

definitions, the Department of Conservation's mission is little different from that of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries or the Forest Service.

The intentions behind the ditching of "stewardship" and its replacement by concepts such as "conservation management" and "utilisation" may be illuminated at two levels, political and philosophical.

Guarded jealously

The politics of the situation within the government is clear enough. The Department of Conservation has no official employees at this date, and the officials who are advising the government on its constitution are the same resource managers who last year fought so tenaciously to retain Lands and Survey and the Forest Service in their original forms. Charged now with designing the Department of Conservation, these powerful managers seek to reincarnate the old form of the old departments they know and like so well. The *de facto* power to decide the balance between production and protection over vast tracts of their public land empires is a power they have always guarded jealously, and will not voluntarily give up.

Another potent factor here is the fervent commitment of many Forest Service hands to indigenous production forestry. Their operations have always run at a loss: New Zealand spends two to three times as much per year on subsidizing the logging of indigenous State forests as it spends on acquiring land for protected natural areas and coastal reserves combined.

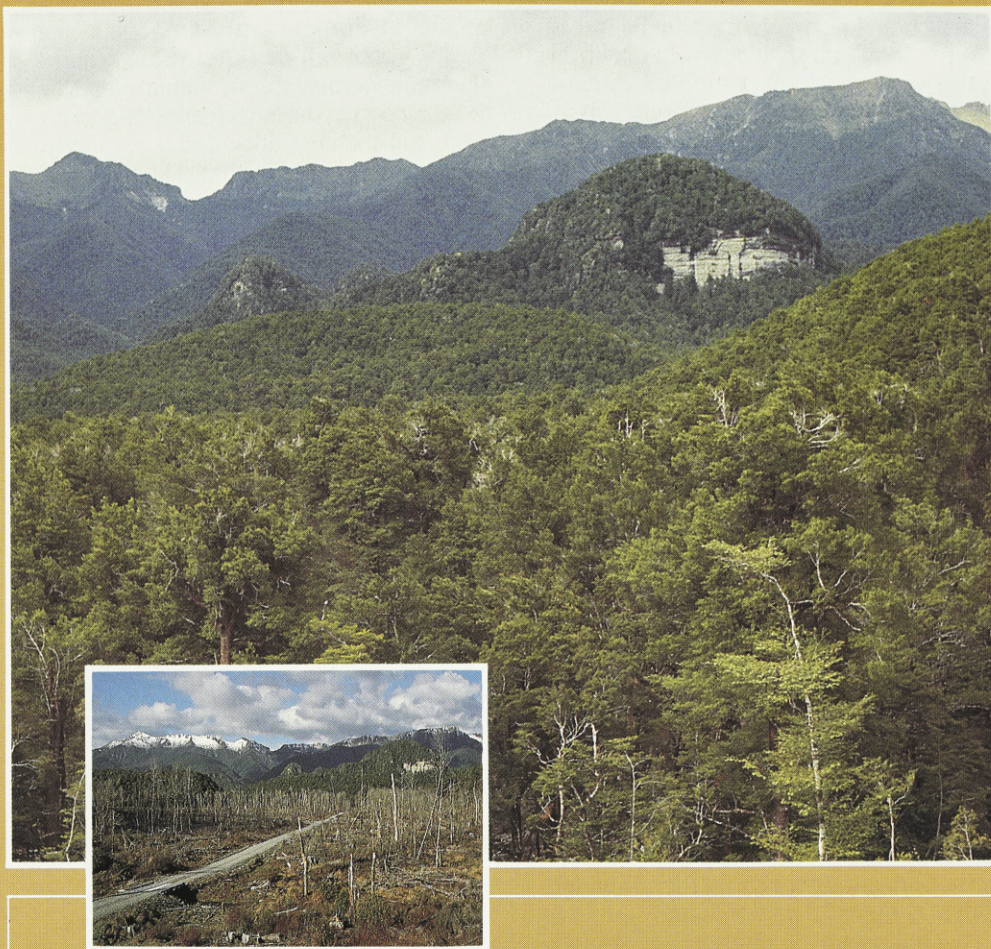
Indigenous forestry would continue in some limited areas under the Forestry Corporation, but for those foresters who are zealous to maximize the area brought into production, it is undoubtedly essential to take over the Department of Conservation as well. By subverting the original concept of this department, they can neutralize what would have been an advocate for preservation and at the same time establish a departmental platform and even a nebulous rationale ("conservation management") for extensive wood production activities.

Not much further down this doublethink trail is the idea, already being discussed, of remaking the Department of Conservation in the image of a self-funding "conservation corporation". Under this concept, income earned from timber production, grazing, mining, hydroelectricity and other "conservation management" activities could be used to pay for recreation development facilities, reserve acquisitions, and wild animal control, thus reducing or even eliminating dependence on government funding. The controversial idea of entry fees for national parks is part of this concept. The trade-offs which would regularly have to be made between protection and production are no doubt challenging and attractive to the departmental resource managers who would run the show. But the dangers are surely obvious:

- lack of accountability of the resource managers
- undermining the New Zealanders birthright of free access to public land for recreation

- government pressure to produce revenue from mining, logging etc, leading to active erosion of the national heritage by the very department charged with safeguarding it.
- conservation expenditure would follow not so much conservation needs as the availability of natural resources for trading away.

Red beech forests at Station Creek, Maruia Valley, the summer before woodchip logging and the winter after (inset). Under the "conservation management" concept, the Department of Conservation could end up running its own woodchip schemes as a source of revenue. Photo: Guy Salmon



The huge extent of the South Island high country, 10 percent of New Zealand's land area. This pastoral lease land should be placed under a neutral stewardship agency.