

**Resource Community Formation & Change:**  
**A Case Study of**  
**MURUPARA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper reports the findings of a case study of Murupara. It is one of a series of three case studies of forestry communities in New Zealand which are part of a project entitled "Resource Community Formation and Change" that has been funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The other two case studies of forestry communities in this series are Kawerau (WP 6) and Tuatapere (WP 8).

A variety of research methods were used in this case study which focuses on the history of Murupara since the early 1950's. These methods included an analysis of census statistics, a review of published documents about the town and forestry sector, and five days of interviews in Murupara during November 1997.

## **FORESTRY IN THE CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND**

The following description of the forestry sector in the Central North Island has been based on an earlier working paper which examined the regional, national and international trends and linkages of the sector in New Zealand from 1980 to the present (McClintock, 1997). That working paper updated an earlier profile of the forest industries provided by McClintock and Taylor's (1983) case study of New Zealand forestry towns.

Many of the soils in the Central North Island are of volcanic origin. The rainfall in the vicinity of the Kaingaroa plateau is between 1,200 and 1,800 millimetres per annum, with precipitation being heaviest during the winter and spring (Ministry of Forestry, 1994: 7).

Land use in the Central North Island is dominated by pastoral farming. The region is the largest wood-producing area in New Zealand, however, with over two-fifths of the country's exotic forests in 1992 (Jarvis, 1994: 40). Extensive production forests are located on the volcanic plateau near Kawerau, Kaingaroa, and Tokoroa, and on the eastern side of Lake Taupo. Smaller production forests, or wood lots, are distributed throughout the region, while most of the natural forests are on the steeper hill country (Ministry of Forestry, 1994: 5).

Production forestry has been a major feature of the Central North Island for over 70 years. During the 1930's there was a period of expansion in the region. By the latter part of that decade 110,000 hectares of forest had been planted. A second phase of expansion commenced in the late 1960's with over half a million hectares of production forest being planted in the region by 1990 (Ministry of Forestry, 1994: 6).

There were five pulp and paper plants and 35 sawmills operating in the Central North Island during 1993. The pulp and paper plants included two Kraft mills at Kawerau and Kinleith, two chemical thermo-mechanical pulp (CTMP) mills at Kawerau and Ohakune, and a paperboard mill at Whakatane. Eleven sawmills, all of which produced over 40,000 cubic metres, accounted for 86 per cent of the regional production of sawn timber. Furthermore, there were three panel board plants and four major post and pole manufacturers in the region (Ministry of Forestry, 1994: 12-15). The region's forestry exports are mainly shipped out of the country through the port at Mount Maunganui.

Since 1980 the development of the forestry sector in the Central North Island has been shaped by two significant processes: the amalgamation and internationalisation of companies in the industry and the changed role of the state. The focus of companies such as Carter Holt Harvey and Fletcher Challenge

became global in the 1980's as they purchased forests and processing capacity offshore. Foreign ownership of domestic processing and production forests also accelerated during this decade. The Bay of Plenty forests, including the Kaingaroa State Forest, were purchased by a consortium of Fletcher Challenge, Brierley Investments Ltd and a Chinese government company, Citifor, in 1996 (McClintock, 1997: 4-5).

The sales of state forests and the dissolution of the New Zealand Forest Service in 1987 signalled the government's withdrawal from the sector. This case study reveals that the restructuring of the Forest Service and the rationalisation of processing capacity by the major companies has had profound economic and social consequences for communities in the region.

## **MURUPARA AND THE FOREST INDUSTRY**

Murupara is located on the eastern boundary of the Kaingaroa Forest in the eastern Bay of Plenty. It became the centre for logging operations in the forest during the 1950's.

In the early 1950's Murupara was a small village with a post office and three stores. It was a service centre for Maori belonging to the Ngati Manawa tribe and the dairy farming community of the district (Chapman, 1966: 51). The State Forest Service had provided jobs for growing numbers of people in the area since 1918. Forestry workers residing at Murupara worked in the township itself, at a State mill eight miles westward, and at two bush camps to the north. Large stands of indigenous timber to the south-east of Murupara were harvested by a Maori owned and operated mill and another private mill 30 miles away. Most of the jobs provided by the Forest Service were bush jobs concerned with forest maintenance, although some part-time work was available in the nursery during the winter for women (Ritchie, 1963: 59).

In 1954 the Government and Tasman Pulp and Paper Company Limited formed a private company, the Kaingaroa Logging Company Limited, to handle clearfelling operations and extract the logs from the Kaingaroa Forest. The Forest Service retained its responsibility for managing the forest and was to conduct thinning operations as part of its silvicultural programme. The Government built over 200 houses and a single men's camp at Murupara, and another 50 houses nearby at the Forest Service settlement of Kaingaroa, to accommodate the workforce. At the railhead in Murupara large workshops were erected to maintain the large amount of equipment and transport required by operations in the forest (Moore, 1991: 26-28).

