by the Council of the Institute after the 1963 symposium on this topic. This report deserves close study, not only by those who are engaged in forest extension work, but also by officials of local bodies and their governing councils.

Finally, by kind consent of the Editor of *Forestry* and Professor M. V. Laurie, Head of the Commonwealth Forestry Institute, we reprint an article reviewing the book *Forestry Education in America Today and Tomorrow*, published in 1963 by the Society of American Foresters. The pertinence of this article will be immediately apparent to our New Zealand readers.