MAORI LAND AND FORESTRY: DEVELOPMENT IN TAITOKERAU*

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Whatungarongaro te tangata, tu tonu te whenua.
Man perishes but the land remains.

MAORI LAND

Maori land is not:

(a) Crown land.
(b) A national resource or reserve readily available to all.
(c) An asset to be assessed in European terms.

Before legislation introduced the concept of individual ownership, Maori land was owned by the tribe as a whole. There is a return to this concept in many cases but in general Maori land is owned by groups of specified individuals usually with some kinship links. It is a recognised obligation of Maori people to maintain the land during their lifetime and to pass it on intact to subsequent generations i.e., Maori land is recognised as an integral part of Maori culture and traditions.

Owners often have family links with the land going back centuries. It is no wonder they may have strong feelings and attachment to the land just as people in England or Scotland may do.

AREAS OF MAORI LAND

Maori land in the North is 140,000 ha in total of which 70,000 ha is idle or under-utilized. Possibly about half of this — i.e., 35,000 ha — could be developed for forestry. This idle or under-utilized land is predominantly back country or coastal and contains many areas of bush and scrub. The land is mainly in more remote areas where the Maori population predominates and there are close spiritual and cultural links with the land.

*Editor’s Note: This paper is published here as presented. The issue of Maori land, and the distinctive characteristics of Maori culture are such that the impact would be lost by its translation to a conventional style.
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Maori people represent 25% of the population of Taitokerau but own only 11% of the land — national figures are 10% of the population and 10% of the land. We are in Taitokerau dealing with the last remnants of the land at a time when the demand is greater than ever before. This demand is from the large companies, private investors and N.Z. Forest Service, on the one hand, and, on the other, pressure for retention of land in an undeveloped state for recreational, scenic, wildlife and other environmental and conservation purposes.

**PHILOSOPHY OF MAORI LAND USE**

Our guiding principle is *Tu Tangata* — stance of the people. This is more easily explained as Maori people doing their own thing with their

— own resources.
— in their own time.
— and in their own way.

*i.e.*, *Maoritanga* in action for the good of the Maori people and the country as a whole. By being better Maoris — we will be better New Zealanders.

We cannot have a cultural identity without economic viability and independence; the culture and philosophies of the Maori people cannot last and flourish unless there is a strong economic base that is ongoing and not dependent on temporary employment and other such forms of assistance. There is a desire to use the land to provide this base but not to sell it.

**WHAT IS FORESTRY?**

Forestry is an industry comprised of:

(a) Land.
(b) Labour.
(c) Capital (or finance).
(d) Management (or expertise).

The Maori people have the land and the labour, and management is a purchasable commodity or one that can be achieved with suitable training and education. The main resource lacking is capital (finance) and, as such, the objective of any dealings in Maori land is to create a source of finance as soon as possible so as to enable the Maori owners to become forest owners and operators as well as workers and managers.
That is, Maori people must be part of the forest industry at all levels — *i.e.*, 
— forest workers  
— forest foremen  
— forest managers  
— forest contractors  
— forest lessees (as well as the more customary role of lessors)  
    and forest owners  
and not just at the lower levels as tends to be the case now.

**BENEFITS OF FORESTRY**

The benefits of forestry include the following:

(a) Good use of land — it is economic where other land uses would fail.

(b) Job creation — particularly in remote areas where unemployment is endemic.

(c) As a consequence of job creation, the opportunity for better housing and rural resettlement.

(d) Permanent work — *i.e.*, a lifetime career.

(e) A profitable industry both in the short term in respect of wages and the long term — wood and more jobs from downstream and off-shoot industries.

(f) The provision of an economic base to help finance owner self-development including horticulture and farming. *i.e.*, it allows rationalisation and diversification of land use.

(g) It provides opportunity to return land in Crown ownership to 100% Maori ownership and eliminate debt.

(These comments relate primarily to forestry regimes using labour-intensive methods and silviculture.)

There will be disadvantages, too, but not of any significance compared with the benefits.

**UTILISATION OF MAORI LAND**

The priorities must be:

(a) Use and occupation by owners for owners.

(b) Use by some other party on behalf of Maori owners as an interim step towards achieving owner use and occupation.
As a consequence — any occupancy of Maori land by non-Maoris (i.e., N.Z. Forest Service or forest companies) must be:

(a) Short term — a one-crop rotation lease such as exists for Ngatihine should be the objective. Present owners should not pre-empt a decision by the next generation by tying up land in long-term leases. The next generation may well decide to lease again — that is for them to decide.

(b) Labour intensive — this would therefore tend to favour an intensive silviculture regime. Employment preference should be provided for owners together with training and educational opportunities.

(c) On a basis that gives the owners genuine involvement in decision making — e.g., in regard to forest management plans.

(d) On a basis that gives the owners a realistic annual rental to benefit present owners as well as some share of stumpage to safeguard the future.

Maori owners must retain rights to build on their own land or in traditional areas close to marae.

In a paper presented to the N.Z. Forestry Conference (Parore, 1981), I argued that the 99-year forestry leases should be reviewed and that the N.Z. Forest Service should set an example in that respect. That call went unheeded. It is clear that, if leases in the Parengarenga and Pouto areas were suitably amended:

(a) The interests of the Crown could be adequately protected whilst

(b) The Maori people could have the opportunity of taking back under their control (and ownership) land in which the Crown is presently an owner.

I would hope, therefore, that these leases will be reviewed.

