

## PANEL 2—PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF FORESTRY

### THE WORKER

*Maurice Pocock\**

The high turnover of forestry workers — 70% per annum — is wasteful. This is because forestry is looked upon as being less important than manufacture of forest products and is thus the last to benefit from financial and social improvements. It is up to management to remedy this state of affairs, for forestry should be thought of as an integral part of the production of forest products; the forest industries of the future rely on trees being planted and tended now. This attitude would allow the forestry work force to be better rewarded.

Workers younger than 19 years old are grossly underpaid in forestry. These are the people who should become skilled workers and first line supervisors. Those who want to stay with forestry should be educated formally for advancement and increase in skills. Adult workers (19 years and older) see little or no chance of advancement in forestry and may find the work monotonous and unrewarding. These difficulties could and should be overcome. Some of these workers are recruited through employment offices and have only a vague picture of what forestry operations involve. Most of these stay only a short time.

Many forestry areas are isolated, and communities lack amenities. Medical, educational and recreational needs may lag behind rapid industrial growth. The industry could play some part in providing medical consulting rooms with X-ray diagnostic laboratories and could engage doctors with inducements such as third-year study leave overseas. Similarly, industry could improve educational facilities by sharing with local authorities the cost of subsidizing housing or flats with a view to attracting highly qualified teachers. If good facilities are not provided, the drift to the larger centres will continue.

### THE FOREST RANGER

*A. E Russell†*

In 1971 there were 171 applicants for 30 vacancies in the Ranger School, indicating that there is little wrong with the image of a career as a forest ranger. Many applicants gained their impressions of what this career is about through per-

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\*N.Z. Workers Union. (The above is a précis of Mr Pocock's position paper.)

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sonal contact with forestry officers. Therefore, if rangers are satisfied with their career, they project a good image; the more the satisfaction, the better the image.

At the Forestry Training Centre, ranger trainees are told that their careers will be as self-motivated man managers responsible for getting work done through the control and organization of men and materials. However, an examination of figures for those working as rangers four to nine years after completing training shows that from 50 to 60% have found employment elsewhere. This may mean that rangers are not satisfied with this career. There are two ways in which improvements can be made — in training and in job satisfaction.

Rangers receive sound instruction in the technicalities of forestry, but virtually nothing in man management, human relations or motivation. It has been assumed that these skills are acquired by experience. But if rangers were given training in the techniques of supervision this would be a sound basis for development through experience.

Several studies carried out in America show that the factors leading to job satisfaction are achievement, recognition of achievement, the work itself, responsibility and accountability, and growth potential. These are more important than supervisor relations, company policy and administration, work conditions, salary, status and security. Many young rangers become frustrated at the lack of real responsibility, achievement, and recognition. These may be the real reasons for leaving the job, rather than salary, which is the usual reason given.

In order to hold rangers it is considered that the job must be clearly defined; those selected must be really suited to the defined job; training must be strictly related to the job specifications; rangers must find job satisfaction; and there should be provision for continuing in-service training in order to overcome the communication problems created by the scattered nature of the group.

## THE POINT OF VIEW OF A UNIVERSITY TEACHER

*P. J. McKelvey\**

Our concern about the image of forestry indicates that it has yet to be securely established in the eyes of the community. The university teacher is concerned with attracting sufficient good students to educate as the practitioners of the future. About 25 graduates in forestry will be required each year to fill posts in forest management, forestry research, wood technology and related activities. It seems that quantity is assured, and intakes of about 26 from New Zealand and three or four from overseas can be expected in future. Quality is more difficult to evaluate, for if all graduates are of uniformly high academic ability then certain aspects of forestry

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will not be properly accommodated. The school needs to produce graduates whose academic capabilities range, in the examination jargon, from A to C. This would represent a range of interests and aptitudes to match our broad and varied technology. However, a substantial proportion of graduate foresters should have high academic abilities.

In order to attract school pupils to a forestry career, the profession must be clearly presented. First it involves an understanding of ecosystems and the influences which forests exert beyond the sites on which they grow; thus the forester is involved with people's environmental and industrial needs. Secondly, economics is vital to the business of forestry, and encompasses much more than the attainment of maximum monetary profits. Thirdly, many aspects of engineering are germane to forestry, including mechanization of a wide range of operations. Fourthly, forestry aims to satisfy both material and aesthetic needs. Finally, forestry demands an integrative faculty, which is more likely to be possessed by the broadly-based generalist than the narrowly confined specialist. While these define the sort of image which should be presented to young people, the university teacher must be concerned also with other workers in forestry, particularly the technicians, supervisors and managers, for these, being scattered throughout the community, have a marked effect on the image of forestry, and are responsible, with professional foresters, for the effective practice of forestry.

A good image has to be earned. All those concerned with the business of forestry need to prepare themselves by education to master those aspects for which they are responsible, so as to become more effective and liberal people. This is a far better and truer way to improve our image than by any Madison Avenue "gimmickry". Only in this way can the forestry industry achieve its rightful status and be made to appeal as a career.

## PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF FORESTRY AS A CAREER

A. D. McEwen\*

### SYNOPSIS

*Not only is the image of professional forestry expressed by recruiting pamphlets seen to be inadequate, but the career expectations of trainee foresters are also found to change during a university forestry course. Forestry compares unfavourably with other professions because of the dominance by government employees, the smallness of the profession, the lack of interest by the news media, the lack of non-university professional qualifications, low salary scales and, until recently, the lack of a university course for forestry in New Zealand.*

### INTRODUCTION

In discussing the image of forestry as a career, it is important to distinguish between forestry as a job and forestry

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as a profession. Generally, forestry has a good image as a job — there is the attraction of work outdoors, and of being associated with heavy machinery and big industry which appeals to many school leavers. In addition, the publicity surrounding both the Forestry and National Development Conferences created more optimism for the forest industry with their messages of increased production, more employment at all levels, and the growing importance of forest products as an earner of overseas funds. This air of well-being in the industry promises that a career in forestry should lead to an interesting job in a developing industry with consequent job security and good prospects for promotion. One would also expect that remuneration would be good.

However, with regard to the side of the industry which the term "forestry" often implies — *i.e.*, the production of the raw material in the form of logs — it is felt that a large section of the public is unaware of what this actually involves. Many think of foresters in terms of tree planters, tree fellers, and logging truck drivers. Such aspects as the tending of trees and yield control are unknown. This attitude is emphasized by the news media which frequently publish figures of new planting areas, but seldom, if ever, give details of how much thinning and pruning has been carried out, or of the objects of management prescribed by a new working plan.

## RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The call of forestry (or is it the thought of an outdoor job?) is, however, strong enough to encourage about 60 boys to apply each year for the 16 forester-trainee vacancies in the Forest Service. Unfortunately, about 50% of these fail to qualify as foresters. This could be due to several factors, including a growing awareness that forestry involves other things besides outdoor work, poor selection of trainees by interviewers, an inability of candidates to cope with university studies, and an awareness, while at university, of other avenues of employment, which were not previously considered but later appear more attractive than forestry.

These factors are perhaps the result of poor vocational guidance at schools and the immaturity of candidates at the time of selection, rather than because of any fault of forestry. Probably other professions also have a high drop-out figure for recruits selected straight from school.

Career pamphlets available to recruits and the training they receive do not present a very good picture of the type of work a qualified forester does. He is pictured as living in a forest community and looking after the technical aspects of forest management — writing working plans, planning roading layouts, preparing cutting plans, and so on. Table 1, however, shows that less than one-third of junior foresters in the Forest Service are actually on a forest, and nearly half of these are at Kaingaroa or Golden Downs. Another third are in specialist branches of forestry — as research workers or timber officers — and the remainder are in positions requiring more administrative work than is usual on a forest (Head Office, con-

TABLE 1: LOCATION OF FORESTRY GRADUATES EMPLOYED BY N.Z. FOREST SERVICE

Year	Head Office	Con-servancy District			Timber Training			Total
		Office	Office	Office	Forest*	Research Officers	Officers	
1966								
Junior†								
No.	1	4	6	9 (5)	6	1	0	27
%	3.7	14.8	22.2	33.4	22.6	3.7	0.0	100.0
Total								
No.	11	21	11	15 (8)	30	6	2	96
%	11.5	21.9	11.5	15.6	31.2	6.2	2.1	100.0
1970								
Junior								
No.	5	4	9	13 (6)	11	5	0	47
%	10.6	8.5	19.2	27.7	23.4	10.6	0.0	100.0
Total								
No.	14	24	15	25 (15)	38	14	2	132
%	10.6	18.2	11.4	18.9	28.8	10.6	1.5	100.0

\*Figures in parentheses are the number of foresters at Kaingaroa and Golden Downs Forests.

†“Junior” refers to those with less than 6 years’ service since graduation.

servancy offices or district offices). Little, if any, administrative training is included in a forestry curriculum.

While few foresters are actually placed on a forest, it is these, together with those in small district offices in isolated areas, who are generally the most unsettled, despite the fact that this is the career expected when training started. There can be various reasons for this. During university training the emphasis is often on the more intellectual and theoretical aspects of forestry, rather than on the practical features of working in a forest community. Thus the image of a career in forestry tends to change during the training period. In a small community a young forester may feel in an intellectual gap after having come from the stimulating influence of discussion with other students and lecturers. During the time when a man selects a wife — usually during the 3 to 4 years after leaving school — a forester is at university. Thus the girl is likely to have a background of tertiary education (training college or university). Such a girl can often feel left out in a close-knit rural community with limited cultural outlets — and of course an unhappy wife does not make a happy husband. Finally, it can be easy for friction to develop between a young forester and an older officer-in-charge when the salary gap between them is closing and the forester is suggesting changes in programmes and techniques.

