

# **‘A man of few words’: A.D. McGavock, Director of Forests, New Zealand State Forest Service, 1931 to 1939**

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## **Abstract**

Alexander McGavock was Director of Forests from 1931 to 1939 but remains comparatively unknown in comparison to his predecessor and successor. Using valedictory and obituary observations as a guide, aspects of McGavock’s early career in Lands and Survey and later move to the State Forest Service are scrutinised in order to better appreciate his impact as Director of Forests.

## **Introduction**

Alexander Douglas McGavock was the country’s third Director of Forests. After a long career in the Department of Lands and Survey (hereafter Lands) he became Conservator of Forests for Westland in 1921. A decade later he was Director of Forests, head of the State Forest Service (SFS). Some of his major accomplishments as Director included staving off SFS reintegration back into Lands in 1931-32, management of sizable unemployment relief afforestation projects during the Depression, and reorientation of forest policy back to its earlier goals in the late 1930s. Despite these achievements, McGavock remains less well known than his predecessors L.M. Ellis and Edward Phillips Turner, and successor Alexander (‘Pat’) Entrican, yet in light of his record, of his successes, setbacks, and mistakes he is deserving of further attention, for as Director for nearly a decade he was more than just a transitional figure.<sup>1</sup> This paper reviews McGavock’s career, both in Lands and the SFS and closes with an assessment of his importance as a forestry administrator.

One of the reasons for McGavock’s low profile lay in his character and temperament. Sam Darby, a foundation forestry appointee, described McGavock as “Of a rather strong character, perhaps conservative at times, reserved and shunning publicity, he was staunch and loyal to forestry.”<sup>2</sup> C.M. Smith, one of the New Zealanders who completed an Edinburgh forestry degree and worked with McGavock for 20 years, produced an obituary which observed that McGavock’s “view [of] his task and his duty was to understand and carry out the instructions and the policy of his Department and to keep completely silent about it” and that “he was a man of few words on other than everyday topics, and he especially disliked listening to people who were not well versed in their subjects.”<sup>3</sup> A retirement tribute from the Dominion Sawmillers’ Federation (an organization frequently at odds with SFS in the 1920s) suggested McGavock’s “retiring nature left perhaps in the minds of too many a false impression regarding the interest which he exercised in the conduct of his business as Director of Forestry.”<sup>4</sup> Frank Hutchinson, lecturer in forestry at Canterbury University College (1925-1934), considered that McGavock “as an original transferee from Lands Department and with a lifetime of experience in the administrative machine, was sincere in his belief that a staffing of such men could administer the State forests without professional assistance.”<sup>5</sup> Using clues suggested by these comments, this paper evaluates McGavock’s career, paying attention to some specific episodes that throw light on his character, attitudes, and reasoning.

At this point it is helpful to prefigure the context in which the Department McGavock would ultimately head was operating. Two attempts to set up state forest departments in the 1870s and 1880s had failed. The newly established SFS of 1921 also faced various trials during its first two decades, including a challenge to its very survival. Within the public sector, the SFS had taken responsibility for forest management largely out of the hands of the Lands Department, but legislative control was still fragmented across Mines, Lands, and the SFS. For the State, however, land development tended to outweigh forest management – felling two trees to plant one blade of grass as the foresters saw it. By implementing a new timber sales strategy, the SFS sought to increase revenues to the state and through timing the release of new areas of forest for milling, to manage the longer-term configuration of the timber industry. Professional foresters had faith in sustained yield management and their ability to enable forests to provide a perpetual stream of timber and other forest products. There were, however, unexpected difficulties in this regard with the relatively slow growth of the main indigenous timber species as well as the limited extent of natural regeneration. An added concern was that of a timber famine – predicted by the 1960s – which triggered a largescale state and company exotic afforestation programme in 1925.

### **Lands and Survey in Invercargill 1891-1917.**

McGavock was born in 1877 in Invercargill, to Scottish migrants Archibald and Sara McGavock, the fifth child in a family of eight. Archibald McGavock worked for the Railways Department as an engine fireman from the mid-1860s and died of exposure while on duty in 1888. The following year Sara McGavock petitioned parliament for an allowance based on her husband's length of service.<sup>6</sup> Economic necessity thus may have encouraged McGavock to leave school aged 14 in 1891 and join Lands as a temporary messenger in the Invercargill Survey Office.

McGavock's salary as messenger was a modest £36 p.a. He showed early initiative in learning to type and taking charge of office correspondence.<sup>7</sup> The Commissioner of Crown Lands (CCL) accordingly recommended a salary increase to £50.<sup>8</sup> In 1895 he transferred to a vacancy in the Clerks' Office where he was trained by the meticulous George Fannin. Well versed in office procedures, over the next decade he rose to be the senior clerk in the office but remained on the temporary staff. Although he was supported by the District Chief Surveyor, the Under Secretary for Lands could not agree to shift him to the permanent complement. McGavock, he noted, was only one of many deserving cases and "the matter was to be dealt with by the Government as a whole."<sup>9</sup> For a time, he contemplated leaving the public service, but once on the permanent staff by 1908 committed himself and applied to join the Public Service Superannuation Fund.

On Fannin's retirement in 1909 McGavock succeeded him as Chief Clerk for the Southland Land District. The *Southland Times* applauded his appointment describing him as "a capable and courteous officer he is well and favourably known to all the Crown tenants of Southland, and to those members of the general public who have had occasion to transact business in the Lands Office."<sup>10</sup> His "minute knowledge" of the land laws was recognized. The newspaper noted that McGavock was prominent in rowing, rugby refereeing, and shooting circles. His duties involved the sale and leasing of Crown Land. He developed a detailed knowledge of relevant acts and regulations, particularly over the opening and closing of roads under the Land Act and the Public Works Act and taking of land under the Public Works Act. He now exercised general supervision over the other clerks and importantly served as Secretary to the Southland Lands Board.

CCL for Southland, Gordon McClure described McGavock in 1914 as a “most capable and intelligent officer and assiduous worker.”<sup>11</sup> McGavock gave evidence before the Magistrate’s Court about mutton birding rights on islands in Foveaux Strait and appeared before the Waiau Land Commission in 1915. Previously in 1914 he had applied unsuccessfully for the higher position of Chief Clerk of the Public Works Department in Wellington. Further advancement within Lands seemed possible via promotion to “Inspector of Offices and Relieving Officer” for Lands in Wellington. His application referred to his “expert knowledge” of land settlement legislation and regulations was now expanded to include departmental responsibilities for timber, gold, mining, coal mining, and education endowments.<sup>12</sup> Although strongly supported by McClure he was unsuccessful. Not only that but he was chastised by the Under Secretary of Lands, J.B. Thompson for including testimonials from Invercargill lawyers. Thompson took the view that McGavock was placing himself under obligation “to persons outside the public service” and that this practice should cease.<sup>13</sup> Here was an example of an impetuosity that occasionally surfaced in someone usually so careful about rules and boundaries even in his more mature years. Rebuffed by Head Office, McGavock gained added local responsibilities in 1915 as Acting Receiver of Land Revenue and Accounts.

McGavock spoke at many staff social functions. His attendance illuminates his idea of ‘proper’ behaviour while the sentiments he expressed, especially about superior officers, hint at the attributes that he admired and on which his own conduct as a senior administrator was modelled. At the gathering to mark CCL Harry Skeet’s transfer to Auckland, McGavock characterised him as a “kindly, courteous, and considerate chief” and as Secretary of the Lands Board he observed that “he could testify to Mr Skeet’s knowledge of men. At all times he dealt fairly and squarely with all, while his first consideration has been for the State.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Outside interests**

McGavock was well known locally as a sportsman. Although only 5 ft 4 inches [1.60m] he played rugby and afterwards was a referee, committee member, and later a life member of the Southland Referees’ Association. An excellent shot, and life-long duck shooter, he served from 1899 on the Committee of the Southland Gun Club on occasions acting as handicapper and referee for shooting matches.<sup>15</sup> He was a Council member of the Southland Acclimatisation Society.<sup>16</sup> In Hokitika he was a Vice President of the local rugby club and regularly played golf. The values of team sports where he often had a leadership role, adherence to the rules of the game, loyalty and service as a sports administrator crossed over into his work life.