Most Maori land blocks brought together under trusts for ease of administration contain a range of soil types, some suitable for horticulture or farming. Because of the capital input necessary, few commercially viable horticultural projects are possible. However, annual rental forestry leases can provide the cash flow to make this development possible. Thus additional work opportunities can be provided, especially for women who are amongst the hardest hit by unemployment.
DEPARTMENT OF MAORI AFFAIRS AND MAORI TRUSTEE

My department (Maori Affairs) has a particular responsibility for working with Maori owners and Maori organisations such as the District Maori Council to ensure that:

(a) Land utilisation is handled on an organised rather than a piecemeal basis to secure the optimum advantage and return for the owners;

(b) Adequate advice is given to Maori land owners on the different options available.

The Maori Trustee (represented by me in this district) has an important part to play in administering projects such as the Ngatihine development in the interests of the owners. But even this is on a short-term basis (3 to 5 years) before passing control back to the owners. Other major land projects that he could become involved with include Te Hapua, Ahipara, North Hokianga, Waima, Waimate, Waikare/Whangaruru, Pouto and Te Horo. The department and the Maori Trustee must support growing aspirations of the Maori people to control and develop their own lands. Whilst this may not always be practical in the short term, it must remain as the overall objective.

OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The first priority should be development by the owners themselves and this should be feasible as family projects where small blocks are involved. The Rewarewa D Incorporation which has developed some 60 ha near Whangarei is a good example of this. Forestry co-operatives are another possibility although they seem to be workable only where a large labour force is available — e.g., Whakatu and Moerewa freezing works. At Ngatihine, 800 ha have been retained for owner development; about 300 ha of this have been developed so far.

It should be possible to develop forestry on Maori land using finance under Part XXIV of the Maori Affairs Act 1953. This is the provision used for farm development. The idea needs to be developed further. This type of development could involve farm forestry regimes over substantial areas as opposed to conventional silviculture.

Another possibility, currently being considered by the Taitokerau Federation of Maori Authorities, is a company owned and financed by contributions from trusts and incorporations to
undertake forestry development. This idea is being developed further as initial indications are quite promising. It could conceivably seek finance from investors in the business sector not presently involved in forestry. Similar moves are afoot in other areas and I believe the N.Z. Forest Owners’ Association is encouraging this approach.

This leaves the forest companies and finally the N.Z. Forest Service. The interest of Maori owners in Taitokerau are better represented now than previously. All sectors of the industry can learn from and improve upon forestry leases already in existence. It is my opinion that Maori owners should still invite proposals from these organisations. In the past the initiative was mainly with the companies or N.Z. Forest Service, who extracted the maximum economic advantage to themselves from people not always fully equipped to present their case properly. It should be possible in negotiations to arrive at mutually acceptable arrangements where an equitable economic return is available to each party, whilst still permitting the owners to retain reasonable access to their Maori aspirations.

Maori owners will watch with interest the development of the new forestry licence legislation and the forestry companies’ attitude to joint ventures of a licence rather than a lease nature. Owners will want the same treatment as the farming community.

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

Difficulties with Maori land titles may arise — such as keeping track of owners and getting them to make decisions about their land. Some flexibility exists in regard to trusts under S.438 of the Maori Affairs Act 1953 and this provision has been used widely to facilitate development. At the same time further legislative changes are desirable to increase the flexibility of trusts.

One Maori writer (Dr Ranginui Walker) points out that the Maori people were pushed into the foothills and mountains that were considered unattractive for development at the time — the more fertile flats were lost to them. But now the hills and mountains have become attractive to the conservationists/environmentalists who now seek to deny the Maori the use of them. This is not to criticise these people and the Maori people would accept that they should make a fair contribution in conservation and environmental matters. Examples can be given where they have done this — e.g., substantial reserves have been established in the Ngatihine block and in the planned development of Waikare lands a kauri management plan is being arranged with the N.Z. Forest Service.
Maori owners would, however, assert strongly that:

(a) They will accept no greater obligation in these matters than the Crown or other private owners accept.

(b) They should not be required to make any disproportionate contribution to reserves for whatever purpose (and they would point to the substantial reserve contributions already made for marae and other community facilities in addition to those mentioned earlier).

(c) No artificial barriers such as conditional use provisions for forestry should be introduced to deny them development of their remaining lands.

(d) Whilst they do not object to recent arrivals who have come seeking an alternative lifestyle, they do object to any move to impose the values of the new arrivals on the Maori people, who have links with the land going back centuries, and to deny them the opportunity to develop their resources fully. This relates particularly to Hokianga.

It is all too easy to make suggestions about other peoples’ land.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

To summarise:

— The forest industry provides the opportunity for development of Maori resources — it needs those resources and the Maori people need the industry.

— The Maori people must be part of the industry at all levels.

— Land-use objectives must be to have Maori use and control.

— The Maori people must be able to build on their land.

— The people will contribute to reserves for conservation/environmental purposes but will not accept artificial barriers or unfair or disproportionate demands.

— 99-year leases should be reviewed.

The next 5 years are critical for the Maori people of Taitokerau. The decisions made will influence their advancement as a people for many years if not for all time. Companies and the N.Z. Forest Service must be aware of this and understand the necessity for short-term occupancies of Maori land and to view their position as short-term custodian only.

The forest industry in Taitokerau is seen as a potential saviour of Maoritanga — i.e., as providing the economic base from which
Maoritanga will grow. It is a responsibility of the forest industry in its actions in the 1980s to ensure that it enhances the development of Maoridom and not assist in its destruction.

This is a heavy responsibility but one which I am sure the industry will respond to.

*Te whenua te wai-u mo nga tamariki.*

Land is the nourishment for the children of the next generation.

**REFERENCE**