

## THE NEW ZEALAND FOREST INDUSTRY TRAINING AND EDUCATION COUNCIL

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### INTRODUCTION

My name is Rod McGowan, and I work for this new outfit called FITEC. What I want to do is very quickly go through my understanding of what my brief is, a little bit about myself, and then encourage some discussion from you, about what it is that you expect an organisation such as we've got in mind, and is now in place, to actually do. A couple of the comments that I've heard so far. Training is everybody's responsibility. That's true, but what is also true is that training tends to be the responsibility of your little patch.

Now, FITEC's responsibility is to try and stand back from the whole industry and look at it as a whole, and try and make some sort of sense from it as a whole industry, rather than relying on each little group, to look after each of its own areas. Now, for that to make any sense then we have to have people of the quality of Mike and his people, to look after one particular area and develop that area. I'll come back to that.

What the industry has said, as a result of the review which Colin McKenzie's group did over the last six months, was "the industry's view is yes, what we're doing now is fine, it needs a little bit of tweaking here, a little bit of fine tuning, no major changes required. A little bit better funding (which is also going to be FITEC's problem), but what is really necessary is that there are several areas that we have not done before, which are going to need to be done". That's going to be the responsibility of my group.

### OBJECTIVES OF FITEC

Now, what I want to do is just talk about the main objectives of FITEC and from that talk about the five major areas of FITEC's concern.

#### 1) Coordination Role

The first and probably the most important part is to try and co-ordinate and rationalise (not in the sense of cutting things away, but in filling in gaps) the approach to the whole industry training effort.

I think it's a simple reality that in the next nine years, the general projection is that there is a market available for New Zealand wood fibre, about double what we do now. Now, it makes sense that the trees have to be in the ground now because if they're not we're not going to get them ready. The technology is either available, planned, or in the pipeline.

What the industry is not at all sure about is the fact whether we, the human resources, are going to be ready to maximise that technology to produce the end result. Because in terms of the whole economy, and I suppose the Minister has spoken about this this morning, is that that is incredibly important. Now, we are in one of the only growth industries in the country (and God knows we need a few) and what needs to happen is that we need to maximise that, not only for our own good, but for the good of the whole economy. So there's a co-ordination role of all of the groups that are in the industry now.

## 2) Integration with other industries

What we also need to do is to integrate what is happening in the forest industry with other industries, and with education as a whole. What has tended to happen in the past is that industry groups have stood back from the mainstream. Mainstream meaning ordinary schooling. One of the most exciting things that I'm going to be involved in is called the "Forestry in Schools" programme. I'll tell you about it now, because it will make sense of all the rest of it.

Various people and various groups in the industry have for a long time said what needs to happen is that the status of people involved in the forest industry in the view of the public, and in their own eyes needs to be improved. Now what the industry has decided to do is to actually take the bull by the horns and get several groups together and do what's called a "Forestry in Schools Programme".

There will be five modules, and each kid in each school in New Zealand, every year will do a module about forestry. Now this will range from, I think, two modules in the primer sections and then a lot more as it goes up. It will range from very basic introductions about forests as an important economic element, environmental, social ... all of those sorts of things. All of the things that a forest industry means to a society is actually going to be taught in the mainstream school system. It's going to be an expensive programme, most of which will be done by sponsorship. But we are very confident it's going to work well and it's going to transform the way the public thinks about the forestry industry.

That will have two effects. What it should do is improve our view of ourselves, and training is at least as important in that respect, and it will also produce a different sort of person, or a wider range of persons, coming into the industry. That's the "Forestry in Schools" programme. It goes right from Primary School right up to Secondary School.

## 3) Formalise training

Then the next part of the process is to formalise training to match other industry sectors, so that there is some portability. If you've got skills in forestry then you are bound to find in some other area, in some other industry, a similar sort of skill. What we need to be able to do is to give people skills that they can take with them when they leave the industry. Otherwise what tends to happen is that someone will have a skill that is so specific to an industry that they cannot work in another industry except the one that they've been trained in.

The common sense approach to that is to say : "Why is the forestry industry going to be spending money training people so that they can take that skill away?". There are two benefits. One is that if the person has got that skill from another industry, they will come to forestry, that's the first one, so it will be a balancing thing.

The second thing is that there is nothing worse from somebody's work performance to feel that they are trapped. So we would need to have flexibility in that respect, so that we can actually have people in the industry who have the skills, who enjoy what they're doing, and the maximum efficiency will come from that. That's the formal part of the training part of it.

Encouraged, contractors become more involved in their training. What that really means is not only to be careful and encouraging about their own people being trained, but looking after their own training as people. Now that means refresher courses in technical areas. It might mean training courses in better management. How to run a small business, how to run a large business, how to run a small business so that it becomes a large business. All those sort of things are very important.

## 4) Staircasing

What staircasing means is that it's part of this idea of the current buzz word of 'career pathing'. What that really means is that if you start somewhere in an industry,

and you want to be trained, and you want to use that training, one of the best ways of being able to encourage people is to say : "Well if you start here, you can go to there, or there, and you can move across and go to there or there".

Now the idea is that each of those steps must be manageable. Each of those steps must be clear. You must be able to demonstrate competence to acquire that step. So the idea is that someone can start at the various entry points in the training system and move in a steady, stepped way to the objective that you want. That way people can see a future for themselves.

