PEOPLE IN FORESTRY

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Although I am honoured and pleased to have been asked by the Institute to give this the final talk on the subject of "People in Forestry", I have been wondering what special qualifications I may have for this particular task. Perhaps an obvious one is that I have been around for a long time. Having now reached a stage of obsolescence, or senescence, I have had the opportunity to meet and know many people in forestry during the course of my career. This leads me to the thought that the talk could be about personalities rather than people in forestry, and indeed I have been tempted to do this. New Zealand forestry has thrown up many notable and some notorious characters, and is still doing so. One has only to think of the likes of MacIntosh Ellis, Arnold Hansen, Owen Jones, C. M. Smith, A. R. Entrican, Fred Fields, Sam Darby, Hub Roche, Jim Perham, Roderick MacRae, Darcy Dunn, Frank Hutchinson, Mick Forbes, W. G. Morrison, Norman Dolamore, Dave Kennedy, and a host of others. But this is perhaps not the time and place to indulge in reminiscences, nor would I be the best person to do so.

The other qualification that perhaps entitles me to speak on people in forestry is that, as Director-General of Forests, I am by far the largest single employer of them. Indeed, according to recent figures, there are 2,500 people on the staff of the N.Z. Forest Service, and our average labour complement is very much the same. If what I have to say is about people in the Forest Service more than about people in forestry, this is only because of my working background in the Forest Service; in no sense does it imply that the Forest Service has any monopoly in quantity, in expertise, in good qualities, in eccentricity, or in any other aspect of human relationships.

It is only recently that I have discovered what subject the organizers of this meeting wanted me to talk about. I gather that the intention was for me to do some crystal-gazing and give my views on what different attributes and what different types of training will be required, as the nature of the profession of forestry itself changes, and as forestry in its many facets plays a continually increasing part in the economy and in the social life of New Zealand. I will have a little to say on this later, but I think that the subject has already been more than adequately covered by Professor McKelvey in his paper.

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I would now like to make a few general remarks about people in forestry. Looking at our own staff list, perhaps the first thing that strikes one is its diversity. I find that we have no fewer than forty-four occupational groups, including not only, as one would expect, the forestry and forest management classes, the servicing groups such as engineers accountants, clerical workers and typists, plus technicians and tradesmen, but that also we have three editors, two hostel managers, two architects, one landscape gardener, ten librarians, two nurses, four photographers, a safety inspection officer, four systems planners, eight programmers and three artists. We have no less than 256 graduates or their equivalents, of which 136 are professional foresters, 51 are scientists, 18 are engineers (civil, mechanical, chemical and electrical), four are economists, three are lawyers, eight have an arts degree, 18 have degrees or diplomas in agriculture or horticulture, and 11 are graduates in commerce. Notable omissions, which should be rectified, are sociologists and landscape architects. I have not got a breakdown amongst the 51 science graduates, but the diversity here would also be considerable.

As I have said elsewhere, forestry today is no longer merely the task of measuring, valuing, and selling timber from Crown forests to an already established indigenous sawmilling industry, or of growing trees in nurseries and planting them out in rectangular compartments on land which was not considered suitable for farming. It is truly a complex and sophisticated inter-disciplinary profession, in the private sector just as much as in the public one.

Despite this diversity of trades and professions, it is perhaps more the people who are actually working in and with the forests — foresters, forest rangers, forest technicians, and forest labourers — who are the more particular concern of this meeting. In talking about this group I should like to make some general comments. In so doing I may lay myself open deliberately to the charge of some degree of complacency and even of euphoria. My first comment refers to what in my view, and in the view of many others, is the extraordinarily high calibre at nearly all levels of people working in forestry. As far as professional foresters are concerned, we have to thank the late A. R. Entrican who pursued a recruiting and training policy which was remarkable for its vision, its single-mindedness, sometimes its ruthlessness, and now I think for its success. As a result the New Zealand Forest Service today is in the unusual and enviable position of having a surfeit of talent in the middle and senior professional groups. I am given to understand that only one other Government department enjoys this same good fortune. I believe that today we could fill fifteen conservators' positions if they were available — not seven — and that if the whole of the top brass of the Service was killed in the same aeroplane crash, the Department would function as well as ever before, if not better.