Some of our informants described Murupara during the 1960's as "*a booming town*", "*a place where you came, you worked, made your dollars and left*" and "*peaceful*". Residents had high incomes and the town had many of the facilities that existed in Rotorua. A housewife who came from Rotorua in 1964 remembered it as a "*young people's town*", where the housing was uniform and "*very basic and plain*". There were a large number of families with young children residing in the town, and heavy drinking at the hotel and private parties was a feature of the social life of some of the residents.

By the late 1980's the situation in the town was very different. In a report commissioned by the State Services Commission, MacLennan and Durand (1987: 23, 31) note that the full-time labour force in Murupara declined by 156 positions between 1981 and 1986, while the number of full-time workers, part-time workers and working proprietors involved in the forestry and logging sector at Murupara in February 1986 was 205. The Forest Service employed 124 of these workers and there were 186 people (workers and their families) who were dependent on the Forest Service for their housing (MacLennan and Durand, 1987: 47, 55). Therefore the combined impacts of the restructuring of the Forest Service

in 1987 and the rationalisation of the operations of the Kaingaroa Logging Company, which began in 1981 and resulted in the loss of over 250 jobs over a five year period (New Zealand Herald, 11/9/86), were an outflow of population from Murupara and a downturn in the local economy. A decade later the residents of Murupara are still experiencing the effects of the exodus of redundant workers and their families from the town as they struggle to retain essential services, such as banking, in their community.

## DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

### Demographic characteristics

The population of Murupara grew rapidly after it became the centre for logging operations in the Kaingaroa Forest during the 1950's (see Table 1). After 1966 the rate of growth slowed until the middle of the 1980's, when reductions in the workforce, following the corporatisation of the New Zealand Forest Service and the increasing mechanisation of logging operations, led to a decline in the town's population. Murupara's population peaked at just over 3,000 in 1981, but by 1996 it had fallen to 2,208.

Murupara had a relatively youthful population in 1971 and 1991. Children under 15 years were over represented in the population, while the proportion of adults over 64 years of age was much lower than for the nation. Males outnumbered females in both of these census years, but by 1991 this imbalance between the sexes was less evident. Maori have always been the dominant ethnic group in Murupara and they comprised 85 per cent of the town's population in 1996.

Table 1: *Murupara - Population changes 1951-1996*

Census Year	Murupara		New Zealand	
	No. of Persons	% Change in Pop.	No. of Persons	% Change in Pop.
1951	*643	-	1,939,472	-
1956	762	18.5	2,174,062	12.1
1961	1,571	106.2	2,414,984	11.0
1966	2,670	70.0	2,676,919	10.8
1971	2,760	3.3	2,862,631	6.9
1976	2,982	7.0	3,098,900	9.1
1981	3,003	0.7	3,143,307	1.4
1986	2,592	-13.7	3,263,283	3.8
1991	2,376	-8.3	3,373,929	3.4
1996	2,208	-7.1	3,618,302	7.2

Note: Data for the 1951 to 1971 years are for the total population and that from 1976 onwards are for the usually resident population. Changes in population from the 1976 year are calculated using data for the usually resident population as these figures for 1971 & 1976 were published in the 1976 census reports.

\* This is the population of the locality as Murupara did not become an independent town district until 1st January 1955.

Source: New Zealand Census 1951-1996

*Table 2: Occupational status of the workforce of Murupara - 1971 & 1991*

Occupational category	1971		1991	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
administrators/managers	0.6	-	7.7	8.1
professionals & technicians	6.0	18.3	7.7	29.7
clerks	3.1	29.2	1.7	18.9
service/sales	7.0	31.4	2.6	21.6
agriculture, forestry & fisheries workers	45.5	6.6	42.7	8.1
trades workers/machine operators/ elementary occupations	35.9	3.7	30.8	2.7
Total Number of Persons	715	137	342	117

Source: New Zealand Census 1971 & 1991

### Socioeconomic characteristics

The unemployment rate of the workforce of Murupara was substantially higher than the national average in 1991. Four-fifths of male workers in the town were engaged in blue-collar occupations in 1971, and about 73 per cent belonged to this category two decades later (see Table 2). Female workers were more likely to be engaged in white-collar occupations. The primary sector of agriculture/forestry was the predominant source of employment in both 1971 and 1996, although its share of total employment declined from 64 per cent to 29 per cent over this period. The other major sources of employment for the workforce were the community/social sector (23% in 1996) and wholesale/retail sector (13% in 1996).

*Table 3: Highest educational qualifications held by residents of Murupara - 1991*

Highest educational qualification	% of residents	
	Murupara	New Zealand
University & other tertiary	23.2	34.5
Secondary	11.9	18.8
No qualifications	49.3	30.6

Source: New Zealand Census 1991

Murupara's residents held less educational qualifications than the population of New Zealand in 1991, and their household incomes were lower than those at the national level (see Tables 3 & 4). Another significant feature has been the changing pattern of housing tenure; with the incidence of rental dwellings declining from 72 to 25 per cent of the total stock between 1971 and 1996 (see Table 5) as the Kaingaroa Logging Company Ltd and the Forest Service divested their residential property.

