

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### *Special-purpose species*

Sir, — I read with enjoyment John Purey-Cust's excellent report on the special-purpose species workshop which appeared in Vol. 24 (2) of the *Journal*.

However, it is quite apparent that he is an inhabitant of the deepest south, for despite that fact that kauri grows quite well in Dunedin, Invercargill and even Stewart Island, most South Islanders tend to grossly underestimate its potential.

John lists seven fields for which special-purpose timbers are required. He concludes that *P. radiata*, with careful selection, can fill 5 of these and then blithely relegates kauri to one use! I would be interested to know which one?

Of the seven special uses listed, kauri is a premium timber for: (i) Furniture and cabinet work. (ii) Turnery. (iii) Decorative veneer and plywood.

It is suitable for exterior joinery and poles. With careful selection it can be used for ladder construction and low impact handles.

Kauri can thus fill all seven of the uses listed in John's paper and should be regarded as the premium special-purpose timber for the northern part of the North Island.

Some may think it grows too slowly, but, of the special-purpose species listed in the paper, properly managed, kauri has a growth rate better than or equal to silver, red and hard beech, Douglas fir, rata, tawa, black walnut, kanuka and mangao.

To John I extend a sincere invitation to "come north young man".

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P.S. Kauri is also quite useful for building boats.

### *Wilderness areas*

Sir, — In an earlier issue (Vol. 24, No. 1) Les Molloy had comments about recent decisions on indigenous State forests, particularly the zoning and gazettal of wilderness areas.

Over the years Mr Molloy has contributed to the advancement of mountainland recreation, putting a lot of effort into Federated Mountain Clubs in particular. Regarding him as a man of cautious but generally reasonable views as far as the environment goes, I am surprised and disappointed by the attitude he adopts in the *Journal*.

The substance for argument in Mr Molloy's articles is the justification for wilderness especially wilderness over and above those existing areas set aside in National Parks and State Forest Parks. I do not think there is much point in taking detailed issue with Mr Molloy's ". . . résumé of . . . attempts to achieve a compromise between local and national interests". Obviously he deplores the postponement of the decision on the Tasman Wilderness Area.

Wilderness areas are commonly represented as parts of the country where the individual can slip the traces of modern society because all

around him is primeval nature stripped of the sights and sounds of man. Of course, no such thing really exists any more unless you choose to ignore possum, deer, stoats, etc., for a start, as these provide continual advertisements for man's presence in the environment. However, your modern wilderness-users are grudgingly adaptable so they settle for just having no obvious indications of man's presence — roads, tracks, huts, etc., except for some places as Molloy's paper illustrates (Table 1). Nevertheless, wilderness is not produced necessarily by land zoning decree; it occurs unheralded in many parts of New Zealand, the South Island in particular. Table 2 of Molloy's paper tabulates them pretty well though it conveniently ignores potential wilderness areas that could be created by removing tracks, huts and so on from semi-developed mountainlands. Informal wilderness has been used for years by people like Les Molloy and it is the slow attrition of the resource which obviously worries them, particularly when it occurs through recreational development, but in the absence of any thorough recreational rationale. This is a legitimate complaint but in itself is no justification for securing wilderness by legal tenure in new areas not "developed" as yet.

Wilderness areas can be set aside by zoning which is flexible, or by gazettal which is practically as tight as gazetting National Park. The roots of environmental thinking are supposedly buried in concern for the ramifications of man's actions on natural resources or whatever before commitments are made. Decisions to create wilderness by gazettal should be treated very seriously as in pragmatic terms it forecloses all foreseeable production options.

Any consistent environmentalist must recognise the deferral of the Tasman Wilderness proposals as a wise decision in view of the circumstances — for any part of New Zealand with extensive and relatively intact native vegetation has potential as a wilderness but only a few such areas have sufficient mineralisation to perhaps permit production mining. True, the wilderness values may in the final decision outweigh the latter but no decision should be made until the *full* resource picture is known. If this is difficult to do over the deferral period because the Mines Department is lacking in mineral geologists, as Mr Molloy suggests, then maybe he and others should press for geologist recruitment with the same zeal they demonstrated for ornithologists, botanists etc., to carry out inventories of flora and fauna in other West Coast forests proposed for production forestry.

The statement is made in Molloy's wilderness paper: "There is in New Zealand no co-ordinated conservation strategy which seeks to assess, methodically and scientifically, the scenic, scientific and recreational values of the natural New Zealand landscape, rank areas according to their appropriate management and administration; rather the situation is one of fragmentation." Might I also point out that similarly there is no "comprehensive production strategy" which seeks the same ideal allocation of land uses, deployment of resources, and so on. We could certainly use such a scheme if the Forest Service is seriously contemplating gazetting wilderness State Forest Parks at the instigation of management advisory committees without any formal justification or simple statement of advantages and disadvantages. If a proposal is put forward suggesting 85 000 ha be managed in perpetuity as wilderness undisturbed, surely it is not unreasonable to wait five years while information is gathered on the area.

Surprisingly, no full account of wilderness benefits appears in Molloy's comment and paper. The worth of having some wilderness somewhere in New Zealand is self-evident though admittedly pretty nebulous. However, when it comes to determining wilderness *extent* and *location*, the public is entitled to see a more thorough and objective account of values gained and costs incurred. Logically, wilderness would seem best zoned (and maybe occasionally gazetted) in tenure of closely compatible function, in other words National Park. The prime reason for National Park is preservation of primeval conditions — the prerequisite for wilderness. If wilderness advocates cannot convince National Park administrators to cater for their needs, then I suggest they must have a woefully poor argument. If this is the problem limiting wilderness it could perhaps be solved by a bit of recreational research and mountainland diplomacy. The answer does not lie in Molloy's thinly disguised threat to support formation of a "Nature Conservancy . . . . . unfettered by a multiple-use philosophy."

CURT GLEASON

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## THE NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF FORESTRY

The *Journal* is the official publication of the N.Z. Institute of Foresters, and is published twice annually. A consolidated index is produced at three-yearly intervals, covering three volumes.

Subscriptions from non-members of the Institute will be entered by the Treasurer, N.Z. Institute of Foresters Inc., P.O. Box 468, TOKOROA, New Zealand. The annual rates, covering two issues each year, post free, with index each three years, are: within New Zealand, \$NZ9.00; overseas, \$NZ12.00 or equivalent, net. Back issues may also be obtained. Most issues up to 1947 are now out of print, but second-hand copies are sometimes available.

Correspondence on editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, *N.Z. Journal of Forestry*, c/- N.Z. Forest Service, Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand.

Papers and articles for the *Journal* should be in the hands of the Editor before 1 January and 1 July for the first and second numbers, respectively, in any particular year.

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