SUBMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF WEST COAST FORESTRY AND FOREST INDUSTRY BY THE N.Z. INSTITUTE OF FORESTERS (INC.)

Following an invitation from the Minister of Forests to comment on the future policy for forestry and forest industries on the West Coast, a submission was prepared by Council of the Institute, following consultation with members in the West Coast and Nelson Sections. The submission, 39 pages in length, was sent to the Minister in September, 1977. The first part of it, summarising the Institute’s recommendations, is presented here.

PART I — SYNOPSIS OF THE INSTITUTE’S RECOMMENDATIONS

The N.Z. Institute of Foresters has based its detailed submissions on these broad policies:

1. The Institute supports the Government’s indigenous forest policy, but takes the view that it must be applied in individual areas in the light of all relevant factors — ecological, technical, economic and social. It should not be used as a “blanket prescription” for all forests.

2. The wood-using industry on the West Coast should be maintained for social reasons. However, because of the legitimate demands of other forest users, the cut from State forests needs to be reduced by about 5% over the next five years in order to avoid a more serious decline in industry later.

3. In order to absorb labour which might be displaced by this reduction, there should be an increase of wood processing, and also an increase in forest management work, especially the re-establishment of beech and podocarp forests following logging.

4. The eventual aim will be to achieve a balance between allowable cut and sustained yield in perpetuity for podocarp, beech and exotic timbers.

5. Therefore, where forests are logged, positive measures must be instituted to ensure that they are regenerated or re-established.
6. Proposed reserves are satisfactory, but each must be subject to detailed examination before it is gazetted.

7. The question of riparian strips and green belts needs re-examination in the light of objects and methods of management in individual cases, and a proven need for them.

8. All land that is suitable only for forestry use should eventually be transferred to Forest Service control, except where individual landowners use it for forestry purposes. It is particularly important that timber on Crown land be handed over to the Forest Service in the near future, to be part of the allowable cut where appropriate.

9. Land which is suitable for permanent agriculture should in certain circumstances be deleted from State forest and transferred to the Lands Department for disposal.

10. Exotic forests should be established to the extent that they can maintain the present sawmill supply in Buller, Inangahua and north Westland (but no planting should be undertaken in south Westland). In exotic stands already planted, intensive silviculture and the application of fertilisers should be obligatory in order that exotic crops should reach harvestable size as soon as possible to reduce the drain on native timbers.

11. Red and silver beech (and preferably hard beech also) should be included in allowable cuts, wherever beech or beech/podocarp forests are to be logged.

12. An important aspect will be processing and marketing beech timbers; co-operation between Government, sawmillers and end users will be necessary to achieve maximum use, together with any complementary reduction in imports of comparable timbers.

13. Exotic forests in north Westland have sufficient potential yield for supply to south Westland, in order that the cut of native timbers can be reduced there to a sustainable level before the end of this century. However, it would be more logical for mills which have exhausted their supplies of native timbers in south Westland to be re-established in central (Ross-Hokitika) or north Westland; at least 10 years’ notice of this should be given to the companies concerned.

14. The major supply problem is currently in north Westland. As well as maximum utilisation of beech sawtimber (in-
cluding areas adjoining, but not including, the Maruia Valley, under sustained yield), it is proposed that sufficient exotic logs be brought from Nelson in order to eke out native timbers until such time as much of the cut can be supplied from exotic forests already planted. Beech chip logs would be backloaded (as incidental to supplying sawlogs from beech and beech/podocarp forests) to Richmond for processing until such time as a plant to utilise waste is established in north Westland.

15. In order to ensure optimum utilisation, it is proposed that a feasibility study be undertaken in the very near future to test whether it would be possible to set up an ethanol plant in north Westland with an input capacity of 350 oven-dry tonnes per day. Such a plant could be in operation by 1981, either for a period of 15 years as a prototype to test the economics of such an enterprise, or on a permanent basis.