In 1908 McGavock and companions were shooting snipe (*Scolopacidae Coenocorypha*) at Awarua Bay when the Acclimatisation Society’s Ranger, John Friend and the local Police Constable accused him of shooting a swan out of season. The case was heard in the local Magistrate’s Court. McGavock acknowledged shooting at some snipe and that, 60 to 70 yards from the swans, he had not expected he would bring one of them down. Late in the proceedings McGavock’s lawyer asked to withdraw the plea of not guilty. It now emerged that McGavock wished to have the charges laid out in Court not because of accusation of shooting of the swan, but because of what he regarded as the aggressive and vulgar language with which the Constable had accosted him. It was “neither the sort of thing he was accustomed to hear, not the sort of thing he was inclined to swallow.” Furthermore, he objected to the episode being characterised as “deliberate poaching.”<sup>17</sup> He was fined £3. McGavock was deeply offended by what he regarded as bad behaviour. Controlled on

the surface but perhaps privately seething, McGavock's conduct here may be usefully recalled when assessing his time as Conservator of Forests in Westland and as Director of Forestry.

Friend and McGavock's paths crossed again in 1912. Friend was dismissed as Acclimatization Society Ranger for disobeying instructions in 1911 but was later reinstated. McGavock wrote to the *Southland Times* under the nom de plume "Anti-Tumbler" suggesting that the Society's actions over Friend's reinstatement were procedurally wanting.<sup>18</sup> Friend sued McGavock for libel claiming damages of £501.<sup>19</sup> In court McGavock, well versed in meeting procedure as Secretary of the Southland Lands Board (and other sports committees), stood by his statements about Friend's dismissal. His main concern over the reinstatement was about "the desirability of [Acclimatisation Society members] carefully weighing evidence before exercising their votes."<sup>20</sup> He readily disclosed he was "Anti-Tumbler" and absolutely believed that his comments about Friend's dismissal were true and saw no reason to retract them. After retiring for 17 minutes the jury ruled in Friend's favour but awarded damages of only £2.<sup>21</sup> A certainty about his judgements and singlemindedness – evident in the libel case – were features of his later time in the SFS.

McGavock's duties took him around Southland and its remaining forest areas. As a sportsman he enjoyed the opportunity nature provided for hobbies such as shooting and was familiar with the relatively unmodified coastal wetland areas in the district. He drew up Acclimatisation Society fish netting limits for the estuary.<sup>22</sup> He was also interested in the attempts to introduce red deer into the district. This is a quite narrow appreciation of nature which suggests that McGavock's 1921 shift to the SFS was motivated by promotion and an opportunity to return to Southland rather than a strong interest in forests.

### **Dunedin, Christchurch, and Wellington**

In 1917, now aged 40, McGavock was called up for military service. He reported to Trentham Military Camp in June but his time in uniform – during which he was promoted to corporal, reverted to the ranks and was later again promoted – was short; an injury to the tendons in his foot and leg caused him to be discharged as medically unfit in February 1918.<sup>23</sup> On returning to Invercargill McGavock found himself loaned to the Public Trust in Dunedin (potentially for two years).<sup>24</sup> This move caused him some concern. Unmarried, he lived with his elderly mother in the family home in Invercargill, so the transfer to Dunedin meant maintaining two residences on a limited boarding allowance.<sup>25</sup>

Lands were keen to regain McGavock and in March 1919 he was appointed Chief Clerk and Receiver of Revenue in Dunedin.<sup>26</sup> Now heavily involved in administering the discharged soldier settlement scheme in Otago and given the added responsibilities, with his strong sense of 'fairness', he was unhappy about salary relativities.<sup>27</sup> His time in Dunedin was unexpectedly cut short; in November 1919 he was transferred to Christchurch taking charge of the 22 clerical staff in order to improve the workings of the Lands Office.<sup>28</sup> Before this task was completed McGavock was appointed Secretary of the Southern Pastoral Lands Commission on account of his knowledge of Otago leaseholds. The Commission was chaired by Robert Sadd, CCL Otago, who presumably had a hand in the appointment.<sup>29</sup> The Commission, anticipated as occupying six to eight weeks, was charged with investigating whether leasehold lands were being properly used, the extent of land deterioration thereon, and suggesting remedial measures.<sup>30</sup>

McGavock's work for the Commission had marked him out for advancement and instead of returning to Christchurch he was shifted to the Lands Head Office in Wellington to cover serious staff shortages. Now identified as "one of our best officers," McGavock was designated as "Relieving Officer" and it was envisaged that he would be sent to improve practices at substandard offices, particularly North Auckland and Nelson.<sup>31</sup> However, within months of moving to Wellington, the Under Secretary of Lands selected him as secretary of another commission to examine the Taupo tramway and timberlands. McGavock was unenthusiastic, pointing out that the per diem was inadequate, particularly given the anticipated amount of hotel accommodation, noting that he had been left out of pocket for his Southern Pastoral Lands Commission duties.<sup>32</sup> By February 1921, however, Lands intended sending him to Nelson as Relieving Officer.<sup>33</sup>

McGavock's contemporaries Sam Darby, C.M. Smith, and Frank Hutchinson all pointed to his experience in Lands administration, but do not elaborate on what this involved. This first part of the paper has explored McGavock's working life to 1921 in some detail to understand better what knowledge and practices he brought to his new role in the SFS. A further point is that McGavock was 44 when he became Conservator of Forests; the first 30 years of his working life were spent in Lands and while not suggesting that he was so conservative as not to adapt to his new circumstances, closer scrutiny of events from his pre-Forest Service working life helps in understanding some of his attitudes and approaches in a public service setting as Conservator and later as Director of Forests.

### **Transferring to the State Forest Service 1921**

By late 1920 McGavock decided he had better prospects elsewhere. A Forestry Department was established in 1919 and in 1920 the position of Director of Forests was filled by Canadian L.M. Ellis, a University of Toronto forestry graduate with experience in Canada and the UK. Ellis submitted a report on forest conditions, made some staff appointments and drafted new forests legislation.<sup>34</sup> Ellis realized there were no professionally qualified foresters locally, that the system for timber sales from Crown Land was complex and wasteful and, to McGavock's advantage, that knowledge of the existing legislation and regulations, not to mention a resolute personality would be an asset in his senior regional officers.

In January 1921 McGavock applied for the position of Conservator of Forests for Southland. He was, he wrote, "particularly well acquainted with all the bush lands of Southland and ha[d] a wide knowledge of land values in the district."<sup>35</sup> The itinerant nature of Relieving Officer duties may have lost its attraction and the SFS post offered advancement as well as enabling him to return to Invercargill, where his elderly mother and extended family still resided. McGavock was appointed as Conservator, but it was to Westland rather than Southland, and he had to survive an appeal from James Collins, the Crown Lands Ranger and Timber Expert in Invercargill, before taking up his new position based in Hokitika. As one of the original appointees as Conservator of Forests in the SFS, McGavock occupied a position equivalent to that of a CCL and received a salary of £700, a sizable increase from the £500 p.a. he received as Relieving Officer.<sup>36</sup>

Phillips Turner, the Secretary of Forestry and the senior permanent officer, in arranging McGavock's transfer to the SFS pleaded urgency: "there are numerous applications for timber which have accumulated before our staff was obtained. As you are aware the timber industry is most active in Westland, and that district is most difficult to administer."<sup>37</sup> On 22 April 1921



McGavock signed the equivalent of the ‘official secrets act’. This laid out obligations that he would follow assiduously throughout his career to the effect that in the course of his duties he would give out no information without the permission of a responsible minister and that communications to the press would only be made by officers authorised to do so.<sup>38</sup>

