

with the recent growth in production based on a modest export trade. The Government is considering proposals to expand the level of coal exports dramatically, based on direct loading of ships at Westport or Ngakawau.

However, such a policy would drastically shorten the lifetime of the coal resource, starting another cycle of boom and bust. It may leave little lasting benefit behind in the Buller — just another hole in the hill and some rusting machinery.

Agriculture offers more sustainable long-term benefits to the region. Dairying is well established, with a dairy factory at Karamea, and there is immense scope for bringing more land into production. The Department of Lands and Survey has a major land development programme in progress in the Buller. Its Cape Foulwind development will release 38 new dairy farms near Westport over the next decade, which will support a regional population boost of almost 1000 people.

But this is only the beginning. Without the felling of any more native forest, or the draining of wetlands valuable for wildlife, the area under productive pasture in the Buller could be doubled. This conclusion comes from an agricultural potential survey of the Buller prepared for the Joint Campaign.

The survey report estimates that this development would allow total stock units in the region to increase from the present 165 000 to 380 000. In addition, the report says that improved grazing management and fertiliser use on existing pastures could increase production from them by 50 to 70 percent.

Significant areas of the Buller are suited by soil and climate to intensive horticul-



A typical Buller sawmill. This one, whose State forest log allocation was recently increased, is owned by Mr Bill Mumm, chairman of the West Coast United Council.

ture, with kiwifruit at Karamea showing the greatest promise. Kiwifruit from Karamea orchards were the largest handled at the Nelson packing-house this season. Kiwifruit growing yields gross margins of up to \$30,000 per hectare, compared with \$360 per hectare for dairying locally.

Capital costs are high and kiwifruit returns may ease back in future years, but kiwifruit orchards are now almost certain to expand on to suitable sites in the Buller. If, where suitable, 5 percent of the existing pasture was planted in kiwifruit, regional income could be boosted by almost \$30 million and employment opportunities could grow by more than 700.

Forests for growth?

Exotic forests can contribute to the Buller's prosperity as well, according to the Forest Service, which aims at planting 3900 ha in exotic trees, mainly by converting or interplanting existing native forest. The cost of the plantations will be at least \$14 million, and, unlike the Department of Lands and Survey's development of 38 dairy farms at Cape Foulwind (for \$11.5 million), the plantations do not stand on their own feet as a commercial proposition in the national

interest. Rather, the Forest Service justifies its expenditure on the exotic plantations on social grounds — a desire to maintain all of the 96 jobs in the local forest industry on a permanent basis.

In the department's Westland Conservancy, where "production forestry" accounts for 95 percent of all departmental expenditure, the excess of expenditure over income in 1981 was \$7.9 million, the deficit amounting to almost 80 percent of total expenditure. Substantial costs of in-

Mark Christensen turning beech on his lathe at Karamea: the beginnings of wiser use of native wood.

