

*EDITORIAL*

## Land Hunger

The policy of the Forest and Wildlife Service on the establishment of plantations is quite clear. The annual planting target is 10,000 hectares. It has been so for many years. Unfortunately, plantings have fallen short of this target in recent years. From almost 9,000ha planted in 1975, the annual figure has fallen in each succeeding year to less than 7,000ha in 1980. The shortage of plantable land is a major reason why the target is not being met. The reserve of land available to the Forest and Wildlife Service for planting is lower now than in any year since 1974. Land acquisition took a sharp downward turn just when land prices had begun to fall. In fact, the total area of land acquired in the past two years is considerably less than that required for one year's planting. Why has this situation developed? Annual reports of each minister responsible for forestry since 1975 have expressed dissatisfaction at the rate of land acquisition. It has been clear for many years that a situation was developing which would make it impossible to achieve the planting target.

This is so contrary to sound forest planning that it demands explanation. Of course money is in short supply, but the programme of acquisition and planting must be considered top priority. It should be adhered to consistently through good times and bad until revised on the basis of rational decision.

The failure of the Forest and Wildlife Service to implement a major component of its policy is cause for serious concern. Will it be able to cope any better with the challenges of the coming years, the problems of fulfilling major supply contracts, of marketing timber surpluses? This may be the time to critically examine the service, its internal management structures and its relationship to government and to society.