HIGH PRUNING TO 30' IN PINUS RADIATA

by K. Kelers.

A test was carried out in Nannup in June 1966 to determine a satisfactory method of pruning Pinus radiata from 15 to 30 feet.

Three methods were tested :

(1) Pruning with a dismantable pole.
(2) Two climbing methods
    (a) Using a Morris Ladder.
    (b) Using a Tree - Bicycle.

For the sake of being brief, this article won't go into detailed description of the equipment or the results. However it can be said that the pole method proved to be more satisfactory. With both feet on the ground the operators felt a lot safer. The tallies were nearly double the tallies from the climbing methods.

Since January 1968 about 6 contract pruners have been employed on 22 to 30 foot pruning using a pole. The better pruners are able to prune about 400 stems per week. With a price of $21 per 100 stems this gives them a weekly earning of $84.

It must be noted that only site qualities 1, 2 and 3 are considered for this extra high pruning. Of the 100 stems per acre originally selected for high pruning only 50 of the best trees per acre are pruned; the remaining are marked out.

The pole-saw set - up most favoured is a 24 foot long $1\frac{1}{2}$" external diameter - 20 gauge aluminium pipe used as the pole. Mounted on it is the Gnangara blade. The blade is an important feature of the whole design (it has $3\frac{1}{2}$ teeth per inch). The total weight of both pole and saw is not more than 7 lbs.

It is felt that pole pruning to 30 feet is possible and more efficient than any climbing method. However there must be a height limit after which it is not possible to prune with a pole. This limit seems to be about 35 feet.

Talking about off-the-ground techniques,here is a suggestion from one individual. He suggests the Department train a gang of gorillas. These agile cousins of man, armed with handsaws could be very effective. It would involve requisitioning large amounts of bananas.