

MANPOWER MANAGEMENT RESEARCH
IN N.Z. FORESTRY

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NAPIER
June 1990

INTRODUCTION

Man in his employment seeks basic needs, needs which are too often overlooked, or perhaps not even understood.

Manpower research for the future must not lose sight of those needs, and could make good use of the knowledge available from investigation of the harvesting industry (and indeed other industries) over the last forty years. That investigation will indicate, that in ignorance, man has himself allowed development of rigidities in employment, which have eroded personal opportunities to achieve basic needs. Man has to a very significant extent lost his way as an individual, believing that security is provided by numerical strength, rather than being earned through personal endeavour. Trade Unions have sought this, and employers have made it possible. The phenomenon is not confined to the labour force, but afflicts

management structures as well.

Man's Needs

Mans needs have been variously described by psychologists. Robert Ardney (3-pp. 91,289) claims that man has three innate needs which demand to be satisfied; the highest of these is **identity**, next is **stimulation** and the lowest is **security**. He goes on to point out that the antithesis of these are, in order, **anonymity**, **boredom** and **anxiety**.

Maslow (in 9-P.49) describes mans needs rather differently; he says the most basic requirements are in turn, **physiological needs**, the need for **safety**, **belongingness** and **love**, **esteem**, and finally **realisation of ones potential in action**.

Being a social animal man can develop his full potential only in societies.

Experts say that societies are groups of individuals competing for conventional prizes by conventional means, a definition which implies that the "game" must be played so that the team as a whole does not get hurt. The society will be a group of unequal beings organised to meet common needs, the group providing individuals with equality of opportunity to develop their genetic potentials and so better serve the group.

The History Of Employment In Harvesting

It is now easy to understand how "native bushmen" (as loggers were then known) achieved production targets, in working conditions far from "comfortable". The boss was clearly identifiable, as was the daily task; and recruitment patterns ensured the social structure of the (small) team was maintained. Training of new recruits was undertaken within the group to ensure standards of safety and efficiency. The team was more than a "gang", it was in essence a "family", and therefore responsibilities for the well being of the family were shared by the boss and the workmen. In most cases the financial burden of machine ownership was carried by the company.

With the closure of native sawmills in the late 1950's, as result of resource depletion, the concept of owner-operator contractors

developed, basing operations on scattered forest remnants, supplying logs from private forest resource to a shrinking sawmilling sector. Pressure to compete in an industry then fraught with uncertainty, and heavy financial involvement by individuals, in equipment ownership, resulted in near total dismantling of the social structures, so important to the viability of native logging in those early years.

Technological changes were significant in the 1950's, some (e.g. chainsaws) making the lot of the logger much less arduous, while others imposing even greater demands on the human frame than previously existed. Choices of equipment were limited, and in retrospect poor choices at times resulted in the need for greater human effort to justify poor financial (management) decisions.

Exotic Logging

The indigenous cut was to be dwarfed by the demand for plantation wood imposed by the construction of pulp mills and sawmills at Tokoroa and Kawerau. Many native loggers took up the challenge, working alongside new and experienced loggers from New Zealand and overseas. Individual loggers, and indeed "social families", were to lose identity, and become part of major new communities. The environment was one of new social, operational,

and management structures, unlikely to meet adequately mans innate needs.

The appropriateness of these structures was challenged during the mid 1980's resulting in the larger processing companies choosing (for whatever reasons) to pass the responsibility for ownership of logging equipment to private operators. The owner-operator would assume accountabilities, and be dependent upon his labour management skills to assure achievement of production targets and thus viability of his operation. Additionally, he would seek some freedom in a planning sense, to determine felling and extraction patterns, a role previously performed by a planner/ supervisor.

Replacement of the large logging organisations, with a multiplicity of small intimate units, will certainly have resulted in the provision of a working environment more likely to meet mans innate needs.