#### 5) Improve Career Path

Revise the New Zealand Certificate of Forestry. Now we're just beginning to talk to people about this. We're not at all sure where FITEC will go with the New Zealand Certificate. We've got some ideas, but we will need to talk to lots of people with the Certificate, to give us some idea of how useful it has been in their present jobs, or how it could be made better use of.

An important thing that is becoming more and more clear to me, is the fact that we actually know very little about the stock of training skills in the industry right now. I think this is partly the result of having so many separate groups involved in the industry. They know quite a lot about their group, but as a whole industry we know very little about ourselves.

What I want to do is to talk in the industry and with my own Council about some way of assessing what the stock (if you want to put it in those terms), what is our current stock of human skills. From that we can say " Let's talk to the same people who have told us about the skills that they've got, and that they haven't got. Give us some idea of the sorts of skills you're going to need three or four years down the track".

Then we can do what's called a cost-benefit analysis and that will tell us what the critical gaps are going to be. If we're going to need this sort of person in five years, and

we haven't got any, how do we make a training system that will fill that gap? Those are the sorts of things that we need to understand a hell of a lot better. Our basic information in my view, about the whole industry is not very good.

### STRUCTURE OF FITEC

FITEC's got three clear components:

Firstly, it's a national organisation. We are not replacing or displacing anybody. What we want to do is try and fit the pieces of the puzzle together, a little bit better. To my way of thinking, training in the industry at the moment is that it is about a 20 piece jig-saw puzzle. We've got five or six of the big pieces, the big important pieces. My job is to find the other five, or six pieces that fit the puzzle, then over time create the whole picture, so that we know exactly where we're going. So there's a national perspective.

Secondly, there is a whole industry perspective. I know that I'm going to get a lot of flak about the fact that I don't accept the differences between the training organisation in theory. I see absolutely no reason why we can't have some sort of national direction, retaining the separateness, retaining the uniqueness, but trying to break down some of the barriers that have caused a good deal of inefficiency and unhappiness.

Then there is a regional structure. Probably the most important part of FITEC's organisation is going to be it's regional groups. In that way we can get information to the regional groups, but most importantly the regions are going to be able to tell us what they want FITEC to do. It's got to be a very responsive organisation. It won't be a bureaucracy in Wellington. What I want to do is make it a very small, tight organisation. Maybe only two or three people. The real work has got to be done where it's being done now and being done very well from what I can see.

## MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF FITEC

Let me touch on the five main areas that FITEC is going to concern itself with to give you the whole industry a much better view of training and a much better identity:

### 1) Forestry in Schools Programme

This is extremely important. It will tie the whole thing together. Gradually we'll get a whole generation of people coming into the industry who know a hell of a lot more about forestry than they ever have before. In very pragmatic terms, what that's going to do for the industry is vastly improve the quality of the training that people who come into the industry with. That means we won't need to do a lot of the basic training, it will already have been done by the school system. Mind you we will have paid for it.

### 2) Pre-entry Programmes

Pre-entry programmes are things like ACCESS. We need to find a way, (perhaps it's through Mike's group (LFITB), perhaps it's through another group, I'm not sure), to find a way to get a handle on the ACCESS programme training that's being done. In some parts of the country it's marvellous. In other parts of the country it's pretty dismal. Maybe we need to find some sort of certification system, where we actually say to the people that are funding ACCESS: "If you're going to do an ACCESS programme in forestry we actually want to have some control over it, because you're going to be expecting those people to have jobs in forestry".

That's fine, but if they present some sort of evidence that they've been on an ACCESS programme, our contractors need to be guaranteed that at least that training is up to a certain standard and has covered a certain area. That pre-entry programme is very important.

### 3) Trade training

At the moment Trade training is the centre-piece of the whole forest industry effort. It's probably about 15 or 20% of FITEC's overall responsibility, but it is probably the best organised and the most professionally run so far.

### 4) Technical training

That's the work that's done by the Polytechnics and the two organisations in Rotorua who report to the Polytech. We need to look at the NZ Certificate of Forestry and Sawmilling. We may need to extend those areas and we certainly need to be monitoring the sorts of information that's going into those trainees.

### 5) University system

Now I am sure that most of you are aware that the School of Forestry is at Canterbury, and I'm sure that most of you are aware that not too many people in the industry are terribly happy with the outputs of the School of Forestry. What's happened is that such an important aspect of social life in New Zealand as the education system has been tipped on its head in the last few years. One of the things that has been introduced is the competitive element. Waikato is proceeding with a Forestry degree, or a variation of a technical degree that is concentrating on forestry, and no doubt other universities will also wish to compete.

It's difficult to actually make hard and fast rules, and FITEC is certainly not going to be standing saying "you will do this, or you will do that". What we need to do is to encourage the tertiary institutions to be very responsive to what industry wants, and not leave it to the market, because it's not always effective to be able to control the sorts of input that go into technical training.

I guess the most important part for me is to try and produce some excitement, to galvanise people into realising that training is arguably the most important element in

any industry. You can have trees and you can have technology and not a thing will happen unless people manoeuvre and change those inputs.

I am very pleased to be part of an industry that is making some progress. It is, in my view, (and I've been involved in two primary industries now) miles ahead in terms of thinking about training. The on-the-ground systems that you've got are excellent. What we need to do is add a little bit of overview, and a little bit of "Wellington funding muscle", to try and make things easier for the people who are doing it, to make sure that their job is to produce really well trained people.

My job is to worry about the other bits and pieces and the overall view. Thank you for listening to me.

