



INFORMATION SHEET 13



CALM LIBRARY ARCHIVE
NOT FOR LOAN

012982

FORESTS AND CONSERVATION

P. N. HEWETT

What is *Conservation*?

There are many different definitions of this word, so much used today. The Forests Department defines conservation as:

The planned use and management of land, water, air and their associated resources for the greatest long term economic and social benefit.

The world is often likened to a spaceship—the spaceship *Earth*—and apart from entry of the sun's rays, this spaceship with its envelope of atmosphere has to survive from its own resources. This means that we must minimise waste and maximise efficiency in the use and re-use of all materials available.

There are some people to whom conservation means leaving everything untouched and who hope that by this means the world will stay as it is now. If we consider a newly born puppy—does it continually change?

A project which can readily be carried out in a classroom or at home will show the problems of competition among plants. Sow as many seeds as you can in a seedling tray and keep it well watered. As the young plants grow some of them will grow faster at the expense of others, and so the community of plants will be continually changing in health, vigor and appearance.

All animal and plant communities tend to show similar patterns of behaviour. They are all complex living things—they must live to change and they must change to live.

It is therefore quite unrealistic to believe that if our natural resources are “locked-up” in wilderness areas or in reserves, that they will stay exactly as they were hundreds of years ago. All living things will change, whether man interferes with them or not—all that man is likely to do is to influence the direction of change, or the rate at which it occurs.

Plants are nature's factory and the small plants like grasses and shrubs may be thought of as primary industry. They use as raw materials, the soil and the water, the air and sun's rays—they take these simple ingredients and process them into complex organic chemicals. Some plants provide food for fungi, insects, birds or animals and become the foundation for a series of other factories which are sometimes called *Food Chains*.

Forests should be considered as something more than just a big hard collection of treatments. They could be called the big brothers of all smaller plant life and are the super-factories in this environmental industry.

They make more products, and a wide range of models.

They drive deep holes into the earth's crust and provide a home and shelter for other living things.

Forests help protect the soil from floods and erosion and provide building materials.

They supply fuel, and paper and rayon synthetics inspire artists and poets.

Perhaps they should be called *Nature's Industrial Community*.