ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1974
COLLOQUIA REPORTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Colloquium 1: Relevance of the Institute’s Constitution for the 1980s

This colloquium discussed whether or not the articles of the Constitution approved in 1971 will be relevant to the needs of forestry, and people in forestry, in the 1980s. From the discussions, it appeared that changes should be made in qualifications for the grades of membership, and with regard to policing the work of consultants, but that no changes in the composition of Council, nor of local sections, were considered necessary.

There was some feeling also that the statement of objectives of the Institute (Article 2) warranted amendment. These are: “to further the development of forestry and the interests of the profession of forestry in New Zealand”. In Article 42: “The term ‘forestry’ shall be understood to include all those activities involved in the management of forest land, the object of which is the production of wood or other forest benefits, and the maintenance of the environment in its most beneficial form”. But it was generally considered that both “forestry” and “profession” need clarification.

Although “forestry” as defined is already open to reasonably wide interpretation, earlier speakers at the conference (J. J. K. Spiers, E. H. Bunn and P. J. McKelvey) stressed the need for more concern for the welfare of people living, working and pursuing recreation in forests, or indeed anyone even loosely connected with forestry.

The term “profession”, as used in a forestry context, is open to considerable misinterpretation. Despite the prevailing attitude of governments and of the public service to the contrary, opinion within the Institute is wholeheartedly against equating professionalism with the possession of a university degree. Undoubtedly the forestry profession differs from those of medicine, law, the church, etc., whose members are legally licensed to carry out certain functions. Ours is one of varied skills with no licence to invoke — merely a professional concern for applying our skills to good advantage. Thus, all those who have completed an approved formal course, be they holders of a university degree, or of a ranger’s, technician’s or woodsman’s certificate, should be eligible immediately for associate membership of the Institute of Foresters, provided that they are applying these skills to advancing forestry. Furthermore, advancement to full membership should not be as of right after a few years for university graduates, in contrast to the more rigorous conditions and longer time imposed on non-graduates. The overwhelming feeling of this meeting, and of some of the earlier local section meetings, was that the same criteria of merit should be applied to the advancement of all members.

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Of the several possible ways of judging merit, only two received an airing. One basis could be the “wisdom and mercy of Council” as noted by D. Kennedy. Trotman advanced other criteria — assessment based on academic qualifications, a project on one's daily work, experience and appearance before a registration panel. However it is to be judged, the Institute could be more active in insisting on re-training and refresher education. There would be substantial difficulties in setting up the Institute itself as an examining body, since it is not chartered, nor would it be easy to cover the wide range of specialization to be examined. Nevertheless, the Institute should actively seek and recognize pertinent courses which would benefit individuals in forestry, and perhaps even delegate authority to examine on its behalf.

Advance to member, therefore, should be judged on the worthiness of an individual, not only in terms of his performance at work, but of his participation in Institute activities also. If a majority of voting members disagree with the standards set, and interpretations made by Council, it is in their hands every two years to remedy the situation when electing a new Council.

On the other hand, it is important to beware of pressure groups or group representations on Council, and voters should therefore be encouraged to strive for a suitable blend of experience, background and initiative without voting necessarily for all the senior people in their particular organization who are offering themselves for election. Similarly, anyone elected should be prepared to be active without being hindered by divided loyalties.

There is apparently no need, however, to increase the size of Council. To cope with any extra work load, Council should continue to set up subcommittees which would include members from outside Council, and this practice should be extended as required.

There is a fair measure of agreement that, when recognizing the competence of consultants in particular fields, it is important to safeguard the interests of the public and the client, as well as of the consultant himself. Consultants, seemingly, would have to be full members, and machinery needs to be set up to police their activities.

In all other respects, the constitution of the Institute seems able to meet the needs of the 1980s.

A. G. D. Whyte

Colloquium 2: The Institute's policy for the 1980s

FRANKLIN: As far as the internal policy of the Institute is concerned, I think it is fair to say that this should revolve around the question of more involvement of members. If members feel that they can take an active part in the Institute they will contribute more. In part, this involves the question of membership which has already been dealt with by Graham Whyte. It also involves the role of local sections and standing committees with co-opted members, encouraging