### **Conservator of Forests for Westland, 1921-1930**

McGavock had only six staff comprising one clerk, one senior forest ranger, and four forest rangers for most of the decade he was in Westland. His duties included forest demarcation and timber sales. Ellis immediately recommended the gazettal of Crown forests, including those in Westland as Provisional State Forests<sup>39</sup> Another major change in 1921 involved releasing standing forests to sawmillers by tender rather than collecting a royalty on the cut timber. This new system encouraged more efficient felling and sawing as well as returning greater revenues to the State. As early as 1922, Ellis also recognised that over the next 15 years the “centre of timber production is moving to Westland”.<sup>40</sup> Timber production rose to become second in New Zealand by 1925 (over 70 mill sp. feet with Auckland and Rotorua leading at 130 mill sp. ft).<sup>41</sup> McGavock also had to confront Westland’s gold mining past whereby the Mining Wardens could issue timber cutting rights on Crown land. This involved 84 sawmills with 24,761 acres of forests and another 61,015 acres in reserve. The “best and most accessible of our forests,” McGavock noted.<sup>42</sup> Moreover Mining Wardens had no staff to exercise control over the licensed areas and offered timber at below the rates charged by the SFS. There were other complications, but for McGavock divided control “was not in the best interests of the State.”<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, SFS efforts at reform proved unsuccessful until 1926, although Wardens were referring some license applications to the Conservator of Forests for conditions and approval by this time.<sup>44</sup>

From late 1920 Westland was the site of silvicultural research geared towards the perpetuation of the forests, initially undertaken by Charles Foweraker, lecturer in forestry at Canterbury College, on the podocarp rain forests and from 1923 by Dr Leonard Cockayne on Beech forests.<sup>45</sup> Ellis instructed McGavock to assist these investigations. McGavock was particularly interested in the 4,080 acres Westland Forest Experimental Station between Hokitika and Lake Marinapua. This was an area of felled rimu forest where from 1923 experiments began in restocking of cut over indigenous forest with exotic species. By 1925, sixteen sample plots had been established to measure the growth rates of a range of exotic species.<sup>46</sup> The following year twelve acres were planted on dredge tailings.<sup>47</sup>

In 1922, Head Office instructed McGavock to secure land for a tree nursery for the Experimental Station. The only suitable site was 53 acres of river flat by the Hokitika River. The area was originally set aside as a tailings reserve for the mining industry but had been leased for grazing. It ought to have been simply transferred to the SFS under the provisions of the Public Works Act. The complicating factor was that the Westland Lands Board had immediately prior to this approved a £200 annual lease agreement with Harry Wells, a discharged soldier, that he might farm the area.<sup>48</sup> The matter was woven into an editorial in the *Hokitika Guardian* on the “antagonism” of the SFS to the timber industry in Westland which accused the Service of “seek[ing] to put a soldier settler off the land.”<sup>49</sup> Given that P.M. Bill Massey had articulated a

“debt of honour” to returned soldiers, the latter complaint was particularly unwelcome. Events escalated and the Minister of Lands, the CCL Westland, the Commissioner [Minister] of State Forests, the Minister and Under Secretary of Mines, T.Y. Seddon the M.P. for Westland, and ultimately Massey himself, were all embroiled in the matter.

Wells ultimately indicated he would surrender the lease for £450 in compensation. Cabinet offered Wells £350. Wells claimed that McGavock had promised £450. McGavock demurred. It seems doubtful he would have tied himself to promising a particular settlement, when ultimately the decision was not his. It is also conceivable that Wells misunderstood what McGavock was undertaking to do. Cabinet asked a local magistrate to review the case. He recommended payment of the full sum of £450.<sup>50</sup> McGavock was direct about the root cause of the problem in in-house correspondence. Lands had simply erred in leasing the land (the incorrect section of the Land Act had been cited), in transferring a temporary lease they erroneously created a baseless sense of permanence, and by approving the transfer for “goodwill” added to the illusion of permanence.<sup>51</sup> In January 1924, in a sequel to the nursery lease saga, McGavock appeared in the Mining Warden’s Court to oppose an application by John C. Wells, Harry’s uncle, for a one-acre residence site on Crown land within the nursery site and available under the Mining Act. He gave evidence that one of the sections Wells sought was on accretion land and that road access had previously been cancelled and furthermore that the land was now ploughed and was a planted part of the tree nursery. The Magistrate ruled against Wells’ application on the grounds it would “interfere with public policy”.<sup>52</sup> This was the sort of issue that played to McGavock’s command of legislation and regulation; he was doubtless privately pleased with the outcome especially as he considered that Wells was only trying to obtain compensation.

In developing the tree nursery McGavock faced considerable financial constraints along with minimal delegated authority to expend funds. *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Larix leptolepis* seed were gifted from Japan in 1926.<sup>53</sup> Other species trialed included *Pinus radiata*, *Cupressus muricata*, *C macrocarpa*, *C. lawsoniana*, *P. Muricata*, *Eucalyptus gunni* and varieties of *Thuja*. The future of both the nursery and the experimental area came into question in 1928. Arnold Hansson, the Chief Inspector of Forests, explained to McGavock that the cost of clearing cutover forest land for planting mitigated against afforestation efforts in Westland.<sup>54</sup> It was only the intervention of C.M. Smith, Conservator of Forests for Nelson, who pointed to the quality of the seedlings as a source for all South Island state plantations, that saved the nursery.<sup>55</sup>

The acquisition of the nursery exemplifies some of the difficulties that McGavock faced in Westland. It was the tip of an iceberg of timber industry mistrust of and opposition to the SFS. This and other experiences in Westland over the next decade hardened McGavock, if anything, making him more zealous and more taciturn in his dealings with the public.

Forest fires were a significant issue for Ellis, arguably overly influenced by his North American training, and ultimately more of a problem in the exotic plantation forests. In 1922, however, a single sawmill-related fire in Westland consumed 1,000 acres of cutover forest and seemed to vindicate Ellis’ concern.<sup>56</sup> All Conservators received circulars from Ellis about fire plans in 1923 and 1924.<sup>57</sup> The next forest fires in Westland were recorded in 1924 and 1925. In the former year, five fires burnt 114 acres of cut over State Forest and 114 acres of private cut over land and in the latter year five fires consumed 2,307 acres of cutover State Forest and 1,480 acres of private

cutover land. One of these was attributed to sawmill operators and the remainder were of unknown origin.<sup>58</sup> The seriousness with which Ellis regarded the fire danger is revealed in his reluctant consent for McGavock to take annual leave to visit his family over Christmas in 1925.<sup>59</sup> It was made clear that this was not to be a precedent, the Conservator and staff were not to take annual leave during the summer “fire season.”

The activities of the SFS were viewed with a mixture of apprehension, criticism, and occasional support in the Westland newspapers. The *Hokitika Guardian*, at the seat of the timber industry, tended to be most critical and devoted a series of editorials and articles to analysis and censure of the SFS.<sup>60</sup> A major task for McGavock in this difficult environment was the implementation of the new timber sales policy.<sup>61</sup> His thorough understanding of timber regulations and land law was a decided asset. He was a skillful composer of departmental memoranda and remained resolute in argument especially over what he saw as matters of principle.