Table 4: *Distribution of Household Incomes in Murupara - 1991*

Household income range	% of households	
	Murupara	New Zealand
Less than \$10,000	12.9	7.5
\$10,000 - \$30,000	34.8	34.6
\$30,000 & over	24.3	44.4

Note: The "not available" and "not specified" categories accounted for some 27 per cent of Murupara's households - nearly twice the proportion of these categories in the national population.

Source: New Zealand Census 1991

Table 5: *Tenure of Dwellings in Murupara - 1971 & 1996*

Form of Tenure	% of dwellings	
	1971	1996
Provided rent free	9.2	4.7
Rented	72.3	25.2
Owned with a mortgage	15.1	35.5
Owned without a mortgage	3.1	26.2
Total Number of Dwellings	524	642

Source: New Zealand Census 1971 & 1996

## INDUSTRY, WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

### The role of the state

Murupara was transformed from "a tiny wayside village" to house employees of the New Zealand Forest Service and the Kaingaroa Logging Company during the 1950's (Chapman, 1966:35). This transformation was achieved through a close partnership between the state and private sector whereby the former provided the infrastructure, including a 42 mile railway line, a roading network and port facilities at Mount Maunganui, to transport large quantities of radiata pine from the Kaingaroa Forest. The partnership between the state and Tasman Pulp and Paper Company helped the industry secure world markets and the technology for pulp and paper production. And by doing so it has produced significant economic benefits both for the nation and the Bay of Plenty region (McClintock and Taylor, 1983: 16-17).

### Division of labour within the industry

Murupara was only one of several settlements in the vicinity of the Kaingaroa Forest that were developed to service the needs of the forestry sector. Each of these settlements had a highly specialised role in the industry's division of labour in the Bay of Plenty region. Murupara's function in the industry's division of labour was as a supply centre for logs destined for the Tasman Mill at Kawerau, and for export through Mount Maunganui.

Since the economic restructuring of the 1980's, however, the nature of those roles has changed radically. Kawerau, for instance, continues to be the site of two pulp and paper mills and a sawmill, although much of its workforce now resides outside the town. Murupara still functions as the railhead for shipping logs to Kawerau and Mount Maunganui, but many of the logging crews reside elsewhere

in the region. While villages, such as Kaingaroa, which formerly housed workers employed by the Forest Service for silviculture and forest maintenance, are now struggling to survive.

### **Dominance of major employers**

The economy of Murupara was dominated by two major employers for about thirty years. Most of the town's workers were employed the Kaingaroa Logging Company and the Forest Service between the mid 1950's and the economic restructuring of the 1980's. Since then the growing trend for major companies, such as Tasman, to contract out logging and other forestry operations to smaller operators has increased the number of employers of the town's workforce.

### **The industrial disputes and restructuring of the 1980's**

The 1980's were a turbulent time for the people of Murupara. There were several industrial disputes at the Tasman Mill at Kawerau which led to the Kaingaroa Logging Company and the Forest Service laying off hundreds of employees or reducing their working hours. The restructuring of these two organisations, moreover, resulted in hundreds of workers losing their jobs and many families leaving Murupara. An article in a national newspaper about the shutdown and strike at the Tasman Mill for two months in 1986 describes how these industrial matters affected the residents of Murupara:

“Since the Kaingaroa Logging Company was absorbed into Tasman Forestry five years ago, the workforce of 600 wage and salary earners and private contractors has shrunk in voluntary redundancies to 345 workers. Most of the redundant workers lived in Murupara. Although some accepted generous offers from Tasman and bought their company houses, staying on in the hope of finding another job one day, the rest have just drifted away. ...The fat-trimming exercise by the two major employers in the three timber towns [Murupara, Kaingaroa and Minginui] has been exacerbated by the stoppage at the Tasman mill in Kawerau. The Forest Service has laid off 70 employees as a result, and almost all others are working reduced hours. Tasman similarly has laid off logging gangs and reduced the working hours of others.” (New Zealand Herald, 11/9/86)

While some workers who were laid off lived on their redundancy payments, others got jobs with out-of-town contractors. “*The whole town started to turn over - we were losing people*”, a retired forestry worker recalled. His workmates in the Forest Service were in a state of shock because they thought they had “*an everlasting job*”.

### **Technology and the organisation of work**

The work processes of bush work, such as clearfelling and planting, are very different from the routines of pulp and paper mills or industrial sawmills. Chapple's (1971) study of Kaingaroa describes several aspects of bush work: planting, the raising of young trees, line cutting, pruning, extraction thinning and clearfelling. These last two tasks not only demand a high level of skill, but expose workers to the risk of sudden and unforeseen injury. Every member of gangs involved in the more dangerous forms of bush work must cooperate closely with others in the team for accidents to be avoided. Nowhere is teamwork more crucial than in clearfelling operations where variations in the terrain, weather and logs make the immediate work situation different for every member of the gang.