One of the particular strengths of the modern professional forester in New Zealand is that, unlike most of his counterparts the world over, he is still a generalist and not a special-
ist. I have myself seen evidence of this in recent overseas travels, and have seen how difficult it is for international agencies, because of the country quota system under which they work, to recruit general forest practitioners and forest managers, rather than highly specialized experts. Only recently I had this view confirmed by a letter from an overseas colleague. He said:

I really ought to have spent more time with your staff and dug deeper into the wide range of experience and new thinking which you have to offer. Your organization is an impressive one and I appreciated its sense of dynamics. Indeed the main impression of my New Zealand tour was that the whole forest sector is moving forward unfettered by too many traditional concepts; it was a most refreshing and stimulating experience for me.

Other overseas visitors make much the same comment.

Outside observers also tend to confirm my equally firm conviction that New Zealand is extraordinarily fortunate in the high calibre of its General Division or forest manager class. Here again the selective recruiting and subsequent intensive sub-professional training which Entrican insisted upon is responsible for this happy state of affairs. I can best underline my point by giving another quotation: this time from a conservator’s recent annual report. He wrote:

We talk glibly about planning and control and then confuse with a succession of commands on spending, counter commands on expenditure, counter counter policies on planting allocations. Always the forest officer in charge and his staff are expected to sort out the confusion while immersed in a mass of lesser instructions on accounting, costing and stores procedures. They cope with all this with only a note of cynicism, stoicism, and always with competence, dignity and good humour coupled with an intense interest in the job. I have nothing but admiration for our staff.

I heartily endorse these comments.

They lead me to the other well-known notable feature of people who work in forestry — their devotion to the job and the general esprit de corps which pervades the whole profession. This is all the more remarkable since at times it has been despite the absence of good local leadership. The intense dedication of New Zealand foresters is also obvious to, and frequently commented upon, by overseas visitors and also by people outside the profession in New Zealand, including, I am pleased to say, the State Services Commission.

One manifestation of it is the use of the term “T.M.F.S.” — “This man’s Forest Service” — a habit started by Sam Darby and brought into general use by Dave Kennedy. Somehow or other, this denotes most aptly and clearly a fierce and jealous pride in the Service. I detect the same sort of institutional pride and loyalty in the private sector as well, and I hasten to stress that it is no less justified. The final manifestation of the esprit de corps, the friendliness, the freemasonry and the
cohesion of the whole profession is of course the vitality of this Institute itself.

In passing, one other indication can be mentioned — it is the remarkable way in which familiar names keep cropping up in the forestry profession in New Zealand. Offhand I can think of over a dozen father and son combinations, the Wastneys, Colletts, Holloways, Bamfords, Reids, Hopkins, McKinnons, Perhams, Baileys, Fields, Gimblett's, Days, Jolliffe's, Jolly's, and Groomes. Add to those the well-known brothers, cousins or nephews — the Cooneys, Lawns, Swales, Logans, Collins, Morrisons, and once again Colletts. I can think of few other professions that in such a short space of time have commanded this family loyalty or achieved this degree of inspiration.

In passing it could also be noted that people in forestry in New Zealand are by no means all New Zealanders and this in itself is a very good thing. Once again it is Entrican who has to be thanked for the vigorous recruiting policy which was responsible for it. He cannot, nor would he have wanted to claim all the credit; perhaps it is the attraction of New Zealand and of forestry in New Zealand which has brought so many people from other countries to work here. Whatever the reason, we are grateful to England and Burma for Fred Allsop and Hugo Hinds; to England for John, Denis Richardson, John Madden Harris, Geoff Chavasse, Ralph Naylor, Robin Cutler, Mervyn Uprichard and many others, particularly in the research field. I nearly included John Ure in the English list, for which he would never have forgiven me; we are grateful to Scotland for John, for George Brown, Graeme Whyte, George Leggat, David Black, and above all for Roderick MacRae. We are grateful to Australia for Jim Currie and Alan Mackney; to South Africa for Bob Jackson; to Denmark for Ib Thulin; to Norway for Knut Bergseng; to Holland for Gerard Yska, Hans Beekhuis, Rudi Zondag, Chris van Kraayenoord and others; and to many other countries, European and Asian, for the valuable people they have sent us, again in the research field particularly.

We owe a debt of gratitude also to the American influence which has come via the Research Fellows — Stephen Spurr, Rudi Grah, Ed Stone, Earle Stone and others; and likewise we pay our tribute to the Research Fellows from other nationalities, Czech, Japanese, Danish and Swiss, who have worked with us.

