

EDITORIAL

WHERE DID POLITICALLY BASED PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT AND NON-MARKET MANAGEMENT LEAD US

Party-based (political) personnel recruitment in the Ministry and the company Hrvatske Šume Ltd for some time went hand in hand with professional attitudes, but later began to swerve, to be finally almost completely taken over by political and party interests. The unity of forestry education, science and practice, which had been at the core of every initiative for decades, somehow disappeared in the process. On their climb up the political ladder, many suddenly became the cleverest and the best experts, but in fact utterly forgot the profession and even the promise given at the graduation ceremony that they would apply the acquired knowledge to the best of their possibility. No wonder, then, that the Fimi Media and Planinska affairs took place. The poor perception of the foresters was aided by forestry "guardian angels" from the opposition, who did not discriminate between criticizing their colleagues and criticizing the profession. The ensuing result is the current situation. After the change of government, new personnel recruitment, proclaimed to be based on expertise, took place. However, the strictly party-biased recruitment continued to adhere to the principle of nepotism (my party, my village, my friend or neighbour), neglecting the profession completely. It is finally clear to all that an attack on forestry was launched, since only the most naive believe that the term "forestry" was only accidentally omitted from the name of the relevant Ministry. The Ministry has been without a deputy minister of forestry for almost two months, but nobody blinked an eye. The justified doubt of the professionalism and aptitude for the task by the aforementioned deputy minister were confirmed when he resigned from the post. At the moment, forestry is without a representative, with the current Minister being incapable of coping with agriculture, let alone thinking of forestry. He will not stir from the problem of cows and milk before the problem of wheat assails him.

One hundred and fifteen years ago, some clever people concluded that forestry management required the most highly educated forestry experts instead of those with secondary or college degrees. This was put to practice in 1989, when the Academy of Forestry (today's Faculty of Forestry) was established as the fourth institution of higher education within the University of Zagreb. This testifies to the fact that exceptional biotechnical knowledge was in high demand even then. Today, however, with some honourable exceptions, what is needed for managerial positions is political allegiance. We are constantly surprised by the fact that forestry experts, are being replaced by so-called managers of the general type.

Forestry is a biotechnical science and profession which definitely does not need managers of the "general practitioner" type, and even less those who are sent on duty or who are lured by the rustle of banknotes. In their "political correctness" they completely overlook the principles of sustainable management and the benefits of clean air, pure and stored water, erosion protection, tourist and health services and other non-commercial forest functions. All that matters is profit, even if it is made by not performing or by omitting operations related to biological forest reproduction, by abolishing work posts or cutting down on the employees' salaries (e.g. by closing down some work posts and relegating employees to lower-ranked positions and much lower salaries). What is the purpose of early retirement and severance money if there is constant complaint that the number of the retired almost equals the number of the employed, what kind of politics raises the age for retirement while only about 17 percent employees manage to reach full retirement age? At the same time, young experts cannot get employment. Why is a company that makes positive business put in the same boat with a company that compiles losses amounting to billions of kuna? Where are the new jobs based on biomass, recreation, sport, tourism and other services, as in Austria, for example? We are getting tired of pointing out that timber is only a classical side product of sustainable forest management. Yet, the profit is constantly based on timber, and what is worse, on non-market principles, since there is no free price formation and no bidding for all available quantities of forest wood products. The final wood product is only a declarative political strategy: it is incompatible to proclaim it and at the same time favour numerous aspirers from primary production (sawmills) by prescribing and limiting the quantities of forest wood assortments. We have stressed more than once that wood as raw material participates in the manufacture of final products with only 20%. It would therefore be logical to seek certain concessions in production among those who participate with 80%, and not exclusively among foresters.

Finally, forestry as an economic branch was established two and a half century ago from fear of inexperienced management and overuse of forest wood products. In view of the above, we may well ask ourselves: will we soon need a new Law which will enforce the exclusive return to the profession? This Law will not need to enforce higher forestry education since we have had it for 115 years, but regrettably, we have been forced to apply the acquired knowledge to a much lesser extent.