Bush work, like the work routines of the pulp and paper mills and the industrial sawmills, has become more capital intensive with the use of increasingly sophisticated technology. Prior to the mid 1980's the Kaingaroa Logging Company employed a mixture of waged employees and contractors on their logging operations. The Timber Workers Union, to which most of the logging crews belonged, had secured good wages and allowances (e.g. housing and cheap loans) for its members and its strong bargaining power was a strong motivation for the company's switch to contract labour. When this change occurred Tasman Forestry sold equipment to its former employees who wanted to become contractors. The first of these contractors were the owner/operators of the logging trucks, and some of them were financed by the company. The cost of equipment is considerable. Nowadays, for example, the capital required to purchase basic equipment such as a skidder, loader, and two vehicles, costs half a million dollars.

Following the reorganisation of the Kaingaroa Logging Company, local people, with the assistance of Tasman Forestry, organised themselves into a contract trucking fleet that uses the network of private roads that radiate from Murupara to transport logs to processing plants at Taupo, Rainbow Mountain and Kawerau (Daily Post, 28/2/91). The cartage of logs to the railhead or mill relies heavily on powerful truck and trailer units operated by the contractors:

“[The truck] can pull four loaded trailers with up to 200 tonnes of logs on board, and it is claimed, can outpace more lightly loaded conventional rigs. ...The privately designed and built truck is powered by two 450 hp Cummins diesel motors - the second engine is in its trailer unit. ...The Boss, with four trailers connected, is 60 metres in length. It was built at a cost of \$750,000. ...It is designed to go where conventional logging trucks cannot. It can haul logs out of a skid site where other trucks get bogged down. ...Owned by a family contracting company, Marathon Truck and Trailer Ltd, the truck is driven by Lance Magee. ...He gets up at 2.30 am, is in his cab by 3 am and rarely out of it till 6 pm. That's his routine five days a week. 'I sleep all day Saturday and monkey wrench all day Sunday so I can do it all again next week', he said. 'It's not a job - it's a lifestyle'.” (Daily Post, 1/12/90)

Other tasks, such as constructing private forest roads and skid sites, are also performed by former employees of the Kaingaroa Logging Company on a contract basis.

The Forest Service had employed contractors for such tasks as planting, establishing new blocks, clearfelling, and roading since 1978. A former contractor with the Forest Service reports that between 1978 and 1987 he regularly worked 12 hours a day and seven days a week while pruning and thinning trees. It was a two person operation. They were given a block marked with grid lines and worked along a grid line. They were paid per tree, and the staff of the Forest Service made quality checks. When the Forest Service was restructured in 1987, Timberlands reorganised the silvicultural operations into contract gangs of 8 to 14 persons to work larger blocks of land. Tasman Forestry also employed growing numbers of contractors for silvicultural tasks from the mid 1980's. A former contractor with the company between 1985 and 1990 organised a gang of nine men for pruning and trained them according to Tasman rules. He had to supply his own equipment and a van to transport the gang at a cost of some \$20,000. Contractors financed their business from their own resources and/or by borrowing. No funding was supplied by Tasman Forestry and the contracts were renewed annually.

Following the Government's sale of the Kaingaroa and other Bay of Plenty forests to a consortium led by Fletcher Challenge in 1996, all the silvicultural and harvesting operations in the area around Murupara are now managed by Fletcher Forests. Contractors may be allocated work by Fletcher Forests all over the Central North Island. They may be brought from Rotorua to work near Murupara or vice versa. Most contractors are based at Rotorua, Tauranga and Taupo, although a few of them continue to be based at Murupara. They finance their purchases of new equipment through finance

companies which have been reluctant to lend money to contractors during the current slump in log prices.

### **Occupations and class structure**

In 1996 half of Murupara's workforce of 537 persons was employed in blue-collar occupations. Another 27 per cent were engaged in white collar occupations as managers, professionals, technicians and clerks. Most of the blue collar workers (25%) were classified as agriculture and fishery workers; a category which covers activities such as logging and silviculture.

Formerly, the occupational hierarchy of the industry was clearly linked with the social stratification system in Murupara. For thirty years, when the Forest Service and the Kaingaroa Logging Company were the dominant employers, the community made broad distinctions between 'staff' and 'workers' with the staff associating with local businessmen and bankers, and the workers amongst themselves (McClintock and Taylor, 1983: 56). With the shift to contracting, however, these distinctions have become less important as many former employees of these organisations who were regarded as 'staff' or 'workers' have become employers and managers of their own work gangs. Thus the way social status in Murupara, and other smaller forestry settlements in the Central North Island, is distinguished today may be little different from how it is assessed in other rural communities in New Zealand.