Manpower Research - What We Know

In addition to an understanding of mans basic needs, and how various forms of employment structures meet or challenge those needs, recently undertaken turnover and absenteeism, studies indicate that employees in harvesting are generally inadequately prepared.

Currently the direct labour cost in harvesting is 50%

+ 10% of total costs of production. This large single cost component is surely worthy of greater research emphasis than that presently afforded.

Any research in the area of labour costs in relation to productivity will highlight inadequacies in training. High pressure production demands of the current logging sector do not provide a suitable environment for optimum skills provision - an on-going demand to cater for evolving technologies.

What Do We Need To Know

We need firstly to have some idea of possible impacts on the forestry industry, of changes in forest ownership brought about by the sale of State Forests.

Impacts will likely include:-

- An immediate surge in log production, a requirement of new owners to meet cashflow demands.
- Resurrection of second-hand equipment to facilitate immediate production commencement.
- Engagement of owner-operators who will be required to accept logging rates specified in some instances by a third party, rates which may not take account of the need, at least initially, to engage inexperienced contractors with perhaps an added burden of using less than ideal second-hand equipment.

- Production restrictions and surges, occasioned by market fluctuations during the "settling in" period.
- Production failures (and bankruptcies) as result of inadequacies in skill levels of employees at all levels.
- Some forest owners, being new to the logging industry may take time to develop management qualities commensurate with the task.

Financial pressures under which some forest owners will be placed, will impact on the entire industry. Inadequacies at all skill levels in the harvesting arena, to meet the initial two year "crises" period have been foreseen. It could not realistically be expected that existing forest owners (private sector) should have provided for the particular demands that the Sale of State Forests will create. It is expected that during the 1990/91 year, long term stability will befall the industry, a stability previously unknown, where long term contracts can be entered into with confidence.

The implications for Harvesting Research are significant:-

- Long term logging contracts (10-20 years) will encourage importation of (high cost) plant items, of a very specific nature.
- Systems analyses will assume major importance at the expense of short term, "quick-fire" pro-

- jects.
- Introduction of new (and existing) systems will demand greater strategic, and management planning skills.
- New technologies will demand higher levels of operational skills.
- The role of man in the logging sector will constantly come under review to ensure mechanisation is introduced for sound social and economic reasons.
- Mechanisation will require a review of the respective planning roles of owner-operators and management/supervisory employees.
- Existing systems (part systems) will be subjected to continual study, the production costs of which will be matched with those of the new fully integrated mechanised systems.
- High cost systems will demand unrestricted production capability to gain optimum production cost benefit from mechanisation. These benefits will be required to be offset against costs of the provision of "surge" log dumps, and/or costs of balancing woodflows by manipulation of motor manual systems. All costs and benefits must be taken account of to fully reflect economic worth of new systems.

Conclusion

For decades, foresters have predicted the magnitude of increase in future annual cuts, alerting all sectors of industry to make best use of the available "lead

time". Intervention of the State Forest Asset Sales process will certainly alter predictions, and bring the cut increase forward, creating adverse short term harvesting impacts. In the longer term the industry should gain considerable strengths from secure private ownership of the resource. Economies of scale, and benefits of long term security of supply, will provide a platform from which industry can establish and maintain international competitiveness.

This 1990 Manpower Management in Logging Seminar, will raise more issues than it can hope to solve. Focus of research on the future role of man in his capacity as a manager, supervisor, contractor, or machine operator is of critical importance to the determination of present

training needs. Machinery capability is governed by the qualities of decision making at all levels. Qualities of decisions are regarded as being far more influential on harvesting efficiency, than are the relative performances of one loader versus another. A systems approach in decision making, recognising every opportunity for potential business benefit in the broadest sense is that which requires implementation.

People, forests, machinery and huge amounts of money comprise our industry. Responsibility for its future rests totally in the hands of people. The challenge is therefore to prepare those people in every possible way, by the provision of appropriate education, training, and research support.

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