The ongoing task was to bring as much as possible of the merchantable forest on Crown land under SFS control. McGavock oversaw the expansion of State Forests in Westland from 402 acres in 1920 to 1,542 acres in 1921 and up to 2,178 acres in 1922, but with only minimal change until 1929 when the area increased to 2,309 acres. Provisional State Forests amounted to 1,126,944 acres when McGavock became Conservator, and this figure jumped substantially to 1,627,944 acres in 1921 and 1,732,512 acres in 1922. State Forests of all kinds constituted 44% of the land area of Westland Conservancy by 1922.<sup>62</sup> Nelson was the only other forest conservancy with such a high percentage of forest reserved. The Westland forests were, however, of greater economic significance. This consolidation of control of significant forests in the SFS together with the ability to regulate the quantity and location of wood released by tender made the State a considerable force in regulating the industry in Westland. From 1922 to 1929 McGavock, under the new system, advertised timber sales by tender for over 42 million superficial feet of timber from State Forests. This was predominantly rimu, though with quantities of kahikatea and miro.<sup>63</sup> The busiest year was 1926 when over 10 million superficial feet was offered in ten lots. On the ground, there was some resistance to these changes. Phillips Turner, now Director of Forests, summarised the situation in December 1928. Of McGavock, he wrote, “This officer is in charge of a region where there was powerful & active opposition to forest reforms. He has carried out his duties with great tact & with very successful results.”<sup>64</sup> This was an oblique reference to the efforts of individuals such as William Butler, of Butler Brothers Timber Ltd, the president of the Dominion Federated Sawmillers’ Association, who opposed the introduction of tenders for standing forest.

McGavock’s grasp of detail was evident in the evidence he gave in 1923 before John Strauchon’s Royal Commission into the loss of revenues to local councils when standing block tenders replaced earlier licensing systems. He provided a comprehensive list of sawmills, forest reserves by type, the number of areas being felled under Mining Warden’s licences, and the value of timber cut and transported by different means.<sup>65</sup> That same year he temporarily assumed responsibility for the Nelson-Marlborough Forest Conservancy.

Ellis dispatched a steady stream of circulars to Conservators. There were admonitions, for instance over the contents of *Te Karere O Tane* the SFS ‘in house’ journal, other circulars detailed new developments, notably over recreational activities in state forests. Some could merely be noted,



where they concerned the receipt of forestry literature, but others such as those relating to fire plans generated time-consuming work. A more congenial duty late in 1925 saw McGavock escort Ellis and the Commissioner of State Forests, Sir R. Heaton Rhodes throughout Westland. They visited the state nursery and experimental plantations near Hokitika and viewed plantings on tailings near Rimu.<sup>66</sup> In 1926, it was the Minister of Mines that McGavock took to inspect the trees successfully planted on dredge tailings.<sup>67</sup> Late in 1928, delegates to the Empire Forestry Conference, being held in Australia and New Zealand, visited Westland inspecting the forests and offering insights into indigenous forest management.

Over his decade in Westland McGavock encountered more opposition in the execution of his duties than he had experienced in Southland. This included newspaper commentary, some quite partisan. In these circumstances McGavock never engaged in public debate but pushed on with even greater resolve to manage the forests. Significantly, his experiences in Westland demonstrated his fiscal prudence and higher-level administrative capacity.

### **Promotion to Head Office**

In 1930, McGavock was selected as Assistant Director of Forests in Wellington, a new position and his appointment was subject to an unsuccessful appeal from W.T. Morrison, then Conservator of Forests Rotorua, the most important of the SFS administrative regions because of its sizable exotic plantation forests.<sup>68</sup> McGavock was an experienced administrator. He was a careful financial manager. From his time in Westland, he took with him a belief in the viability of an indigenous timber industry based on sustained yield management forestry. Barely a year later, as the impact of the depression deepened, McGavock was appointed Director of Forestry, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1939.

Ellis resigned abruptly as Director of Forests in 1928 and had been replaced by Edward Phillips Turner (1865-1937).<sup>69</sup> By January 1931 with the Government actively looking to reduce expenditure, Ministers, permanent heads, and other senior officials of departments were interviewed by a newly established Economy Committee. In February of 1931 it agreed on a compulsory retirement policy, without replacements, for all officers over 60 years or with near 40 years' service.<sup>70</sup> This took in some 1400 temporary and permanent public servants. Under separate legislation, public servants' salaries were reduced by 10%.<sup>71</sup> Phillips Turner was 65 and retired on 31 March 1931; McGavock was appointed in his place with the Assistant Director's position being unfilled. Department heads were appointed by the Public Service Commission and with few exceptions not directly by Ministers or Cabinet. Under Depression conditions, the Public Service Commission had not advertised internationally for a professional forester. Those in the SFS with forestry degrees were too inexperienced to be seriously considered while McGavock was 54, a knowledgeable public servant, and enjoyed the confidence of the Public Service Commissioners.<sup>72</sup>

### **Saving the State Forest Service**

Ever the efficient administrator, McGavock was commended by his Minister for promptly providing a reduced budget.<sup>73</sup> New difficulties emerged by early July, some three months after his appointment as Director. This became public when the press featured articles on the proposed re-amalgamation of the SFS with Lands. Former director L. M. Ellis wrote from NSW opposing this move:

The community therefore cannot expect the Lands Department, which is interested only in getting rid of the public domain as quickly as possible, to administer the State forest estate as does the forester with his long views and interest in the permanent future needs of the community.<sup>74</sup>

If a merger was required in the name of economy, he suggested that it would be better with the Department of Agriculture. A delegation from the New Zealand Forestry League, a forestry lobby group with some influential members, also visited the Minister to protest the amalgamation plans.<sup>75</sup> The immediate Ministerial response was that the matter was not beyond reconsideration.<sup>76</sup> That McGavock's initial appointment as Director was for one year suggests, however, that a reabsorption of the SFS into Lands was being seriously considered.<sup>77</sup> McGavock's attitude was never aired publicly, but his actions point to his loyalty to the SFS.

The amalgamation proposal lapsed without public explanation and the SFS appeared safe, but in 1932 as the Depression worsened there appeared the Final Report of the National Economic Expenditure Committee (the "Economy Commission"), chaired by Wellington businessman George Shirtcliffe and charged with making recommendations for the reduction of public expenditure.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the SFS, the Committee observed that revenues from indigenous forests barely met the costs of administration and additionally questioned whether future returns from exotic plantation forests would cover their establishment and maintenance costs. While they helpfully recommended ending the payment of a percentage of indigenous timber revenues to local authorities (originally intended to offset damage to roads) and crediting timber sold on goldfields back to the State Forest Account, the Committee considered that future afforestation efforts should be wound down by 1934-1935 with the remaining planting coming from unemployment taxation. In addition, they recommended a 20% reduction in expenditure on indigenous forestry, imposing substantial staffing economies at Head Office, amalgamation of conservancies, and the immediate closure of the Waipoua Forest Experimental Station.<sup>79</sup>

McGavock's "scathing comments" about the Committee's suggestions were used by the Public Service Commission to highlight more generally the superficial and arbitrary nature of the recommendations.<sup>80</sup> Two of McGavock's contemporaries later remembered these events. Darby recalled, "'Mac' appeared before the 'Economic Commission' to offer reasons why the Service should survive. When the chairman asked the Public Service Commissioner if there was a Lands and Survey man who could run forestry the answer was 'No! but the Director of Forestry could run Land and Survey also'". Entrican, McGavock's successor as Director of Forests, provided a complementary account to the effect that "ruthless economy was the price he had to pay for retaining the Forest Service as an entity, instead of accepting as was offered him secretaryship of the Lands and Survey with absorption of the Forest Service."<sup>81</sup> J.B. Thomson, the Under Secretary of Lands, was 68 in 1931 and was compulsorily retired, his successor was 56 year-old William Robertson, then Assistant Under Secretary, who had held various departmental positions. Whatever the 'truth' and from my vantage point promoting Robertson rather than bringing McGavock across to head a much larger department seems the more likely option, McGavock's loyalty to forestry became the received wisdom within the SFS. It also appears that over time there was conflation around the "Economic Commission" and the "Economic committee". Significantly, until 1935/36 McGavock's efforts were constrained by the impact of the Economy Commission.

