

The Institute of Foresters of Australia Inc.

(W.A. DIVISION)

CHAIRMAN: R. Underwood
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JUNE NEWSLETTER

1. W.A. FOREST ISSUES SEMINARS

A series of "forest issues" seminars is being run by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Western Australia to deepen their members' appreciation of forest conservation. Institute members are invited to participate in these seminars and the details are attached. Unfortunately the first 2 seminars in the series were not published. They were Fire operations in WA Forests (Angus Hopkins) and Sustained Yield Forestry in WA (Bill Hare).

2. ANZIF CONFERENCE HOBART 1985

Notice has been received that preparations are well underway for the 1985 ANZIF Conference which is being held in Hobart from 20-24th May, 1985. Organizers have produced a video which advertises the conference. Showings have been scheduled at Manjimup, Bunbury and Como. (Contact J. Bradshaw, D. Spriggins or J. Kaye.) Please contact J. Kaye if you miss out on these showings and would like the video. For further details of ANZIF: Mr R. Van Shie, ANZIF '85 Conference, G.P.O. Box 207B, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001. Tel: 302723.

3. FIME '86 INTERNATIONAL

The Institute has received notice of details of FIME '86 International. FIME '86 will be held in Myrtleford, Victoria, Australia from 14-17th April, 1986. For further details, write to: C.A. Lembke, Managing Director, The Australian Forest Industries Journal Pty Ltd, 203 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Tel: (02) 264 6273.

4. A "WOOD" DEDICATED TO FAMOUS TREES

At the last IFA (WA) Committee meeting Jack Bradshaw introduced a project initiated by the Southern Branch which suggested planting a "wood" dedicated to the contribution trees have made to civilization. The theme for selection of the species would be famous trees of commerce, culture, legend and literature. In addition to creating a "wood" it was suggested that a booklet could be published describing the wood, the species, their significance in history and to man's civilization. The idea received the full support of the committee and the Southern Branch have been asked to prepare a detailed proposal for consideration by the membership. Mr Bradshaw will present this at the next full meeting.

5. NEW SECRETARY - SOUTHERN BRANCH

Martyn Rayner has been elected as the secretary to the Southern Branch. Thanks to Roger Armstrong for his brief but vigorous term.

6. NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of IFA members will be held on 12th July at 5.00pm in the Research Auditorium, Forests Department, Como. Refreshments will be available. Items to be discussed are:

- ANZIF 1985 video screening.
- proposed arrangements for IFA dinner.
- arrangements for National IFA Conference scheduled for Perth in 1987.
- Manjimup "woods" project.
- role of Institute and the profession in the new Department.

7. PHYTOPHTHORA AND FOREST ECOLOGY SEMINARS

Venue Murdoch University, Biological Sciences, Lecture Theatre EAll
Time 3.30pm.

Friday, June 15th. The effect of thinning the Northern Jarrah Forest
on water and wood yield. Geoff Stoneman W.A.F.P.

Friday, August 12. Research for Forest Management Conference Canberra
May 21-25 Frank Bettini WA FD.

For further details contact Elaine Davison phone 332 2598.

8. ROYAL SOCIETY OF WA

Next Meeting is on June 18 at 8.00pm at Kings Park Board Office.

Speaker Tom Riggert "Swan River Management, Past, Present and Future".
Visitors welcome.

9. ATTACHMENTS

Two papers are enclosed.

- 1) Copy of letter from IFA president Keith Jennings to the ABC.
- 2) A note on the role of the Institute and the profession in the new
Department of Conservation and Land Management - your comments on
this are sought.

JOHN KAYE (Hon Secretary)
Tel: work 420 9402

W.A. FOREST ISSUES SEMINAR SERIES.

Tuesday, June 26th. 8.00pm Environment Centre, 794 Hay Street, Perth.
Telephone (09) 3227232

JARRAH FOREST CONSERVATION - BAUXITE MINING AND THE JARRAH RESERVE.

Speakers - Mike McGrath, Director, Conservation Council of W.A.
- Bill Hare, ACF W.A. Project Officer and President,
Campaign to Save Native Forest.

Tuesday, July 24th. 8.00pm Environment Centre, 794 Hay Street, Perth.

ROLE OF THE FORESTRY PROFESSION IN MANAGING W.A. NATIVE FORESTS.

Speakers - Roger Underwood, President of the Institute of Foresters,
W.A. Branch.

Tuesday, August 21st. 8.00pm Environment Centre.

FIRE AND FAUNA CONSERVATION IN W.A. FORESTS.

Speakers - Alan Tingay, Vice President, Australian Conservation
Foundation.

Tuesday, September 25th. 8.00pm Environment Centre.

KARRI FOREST CONSERVATION - THE SHANNON IN PERSPECTIVE.

Speakers - Beth Schultz, South West Forests Defence Foundation.
- Neil Bartholomaeus.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia Inc.

