

Review

Report of the Committee on Marketing of Woodland Produce—1956

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THIS booklet of exactly 100 pages gives in convincing detail the deliberations of a committee appointed in 1954 by the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries "with the object of promoting confidence and stability and bearing in mind both the output from Forestry Commission woodlands and the need to develop markets, to consider what measures might be taken within the home timber industry to improve the arrangements for marketing produce from privately owned woodlands; and to report."

While all factors—past, present and predicted—having a bearing on the successful marketing of the future vast quantities of forest produce from the 5,000,000 acres of State and private forest land—are realistically examined within these wide terms of reference, the Report specially concerns itself with the position and prospects of private forestry in Britain or more particularly with the timber-marketing problems of the private estates, *vis-a-vis* the general timber trading structure—national and international.

That private forestry is playing an important part in the British forestry scheme can be judged from the fact (figures shown on page 12) that the area planted by private owners has risen from 9,000 acres in 1947, to 19,100 acres in 1954, while later figures to hand disclose that private planting accounted for 22,100 acres in 1954/55 and 27,200 acres in 1955/56. In fact private planting has now outstripped State planting in relation to their respective quotas of the total planting target. The State Authority, i.e. The British Forestry Commission, however, must also get considerable credit for the extent of the private acreage which was mainly due to the genuine practical encouragement given to private forestry.

Having read through this wholesome booklet one discerns that the healthy state of private forestry in England is not only due to generous State financial aid and technical guidance, but equally as a result of the optimistic confidence in future timber marketing prospects, engendered by the sympathetic concern of the State Authorities for the economic success of forestry, both private and State. Here is evidence of planning and working to a purpose so that there be "a healthy home timber trade capable of dealing with the increasing output and produce and of

adapting itself to deal with the changing nature of that output" and so that "the produce comes forward in a planned and regular flow."

Comparison is made between the State treatment given to the forester and that given to the farmer. Matters of research, processing facilities and transport costs are appraised and the idea of an import levy on imported timber is considered—to be used as a means of "ensuring that the returns received by woodland owners for the sale of their produce are not only adequate to support re-stocking and maintenance of their woodland but also in due course to provide a reasonable return on the capital represented by the woodlands." Facts and figures are presented to show accurately the past outturn and the potential yields from British forests and the proportions of home timber used against imported in the several utilisation outlets. The ten appendices (some abbreviated) substantiate the conclusions reached and in themselves make fruitful reading, representing as they do the views of such important institutions as the National Coal Board, the British Transport Commission, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Homegrown Timber Advisory Committee.

Peculiar people these British who see problems in advance and plan for the solution; who recognise the need for frequent discussions between the three inter-dependent interests in the home timber industry, i. e., timber merchant, private landowner and the State; who consider the need for a permanent central consultation body "to plan the fullest utilisation of the country's timber resources" and "to ensure the financial health and stability of the home timber industry;" and who regard all these matters as being "basic to the successful marketing of woodland produce." I suspect that we also have these forestry problems. But why worry? We always have the emigrant ship.

M.S.