## **REGIONAL AND LOCAL ECONOMY**

### **Murupara's role in the forest industry of the Bay of Plenty**

Murupara is located on the eastern margins of the Kaingaroa Forest and is the railhead for logs transported to Kawerau and the port at Mount Maunganui. Trucks transport logs from the middle and southern parts of the Kaingaroa Forest to the railhead at Murupara. Logs from the northern part of the Kaingaroa Forest and the Tarawera Forest, however, are trucked direct to Kawerau. Every log is graded by an experienced logger to indicate its use (i.e. lumber or pulp) and when it arrives at the Tasman Mill at Kawerau it is stockpiled until it is required for production. Then the finished products - timber, pulp and paper - are taken by rail to Mount Maunganui where they are shipped to overseas markets. Many shorter logs are sent directly to Mount Maunganui as they are preferred by Asian buyers.

### **The regional and national economic impacts of Tasman Pulp and Paper Co. Ltd**

Since 1953 Murupara has had a strategic role in the harvesting of the Kaingaroa Forest. Through the operations of the Kaingaroa Logging Company, then Tasman Forestry, and now Fletcher Forests, the town has provided a base for supplying logs to the Tasman Mill at Kawerau. The Tasman Mill processes some two million tonnes of wood annually to produce about 400,000 tonnes of newsprint and 200,000 tonnes of Kraft pulp (Hughes, 1996: 6). Hughes (1996: 17,21) has calculated the economic impacts of the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company Ltd on the Bay of Plenty region and New Zealand. He estimates that in 1995 Tasman was responsible for almost 15 per cent of the regional output of the Bay of Plenty, and had an overall economic impact on the nation amounting to one per cent of the economy.

## The local economy of Murupara

Before Murupara was established as a base for the Kaingaroa Logging Company and the Forest Service in 1953, its economic activities consisted of three shops, a fishing lodge and a post office. By 1980, however, it had been transformed from a small village to a thriving commercial centre with a hotel, a motel, two supermarkets, a TAB, a pharmacy, two furniture shops, two menswear retailers, a women's clothing and drapery shop, a wire shop, two electrical shops, two fish shops, two dairies, a coffee bar, a restaurant, two banks and two service stations (Bird, 1980: 2).

Both the retail sector and other business firms in the town were seriously affected by the reduction of the workforces of Tasman Forestry and Forest Service during the 1980's. State sector reforms also led to job losses in the town amongst employees of New Zealand Railways and the Ministry of Works and Development. Redundancy payments at first helped to cushion the impact on the local economy, but hundreds of workers and their families left the town. Several of our informants recalled the effects of these redundancies on the community:

*"The companies took the cream and buggered off";*

*"People had large amounts of money in the bank and didn't know how to use it";*

*"The money dried out";*

*"The whole town started to turn over - we were losing people";* and

*"It was a depressing time because a lot of friends left the town."*

Other informants expressed disappointment that promises made by the management of Fletcher Challenge and politicians that changes in forest management and harvesting practices (the rationale for reductions in staff) would bring employment benefits for the town remain unfulfilled.

The town's economy has not recovered from the outflow of population during the 1980's. There are now more families in the town who rely on welfare benefits and have limited purchasing power. Moreover, the rationalisation of the banking sector has led to the closure of local branches or agencies of the Bank of New Zealand (October 1988), Post Bank (September 1991) and Westpac Trust (March 1997). Residents of Murupara depend on a branch of the Credit Union, which opened in 1997 following the closure of the local branch of WestpacTrust, and an automatic teller machine for their banking services. People from outlying settlements such as Kaingaroa, Galatea, Ruatahuna and Minginui are now more likely to travel to Rotorua to collect their benefit payments. While in Rotorua they shop at supermarkets and have a meal. Their custom is now lost to retailers in Murupara.

The retail sector of Murupara consisted of a small supermarket, a dairy, a pharmacy shop, two electrical appliance stores, several takeaway bars and restaurants, and two service stations in 1997. Accommodation for visitors is provided in the town and surrounding district by a hotel, a motel, camping ground, fishing and hunting lodges and a home stay. There are also three electrical contractors, a light engineering firm, a mower and chainsaw repair business, and a full mechanical workshop which services all kinds of farming and forestry machinery (Whakatane District Council, 1996; Whakatane District Council, 1997: 5). Many local businesses have bought EFTPOS equipment. Otherwise they would have had to keep large sums of cash on their premises as a security firm only collects money from the town twice weekly.

Some local firms did not experience the same dramatic downturn as others, however, as the economic impact of the restructuring of the forest industry was unevenly distributed. The part-owner of a local garage, for instance, reported that turnover and employment *"hasn't changed much"* over the last 10-15 years. The garage never repaired the logging trucks and other equipment of the Kaingaroa Logging

Company or the Forest Service as they had their own workshops. Nowadays, the garage repairs the vehicles of contractors and bush workers, whereas prior to the restructuring this type of customer was not a significant part of the business. Farming clients, on the other hand, are of less importance than they were ten years ago. They are using more contractors on their properties and the garage has done no major tractor work for the last four or five years.