### **Hero to Anti-Hero**

Ellis and Phillips Turner believed that the SFS needed professionally qualified foresters to effectively carry out its responsibilities. The Expenditure Commission was unsympathetic about claims for expert staff whereby the SFS was severely constrained in its ability to recruit professionally qualified foresters. These included graduates of the two underfunded forestry schools established in 1925 – one at Canterbury with two sub-professorial staff (Foweraker and Hutchinson) and the other at Auckland with only Hugh Corbin as Professor. McGavock additionally considered that the forestry graduates “were in fact a problem in their lack of respect for the existing order.”<sup>82</sup> His own career had been one where he had risen through the public service grades accumulating necessary experience and skills whereas the forestry graduates would have entered as mid-level officers. The SFS was hiring some forestry graduates; for example, Lyndsay Poole, a future Director-General of Forests (1961-1969), accepted a temporary and lowly position as a deer stalker, but as Smith indicates, McGavock would not have explained his reasoning to subordinate SFS staff.<sup>83</sup>

In his first Annual Report in 1932 on financial matters McGavock, while applauding the purpose of setting aside national endowment lands to provide revenue for educational purposes, pointed to what he regarded as the anomalous situation whereby on felling of mature plantations half the value of the timber would be diverted from the State Forest Account which had met the full cost of their establishment. He also highlighted the prospect of increased revenues from indigenous forests via a beech export trade to the UK and of greater use of thinnings from exotic forests. He further identified the importance of work done at the Waipoua Kauri Experimental station for the future management of kauri. It was on the record but made no difference. Whereas Vote Forests for Phillips Turner was mainly in the high £300,000s p.a., McGavock’s budget was reduced to £227,590 in 1931, fell further to £132,150 in 1932 and to a low of £118,671 in 1934 and did not exceed 1930 levels until 1937 (£400,760).<sup>84</sup> This was the ‘sacrifice’ McGavock accepted for the independent survival of the SFS.

It would, however, be a mistake to see McGavock as being a completely heartless administrator. Behind the scenes he was loyal to his staff: Silviculturalist Arnold Hansson was made redundant when the Waipoua Forest Experimental Station was disestablished in 1932. McGavock successfully proposed to the General Manager of New Zealand Railways that Hansson would be the best candidate for the newly advertised forester’s position with New Zealand Railways.<sup>85</sup> This was a much less important appointment in terms of status and salary than Hansson had previously held, but it did mean he remained in employment during and after the Depression.

### **Attitude to afforestation**

Ellis had initiated a 300,000 acres ten years exotic afforestation programme in 1925. By 1931 some 307,000 acres of plantations had been established. McGavock sought to diversify planting away from *P. radiata*. In 1932, he announced as proportionate planting targets *P. radiata* 68%, *Pseudotsuga taxifolia* 11.5%, *P. ponderosa* 9% with the remaining 11.5% comprising non-pinus species.<sup>86</sup> Increasing the range of species would reduce the risk of epidemics destroying a large portion of the plantation estate. In 1934, the target was for no single species to comprise more than 30% of the plantation estate.<sup>87</sup> McGavock’s other task was to wind up the exotic planting boom begun by Ellis. In so doing he was carrying out a recommendation of the National Expenditure Committee. New planting was to be restricted to the North Island particularly to Kaingaroa, the

South Island plantations being regarded as fully stocked in 1933 and the following year the SFS undertook only offseason planting for employment creation.<sup>88</sup>

Private afforestation companies had also planted some 250,000 acres over this same decade.<sup>89</sup> McGavock was especially concerned over their claims about growth rates and future financial returns. Newly installed as Director of Forests, he wrote to the Conservator for Forests Auckland in order to obtain a set of accounts for a specific company – Timberlands Wood Pulp. He also noted of the Company’s consultant forester, “it is not desirous that Professor Corbin should be approached in the matter.”<sup>90</sup> With more company promotional materials on hand, McGavock in 1932 specifically instructed Entrican, then Engineer in Forest Products, to scrutinise the claims of Timberlands Wood Pulp. These materials Entrican considered to be overly optimistic.<sup>91</sup> This company which had plantation forests at two sites adjacent to the Whakatane River also planned to build a pulp mill. To cover a short fall of pulp wood before sufficient volumes were available from its own plantations, they sought to purchase thinnings from State plantations. After an earlier conference with P.M. Gordon Coates and Alfred Ransom, Commissioner of State Forests, a second meeting with McGavock and Entrican in attendance took place in late April 1932 where the company made a direct request to purchase thinnings. The tone was set when Company chair, Henry Horrocks, demanded unsuccessfully that “Mr McGavock and Mr Entrican should be excluded from all matters” to do with the purchase.<sup>92</sup> McGavock was resolute, the plantations had been established to offset a future timber famine, the impasse was only resolved when Timberlands was able to purchase thinnings from other private afforestation companies.

University forestry did not survive the Depression. Corbin had been made redundant from Auckland in 1931 and the Canterbury school closed in 1934. Thereafter Corbin undertook consulting work for several companies, eventually joining Timberlands Wood Pulp as Director. In company promotional material Corbin retained the title of Professor. This grated with McGavock, who believed Corbin was making use of an honorific to which he was no longer entitled, to entice investors. He wrote to the Registrar of the University of New Zealand, the examining and degree granting body to which the various university colleges belonged, inquiring if they had statutory authority to prevent “such misleading use of a university title” and to protect the “investing public.”<sup>93</sup> Once appraised of the situation Corbin was aggrieved, unsurprisingly given the circumstances of his retrenchment and the negative attitude of McGavock over selling SFS thinnings three months earlier. He complained of the “animus” of McGavock and by implication Entrican. McGavock’s letter to the Registrar, Corbin wrote, “betrays a characteristic lack of good taste, and the proper comprehension of the functions and limitations of a servant of the State.”<sup>94</sup> Corbin’s letter attests to McGavock’s intractability. Corbin’s lawyers replied to McGavock defending the use of Professor as courtesy title while stating that claiming the investing public needed protection against its use “constitutes in our opinion a very serious libel upon him.”<sup>95</sup> Shades of the Friend libel case of 1912. They proposed seeking damages but offered McGavock the opportunity of withdrawing the original letter, apologising to Corbin, and paying “reasonable costs.”<sup>96</sup> McGavock had no intention of doing either and sought the opinion of the Solicitor General. The response gave McGavock little satisfaction: he did not support McGavock’s interpretation of section 62 of the *Forests Act 1921-22* as justifying his action and informed him this was a civil matter. Furthermore, he was advised to seek his own legal advice and deal promptly with the situation. This must have been a blow for someone who prided himself on his knowledge of statutes and regulations. The matter was never tested in court. McGavock’s annotation dated

June 1933 reads “this matter was dealt with previously as suggested. It fizzled out.”<sup>97</sup> There is a triumphal tone here suggesting even the apology had not been forthcoming.

From the early 1930s McGavock received various letters inquiring about the veracity of afforestation company claims.<sup>98</sup> He was perturbed that some investors believed the companies enjoyed some degree of government sanction and support. In 1934 a Royal Commission investigated afforestation company fundraising through “bond selling.” McGavock was called as a witness. His written response captured his view of the practice of public service entwined with his character. He stated, “it is extremely doubtful whether the Forest Service as a Department of State should provide any view on this matter which definitely involves Government Policy until it has a ministerial instruction or at least Ministerial permission.”<sup>99</sup> McGavock, Smith, and Entrican appeared together in front of the Commission. Auckland University Economics Professor Horace Belshaw put some five questions to them – all answered by Entrican.<sup>100</sup> The main result of the Commission was the incorporation of the bondholding companies as ordinary shareholding companies while further company planting virtually ceased.

