Prior to the Elections the Committee had posed to
Labour Leader, Rt Hon Helen Clark, a number of
propositions signalled by the Labour Party's stated intent
to halt sustainable management of beech forest on West
Coast lands of the Crown designated for that purpose.
Pete Hodgson, Labour Party forestry spokesperson,
responded on behalf of Ms Clark. His stated response
was, “For the record none of your four assertions is true”
(the ‘assertion’ is repeated in brackets).

1 (Intent to break the contract that compensates Waitutu
Forest podo-carp with sustainable management of
Southland beech forest on lands of the Crown).
“Longwoods is not crown managed - the trees are
managed by the Waituku (sic.) Incorporation. Their
rights are not infringed one iota by our policy.”

2 (Intent to prevent sustainable management of privately
owned indigenous forest for production of timber).
“Simply untrue. Our policy applies to TWC forests
that are of significant conservation value. It does not
apply to privately owned or managed forests.”

3 (Intent to breach Article II of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by
not permitting Maori land owners manage indigenous
forest according to their tikanga (customs). “Ditto.”

4 (Intent to prevent Maori from sustainably managing
their indigenous forests for the production of timber
and other forest products). “Ditto.”

On the afternoon of 13 December 1999 Timberlands
West Coast Ltd, in response to instruction from
shareholding Ministers Cullen and Hodgson, withdrew
their application for all resource consents associated with
the “beech scheme” and Buller District Council cancelled
the remainder of the hearing.

Consequently the Institute and the 53 others were
not heard. Subsequently there has been a very heated
reaction by both the forestry and scientific professions to
firstly denial of a fair hearing under the RMA and secondly
the apparent contradiction of Government support for
sustainable management of natural resources for
production.

Asking a number of city dwellers, individually and
in groups, in the two months either side of the elections,
what they understood happens to the beech forest once it
is logged has resulted in a surprisingly unanimous
response. “The forests are devastated for up to 1000 years.”
“Clearfelling totally destroys the forest.” “Turning
the wood into chips and exporting them is terrible.” “It
might be alright if each logged tree is replaced by a planted
seedling.” A number then turned around and said, “do
you know where I can obtain some silver beech to repair
some furniture?” When shown a photograph of thicketed
red/hard/silver beech 3-5m tall eight years after chipwood
logging they were incredulous. None seemed aware that
the 1993 amendment of the Forests Act requires adequate
regeneration after logging.

The present political situation with regard to indigen­
ous forest management suggests that the forestry profession
has a big job of basic public education ahead of it.

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