Forestry Insights

Forestry is becoming increasingly important to the economy but how do people view the industry? From a survey of teachers, it would appear not very favourably. However, their attitudes are largely based on misunderstandings and a lack of information.

The majority believe that plantation forests are not always grown for economic gain, that forestry is not an attractive land use, that there are few jobs for technical, managerial or professional people and that pine trees reduce soil quality. There is also a belief that natural forests are being cleared for plantation forests and that there will not always be a ready supply of timber in New Zealand.

It is views like these that hinder developing an empathy and sympathy with the industry; views which prompted the forest industry to embark on an ambitious educational project to put forestry in perspective.

Forestry Insights is a joint project by the Ministry of Forestry and the Forest Industry Training and Education Council to put free educational materials in all schools at all age levels over a four-year period. Forestry is covered in five themes:

- 1992 The Forest
- 1993 Processes
- 1993/94 The Environment
- 1994 Human Dimension
- 1995 Science, Technology and Machinery

and at five age levels:

- Junior
- Standard
- Intermediate
- Lower Secondary
- Upper Secondary

The materials are written by practising teachers under the guidance of an Advisory Committee of industry and educational experts. Industry representatives to date have been: Rob Guest, Ministry of Forestry; Murray McAlonan, NZFP Forests; Russell Dale, Forestry Corporation; Dave Evans, Tasman Forestry Ltd; Ivan Pivac, Carter Holt Harvey Timber; Peter Lett, Tasman Pulp & Paper Co Ltd; Gordon Hensley, Fletcher Wood Panels Ltd; Peter Coakley, Carter Holt Harvey Forestry & Wood Sector; and Chris Turner, Nelson Pine Industries.

The teachers are chosen on recommendation from the Colleges of Education and the Education Advisory Service. At the start of writing, teachers are taken on an orientation tour of the relevant aspects of the industry.

Writers are not chosen for their knowledge of forestry but for their expertise in developing educational resources. Apart from the odd gaff (one writer asked a truckie if he drove a Kenwood!) the teachers have been very adept at understanding the industry.

In the two months of writing, the eight teachers involved managed to produce 122 activity cards, three teachers’ guides and ten resource books – a productivity level of which the project is proud.

The materials on the first theme, The Forest, were released to schools in June last year and the impact was immediate. In the first month after release, $14,000 worth of additional material was sold (even though every school received free materials), school visits to forests skyrocketed and enquiries for forestry courses at Canterbury University and other education institutions increased substantially.

Students – and parents – experience the excitement of a landing site during a school visit to Woodhill Forest.
Preliminary results of independent research show a high usage of materials—especially in primary schools where over 70% of teachers have already used the materials or have written Forestry Insights into their teaching programmes.

The second theme, Processes, is due to be released to schools in April and promises to be even better than The Forest. The main areas covered in this theme are harvesting, transport and export, pulp and paper, panels and timber.

Forestry Insights aims to tell the forestry story and it has achieved that aim because it meets both industry’s and education’s needs. It is the partnership approach that ensures its use in schools—and its success.

Work is due to start on The Environment in May and sponsorship is still being sought for this theme. If you would like to be part of Forestry Insights, phone Gendie Somerville-Ryan on (09) 358 2993 or fax (09) 303 2558 or write to C.P.O. Box 39, Auckland.

Gendie Somerville-Ryan

LETTERS

1993 AGM and conference

Sir,

This is in response to J.J. Hosking’s letter in NZ Forestry, August 1992, in which he commented on the style of Institute Annual General Meetings.

I would like to reassure him that organisation is well advanced for a back-to-basics forestry conference and AGM in Napier from May 12 to 14 this year.

We are planning a variety of local and national topics and speakers to achieve a good mix of relevant technical papers and human interest. The objective of the conference is to discuss the influence of forest product market requirements and trends on forest management. This will involve keynote and lead papers on international and local market opportunities. The programme will then examine market requirements and opportunities for a range of wood products; how forest management might best cater for these markets; people in forestry; the influence of the Resource Management Act and district schemes; and a summary of developments in the forestry investment scene since the last conference.

