Otago — Southland Section report

Chairperson — Jolyon Manning
Secretary — Phil Taylor

Since the Annual Meeting was held in Mosgiel on June 26, 1989 the local section has had a very busy time. Section membership stands at about 113, of whom 72 are formal members of the Institute of Forestry. We are very fortunate in having the services of Phil Taylor as Secretary of the Section. He is a senior forester with the Dunedin City Forestry Department.

NZIAS Conference Participation
In August we organised a full day's programme in conjunction with the five-day annual conference of the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science held at the University of Otago, under the general theme, 'Managing Rural Tomorrow'.

Tony Grayburn (Elders NZ Forest Products) gave a splendid paper at the plenary session of the full conference. More than 50 registered for the Institute of Forestry one-day programme. Excellent papers were presented by Keith Prior (recently retired Conservator NZFS, Southland); Graham Flett (NZ Farm Forestry Association); Ian Farrant (a director of the NZ Forestry Corporation); and Alan Nordmeyer (FRI Canterbury). There were also informative site inspections at the Atlas Timber & Furniture Company, Burnside (Managing Director, Ron Guthrie), and the Invermay Agriculture Research Station, Mosgiel agroforestry trials (John Edmonds, MOF). We were most grateful for the excellent assistance received from the NZIAS national secretary, and member of our Institute, Murray Harris, (Otago Regional Council).

Sale of State Forest Assets
In May 1989 a widely representative group of about 70 people interested in Otago forestry met to consider the implications of the sale of State Forest assets. As one of the initial organising group, I was elected to a small committee to pursue any options that might be favourable to Otago-based interests. Subsequently, our committee worked for about six months and contracted a locally-based forestry consultant, Mr Philip Langston, to prepare some estimates of the costs and options for financing such a regional purchase.

In Otago we are indeed fortunate to have the established operation of the Dunedin City Council (the largest commercial operation conducted by a local body in New Zealand today) and our group have concluded that the best option is to assist that organisation in managing the sales process to best advantage of the Otago community.

This study has been most useful in focusing our attention on the magnitude of the present forest assets in Otago and their potential for industrial expansion. Our committee membership included former Forestry Minister Hon. Jonathan Elworthy, who was recently elected a member of the newly-formed Otago Regional Council.

Institute members were grateful to Dr Don Mead for introducing local members to Professor Weetman of the University of British Columbia at a special meeting held at short notice in the Timberslands office at Mosgiel. This led to a much-needed open and frank discussion about the current sale of State Forests programme and possible outcomes — both positive and negative.
National Policy for Indigenous Forests
I represented the local section at a meeting of the Indigenous Forests Policy Working Party held in Dunedin on October 19. It is sad that this policy initiative is so dominated by the current concern at continued chipping of indigenous forest resources in such districts as the Catlins (South Otago) and Nelson. It is important to place the issue in a much broader perspective and it is heartening to learn of the Minister's recent initiative to set up a task force to consider all aspects of tree planting, amenity, conservation and production, in the form of a revised Forests Act. We submitted a submission for consideration of the Working Party.

13th Commonwealth Forestry Conference
I was particularly pleased to have been invited to attend this important gathering and act as a rapporteur on behalf of Council at the important sessions on “Plantation Management - Australasian Experience” and the special session on “Forestry and the Greenhouse Effect”. This was a splendid opportunity to get right up-to-date with the benefits that have accrued from a steady commitment to forestry research in this country over the past couple of decades or so.

Council Visit to Dunedin
Another major event in our calendar concerned the visit of the Institute Council, November 16/19. This is an important annual commitment by Council to spend more time to consider major policy issues and conduct its ‘think tank’ programme introduced by our current President, Dr Wink Sutton.

This presented a real challenge to the Local Section as we were aware of the high standard set by Canterbury and Nelson members last year on the occasion of our visit to Hanmer/Molesworth.

We arranged a well-attended public meeting on the topic, ‘Forestry - the big leap forward’, a one day ‘think tank’ exercise which centred very much upon the sale of State assets and Section activity programmes, a full-day ‘field trip’ to examine harvest options for Otago’s established forests and a most instructive tour of the Atlas Furniture Company’s operation at Burnside. We were advised that this was the largest solid wood furniture export operation in New Zealand today.

Stewart Island Field Trip
We are currently planning our annual Field Trip for members. Last year's hike over the new Kepler Track proved quite a highlight for the 15 participants and we are looking forward to our next trip in late February. Ron Tindall is providing most helpful advice to ensure that our visit will be both informative and entertaining.

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Council members also had the opportunity to have discussions with the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises, the Hon. Stan Rodger, and the President of the Royal Society, Professor John Dodd. All in all, a most successful programme and one which has subsequently generated quite a lot of media comment and discussion.

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Membership Campaign
We are committed to giving more attention to this matter in 1990. We can only hope that once the State sales programme has been completed it will be possible to approach the forestry sector with greater confidence than has been the case in recent years. It is vital that our membership be strengthened to enable the Institute to carry greater influence throughout the comm-
munity. No sector has more exciting potential today to bring a new note of confidence to the New Zealand scene as we move into the new century.

Jolyon Manning
Chairperson

Westland Section comprises a small diverse group of Institute members including NZ Timberlands, Department of Conservation, Regional Council, sawmilling and private people. (There is no Ministry of Forestry presence on the West Coast; rather an anomaly given the continuing national values of its native production and protection forests.)

A wider group of local members have supported the field trips, which have mainly been held jointly with members of the Farm Forestry Association. Although 1989 activities were low-key because of a continuing period of restructuring and change, 1990 holds more promise, and contacts will also be sought with the Tree Crops Association in Westport. Increased input from members, to influence regional and national forestry, will be our goal.

Chairperson Peter Allan contributed to the Institute's submissions on the Native Forest Policy and Department of Conservation Mining Policy. He continues to work in the Regional Council, and provide valuable input to their forestry policy. A West Coast-based Forestry Enterprise Company, which is 50% owned by the West Coast Regional Council, has been formed to bid for the West Coast State Forests. All exotic and indigenous forests are to be sold as a single package, including cutting rights to approximately 130,000 hectares of beech and podocarp forest (which the Institute seeks to be managed on a truly sustainable basis). Contractual Tasmanian Blackwood plantings would continue to be made in South Westland as part of any sale agreement.

Although Secretary of the local branch, I continued to put most effort into Institute Council activities, and meetings throughout the country. The members of the Council have put in hard work and long hours to reform the Institute of Forestry's administrative and policy structure, so that we can go forward with strength and confidence into the 1990s. Two visits have been made to the Otago/Southland Section where membership roll computerisation is being tested and linked in with the new local body administration system in New Zealand. Additionally, strong formal links are sought with kindred bodies, as a prelude to a new membership campaign.

The highlight of the year was my nomination and attendance as 'Rapporteur' to the Tropical Forest Action Plan Session of the 13th Commonwealth Forestry Conference in Rotorua. I would recommend that many of you seriously consider joining the Commonwealth Forestry Association, or subscribe to its valuable annual technical handbook.

Most recent forestry interest on the West Coast has been the regular visits of former Forestry Minister Peter Tapsell, seeking co-operation on and initiation of a new long-term 'New Zealand Forestry Policy' that will "withstand the vicissitudes of politics". Why not invite the new Minister to speak at a local or public group in your regional area, and form an action group to contribute?