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18 April 1984

Sir Kenneth Myer
Chairman
Australian Broadcasting Commission
Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY 2000

Dear Sir Kenneth

The Institute of Foresters of Australia Incorporated is the corporate body of professional foresters in Australia and was founded in 1935. Its current membership is some 1 400 members who work in a variety of positions within Government (Federal, State and Local), Universities and Colleges, Private Industry, Consultants or are retired. Most practising foresters are members and the Institute can rightfully claim to speak with authority for the foresters of Australia. Its basic objective is "to advance and protect the cause of forestry" and the Institute is concerned that any press or television articles on forestry should be soundly based and presented to the public as objectively as possible.

I was therefore interested in listening to your interview on the A.B.C. program 'PM' on Friday 13 April, 1984 during which you discussed the role of the A.B.C. and in particular, your comment that in each program, the A.B.C. did not have to present all sides of a story, but that they would be covered at some future stage. In the light of the foregoing, I would like to bring to your notice, 2 recent programs on the A.B.C. which contained bias towards foresters and the forestry profession in general and production forestry in particular, thus continuing a long list of programs viz: Four Corners, Nationwide (ex T.D.T.), Science Program, where this has happened. To this date, no follow up program has provided 'the other side' of the story.

The recent programs were -

- (a) 'The Keepers', broadcast of Thursday 5 April, 1984. During the early part of the program, comment was made that 'foresters and loggers cause more harm to wildlife than all the illegal trapping'. I must point out that
- 1) many foresters are in charge of or work for, National Park organisations and
 - 2) properly controlled logging operations pose no threat to the long term survival of native fauna.
- (b) 'Countrywide', broadcast on Wednesday 4 April, 1984. The particular segment of the program which was of concern to the Institute was about the wood chipping industry at Eden in N.S.W. and focusing on specific aspects of forest management in the Eden area and particularly the alleged impracticability of harvesting the regenerating forest; the increased susceptibility of the regenerating stands to wildfire damage; the adverse effects of intensive logging on water catchments. All are important aspects and deserving of critical analysis.

In contrast to many other segments presented by Countrywide, the Institute strongly believes that the wood chipping segment was an instance of very poor investigative journalism. The depth of analysis was at most superficial and inaccurate factual information was presented contributing to a distorted picture of forest management in the Eden area.

The program on the Eden forests was presented in such a way that the viewers would have to reach the inevitable but erroneous conclusion that several very important matters have been almost entirely neglected by the forest managers. The Institute must be critical of such distorted presentation. The Countrywide team was given a good deal of assistance and background material by professional foresters but this was not given proper weight and in many cases completely overlooked. I am also aware that the views of the professional foresters interviewed were inaccurately presented because of gratuitous inferences by the reporter and tendentious editing.

The Institute's major concern is that this lack of objectivity must raise serious doubts in the minds of viewers as to the competence of professional foresters and particularly those concerned with the management of forests at Eden. The tangible proof of the professionalism of our foresters concerned with forest management in the Eden area can be clearly judged by a public document titled "Eden Native Forest Management Plan 1982", published by the Forestry Commission of N.S.W. and prepared by professional foresters.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that this letter is intended as constructive criticism which hopefully will be kept in mind for future programs on forestry matters.

Please be assured that the Institute of Foresters is anxious to co-operate with the A.B.C. on any project aimed at improving public awareness and understanding of forestry issues in Australia.

Yours faithfully



K.S. JENNINGS
President
The Institute of Foresters of Australia Inc.

Discussion paper:

THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTE AND THE PROFESSION IN THE
NEW DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

by R.J. Underwood

Chairman, W.A. Division of the I.F.A.

It now appears most likely that the Government's proposed amalgamation of Forests, National Parks and Wildlife into one new Department of Conservation and Land Management will go ahead. Because this may have profound affects on forestry and on foresters we should spend some time thinking about and discussing the subject.

In this note I present my personal thoughts about how things might turn out and the action we should take. I hope that they will provoke other Institute members to spell out their views, or discuss the subject amongst themselves. In particular I am interested in the views of foresters who are not employed in the Public Service.

On balance, I believe that the profession will benefit from the proposed amalgamation. Firstly, there will be expanded opportunities for interaction at the operational level with our confreres from other disciplines. The stimulation and cross-fertilization of ideas and concepts this provides has generally been restricted to the research area in the past and this has been to the detriment of our professional development. Secondly, many foresters will in future confront a wider range of ecological and management challenges than those which have dominated their lives in the southwest. Where multiple use is not the goal, I suspect that day-to-day management in these areas may be more simple, but here the challenge will be to understand unfamiliar ecosystems and their behaviour. Finally, there will be new and interesting landscapes to discover and explore. No longer will the chance to work in places like the south coast and the Pilbara be solely the province of zoologists or National Park rangers, or visited only fleetingly by foresters on their annual holidays.

