

FOREST INDUSTRY TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

THE E.R.F.I.C. EXPERIENCE

Walter Taylor
Training Manager
E.R.F.I.C.
Tumut, N.S.W
Australia

INTRODUCTION

My name is Walter Taylor. I am the Training Manager for the Eastern Riverina Forest Industry Council. We operate out of Tumut. Our area of operation is the Albury forest region and the Bathurst forest region. Our organisation covers the training requirements for industry in those two regions together. The log intake from the area that we cover is 25% of the national log intake from forest plantations.

I have two papers here. One is "Training in New South Wales: the E.R.F.I.C. Experience" and the other is a report on the results of my previous visit (in March 1991).

Just before I start though, I'd like to comment on what Bryan said there a moment ago. Basically what he is saying is that there is a system here that has a minimum requirement, and we have a system at home that has a minimum requirement, but if our people require further training in any area, further to those requirements, we meet them. I guess that's what you're saying, that there is a minimum requirement.

FOREST INDUSTRY TRAINING

Training in the forest industry in Australia started in 1968. The first training package was conducted by C.S.R. Wood Panels at Oberon, in the forest at Sunny Corner just east of Bathurst, N.S.W.

The training was for fallers in softwood plantation and was based on the Nortech training package that was developed in Sweden. At that time the material coming out of that particular forest was all 8-foot wood. In the early '70's Nortech themselves became active in training from a base in Melbourne, at which time CSR withdrew from the training role.

By the mid '70's Nortec had also left the scene, our industry wasn't large enough to support them so they moved on, which left New South Wales with no training provider for logging operations in that State.

New South Wales went in a few years from being a leader or giving direction in the training field, to having no access to training at all.

FORMATION OF E.R.F.I.C.

In 1979, the Softwood Plantation Training Scheme was formed in Tumut. In '82 we underwent a name change, and restructured to what we are today which is the Eastern Riverina Forest Industry Council, (referred to as ERFIC). The members of the Council at this point in time were mill managers only, and the New South Wales Forest Commission.

Trainers Employed

The first trainer started work in Tumut in July of 1980 and he was there until July'82. The training that he undertook in that time

was chainsaw operator training only. At that point in time his work covered 270 fallers.

I started work for ERFIC on 1 February, 1983, and my research of the organisation I was working for indicated that management of ERFIC was mill and forest grower directed. This meant that training was being directed by senior management from within the industry, in that the management skills were good, but the culture of the organisation was not conducive to training. People were being directed to be trained, and training had become reactive only, to meet the needs of industry. That reaction to training was coming from senior management.

In other words what I'm trying to say here is that people sitting up in the middle decided that the cost of timber was getting a little bit high, because of the reflection of Workers' Compensation, and so they said "Go and train". But nobody said, "What are you going to train him in?"..."Here you've got a chainsaw operator, you're an expert on a chainsaw, so you must be able do it".

Involvement of Contractors

The financial support for the scheme came from industry represented by senior management on the Board of ERFIC. Each industry that was on the Board and paid into the scheme at that point in time had a representative there. Inevitably they were always the General Manager or Site Manager.

Over the next two years, a concerted effort was made to have logging contractors represented on the ERFIC Council. This had the effect of changing the culture of ERFIC, and made it more responsive to the training needs of industry as a whole.

This was brought about from the fact that management structure was broader, the funding base was on a levy system, and that included the logging contractors. To me, it flows on a little bit from what Garry Leeson presented in his paper, where in

Australia, we actually had a situation where the logging contractors moved, and were prepared to fund a system where they were going to have control of their destiny. They were going to direct the training, and they were going to have the training that was suitable and needed. That certainly changed the culture and brought it down from those lofty heights of fairly senior management.

MECHANICAL HARVESTING

A training needs analysis of the logging industry in the Albury forest region of New South Wales was conducted in 1987. It indicated a need for on-going training for mechanical harvesting.

In 1981, A.N.M. Albury introduced large scale mechanical harvesting into the area. They provided training for the introduction of this equipment, the first course being late 1981, and the final course being in mid-1983.

In '81 A.N.M. started operations and at that stage of the game, there were 39 pieces of logging equipment introduced. They consisted of feller bunchers, Logma (delimbers) and forwarders (85-33's). That training package really took us very quickly from a stage where we had no background in mechanical harvesting, and with this equipment arriving, the training was based around the introduction of that technology and the use of it to the area.

Remembering that back in '79 when we were looking at contractors, our primary transportation from stump to roadside was done by a whole range of equipment. There were some forwarders about, bunching was done, and a fair percentage of the primary transportation for thinnings was still horse-drawn. The last horse-drawn outfit to operate in the Tumut area was in March 1983.

So we went suddenly from horse-drawn primary extraction to what at that stage of the game was very modern equipment. It was through ERFIC giving a forum for

industry to voice its opinion and the other things that go with it, that we had no industrial problems at all for that period.

So the final introductory course for that equipment was in 1983 and the end result was that a machine operator course had to be developed from scratch.

There was a four year lapse between the last A.N.M. course and the start-up of the present operator course.

PRESENT GOALS

From the development of the machine operator training to the present day, the ERFIC Training Centre has developed several streams of training:

1. Training in the skills development in Logging.

We are still involved in the logging area. It's still our basis, it's our roots, where we come from, that's what we're proud of.

2. Training for skills development in Mills/Plants

We undertake some work in mill plants, involved in development of skills.

3. Technical Training

We have opened out a little into the post-Trade technical training field.

4. Human Resource Development

We are working in supervisor training in human resource development.

The initiative for this came from the mills, but as our contractor workforce is becoming a lot more professional in its management skills, it sees a need there for human resource development. The function of the unit, which consists of myself, another trainer and an administration person, is to provide that management service, that personnel service to the contractor.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the success of the ERFIC Training Centre at Tumut has been brought by the broad base of the ERFIC management, the change in the culture of the industry that allowed training to flourish, and the expertise and the dedication of the staff of the Training Centre.

The ERFIC Training Centre is a national leader in its field of endeavour, and is recognised by the Federal Government as a Logging Industry Skill Centre, that is, a centre of excellence for training in the logging industry within Australia.

