

disciplines connected with forestry. But my diffidence is perhaps lessened by the fact that in all probability none of you here today will be alive in the year 2062 to prove me wrong.

ASSUMPTIONS

In approaching this subject I have to make certain assumptions, or rather acts of faith, and these I do make with some confidence. The first such act of faith is a human one. It is that Canterbury will still be peopled by human beings in the year 2062; in other words, that the human race, with the means now at its disposal, will not meanwhile commit genocide. I think that all of us make this act of faith, otherwise we would not, as we do, plan for the future; and in particular we would not, as some of us do, assure that there is a future by begetting children. Perhaps this act of faith may come easier to foresters than to most other people. As a professional group, we commonly think of and plan for the needs of the community 30, 50, 100 years hence, or for even longer periods. By nature of our calling we are and always have been accustomed to this extremely long-term forward thinking. We could not practice our profession unless we had faith in it, and in the future of the human race. You do not plant trees for posterity without assuming that there will be one.

The second act of faith is an economic one. It is that the future population of Canterbury will enjoy at least as high a standard of living as do its occupants today. In this context, it is not of great importance, though it is of some, whether future Cantabrians are New Zealanders in the sense we know—i.e., primarily of British descent, or whether they are admixed either with European or with Asian races. It is the standard of living which is the important point, and hence the level of the demand which the community will make on products from the forests.

This leads up to the major or technological act of faith, that the diverse benefits which forests confer will be as much in demand in the future as they are today. There can be no doubt that the group of benefits sometimes termed forest influences will be even more necessary. We will require a greatly extended area of primarily protection forest, forests to control soil erosion, to regulate run-off, to ameliorate flooding; in short to ensure the very existence of the farms and cities and communications of the lowlands beneath them. I repeat, there can be no doubt about this.

But it may be asked if the physical yields of forests and wood and its derivatives will still be needed by the communities a hundred years hence. It may be thought that we are entering into an era of such technological change and scientific ingenuity that cheaper and more efficient substitutes may be found and that large scale production forests may no longer be necessary. I believe the reverse to be true. I will confidently prophesy that wood will continue to be, as it is today, one of the indispensable raw materials on which civilisation is based. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, unlike coal, oil, natural gas or minerals, forests are a readily renewable raw material resource. So, of course, is any product based on the utilisation of solar energy; in fact, there are few renewable forms of either raw materials or energy which do not derive directly from the sun. This brings me to the second reason, which is that through the photosynthetic process, forests or at least exotic forests in New Zealand, are a singularly efficient way of transforming solar energy. The annual dry-weight production per acre from a *Pinus radiata* forest in New Zealand is one of the highest of any form of vegetation in the world. I emphasise that the lasting importance of wood is that it is a readily renewable resource, and that the lasting importance of production forests is that they are one of the most efficient means of converting the major renewable source of energy, sunlight.