Most importantly, however, the amalgamation will provide foresters with an opportunity to demonstrate that they are true professionals, and not simply the wood-butchers portrayed in some conservation literature or television programmes. But more of this in a moment.

Firstly, what should be the role of the Institute as a body in this issue? I believe our foremost duty is to continue to watch over the quality of forest management and conservation in W.A. This means that our major concern must continue to be in the southwest and with questions of forestry policy, forest practice and land use. I strongly support the view that the Institute's role is one of analysis of issues, and

not advocacy of particular policies. In other words, our task is to make objective and balanced appraisals of the consequences of forest policies and management practices and to put these analyses before the Government and the public in clear, simple terms. We should advocate the policies of others only when they completely coincide with our own.

I hope that it will be easier to do this in the future than it has been in the past. The close ties and overlapping membership between the I.F.A. and the W.A. Forests Department over the last 40 years has made it very difficult for foresters to project an independent image. As a result our professional image has suffered: in the eyes of our critics the Government's policies are seen as the profession's policies, and because they did not like the former, they turned against us.

This brings me to the question of our professional standing and the possible impact of the new order on it. As I see it, our professional standing is well below what it should be, but we now have a chance to redeem ourselves.

If I.F.A. members have any doubts about our professional standing in middle-class Western Australia (the other professionals, academics, the media, high school teachers and the "environmental" bureaucracy) they should read two submissions to the Government which recently fell off a truck into my mail box. One is from the W.A. Conservation Council, representing 36 organizations in this State. This widely circulated document contains some of the bitterest criticisms of foresters since the days of "Fight for the Forest". The proposed involvement of foresters in management of National Parks and nature reserves is described as "a disaster". Foresters, it says, will be dominated by commercial interests, will clearfell National Parks, burn Nature Reserves on short rotations in spring, spread dieback and impose their toilet block approach to recreation. None of this is new, nor even unexpected from this quarter. One has almost learned to grin and bear it. Far more disturbing was to read the second report, this one prepared by a group of professional scientists and on the same subject. This group has adopted quite uncritically the stereotyped image of the forester from the literature of the conservation groups. They seriously suggest that foresters would give "no thought to wildlife habitat" in nature reserves, would "argue against responsible management of rare flora" and would give priority in a wild-fire situation to commercial forests. In the view of this group of scientists, forestry training only fits a person for one thing: "managing commercial forests for timber production". This group has very high standing in the community, but has had minimal contact with foresters in the field.

Foresters need to realise that it is with this muddled reputation that they are about to enter a new world of responsibilities and relationships. If the proposed new Department is established along the lines suggested, foresters will soon be involved in National Park and Nature Reserve management and in dealings with a whole new range of professions and special interest groups. Many articulate and influential people are waiting with eager anticipation for the

first forester who puts down a wrong foot. It's a new play, foresters have been type-cast as the villains, and the theatre critics are sitting back with pencils sharpened.

What can we do in this situation? I have already commented on our corporate role and the need for the Institute to be seen to offer independent and objective comment on the issues. There is a second and more crucial challenge: that of the professional conduct, approach and behaviour of every individual forester both inside and outside the new Department. Over the years of controversy there has been a lack of personal contact between adversaries. Foresters are known by the blackened coupes left after clearfelling, not as people. Now we have a chance to become known as people, and to demonstrate our capacity as true professionals.

I have tried to define the personal conduct and the qualities of the true professional so as to suggest some guidelines for foresters for the future. The list is sketchy, and help is sought in fleshing it out. But in the meantime, I suggest that our professional standing can only be enhanced, if all foresters:

1. Aim for and insist on the highest standards of excellence in all their work, and especially in the preparation of plans and in the presentation of operations on the ground.
2. Seek and use advice from outside the profession, particularly from other scientific disciplines, and through public participation.
3. Read widely; listen to others and acknowledge that their values are as important to them as yours are to you.
4. Ignore provocation. The forester who rises furiously to the bait will merely be living up to expectations.
5. Set the example for hard work, and for mental toughness in the face of set-backs.
6. Show courtesy, loyalty and a sense of humour in dealing with all the other people around you, but especially with antagonists.
7. Generate visions. Paint a picture of the future we all would like for land and forest conservation in W.A.
(Surely the capacity to visualise the future should be something foresters can demonstrate to greatest advantage.)

If, on the other hand, foresters are pushy and belligerent, superior about their expertise in fire or dieback or whatever, or are seen as uncritical advocates of government or industry, we will simply be playing into our critics' hands, and worse, our professional standing may fairly be brought into question.

So in conclusion, I believe that the major issues facing the Institute in W.A. at the moment are (i) the maintenance of sound, long-sighted forest policies and (ii) our standing as true professionals. We have been given a chance to work on both. Let's not fluff it.

I look forward to your views on these issues and on critical discussions at coming branch and divisional meetings.

13 June 1984