### **Strengthening the economic base of Murupara**

When the government was seeking bids for the sale of the Bay of Plenty forests in 1996 the Whakatane District Council sought to attract investors to Murupara by promoting it as “a modern town with excellent services and facilities and vacant industrial land” (Whakatane District Council, 1996). The objective of the council’s strategy is the establishment of processing plants which will add value to timber milled from the nearby forest (Whakatane District Council, 1997). Should this strategy be successful there may be significant benefits for the local economy, but the town’s fortunes would still depend on the performance of the region’s forest industry as it competes in a global market.

## **PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Infrastructure and funding**

Murupara is administered by the Whakatane District Council. The town has a reticulated water supply and sewage treatment system which have a design population 3,600 persons. There is a weekly refuse collection with disposal to a landfill site near the town (Whakatane District Council, 1996). Other public facilities include the Council service centre, library, community hall, a voluntary fire brigade, swimming pool and sports fields. Local rates levied on the property owners of Murupara fund these community amenities. Domestic rates in 1996 averaged about \$570, commercial rates \$940, while those for land in the heavy industrial zone were about \$625 per hectare (Whakatane District Council, 1996).

### **Transport**

Murupara is only 45 minutes (64 kilometres) by road from Rotorua. A railway line connects the town with Kawerau and the port at Mount Maunganui (150 kilometres). Public transport to other centres in the region is provided by two bus services. A Rotorua/Murupara/Wairoa service operates three times per week and there is a daily bus to Rotorua (Whakatane District Council, 1996).

The forest industry is responsible for high volumes of traffic on the roads in the district around Murupara. Most logging trucks, however, use the network of private roads that are maintained by the forestry companies, and only make short trips on the non-state highway roads funded by the Whakatane District Council. There is regular communication between council officials and forestry companies regarding their harvesting programmes so road maintenance schedules can be organised. Council officials have recently discussed with forestry companies the possibility of paying increased rates or user charges for these non-state highway roads. The forestry companies’ view was that they only used a particular stretch of road intensively once in 25 years when they were harvesting, yet they paid rates for the entire period. As a result this proposal by the Whakatane District Council to secure greater revenue from the forestry companies has been shelved.

## **Housing**

When Murupara was developed some forty years ago the bulk of the housing stock was provided by the Kaingaroa Logging Company and the Forest Service. The dwellings were of a standard design, although there were clusters of management houses dispersed throughout the town. There was also a camp for single men near the main road.

Most of the dwellings continued to be owned by the town's two main employers until the early 1980's. In 1981 about three-fifths of the town's households occupied dwellings were rented from employers. Single men, however, had moved out of the camp into clusters of two or three units, or houses, that were dispersed throughout the community (McClintock and Taylor, 1983: 72). After the job losses in the forest industry, the tenancy situation changed radically. Some workers used their redundancy money to purchase their homes; while other dwellings that were vacated by departing families were sold by their employers. Thus sixty-two per cent of the town's dwellings were owner-occupied by 1996, and only a quarter were rented.

Since the exodus of redundant workers and their families from the town there has been a surplus of houses. Over recent years about 15 to 20 houses have been purchased and shifted to other locations. This has left a number of vacant sites in Murupara. They are often left untidy and pose a fire hazard in summer. Some of the owners are also reluctant to pay rates on these properties. Those residents who have remained in the town, moreover, have seen the value of their properties decline. One of our informants, for example, noted that his own house had fallen in value from \$60,000 to \$35,000 over the previous ten years. House prices are comparatively low by national standards, with an average price of \$45,000 for a well maintained three bedroom dwelling (Whakatane District Council, 1997: 5).

## **Health, education and training**

Two surgeries staffed by three resident doctors, a community health centre and maternity unit, a Hau Ora (Maori Health) Centre and St John's Ambulance provide medical services for the population of Murupara and the surrounding district (Whakatane District Council, 1996). The nearest hospital is at Rotorua. A community health worker based in Murupara has stated recently that many of the residents of the town and outlying settlements, who are unemployed and without transport, have had difficulties in accessing these services (Daily Post, 8/3/94).

Murupara has a community learning centre, a secondary school, two primary schools, four kohanga reo, a kindergarten and a playcentre. The community learning centre is a private training establishment, that offers courses to adults in business management, forestry silviculture and harvesting, solid wood processing and adventure tourism (Whakatane District Council, 1996). It is funded by ETSA. Many of its trainees get work, but sometimes only on a casual or intermittent basis. Other young people get sent on one course after another. Their initial high motivation fades when they are told repeatedly by the NZ Employment Service that there are no jobs available for them.

