

THE TIMBER INDUSTRY TRAINING COLLEGE

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Although Papua New Guinea's new Timber Industry Training College has been taking in students for over a year now, it is still growing and developing.

Building work on the college, which is partly funded by New Zealand Aid, began in 1977. At that time, the only timber industry training available in Papua New Guinea was a basic course in saw doctoring and timber machining at Malaguna Technical College in Rabaul. This could not produce all the skilled people needed to staff the 90 sawmills which were then operating.

As a result of this shortage of training facilities, Papua New Guineans wanting to enter the timber industry were having to go to New Zealand for their basic training.



Student accommodation at the College

The site chosen for the college was an old chicken farm just outside Lae. The old chicken houses were left standing and cleverly changed into very smart college buildings. The 20 hectare site now has lecture rooms, a library, offices, a saw mill, a saw maintenance shop, accommodation and leisure facilities. Future plans include a remanufacturing plant for lamination, timber machining and moulding, a kiln, and a pressure treatment plant.

At present, the college offers a basic timber utilisation (use) training course which runs for 40 weeks, and a number of short term, more specialised courses in sawmilling, saw doctoring and timber machining.

Some students on the 40 week course are sponsored by commercial saw mills and others are on National Scholarships. When they have completed the course, they will be ready to become apprentices. They will then work in the industry for 3-4 years, returning to college from time to time for further short courses before finally qualifying as timber machinists or saw doctors.

The college also runs retraining courses for adults already in the timber industry who did not get any formal training before. These include courses in chain saw use and maintenance. In 1980, the college hopes to offer courses in tim-



*Circular wood-sorting and grading table
at the College's saw mill*

ber machining and remanufacturing. Timber grading courses are also planned and, when the kiln and pressure treatment plant are built, the range of courses will increase still further. Eventually, the college will become involved in logging courses where most of the training will take place on the job. This will fit in with forestry courses at Bulolo and Uni-Tech.

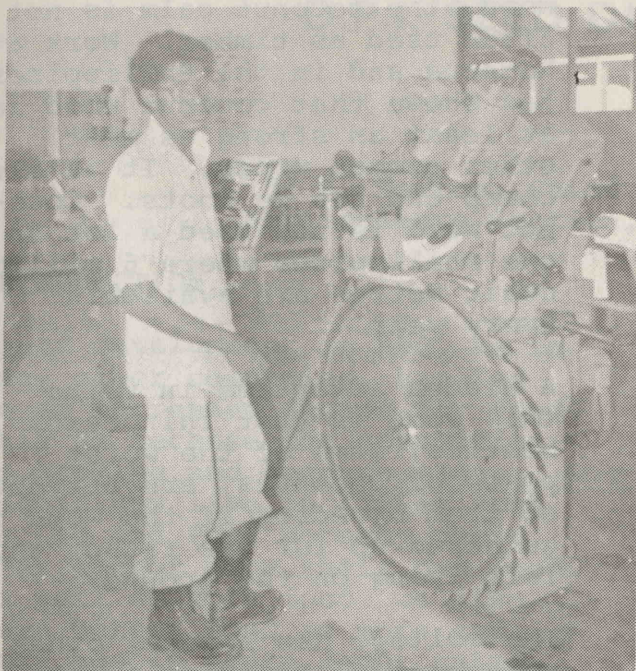
New Zealand has also given aid to a similar college in Malaysia and is closely connected with timber industry training institutes in America and Canada. By exchanging tutors, each college will be able to make use of wider experience than that available in its own country alone.

There is room for a total of 50 students at the college at any one time. Most of those training now are from Papua New Guinea but it is hoped that the college will train people from all over the South Pacific. This will release some of the

pressure on the Rotarua Timber Industry Training Centre in New Zealand which is the only other institute of this kind in the region. Eventually, the two institutes may share the training. For example, the Lae College may teach all the practical skills while the Rotarua Centre teaches administration.

The present number of teaching staff is eleven; three New Zealand and eight national instructors. The national staff were all trained at Rotarua and have completed both timber industry and instructing courses. The three New Zealand instructors have all been provided by New Zealand Aid. Two are from Rotarua and the third is from the private sector of the New Zealand timber industry.

A further three expatriate staff are expected to join the college shortly. Two of these will teach timber grading, and the third will be involved in a D.P.I. scheme to train operators for village saw mills.

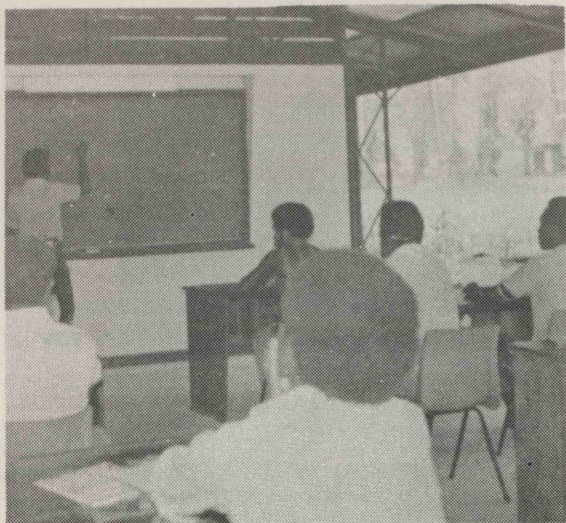


This saw is being sharpened during a saw doctoring lesson in the saw maintenance shop.

The student in this picture is chalking up a saw ready for tensioning.



To tension a saw, the student beats it very carefully with a heavy hammer.



Mr Desmond Elecor, a College instructor, taking a class on saw setting.

The first objective of this village scheme is to decide which of the different models of village-size sawmills on the market will be the best for P.N.G. Only the chosen model will be bought for the scheme so that maintenance and supply of spare parts will be easier. Courses will then be run for village people to teach them how to use the mills and villages will be helped to set them up. The aim of this project is to encourage the villages to be more self-sufficient for their timber needs. Eventually, this should help to improve the standard of village housing.

As well as teaching, the college will carry out research work. One likely topic is the use of coconut wood. Although many of the South Pacific islands have no other source of

wood, the coconut palm is not often used as timber. Work at Rotarua and in the Philippines has shown that coconut wood is at least as strong as most other common woods. It is also cheap and has no knots. Coconut wood is now used a lot in the Philippines where 6 million cubic metres are available every year.

A hidden advantage in using this wood is that rhinoceros beetles, some of the worst pests of coconuts, are prevented from breeding if the wood is gathered up for use rather than left lying on the ground.

The college has several other uses besides training. The lecturers can act as consultants to advise the timber industry when it has problems. The sawmill is used commercially while the students are being trained and, because the work is done so carefully, it is a popular place to get logs milled. The college is also one of the few places in Papua New Guinea where saws can be made. Contracts from consultancy, sawmilling, saw making and saw doctoring, together with course fees, will help the college in its aim to become financially self-sufficient.

According to a F.A.O. survey carried out in 1976, Papua New Guinea could become a world leader in hard wood timber production. The opening of the Timber Industries Training College at Lae is an important step in this direction.