

It should not be forgotten that it has taken many years of trial and error and research into growing, timber use, pulping and marketing to get radiata pine, now our main timber tree, to reach the present satisfactory position and it will take as long again to improve this position. This work is sorely needed on the eve of a great expansion of wood supplies. For various reasons other trees must come along, but it will take an even longer period of nurturing to establish them. A commercial corporation would not undertake this activity.

To put it in its most favourable light, the current examination of this intricate and inter-related matter of forest administration has been ham-fisted and the slanted and diabolical crusade conducted by conservationists has made the public damn the Forest Service for every native tree cut down in this country, on private property or otherwise. If changes are wanted — to my mind few are needed — then the administration of more than half of the nation's natural land demands something much sounder.

Yours sincerely,

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ENVIRONMENTAL FORESTRY

*Environment 1986** and *Heritage New Zealand*, together with the retirement of the Forest Service's Director of Environmental Forestry, all for different reasons mark time for reflection on what we mean by environmental forestry.

Ken Mier's retirement is significant because it marks in a formal way the end of an era of attitudes and problems different from those which foresters face now. They were not any easier to resolve then, nor was the opposition any less intransigent, but

**Environment 1986*, Report of the Post-Environment Forum Working Party. State Services Commission, 1985.

the problems have changed. Then the concept of environmental forestry was very largely high-country orientated — animal control and fire prevention, research into cures for mountainland erosion, and facilities for high country recreational users, deer stalkers, trampers, climbers.

Environmental forestry was for the average person a thing apart, a place in some respects for romantic illusion, separate from the problems of ordinary life.

That illusion of a thing apart had continued, but while foresters may be blamed for not bringing the environment into the workplace, they have that failing in common with many other New Zealanders, if *Environment 1986* is anything to go by. We are all it seems in the same trap together, with "environment" defined as the natural world and "conservation" equated with something very close to total preservation.

But if *Environment 1986* prevails, does that mean the end of environmental forestry? As we see it working now, particularly in the Forest Service, it will, because it puts ethics in boxes, one nice tidy one for Sundays (by coincidence to be carried back up the mountain again) and another for the darker side of life where we earn our living.

But if environment means anything, it must mean the totality of our surroundings. It can be good or bad, improving or getting worse, but it is not judgemental, not compartmented and above all it does not care. Care is the human response, expressed in what some like to call a conservation ethic, and to others just commonsense. We assume that we want the good things of life to continue, that opportunities which we enjoy will remain for future generations, and that we can sustain our resources, not exploit them.

By this definition, "environmental forestry" is all forestry and it certainly will not go away. To an extent most foresters would consider that they work that way already, but for many the battles to get land in trees, to keep it so, and to achieve sustained use above exploitation, have masked the view that much else is missing.

The challenge of the future will be to make our forests a better environment, for people, for preservation values, and for sustained production of the things we need. We all need to learn to be a part of this, to avoid the trap of *Environment 1986*, perpetuating the myth that it is all somewhere else, a matter for specialists and we can leave it to them. It is not, it is right here where each one of us is, and it is for everyone.

So where does that put environmental forestry? Obviously it puts it everywhere, which in a business or government hierarchy means a risk of putting it nowhere. But essentially foresters all do the same thing — they manage land — so the first place to look should be in land-use planning. This is where we look at the values at stake — preservation, production, recreation, education, how they mix, where conflicts are worked out and where the options are decided. The environmental forester, a frame of mind as much as a position, should co-ordinate that process.

But there should not be an environmental forestry division within the organisation. No jobs would be lost without it, and the risk of putting the environment back in a box is too great. As we know well, that way lies polarisation and strife.

We need to raise the profile of those who now often seem to be little more than public relations people, but even more, we should all be environmental foresters.