Although native-born New Zealanders are still the hard core of people in forestry in New Zealand, there is a remarkable degree of internationalization. I am convinced that the strength, the vitality, and the originality of forestry in New Zealand is connected with this phenomenon.

I now turn to probably the most important of all people in forestry — the actual workers in the forests, nurseries, sawmills and factories. For them also I have the greatest admiration. They have always had a tradition of solid, hard physical work, a tradition which undoubtedly was started by the great race of bushmen who logged the kauri forests in the last century; they had almost a superhuman task, and
they were super-men. The tradition has been carried on through the indigenous sawmilling industry, not only in the bush, but also most particularly by those highly skilled and extremely hard workers, the bench men in the typical New Zealand bush sawmill. The tradition has carried through into exotic forestry. The habit of hard work may have been given a push by economic necessity during the depression years, but I like to think that, as a tradition, it still derives basically from the earlier days of indigenous logging and milling.

The other noteworthy tradition, and it has already been commented upon and explored in some depth this week, is that of harmonious industrial relationships. I hope that some recent breaks with this tradition prove to be temporary. I hope very much indeed that both traditions will be maintained. But if they are to be, it goes without saying that the hard and the increasingly skilled work of the artisan in forestry and forest industries must be adequately and indeed generously recompensed. If the industry is to remain healthy and vigorous, and above all if it is to maintain and improve its competitive trading position, both domestically and internationally, a very high unit productivity of labour is essential. Mechanization can do much to achieve this; but honest and hard toil is still essential. Even more essential is an enlightened and generous attitude on the part of management, not only as far as actual monetary rewards are concerned, but in all aspects of working and living conditions.

Fortunately perhaps, forestry operations lend themselves to piece and contract work or bonus schemes, and these probably offer the best hope there is to ensure that labour shares equitably with capital the high profits which this industry should be able to make.

Surprisingly, the discussions at this meeting greatly underemphasized the particularly important place which the Maori people have in the forests and forest industries. I repeat what I have said elsewhere that because Maoris have a natural liking for forest work and a great aptitude for forest skills, including mechanical ones, they are indeed the life blood of many forest industries, both native and exotic. We just could not do without them. The benefits are of course reciprocal. The development of new forests and new forest industries has done much to stabilize some Maori communities which may otherwise have been forced to disband. The rapid development of forestry and forest industries and the rapid upsurge in Maori population, combined with an increase in its standard of living, have recently gone hand in hand. Long may these trends continue.

My one concern is that the Maori people have not assumed the place they should in the higher ranks of forest management. Maoris comprise a large part of our labour force but a very small part of our permanent staff. We have perhaps 50 Maoris out of 2,500 on the staff of the Forest Service; the number should be many times this. Most particularly we should have a far higher proportion of Maoris in the purely forestry operations — as professional foresters, as forest rangers and as forest foremen. Perhaps it is one of the great-
est challenges to the Maori people, so many of whom live in and depend on a forest or a forest industries environment, to see that they take their rightful place as leaders in forestry.

It is of course quite impossible to talk of people in forestry and to ignore what is (numerically) the larger half — the female sex. Time does not permit comments on the question of the employment of women in forestry, and in any case enough has already been said on this subject by other speakers. My only comment is that of the 290 women on the staff of the Forest Service, 145 are married and 145 are single, and I am at a complete loss to explain the significance of these statistics.

I must, however, say something about wives. Mrs Rockell has given you an excellent and thoughtful paper, but, if it has a fault, it is a fault which underlines the point I wish to make — the paper, like most foresters' wives, is modest to a degree. She tells you something of the many problems of foresters' wives, but she does not mention the enormous, invaluable and indeed indispensable contribution which they make. If I have suggested that people in forestry are deserving of praise, it is largely the forbearance, the tolerance, the good sense and the good humour of their wives which make them so. Indeed, foresters being what they are, the wives could not have survived without this combination of qualities. And they have survived. I do not know the statistics, but I would suspect that the divorce rate is low when compared with many other sectors of the community.

Mrs Rockell does not mention one disadvantage of being married to a forester — the long separations to which foresters' wives are commonly subjected. Possibly she feels, and justifiably so, that any feelings of deprivation which foresters' wives experience are lessened by the well-known fact that their husbands are notoriously social bores, who will talk shop at the drop of a tin hat to the exclusion of their women folk, and who will immediately form an *ad hoc* local section of this Institute whenever two or three of them get together.