### **Repositioning Forest Policy**

McGavock used the end of extensive State afforestation efforts to restate forest policy. There had been, he considered, too much recent attention to exotics. In 1933, writing to Isaac Boas, Director of the Forests Products Division CSIRO, McGavock was clear that “the view of this Service is that sawlogs will continue to remain for many decades the basic product of exotic forests.”<sup>101</sup> Given the prior SFS investigations into wood pulping, McGavock’s conservatism and limited vision is revealed.<sup>102</sup> His 1934 Annual Report signaled a return to some earlier principles, originally outlined by Ellis. It “is time” McGavock wrote, “to bring the national-forestry situation into proper focus ... the national forest policy has a two-fold purpose – the maintenance of climatic, soil, and water equilibria, and the supply of timber and other forest produce.”<sup>103</sup> Protection forestry was of great importance to agricultural production. Regards timber,

in review the general forest policy may be stated as the perpetuation of the indigenous forests and the provision of supplementary exotic-forest capital, which by rapid growth will eke out the supplies of indigenous timber and bridge the gap between the exhaustion of the overmature indigenous forests which would otherwise occur and their conversion into healthy productive forests.<sup>104</sup>

In 1936 he outlined a five-year plan for forestry. This gave considerable space to fire protection, the plantations now being regarded as at risk.<sup>105</sup> Exotic planting to 1940 was to be restricted to blanking (replacing dead trees), although some experiments with underplanting exotics on cutover areas of indigenous forest were planned. More central to the forest policy restated in 1934, and mirroring some of Ellis’ early aspirations, was that the kauri forests of Northland and Coromandel, the most valuable of the indigenous species, would be placed under Working Plans by 1940. Working Plans laid out the targets and actions to regulate silvicultural activities and enable wood production across specified time periods. Working Plans were also to be instituted for the Southland beech forests. It was further intended to commence selective logging in the pole rimu forests of Westland and the mixed rimu forests of the North Island. The rimu forests on the terraces in Westland were the only significant area on soils of no agricultural value where it was possible to plan for sustained yield management. Finally, it was planned to change to block sales of timber where possible.



In 1938 and nearing retirement McGavock laid out a 1938-1943 forestry plan. New elements reflected the concerns of a Labour Government, including improved housing for field staff and the establishment of state-owned forest sawmills. McGavock adopted a conservative tack: “The developments of recent years, instead of indicating any necessity for an amendment of the policy formulated during the 1915-1925 period, emphasize the accuracy of its original conception of the forest problem and its solution.”<sup>106</sup> Other points were restatements of parts of his 1936-1940 plan, but not all for he now identified a need for 33,000 acres for new plantations for “extension and consolidation” and others making a total of 82,000 acres. Nevertheless, he noted that, “Establishment of extensive areas of exotic forest has engendered a false sense of security with reference to the timber supplies of the distant future.”<sup>107</sup> Reafforestation of cut over land was to be accelerated at 16,500 acres for the five-year period. Thinning and pruning of 330,000 acres of plantations was to commence. Working Plans for exotic, kauri, rimu, and beech forests were to be put in place to provide a sustained yield of timber in perpetuity. Log sales were to be put in place for block disposal of timbers – as a means of generating more revenue from the sales and encouraging greater efficiency among millers. The Dominion Federated Sawmillers pointed to an increase of over two million acres of protection forest as a “tribute to his personality an ability to co-operate with other land interests affected.”<sup>108</sup> What is conspicuously missing from McGavock’s five-year plan is any reference to the prospects of a pulp and paper industry. Entrican, for one, had been consciously embracing such a possibility since the mid-1920s.<sup>109</sup> The SFS staff presented McGavock with a signed illuminated address on his retirement which noted his “loyalty to your fellow officers, sympathy for those in distress and anxiety to temper justice with mercy have won the respect and affection of us all.”<sup>110</sup> These were qualities that McGavock possessed but were not the sum total of his character; there was also the single minded McGavock who never explained himself and who took offence over matters of form and principle.

### **Sequel**

In the immediate period after he retired, McGavock was frequently in the SFS office voluntarily working on a redrafting of the fire regulations and an even larger redrafting of regulations under the Forest Act. These were tasks which because of his command of the legislation and regulation he was uniquely well placed to undertake. In 1942 with some senior staff on active service McGavock agreed to act as Conservator of Forests for Wellington based in Palmerston North, an appointment that lasted until 1946.

### **Conclusion**

McGavock was a hard-working and efficient public servant. Reserved by temperament he was sometimes misunderstood or underestimated particularly because he placed great store by courteousness in his dealings with staff and the public. This attitude belied a conservatism which on the one hand meant he displayed great loyalty to the SFS and its staff while on the other hand he unequivocally supported public service hierarchies and practices. He was a single-minded individual who was rigid in his adherence to what he considered matters of principle – leading to one libel case with another being narrowly avoided. Surface calm at times concealed strongly held views. McGavock’s early career advancement in Lands was predicated on his command of the myriad detail of legislation and regulations. His initial understanding of forestry from his Lands days involved little more than the issuing of timber licenses to sawmillers but grew in

sophistication to embrace sustained yield management and afforestation. Timing was another factor in McGavock's career – in the absence of professionally qualified foresters McGavock brought a wealth of public service experience, a detailed knowledge of pertinent legislation, and a resolute personality to the position of Conservator of Forests in Westland. A decade later he was the most senior administrator in the SFS and able to comfortably assume the position of Director of Forests. The SFS had offered McGavock promotion and opportunity in 1921 and he remained fiercely loyal to it. As Director of Forests McGavock ultimately restored the forest policy outlined by Ellis, its first Director, in the 1920s. A paradox of McGavock's career was that as Director of Forests he did not believe that professionally qualified foresters were needed to administer the SFS. Department financial constraints reinforced this point of view which was perhaps also an amalgam of McGavock's own experience of rising through the public service and his own limited formal education. Such professionals as he came in contact with in Lands, notably the surveyors, were trained on more of an apprenticeship model. Nevertheless, he recognised and drew on the expertise of C.M. Smith as Chief Inspector of Forests and Alex Entrican, the Engineer-in-Forest Products. His skepticism about professional foresters aside, McGavock's character and skills were an asset to the SFS when he was Conservator of Forests in Westland and even more so as Director of Forests when he staved off assimilation into Lands in 1931-32 and saw the SFS through the difficult following half decade.

In the light of the preceding discussion, how might McGavock's SFS career be regarded? As Conservator of Forests for Westland, McGavock was in a district identified as being of long-term importance to the SFS, especially once the kauri forests were exhausted. Here, drawing on his Lands experience, he was successful in implementing a new timber tendering system that was very unpopular with the sawmillers. He was resolute in administering the new rules. McGavock had a detailed grasp of legislation and regulations, acquired in his time in Lands and carried over to the SFS. He was fiscally prudent but occasionally given to rash behaviour over what he saw as matters of principle, instances of which can be found back to when he was still in Southland.

As Director he was experienced and well able to deal with the Public Service Commission and placate his Ministers. These qualities ensured the survival of a separate SFS and late in his term returned the service to a more orthodox forest policy of the type originally laid out by Ellis. In this regard McGavock was probably taking heed of the views of some of his professionally trained staff, notably C.M. Smith. WWII curtailed the implementation of McGavock's 'new' forest policy as it related to indigenous forest management. Some degree of consolidation of control of forests in the SFS was also realized during McGavock's time, but national parks and scenic reserves, always remained beyond their administrative grasp. Overcutting, where annual harvesting exceeded annual growth took place to meet wartime demands for sawn timber, and post war this continued to meet the needs of housing construction which had priority over forest management objectives; hardly McGavock's fault but a challenge for his successors. McGavock also bequeathed a staffing problem to Entrican, as well as a stalled forest research programme. In 1931 he, nevertheless, was the individual in the SFS best placed to head the department. C.M. Smith would eventually become Director of the Botany Division of DSIR and Entrican succeeded McGavock in 1939. Importing a professionally trained forester to succeed Phillips Turner would have brought no guarantees of success; the Public Service Commission was in any case reluctant to consider 'expertise' and an overseas appointee was not entertained in a time of fiscal retrenchment.