School rolls have fallen dramatically over the last twenty years. At their peak in the 1970's Rangitahi College had a roll of over 700 pupils, Tawhiuau Primary School 350 and Murupara Primary School 600. Nowadays the College has less than 200 students, Tawhiuau 220 and Murupara 180. Their experience in attracting teachers is similar to schools in South Auckland. Rangitahi College, for instance, has struggled recently to fill vacant teaching positions on its staff; with chronic staffing shortages midway through 1995, and at the beginning of 1996, even closing the College for several days (Daily Post, 18/7/95 and 30/1/96). The Ministry of Education has recently proposed a

reorganisation of the two primary schools and the College into a form one to seven school, a Maori language school from new entrants to form seven and a mainstream school from new entrants to standard four.

Nowadays all the children at Tawhiuau School are Maori (formerly there was a mixture of 60:40 Maori to Pakeha children). The school has difficulties raising funds from a community that has a high degree of welfare dependency and “*a boom and bust mentality*”. The school encourages parents to budget \$5 per week for trips and other expenses, and nearly all the children have sufficient money to buy their lunch.

### **Agencies and social welfare organisations**

Like many other rural towns in New Zealand, Murupara is not well serviced by government agencies. Those agencies that do operate in the town include the Children and Young Persons Service, Income Support, NZ Employment Service and the Police (Llewelyn, nd). For access to other services, however, residents may have to travel by car or public transport to Rotorua or Whakatane.

There are also a few community based or privately operated welfare organisations operating in the town. They include the Murupara Youth Centre which has preventative and educational programmes and Te Ika Whenua Counselling Services (Llewelyn, nd). The latter organisation provides counselling for clients with drug and alcohol problems. It receives some government funding and was an initiative of the Department of Justice in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare.

## **RESOURCE AND ECONOMIC PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **Local government**

Before 1955 Murupara was administered by the Whakatane County Council. That year an independent town district was created with a committee consisting of five local persons under the leadership of a town commissioner appointed by the Crown. The first elected councillors were sworn into office in December 1959. In 1962 the town council was reconstituted as a borough and residents elected their first Mayor. Murupara remained a borough until November 1989 when it was amalgamated with the Whakatane County Council and become part of the Whakatane District. The town’s residents now elect a Community Board as well as representatives on the District Council.

### **Resource and economic planning**

The Whakatane District Council is responsible for such matters as community amenities, planning and economic development in Murupara. The town has a separate plan that became operative in 1991, but after the next review it is to be included in the District Plan. Water quality and air quality, however, come under the jurisdiction of Environment Bay of Plenty. The heavy industrial zone in Murupara has very few regulations to restrict forestry processing. Yet there have been no new resource consents applied for by the forestry industry since the mid 1980's. One forestry company did begin the process to secure consent for a processing plant on railway land in Murupara. This was a permitted activity according to Whakatane District’s criteria, but the application had to be forwarded to Environment Bay of Plenty as it required a consent for the discharge of stormwater. After the forestry company consulted

local Maori, however, it withdrew its application because the iwi opposed the water being discharged into the river.

## COMMUNITY

### Community organisation and leadership

Before the restructuring of the 1980's Murupara had a broader social structure. There were middle management staff from the Kaingaroa Logging Company Limited residing in the town who ran the community organisations. They organised the construction of community amenities such as swimming pools and buildings. There was even a competition between employees of the Kaingaroa Logging Company, the Forest Service and Ministry of Works to raise funds for a swimming pool. A Roman Catholic priest, who organised a welfare fund for workers of the Kaingaroa Logging Company who had been laid off because a strike at the Tasman Mill in 1983, observed that:

“We are a very inward-looking community. People live in company houses, the next door neighbour works for the company and so does everybody else. It’s all forestry and timber-related industry. There is nothing else, and we really need something else in Murupara.” (Daily Post, 26/5/83)

Once the economic base of the community was weakened the ties that held the community together came under great pressure as friends, neighbours and family members moved elsewhere.

“*Isolated*” and “*unskilled*” is how members of a social service organisation described the community in Murupara today. Other informants who had lived in the town since the 1960's commented that they know fewer people in the community than they did thirty years ago. Furthermore, a local Maori observed that the Maori who have recently arrived in the town are not from his iwi. The quality and character of the people who have left the town since the early 1980's has resulted in a loss of leadership in the community. Not only are there fewer people capable of administrating community organisations, but it is also more difficult to get a community project started.

### Community activities

Sporting clubs were strong during the 1960's. There were seven rugby teams (now reduced to two) and three cricket teams. Sporting activities remained a feature of the town’s life while its workforce prospered. Bird (1980: 2) notes in his history of Murupara that rugby had nine senior clubs and four junior clubs (*circa* 1980), while netball, volleyball, squash, badminton, basketball, hockey and tennis were also played.

The Murupara Service and Citizens Club has had a prominent role in the community for many years. At its peak the club had 600-700 members. The profitability of the club dropped when its membership fell to 200. Now there are 500 members; with gambling machines being the major source of income. Some of the revenue from these machines is returned to the community. Other community organisations in the town include Lions, Maori Women’s Welfare League, a garden club and an over 50's club (Whakatane District Council, 1996; Murupara Newsletter, 6/11/97). There are several churches including Presbyterian, Anglican, Brethren Assembly, Seventh Day Adventist and Murupara Christian Fellowship (Murupara Newsletter, 6/11/97). A fortnightly newsletter which has circulated

in Galatea, Kaingaroa, Te Whaiti, Ruatahuna and Murupara since 1963 keeps residents of the district informed about these community activities.