Nor does Mrs Rockell mention how frequently foresters' wives have to assume the burden of their husband's work and share part of it. Here I think that the late C. M. Smith, with his felicitous command of language, expressed the point far better than I can, and I quote his obituary of the late A. W. Wastney in an early *N.Z. Journal of Forestry*. He said:

> He is survived by five sons and his widow; and it is fitting to record that to her, as to many foresters' wives, is due much of his practical success in garden, kennels and field. The foresters and botanists who accepted and enjoyed her hospitality and invariable equanimity at all hours are innumerable: as were the outback farmers and sawmillers who sent long distance telephone calls at all hours with the perfect assurance that the forester's wife was a safer and more intelligible and patient transmitter of forest messages than any post office.

I take my hat off — no longer a tin one — to my own wife and to all foresters' wives.
I said earlier in this paper that I may be open to charges of euphoria and complacency. Although I have indicated that some degree of euphoria may be justifiable, complacency never can be. If we are to meet the challenges of an expanding and changing profession, we must ensure that recruitment and training policies, at all levels, are more carefully planned, more visionary, and are pursued with more vigour than ever before. In this context, by training I mean formal pre-job training at artisan, sub-professional and professional levels, and subsequent on-the-job training, postgraduate training, refresher training and, as and when required, re-training. Many other countries are finding more and more that, as technology changes, re-training is becoming an urgent necessity. The need is already becoming apparent here, as evidenced by the plight of the forest mensurationist, who is now finding that a forestry degree, even if mathematically oriented, is no longer adequate, and that he must be re-trained as a professional forester-cum-systems programmer or -systems analyst. Indeed, nearly all of us at present, whether we like it or not, are being forced to learn to understand what electronic data processing can do for forestry and how it can best be used as a tool of forest management. The importance, and some of the attendant problems, of re-training at the worker and supervisor level have already been discussed fully at this conference.

Professor McKelvey has given you a concise but comprehensive description of what modern forestry is all about. He has suggested how forestry in the future is going to differ from forestry in the past, and therefore what type of forestry image we should be trying to project. I will comment on two aspects only. First, Professor McKelvey recognizes that forestry is a business and refers to forestry economics and to "the attainment of maximum monetary profits". Production forestry in New Zealand is rapidly becoming even more a business in the true sense that it produces commodities which have to be sold in different types of markets and in the face of different types of competition. A forester today must be a marketer also and must therefore have some marketing expertise. I find it difficult to see how this type of skill can be imparted by formal training; it seems to me that it can come through experience only. I wonder, therefore, whether New Zealand should not move towards what has been quite a common practice in the United States, the temporary exchange of personnel between Government and industry. I realize all the difficulties attendant upon such a suggestion, but I believe that, if something could be achieved along these lines, it would be very good indeed for the Forest Service, and it might do no harm to the industry at that.

The other matter for comment refers to the radical changes in attitude, and hence in training, which are going to be necessary for the forester of the future if he is to fulfil his correct role in the realm of social and environmental forestry. Let us not under-estimate the importance of this. The current concern about environmental problems is world-wide, although naturally it is more evident in developed than in
developing countries. The concern is deep and I believe it will be lasting. The wave of well-meaning but often uninformed emotion about the quality of the environment and about that imprecise term “conservation” will doubtless pass. What I am sure will endure will be an informed and responsible concern based on scientifically established facts and backed by a determination that never again will private enterprise, public apathy or official mis-management be allowed to devalue or destroy the physical environment in which we have to live. No section of the community exhibits this determination more uncompromisingly than youth, and it is young people who will be the leaders of tomorrow and hence the arbiters of future environmental policy.

Time does not permit me to comment on the implications to the forestry profession of future public attitudes towards the environment, although I think they are obvious to most of you here. Nor is there time to explore what I consider is a matter of even greater significance, the future contribution which the forestry profession, by its very philosophy, should be able to make in moulding these public attitudes. The subject of my talk, after all, has been people in forestry. Perhaps all that needs to be said in this context, and I shall conclude on this note, is that because it is today’s youth who will determine future environmental policy, and because we hope that future foresters will play a key role in this, it is evident that for this reason alone — although of course there are others — of all people in forestry young people are by far the most important.