## Conversion factors

1 acre is 0.404 hectares

1 superficial foot is 0.0023 cubic meters

1 yard is 0.91m

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<sup>1</sup> John R. Martin, "Entrican, Alexander Robert. 1898-1965," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Auckland: Auckland University Press/Department of Internal Affairs, 2000), 164-165; Michael Roche, "Edward Phillips Turner: The development a 'Forest Consciousness' in New Zealand 1890s to 1930s," *Proceedings of the 6th National Australian Forest History Conference*, Augusta, WA, 2004, 12-17 September; Michael Roche, "Latter day Imperial Careering: L.M. Ellis – a Canadian Forester in Australia and New Zealand, 1920-1941," *ENNZ: Environment and Nature in New Zealand*, 4 (2009): 58-77.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Darby, "Personal view of the NZFS - from a man who was there at start," *N.Z. Timber Journal*, 15 (1969): 67.

<sup>3</sup> C. M. Smith, "A.D. McGavock," *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, 8 (1959): 168, 169.

<sup>4</sup> Anon, "Retirement of Mr A.D. McGavock, Director of Forestry," *N.Z. National Review*, May 15 (1939): 59.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Hutchinson, "A Historical Review of Forestry Education in New Zealand," *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, 11 (1966): 114.

<sup>6</sup> "Parliamentary Notes," *Southland Times*, 15 August, 1889, 2

<sup>7</sup> Being able to type enabled McGavock to claim 'expert' status. This enabled usual entry to the public service by examination to be by-passed, and promotion above salary bars without passing the senior examination and compensated for 'Temporary' status. See Alan Henderson, *The Quest for Efficiency: The Origins of the State Services Commission* (Wellington: Historical Branch Internal Affairs/State Services Commission, 1990): 22-24.

<sup>8</sup> Commission of Crown Lands to Under Secretary of Lands, 27 July 1893. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>9</sup> Under Secretary of Lands to Commissioner of Crown Lands Invercargill, 10 January 1905. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. A Civil Service Classification Act was passed in 1905 containing provisions whereby temporary employees could become permanent. See Henderson (1990), *The Quest for Efficiency*, 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> "The Civil Service," *Southland Times*, 5 April, 1909, 5. The setting and details of McGavock's day to day duties can be captured in the annual reports of the Commissioners of Crown Lands recorded in the annual report of the Department of Lands and Survey, *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR)* C1, 1891 to 1920.

<sup>11</sup> Annual appraisal, 23 March 1914. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>12</sup> Application for Vacancy, 25 August 1914. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>13</sup> Under Secretary Lands, 28 August 1914. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>14</sup> "Valedictory," *Southland Times*, 24 November, 1911, 3.

<sup>15</sup> "Chokebore," *Southern Cross*, 2 January, 1904, 2.

<sup>16</sup> "Acclimatisation," *Southland Times*, 30 April, 1910, 6.

<sup>17</sup> "A Black Swan," *Southland Times*, 20 February, 1908, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Acclimatisation Society, "Anti-Tumbler," *Southland Times*, 16 May, 1912, 2; Acclimatisation Matters, "Anti-Tumbler," *Southland Times*, 20 May, 1912, 2.

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- <sup>19</sup> “Alleged Libel,” *New Zealand Herald*, 29 August, 1912, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Acclimatisation Society, “Anti-Tumbler,” *Southland Times*, 20 May, 1912, 2.
- <sup>21</sup> “Supreme Court,” *Southland Times*, 30 August, 1912, 2.
- <sup>22</sup> “Ranger Friend,” *Southland Times*, 16 June, 1911, 5 .
- <sup>23</sup> Alexander Douglas McGavock. WW1 59029 0073191, R10924154 Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>24</sup> Under Secretary for Lands to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill, 13 March 1918. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>25</sup> McGavock to Under Secretary of Lands, 2 July 1918. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>26</sup> Paul Verschaffelt to Permanent Head, Lands & Survey, 12 March 1919. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>27</sup> Robert Sadd, Commissioner of Crown Lands to Under Secretary of Lands, 27 March 1919. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>28</sup> Under Secretary of Lands to Commissioner of Crown Lands Canterbury, 19 November 1919. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>29</sup> Robert Sadd had given McGavock the highest of scores in his annual appraisal of 31 January 1920 describing him as “an officer of exceptional all round ability, steady, industrious and zealous,” Appraisals 1920. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>30</sup> *AJHR*, C15, 1920.
- <sup>31</sup> Under Secretary of Lands to Public Service Commissioner. 23 June 1920. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>32</sup> McGavock to Under Secretary of Lands. 12 October 1920. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>33</sup> Under Secretary of Lands to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Nelson. 3 February 1921. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>34</sup> *AJHR*, C3A, 1920.
- <sup>35</sup> McGavock, Application, 10 January 1921. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>36</sup> The other appointees as Conservator included two with nursery-tree planting backgrounds (Goudie and Buchanan), formerly from the Forestry Branch of Lands and Survey, and the remainder from other parts of the Lands department ,some with survey experience (Campbell, McPherson, and McGavock).
- <sup>37</sup> Phillips Turner to Under Secretary Lands. n.d. [approx. 17 February 1921]. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>38</sup> Declaration, 22 April 1922. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>39</sup> Provisional State Forests were forest on Crown land that for the moment were placed under the control of the Forest Service. Those areas that were suitable for land settlement could be released form the designation in due course. This arrangement, devised by Sir Francis Bell, as Commissioner [i.e Minister] of State Forests reversed the earlier balance whereby Crown land was considered firstly for its settlement potential regardless of the value of the forest cover (see *AJHR*, C3, 1921, 12).
- <sup>40</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1922, 5.
- <sup>41</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1926, 25.
- <sup>42</sup> Timber Cutting Rights in Westland. R24672538. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>43</sup> Timber Cutting Rights in Westland. R24672538. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>44</sup> Frank Foster, “An historical account of timber rights under New Zealand mining law,” *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, 4 (1936): 2-15. For example, the Diggers’ Sawmill Company request in 1927 for tramway license (*Hokitika Guardian*, 17 March, 1927, 2).
- <sup>45</sup> Michael Roche, “Charles Foweraker: forestry and ideas of sustainability at Canterbury University College (1925-1934),” *ENNZ: Environment and Nature in New Zealand*, 11(2018): 6-23. Botanist



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Professor Harry Kirk (Victoria University College) also commenced work on a bark identification key for the major timber species in 1921.

<sup>46</sup> By 1926 these included some 330 acres primarily of *P. radiata*, *P. muricata*, *P. laricio*, and *P. pinaster*, with ‘trial lots’ of *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *C. lawsoniana*, *Cryptomeria japonica*, *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Populus fastigata*, *P. monilifera*, *Cunninghamia sinensis*, *Eucalyptus viminalis*, *E. macarthuri*, *E. obliqua*, *E. regnans*, and *E. gunnii* (AJHR, C3 1926, 20).

<sup>47</sup> AJHR, C3, 1926, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Harry Wells (1896-1988), a clerk in Hokitika before the war, served in the 3 NZ Rifle Brigade before being discharged as unfit for further military service on account of wounds and “shell shock.” In 1920 Wells was a shareholder in the Diggers Sawmill Company which had cutting rights to some 630 acres of kahikatea near Hokitika. It was in some financial difficulty by 1922 when Wells sought to lease land for farming. He was subsequently a storekeeper and member of the local Hospital Board and County Council.

<sup>49</sup> “Helpful or Otherwise” [Editorial], *Hokitika Guardian*, 8 May, 1928, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Stipendiary Magistrate to Commissioner of State Forests, 17 August 1923. Forests Westland 1922-1925, F1 234 6/5/0 Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>51</sup> Resume of the history of sections 1132, 1819, and 1317 Block V Kanieri Survey District, 26 March 1923. Forests Westland 1922-1925, F1 234 6/5/0 Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>52</sup> “Warden’s Court,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 25 January, 1924, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Director of Forestry to Conservator of Forests, Hokitika, 27 July 1926. Westland Nursery SF 17 Westland. R 17274108. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>54</sup> Hansson to Conservator Forests Westland, 11 June 1928. Westland Nursery SF 17 Westland. R 17274108. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>55</sup> Various memos between Smith and Phillips Turner August to September 1928. Westland Nursery SF 17 Westland. R 17274108. Archives New Zealand, Wellington. The decision was reinforced once Smith replaced Hansson as Chief Inspector in 1930.