## **Social Problems**

Murupara, like other rural towns, has experienced many of the negative effects of restructuring the economy during the 1980's. These effects have been most evident in the growing incidence of welfare dependency, unemployment, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, crime and other social problems within the community.

Many workers who were laid off by the Kaingaroa Logging Company or the Forest Service during the 1980's were left with mortgages and outstanding debts they had to service on a much reduced income. Some families were devastated. They found it difficult to cope with their changed circumstances, and marital break-ups occurred when they were unable to meet their financial commitments. Today there are people who are still working through the events of this period. Another effect of the loss of employment was low self-esteem amongst both men and women which sometimes manifested itself in suicide and alcohol abuse. The men's anger was transmitted to the women. They joined their husbands drinking, the children were left alone, and "*it becomes a cycle*". There is now a third generation of unemployed people in Murupara, young people with grandparents who were made redundant, who have grown up in an environment of welfare dependency.

The teenage pregnancy rate in the town became very high in the 1980's. One of our informants attributed this high rate to the poor self-esteem of the girls and the lack of money for the boys to buy condoms. Drug abuse in Murupara is confined to the 'soft' variety, but there is a high incidence of cannabis use because most users grow their own supply.

Crime does not appear to be a major problem. In the view of a member of the Community Board it is safer to walk the streets of Murupara at night than in the cities as "*the community is still small enough to be insulated from the problems of larger centres*". Nevertheless, the town has experienced gang clashes (Daily Post, 23/10/88), burglaries in the shopping centre (New Zealand Herald, 25/5/85) and disorderly behaviour by young people (Daily Post, 8/6/85) on various occasions over the past 15 years.

## **Maori**

Maori comprised 85 per cent of the population of Murupara in 1996, whereas 25 years before they were only three-fifths of the population. During recent years many of the Maori who have settled in the town do not belong to Ngati Manawa (the local iwi), but come from other parts of the country. Some of these new arrivals have been attracted to Murupara by the cheaper cost of living (e.g. rentals) that allow them to live more comfortably on welfare benefits than in the city.

The forest industry of the Central North Island has provided employment for thousands of Maori workers over the last forty years. The large scale redundancies implemented by the Forest Service and the Kaingaroa Logging Company during the 1980's, however, has badly affected the Maori communities of the eastern Bay of Plenty over the last decade. Many of the bush workers made redundant were older Maori men who lacked the skills to obtain employment outside the industry.

Ngati Manawa leaders have tried to provide employment and training opportunities for their people in various ways. They opened a motor camp for visitors to the district, for instance, by renovating the



former accommodation block for single forestry workers and installing power points for camper vans and caravans (Daily Post, 24/2/88). They also organised a scheme with the Forestry Corporation whereby students selected by them attended a 33 week course in silviculture at the Waiariki Polytechnic (Forestry Corporation Newsletter August, 1993).

### **Women and young people**

Women and young people have a relatively disadvantaged position in towns dependent on the forest industry as employment opportunities in the sector are heavily oriented towards adult males. In Murupara during the early 1980's there was no employment for young people under 18 years (the qualifying age for employment with the two main employers), but some women planted and pruned trees for the Forest Service (McClintock and Taylor, 1983: 88). Retail and other businesses in Murupara, however, only provide a limited amount of employment. Most women with jobs are either shop assistants, clerks, teachers or other professionals.

Apart from the courses offered at the community learning centre there is no vocational training available in the town for young people. Thus many of them, like their counterparts in other rural towns, have to migrate to the cities to obtain employment or training. Other than sporting activities they have very little else to occupy their leisure time. It should not be surprising, therefore, that both the incidence of marijuana use and the teenage pregnancy rate are so high amongst the young people of Murupara.

### **CONCLUSION**

The internationalisation of the forest industry and the changed role of the state since the 1980's has undermined the fundamental economic base of Murupara. The local economy has not yet recovered from the reduction of the workforces of Tasman Forestry and the Forest Service some 10 to 15 years ago that resulted in an exodus of redundant workers and their families from the town. Other recent developments in the forest industry have ensured that the outflow of population which followed those redundancies has continued. Although Murupara still functions as a railhead for shipping logs to Kawerau and Mount Maunganui, Tasman's switch to contract labour for logging and other forestry operations has dispersed its workforce over a much wider area of the Central North Island. Furthermore, bush work has become more capital intensive with the use of increasingly sophisticated machinery. Thus the demand is for higher skilled labour and there are fewer jobs available. These changes have had a major impact on the population of Murupara. Maori residents were particularly affected as many of the bush workers made redundant were older men who were unable to secure jobs outside the forest industry.

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