Obituary

Mr J. T. Currie, OBE.

During 1985, Jim Currie died at the age of 71 years after quite a short illness. Jim was a Full Member of this Institute.

An Australian by birth, he had come to New Zealand in 1945 to a new NZ Forest Products Limited appointment as Wood Technologist. He was to become very well known in the forest products industry in New Zealand, affectionately recognised as "Big Jim" for all the reasons that that title might conjure up.

While not an active member of the Institute, he took a great interest in forest, logging, sawmilling and timber marketing. His contribution that way was substantial.

Jim Currie commenced his work in the industry by joining the Forest Products Division of CSIRO in Melbourne. He was seconded to Australian Military Service during World War II on the timber supply side, particularly on aspects of plywood supply for the war effort. Hence his appointment as a wood technologist in New Zealand.

By the end of 1945, Jim had been posted to Pinedale Sawmill, just outside Putaruru, in a technical position. His first real introduction to the forest was during the 1946 Taupo fires when he had relief supervisory roles during fire fighting in the company's forests. He was never to forget that experience and always took a great interest in forest fire protection, the Forest and Rural Fires Act and the operations of the Tokoroa Rural Fire District Committee. Jim moved to Tokoroa when the complex at Kinleith was being developed, namely the sawmill in 1950 and the first pulp and paper mills in 1953. The green belt established around the site is partly due to the risks he could see to the mills were another forest fire to be experienced like that of 1946. Jim's drive and energy were recognised by his appointment to Associate Director in 1959, Director of Forest, Logging and Timber Operations in 1961, and Resident Director, Kinleith in 1963. He was to become Joint Deputy Managing Director of NZ Forest Products Limited in 1973, still based at Kinleith, and Joint Managing Director in 1978. He retired in 1979.

Jim Currie took an active part in forest industry affairs. From 1949 to 1973 he was on the Executive of the NZ Sawmills Federation but never President. During that time he was associated with such well known names as Fletcher, Carter, Pollard, Mason, Buckett and Perham. He helped form the Council of the Timber Industry, encouraged the formation of the NZ Forest Owners Association and was an early member of the original New Zealand Forestry Council. Jim travelled widely and was well known in many parts of the world.

But Jim's interests and encouragement did not stop at work. As an early resident of Tokoroa, and as a senior member of the company staff, he gave generously of his time to solve the growing pains of the burgeoning town. These were particularly necessary in the areas of housing, camps, education, sporting and cultural facilities. There were never enough of these necessities and Jim used all his imagination to help solve the shortages. Because of his hard work in this area, he became a well known figure to the residents and workers of the Tokoroa-Kinleith district. He will be remembered for a long time. He saw the exotic forest industry in this country grow enormously during his 40 years in New Zealand.

A. W. Grayburn