These factors could be overcome if foresters were posted to more centralized offices in larger towns. Having several

foresters in the same office would prevent professional isolation and allow provision of better facilities. The isolation of foresters, and the smallness of the profession as a whole also affect the image of forestry in comparison with some of the more classical professions — law, medicine, architecture, etc.

## FORESTRY AS A PROFESSION

The N.Z. Institute of Foresters has only about 500 members in contrast with about 2,800 lawyers and 2,900 practising medical practitioners. In addition, the Institute is dominated by the Forest Service. Taking only full members of the Institute (*i.e.*, those with full voting rights and power to hold office), nearly 70% are Forest Service employees, 10% are from Tasman and Forest Products, 8% are private consultants or individuals, 8% work for other Government departments, national parks, local bodies, universities, or are overseas, and 4% work for four private afforestation or sawmilling companies. In contrast, 95% of practising lawyers are in private firms or companies, 2.5% are employed in the Public Service, 2% are in universities, and 0.5% are employed by local bodies.

The dominance by Forest Service members probably has an adverse effect on the Institute and on the profession as a whole. Reasons for this are that Forest Service employees can act through the Public Service Association for better salaries and working conditions, and so the majority of members do not require the Institute to speak out for improved conditions. This can have an adverse effect on employees of small companies because the company management may feel that improved conditions are not warranted when the profession as a whole is not backing the individual employee. Also, junior Forest Service employees who are members of the Institute may not feel inclined to speak out against the Department's policies when senior officials of the Department are also taking part in the discussion.

Further factors contributing to the poor place forestry has among other professions include the smallness of the Institute, and the fact that it is not affiliated with other larger organizations, either within New Zealand (*e.g.*, the Royal Society of N.Z.) or overseas (*e.g.*, International Union of Societies of Foresters). Affiliation with the Royal Society, for example, would give the Institute and its members a wider sphere of interest and probably of influence than it has at present.

The annual conferences of the Institute are generally devoted to a fairly dry annual meeting followed by papers or symposia which are of limited interest outside the profession. This could be overcome by devoting part of the annual meeting to current forestry topics, including those of a political nature.

The Institute does not appear to actively supply the news media with publicity items. It is important that news statements be released particularly following discussions at the annual meeting and council meetings, in addition to inviting press representatives to be present at meetings. The Institute

also needs to convince the press that, although it is a small body, it is composed of well qualified professionals who can give expert opinions on forestry matters. This convincing would perhaps be easier if more restrictions were placed on the admission of non-qualified people as Members or Associate Members of the Institute.

The Institute is not associated with any professional examinations, and there is no registration for foresters under Act of Parliament as there is for engineers, architects, accountants, and so on. These are not only a protection for the public, but also a protection for the profession by ensuring that poorly qualified persons are not allowed to give the profession a bad name. In addition, registration and professional qualifications frequently raise the earnings of the qualified individual. The register of consultants maintained by the Institute is the first step in this direction.

Forestry is a poorly paid profession. This is shown in Government salary scales where a forester with a B.Sc.(Forestry) requiring a minimum of 4 years at university has a starting salary three steps behind that for an LL.B (min. 4 years), four steps behind a B.E. (min. 4 years), and three steps behind a B.Arch. (min. 5 years). In addition, the maximum salary in the forestry occupational class is three steps (\$1,800 per year) behind the maxima for the legal, engineering and architectural occupational classes. The comparatively low salary could be a reflection of the fact that many foresters are not carrying out the work they were trained to do, but are actually working as technicians, clerks and administrators.

Until recently, there has been no School of Forestry in New Zealand (apart from those closed down as an economy measure during the depression in the 1930s, which resulted in the impression that professional forestry was unimportant). If the Canterbury School achieves and maintains a high standard, the image of forestry as a profession should be considerably improved in New Zealand. There should also be a carefully planned occupational training programme, both during the university vacations and for one or two years following graduation for all foresters. This period should be used to give a background of the administrative as well as practical aspects of forestry.

## CONCLUSION

It is suggested that the image of professional forestry in New Zealand could be improved. The following three proposals are by no means exhaustive, but indicate how this could be done.

- (1) The Institute of Foresters should take more of a lead in furthering the interests of professional foresters. This should include pressing for better training of foresters, both during and on completion of university studies, improved salaries for foresters and better working conditions — particularly a reduction in the number of isolated foresters and the provision of better trained technicians.

- (2) The Institute should become more conscious of its image, and try to keep the news media aware of what the Institute's views are on forestry topics. As it represents professional forestry in New Zealand, the Institute should be prepared to criticize those policies of Government, or other organizations, which affect forestry. It should also take an active part in the publicity of forestry as a worthwhile career for school-leavers, by supplying general information on forestry careers to vocational guidance organizations.
- (3) The Canterbury School of Forestry should aim at a high standard of qualification for foresters. At no stage, even if there is a shortage of foresters, should this standard be allowed to drop. The profession as a whole should give every assistance to the university to make this an internationally recognized institution for the training of foresters.

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### L I T E R A T U R E   C O N S U L T E D

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