<sup>56</sup> AJHR, C3, 1922, 8.

<sup>57</sup> 14 December 1923 and 10 January 1924 Circular Letters to all to Conservators. F 45/11 Circular letters to Conservators Vol II 1923-1925. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>58</sup> AJHR, C3, 1924, 8 and C3, 1925, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Director of Forestry to McGavock, 14 December 1925. McGavock A.D. Director Head Office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

<sup>60</sup> “Forest working,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 25 January, 1921, 4; “Scientific forestry” (editorial), *Hokitika Guardian*, 24 February 1922, 2; “Forest Policy,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 24 August, 1922, 4; “Broken Promises” [editorial], *Hokitika Guardian*, 14 December, 1922, 2; “Forests and Forestry,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 6 September 1923, 2; “Forests and Forestry,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 8 September, 1923, 2; “Forests and Forestry,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 26 September 1923, 2; “Forests and Forestry,” *Hokitika Guardian*, 29 September, 1923, 2 (the last is specifically on timber sales).

<sup>61</sup> Another unpopular government policy of the early 1920s was that of timber export restrictions though these were managed by the Industry and Commerce Department and not the Forest Service. The Service was still condemned by association.

<sup>62</sup> AJHR, C3, 1922.

<sup>63</sup> Calculated from tenders advertised in the *Hokitika Guardian* on: 18 March 1922, 24; March 1922, 3 (a repeat of 18 March); 18 November 1925, 3; 1 May 1926, 3; 17 July 1926, 3; 14 August 1926, 3; 15 September 1926, 3; 26 February 1927, 3; 1 November 1927, 3; 17 November 1927, 3 (repeats 1 November previous); 11 August 1928, 3; 19 February 1929, 1; 22 August 1929, 1; 5 October 1929, 1; 2 November 1929, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Phillips Turner, Annual appraisal, 31 December 1928. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. This was an oblique reference to the efforts of individuals such as William Butler, of Butler Brothers Timber Ltd, the president of the Dominion Federated Sawmillers’ Association, who contested Bell’s timber export regulations and opposed the introduction of tenders on standing forest.



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- <sup>65</sup> “West Coast Notes.” *Press*, 29 June, 1923, 7; *AJHR*, C3A, 1924.
- <sup>66</sup> “Timber Lands,” *Southland Times*, 25 November 1925, 3.
- <sup>67</sup> “West Coast Notes,” *Press*, 1 June 1926, 13.
- <sup>68</sup> Secretary, Public Service Commissioner to Permanent Head State, 24 June 1920. McGavock A.D. Director Head Office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>69</sup> Ellis was appointed directly by Cabinet on a succession of three-year contracts and not as part of the public service.
- <sup>70</sup> Henderson, *The quest for efficiency*, 121.
- <sup>71</sup> Henderson, *The quest for efficiency*, 122.
- <sup>72</sup> In 1934 McGavock was appointed to deputise for government representative James Jerram on the Public Service Appeal Board, Verschaffelt to McGavock, 25 January 1934. McGavock A.D. Director Head Office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>73</sup> Ransom to McGavock, 2 October 1931. Ransom expressed his “personal appreciation” over McGavock’s prompt response and reduction of estimates by 10%. McGavock A.D. Director Head Office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>74</sup> “State Forests,” *Evening Post*, 8 July, 1931, 8.
- <sup>75</sup> “Forest Service,” *Evening Post*, 8 July, 1931, 8.
- <sup>76</sup> “Axe and Tree: A Reprieve?” *Evening Post*, 9 July, 1931, 8.
- <sup>77</sup> Ransom (Commissioner of State Forests) to McGavock, Warrant of Appointment 1 April 1931. McGavock A.D. Director Head office FW2338 11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>78</sup> *AJHR*, B4A, 1932.
- <sup>79</sup> *AJHR*, B4A, 1932.
- <sup>80</sup> Henderson, *The quest for efficiency*, 172.
- <sup>81</sup> Darby, “Personal view” 67 and Alex Entrican (n.d.), “The Murupara Story 1920-25,” ABHR W3847. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>82</sup> Hutchinson, “A historical review,” 114.
- <sup>83</sup> Smith, “A.D. McGavock,” 168.
- <sup>84</sup> *AJHR*, 1929-1938, B7,
- <sup>85</sup> Note for File, 8 May 1933 R3 W2278 74 1904/1572/1 Proposed appointment of Officer to Control Department’s Afforestation. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>86</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1932, 15.
- <sup>87</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1934, 3.
- <sup>88</sup> *AJHR* C3,1933, 2; C3, 1934, 2. This was not exactly the case for in 1933 2,281 acres were planted at Golden Downs in Nelson, the second largest total in the country although well behind the 23,259 acres planted at Kaingaroa (*AJHR*, C3 1934, 6). It was also not quite the end of State afforestation efforts, however, for in 1937 it was announced that 24,000 acres at Rotoehu in the Bay of Plenty would be planted (*AJHR*, C3, 1937, 2).
- <sup>89</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1932, 5.
- <sup>90</sup> McGavock to Conservator of Forests Auckland, 26 June 1931. F29/5/11 part II. Archives New Zealand, Wellington. This hints at some sort of apathy on McGavock’s part. It is unclear when the two first became acquainted, possibly in the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters in 1928 (not that Corbin approved of an institute that admitted non-qualified foresters such as McGavock) or in 1929 when Corbin and his students held a summer field camp at Hokitika.
- <sup>91</sup> Entrican to McGavock, 13 April 1932. F29/5/11 Part III. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>92</sup> Record of Meeting, 28 April 1932. F1 483 29/5/11 Part III Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>93</sup> McGavock to Registrar, 23 June 1932. F1 562 45/118 H.H. Corbin libel charge. Archives New Zealand, Wellington. The Registrar promptly deflected the matter to Auckland University College.
- <sup>94</sup> Corbin to Norris [Registrar], 15 July 1933. UNZ10 616 459 Professors A-E 1932. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>95</sup> Stanton & Johnston to McGavock, 1932. F1 562 45/118 H.H. Corbin libel charge. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

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- <sup>96</sup> Stanton & Johnston to McGavock, 1932. F1 562 45/118 H.H. Corbin libel charge. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>97</sup> F1 562 45/118 H.H. Corbin libel charge marginal note at end of file. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>98</sup> For example, in F1 W3129 367 SE 35 02, Evidence A R Entrican, Appendix VII Unpublished. Commission of inquiry into Company Promotion ANZ. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>99</sup> McGavock to Chair of Royal Commission, 26 May 1934. AANI W32319 93 29/5/ Part I. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>100</sup> T67/10 Appendix VII Evidence given by State Forest Department officers. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>101</sup> McGavock to Boas, 18 October 1933. Entrican AR Correspondence re 1928 American and Australian Trip W2479 Fw2479 2/0/23/0/1. Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>102</sup> Michael Roche, "Technological Transfer and Local Innovation: Pulp and Paper manufacture in New Zealand, c.1860-c.1960," in T. Särkkä, M Gutierrez-Poch and M. Khulberg (eds.), *Technological Transformation in the Global Pulp and Paper Industry 1800-2018* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018): 189-216.
- <sup>103</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1934, 2.
- <sup>104</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1934, 3.
- <sup>105</sup> Michael Roche, "Pests Pines and Fires: Large Scale Plantation Forestry in New Zealand, 1897-1955," in F. Uekötter (ed), *Comparing Apples, Oranges, and Cotton. Environmental Histories of the Global Plantation* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014): 167-194.
- <sup>106</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1938, 3.
- <sup>107</sup> *AJHR*, C3, 1938, 3.
- <sup>108</sup> Anon, "Retirement", 60.
- <sup>109</sup> Alexander Entrican, "The romance of Murupara," *N.Z. Timber Journal* 1(1955): 36-39.
- <sup>110</sup> From a photocopy of the original gifted to me by the late Elizabeth Orr.