

EDITORIAL

Change

THE assumption that anything that can be done must be done runs through all of our lives today. An enormous potential for change is now being realised and the waves of current which have surged through society with the advent of television, supersonic airline travel, the microprocessor, have transformed our lives beyond the wildest imaginings of our forefathers. We are all figurative mutants, the products (or the victims) of this influence. We are changed by change to accept change all around us and so change with change.

Although the benefits of development are enormous, change presents particular problems for decision makers in forestry. The temptation is great, particularly for the manager in the field, to adopt a new technique, simply because it will do a job neatly, effectively, efficiently. The emphasis tends to be on efficiency. If the suitability of a machine for a job can be demonstrated, for example, the natural tendency is to accept it without further question.

Fortunately, there are elements within forestry organisations which counterbalance these tendencies. New procedures are tested to check their efficacy, as well as their efficiency. Unfortunately, due to pressures of time, there is a tendency to be satisfied with short-term results. Adequate consideration is not always given to the possible ecological consequences of the introduction of new techniques. The short-term advantages of ploughing an iron-pan podzol with a thick mor humus layer can be demonstrated by growth response data, but who can predict what may be the effect in twenty years or in the next rotation? For this, long-term research is needed.

This represents one of the great dilemmas facing the forest manager today. He cannot afford to wait. Five years experimentation, it can be argued, is better than none at all. Perhaps so, but on the other hand, short-term success can lure even the prudent into decisions which may, in time, prove to have been ill judged.

Of course long term experimentation is important, but, more immediately, what is required are research workers who can critically assess the experience of other countries and evaluate its relevance to our own situation. For this we need people of broad experience, within our forest services, who are afforded the opportunity to work abroad and who can see a future for themselves within the research wing of their own organisation at home.