

TRAINING

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Logging and Forest Industry
Training Board

Introduction

It is a fact, but one not generally considered, that logging and the production of logs for one use or another, is New Zealand's oldest industry. Ship spars were first exported long before gold or any agricultural product.

Unfortunately it can also be said that the logging industry is one of the last in New Zealand to organise itself in the areas of training and recognition of skills and experience.

Hence it has also been stated*¹ that "the present work force can be characterised as being of the age of prime physical fitness, poorly trained for their present job, prone to accidents, liable to show a high rate of turnover and holding their job in relatively low regard".

Perhaps for these reasons then, there is a strong consensus of opinion within the industry that a comprehensive training scheme is needed in order to -

- improve the work performance of those engaged in the industry
- improve the motivation and job satisfaction of the work force
- reduce the accident levels and increase the safety of logging operations
- plan ahead for the increased work force which it is envisaged will be needed within the next decade

It was with these broad principles in mind that the Steering Committee for Logging Industry Training was formed in 1977 and as a result of its subsequent impact through a group training scheme in the Bay of Plenty, the Logging and Forest Industry Training Board was established in late March 1980.

The Current Situation

Apart from Forest Service Woodsman Training Schools, to a limited degree in the N.Z. Ranger's Certificate and 3 or 4 major companies, formal training of loggers is practically non-existent.

The Group Training Scheme involving Tasman Pulp and Paper, N.Z. Forest Products, N.Z. Forest Service and Fletcher Forests has achieved some degree of success in as much as it has defined standards of training and levels of skill and experience. The approximately 400 loggers within the Bay of Plenty holding Loggers' Certificates have attained some or all of these various levels. In all instances some degree of training has been involved, even if it was only thorough familiarization of the Bush Safety Code. Certification is voluntary, thus when a logger applies for a certificate he puts himself voluntarily into a training situation whether he actually realises this or not. The ready acceptance therefore of logging certificates in the Bay of Plenty would indicate also a ready acceptance by loggers of training. This is the crux of the matter and the pivot on which

*¹ (G.C.Wells - A Survey of the N.Z. Logging Work Force)

any training programme succeeds or fails, that is, the willingness of those to be trained to participate.

It is not intended to elaborate further on the Logger's Certificate here except to say that its value to both employer and employee is considerable. It might be appropriate however to mention that one company who has encouraged certification amongst its own and contracting loggers since early 1978, reports that of the last 217 lost time accidents in their operation, only 7 have been experienced by holders of the Logger's Certificate.

Training in Small Wood Operations

It is generally considered that small wood operations have a higher accident rate and can therefore be accepted to be more dangerous than large wood operations. It is for this reason no doubt that the A.C.C. funded L.I.R.A./ Swedish consultants investigation into felling and limbing techniques, was mainly concerned with round wood operations. It is possible that if any improved techniques in handling small wood arise from this study and they are acceptable to the industry, the Logging and Forest Industry Training Board will consider their inclusion in training programmes.

The Group Training Scheme does not generally have any different training policy from one type of timber or operation to another, the principles being the same. The Logger's Certificate however does differentiate between thinning and clear-fell, age of trees, species, terrain, etc and loggers must prove their competence to be certificated in specific types of operations.

Although it has yet to be considered, it is envisaged that the Logging and Forest Industry Training Board will need to give due consideration to the problems associated with small wood production and the training required. It is generally accepted that the techniques of extracting small wood differ from clear-fell operations, e.g. difficulties manoeuvring extraction machinery, higher rate of tree felling required, greater proportion of time spent on limbing, preparation of logs in the bush rather than on the landing

Future Training Requirements

There are many opinions on the growth of the logging industry and the manpower requirements that will need to be faced up to. Almost every week recently new afforestation and timber use projects have been put forward. One certainty however is that someone will have to do the logging and additional people will have to be found to do it.

The traditional methods of training in the logging industry whereby a new chum learned from a more experienced man will never be replaced entirely. This method has got us through the last 100 years but will it be good enough for the future or even the present for that matter.

The Logging and Forest Industry Training Board's responsibility will be to recognise the requirements of the industry and do something about it. Definite possibilities are instigating

- the establishment of more group training schemes based on the Bay of Plenty experience
- employment of regional logging training officers to assist small operators and administer group training schemes

- establishment of basic introductory courses for new men in the industry
- seminars and courses for increasing the skills of those already employed in the industry
- training of trainers, to enable experienced loggers to pass on their knowledge and experience to others
- promotion of the Logger's Certificate and its availability throughout the industry.

Conclusion

Traditionally, but also unfortunately, training in many industries is often one of the last management considerations and the first to go when things are tough. For any training programme to succeed, employers and management must give its full support to those responsible for the training.

The Logging and Forest Industry Training Board is very much in its infancy and will therefore need to rely heavily on the good will and assistance of both employer and employee to be effective.

It is important that any training should be of the type that industry wants and it is to this end that I request those involved to look seriously at their needs and advise the Board accordingly.