

Whatungarongaro te tangata, tu tonu te whenua

The forestry industry provides the opportunity for development of Maori resources, it needs the resources and the Maori people need the industry.

But certain conditions need to be met, especially in the Taitokerau district, said Maori Affairs Director, Tom Parore at this year's conference of the N.Z. Institute of Foresters.

He said Maori people must be part of the industry at all levels from forest workers to forest owners so as to achieve the ultimate aim of Maori use and control of the land.

He pointed out that the practice of 99 year leases should be reviewed so that Maori people could regain control and ownership of land which the Crown held.

Mr Parore said as a step towards owner use and occupation, there could be interim use made of the land by another party on behalf of the Maori owners. He said that could be fairly radical thinking for forest companies to accept but there was precedent.

He noted that a one crop rotation lease existed for the land at Ngatihine and said that backed up the need for short-term occupancy by non-Maoris such as N.Z. Forest Service or forestry companies.

"Present owners should not pre-empt a decision by the next generation by tying land up in long term leases. The next generation may well decide to lease again — that is for them to decide."

At Ngatihine 800 ha has been retained for owner development with about 300 ha developed so far.

Maori land in the North is 140,000 ha in total of which 70,000 ha is idle or underutilized. Possibly about half of this i.e. 35,000 ha could be developed for forestry.

The idle or underutilized land is predominantly back country or coastal and contains many areas of bush and scrub. The land is mainly in more remote areas where the Maori population predominates and there is close spiritual and cultural links with the land.

Maori people represent 20% of the population of Taitokerau but own only 10% of the land.

The demand for land comes from the large companies, private investors and N.Z. Forest Service on the one hand and, on the other, pressure for retention of land in an undeveloped state for recreational, scenic, wildlife and environmental purposes.

Mr Parore put forward several options for development of Maori land in the North, including family projects where blocks were small, and forestry cooperatives where a large labour force was available e.g. Morewa freezing works.

He said another possibility being considered by the Taitokerau Federation of Maori Authorities was for a company owned and financed by contributions from trusts and incorporations to undertake forestry development. The company could seek finance from investors not presently involved in forestry.

"Maori owners will watch with interest the development of the new forestry licence legislation and the forestry companies attitude to joint venture licences rather than a lease nature," he said.

Te whenua te wai-u mo nga tamariki.

Joining the MP for Whangarei, John Banks (second from left) at the official welcome are the district officer for Maori Affairs, Tom Parore, Mrs Pane Cooper and Mrs Moetu T. Davis, the wife of John Davis.