This will be the third Institute AGM to be held in Napier. The first was in 1958. We expect to have some of the personalities who were present at the 1958 AGM look back at the Institute’s last 35 years.

We are arranging field trips which should appeal to the most discriminating. We intend to provide alternatives for those more interested in forest management or processing. We have crops which illustrate the range of treatments which have been in vogue over the years. This diversity provides a challenge to today’s managers trying to meet tomorrow’s market requirements. We hope to be able to control the fierce debate which is likely to develop.

In addition to the field trips we are encouraging delegates to bring their families to sample the holiday pleasures of Napier’s sunny climes. Family tours are being arranged to cater for all interests. The youngsters should enjoy Marineland and Fantasyland and the more mature should enjoy the wine trail and some of Hawkes Bay’s outstanding country gardens.

Mr Hosking will be glad to hear that in addition to the usual opportunities to share a convivial ale we can also offer vineyards ranging from the historic and reverent ambience of the Mission to the most modern and technological of viticultural facilities. We hope to capitalise on these and Napier’s Art Deco cafes and restaurants.

We look forward to seeing members and families in Napier in May.

Barry Keating
For AGM Organising Committee

Forestry and political dogma

Sir,

The Minister of Forestry, John Falloon, in his reply (NZ Forestry, August 1992) to A.L. Poole’s open letter to the Prime Minister, says “I hope this letter clarifies the issues you raise”. It hardly does so, and in any case “clarification” surely was not the response hoped for. Poole presented his arguments perfectly clearly. What would have been helpful would have been some show of understanding and discussion of these issues, which are very important ones, by the Minister.

Poole drew attention, in particular, to three undesirable results of Government policies.

Firstly, he made the point that no New Zealand Government had ever shown any real interest in, or commitment to, the management of our timber-bearing rainforest for sustainable production, in spite of a considerable amount of promising investigation. As a consequence, this indigenous resource had been single-mindedly cleared almost to extinction for other purposes.

Secondly, Poole noted that the selling off of cutting rights in State exotic forests to a number of different buyers had effectively destroyed all the long-term State plantation plans to create a group of forests in the various regions which would have eventually provided sustainable yields of wood large enough to attract substantial industries to enhance regional development and employment opportunities.

Thirdly, he observed that the new private owners of the State exotic forests would naturally act as they saw fit to meet their own particular and perceived needs and objectives, which might or might not be in the best interests of New Zealand or indeed even make the optimum use of the forest resource itself. Already, one has seen an enormous increase in sales of logs overseas for immediate availability of cash, rather than their use in local industries.

How does the Minister of Forestry reply to, or comment on, these criticisms?

On the question of native forests, he makes much of Government’s recent introduction of the Forests Amendment Bill, which is intended to promote sustainable management of our indigenous forests. Yet, after four years of debate and indecision on an indigenous forests policy, and after another four years before the introduction of controls on the milking of native timber comes into effect, one is hard pressed to detect much urgency or commitment. Meanwhile, the small production forest resource remaining is diminishing further all the time.

Then, does Government really expect private landowners to take kindly to controls more stringent on their own properties than are to apply on land still publicly owned, when they see that West Coast Timberlands is to be allowed to continue to clearfell up to 800 ha per year of beech, and also to patchwork clearfell rimu on its 132,000 ha of indigenous forest?

And what about all the exceptions and exemptions in the Bill, which water down the effectiveness of its provisions, and which will make strict enforcement by the Ministry of Forestry both difficult and controversial?

As a plus, Government does indeed state that it is considering measures to reforest suitable land in indigenous species and rehabilitate degraded indigenous forest. Some early positive action in this regard would do much to reassure foresters, and general public alike, that the