

# Sacking sparks off attack on forestry policy

THE recent removal of Victorian Forests Service chairman, Dr Ron Grose, has sparked a scathing attack on the direction of forestry policy in Victoria from one of Australia's leading foresters, Professor E.P. Bachelard.

Dr Grose was removed from office early in May. No formal public statement has been made on the transfer.

Speaking at a dinner to farewell to the former chief forester, Prof. Bachelard said Dr Grose had been removed against his will from the position to which he had devoted much of his professional life.

He had gained the respect of his professional colleagues nationally and internationally.

"I believe event which brought us here tonight is the result of a concerted attack on the forestry profession initiated in the early 1970s."

Prof. Bachelard said all the multiple use practices carried out by the Forests Commission since its inception were in danger of being demolished at the whim of people who have no knowledge or appreciation of the thoughtful application of foresters to both forest conservation and wood production.

"And for what?"

"There is not a skerrick of evidence for the exaggerated claims by the 'new breed' of conservationists of perma-

nent environmental damage caused by forest operations."

"I am sick and tired of feeling qualms and unease when I advocate the virtues and necessity of wood production and multiple use of forests."

"These are not dirty words, but they are fast becoming so in the social climate engineered by those with narrow, dictatorial views."

## Imperative

"It is imperative that the profession and the public be clearly informed of the forest policy being adopted by the current Victorian Government and of the social and economic implications of that policy."

"We want to know whether any forester, chief or otherwise, who believes in balanced use — including wood production — of the native forests has a place in Victoria's forest service."

"The professor said the fact that Victoria possessed forests in the late 1960s and 1970s, about which the new breed of conservationists could express such interest and concern for preservation, was a monument to the multiple use policies of the

commission and its officers, given the appalling state of the forests at the time they came under their charge."

"I reject the assumption that the policies advocated by the Australian Conservation Foundation have popular public support."

"These policies have been proposed by a small group of zealots who have gained a sympathetic political ear."

"I am convinced the mass of the uninvolved public have no appreciation either of the policies or their implications."

**PROF. Bachelard** said the Institute of Foresters of Australia rejected the philosophy underlying ACF policies.

Ron Grose also rejected them and unfortunately this had led to his sacking.

He said foresters had responded positively to the environmental concerns expressed since the early 1970s and had endeavored to meet legitimate demands as responsibly as they could.

"We have attempted a rational dialogue with people who have perceived things differently, and we have modified our practices substantially to meet changing needs."

"On the whole we have taken the view that our critics are reasonable, concerned people with legitimate requirements."

"The vast majority of concerned conservationists are such people."

"However, I believe the time has come for us to face the facts that a hard core of our critics are zealots — a situation which is becoming distressingly common in Australian society — with whom no dialogue or consensus is possible."

The professor said the forestry profession had to recognise the



unpalatable fact that it was facing an implacable opponent which must be fought with all the energy the profession possessed.

Should the sacking of Ron Grose result in such action and resolution, it will not have been in vain.

There is not a skerrick of evidence for the exaggerated claims by the 'new breed' of conservationists of permanent environmental damage caused by forest operations.

Prof. Bachelard said Victoria had a proud history in forestry.

Since the beginning of settlement, Victoria's forests came under intense pressure for building, mining and firewood. As early as 1865, reports advocated controls over indiscriminate cutting, but it took another 40 years for the Government to act with a State Forests Department in 1908, and later in 1918, with the expanded Forests Commission.

The infant commission faced many prob-

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— Prof. E.P. Bachelard

Of critical importance was that Victoria had insufficient forest area reserved for future wood production.

In 1939 the Commission's priorities were dramatically disrupted by bushfire and then by the war which caused unprecedented demand on forests.

Later came the pressure of the post-war housing boom. On top of all this, the commission had since its inception been happy to cater for public recreation and undertook this task in spite of Government apathy.

"It is ironic that in Victoria as elsewhere, Government policy has

always given priority to wood production — the multiple use and conservation practices which did occur were at the urging of the commission itself."

"It is little wonder Victorian foresters reacted with hurt bewilderment to the viciousness of the attacks made upon them and their policies, particularly by the lunatic fringe of the conservation movement," he said.

— JOHN PARRY.

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