

Report of Forestry Commissioners for 1947. His Majesty's Stationery Office. Price 1/3.

It is not easy to present in summary form and with adequate statistics the annual report of a forest department and at the same time produce a document which is readable and attractive to the layman. This report is factual rather than digestible.

On Forest policy it is recorded that the British Government asked the Commission to prepare for large-scale action in afforestation and arranged to replenish the Forestry Fund by some £20 million during the five years, 1946-50. This is expected to provide for the planting of 365,000 acres by State action and by assistance to private owners. The Government accepted the Dedication Scheme prepared by the Commission.

Felling licences issued covered 55 million cubic feet so that the drain on timber reserves remained heavy. In view of rising labour costs controlled maximum prices of standing timber were increased 25%.

State planting is to work up from an annual rate of 30,000 to 87,000 acres in the five-year period, making a total of 280,000 acres. Land acquisition is to work up from 121,000 to 235,000 acres per annum giving a total of 926,000 acres in five years. It is interesting to record that the first year's planting actually reached 26,356 acres in spite of the exceptional winter. On the other hand acquisition lagged behind and only 22,322 acres were acquired in the year. Private planting amounted to 3,659 acres under State aid schemes and suffered from labour and plant scarcity.

In research it is stated that some progress has been made towards solving the problem of raising plants suitable for planting out at an age of one or two years. In view of the high cost and scarcity of plants this line of research is particularly important.

Of the total of 1,440,500 acres in the Commission's hands 55,200 were acquired plantations, 478,900 were planted by them and there remained 346,400 acres of plantable land on hands. The remaining 560,000 acres included unplanted, nursery and agricultural land.

The area thinned—13,800 acres—is surprisingly low.

The number of men employed stood close to 14,000 at the end of the year.

Preparatory work and planting seem to work out at about £15 per acre and this does not include the cost of plants or fencing materials. This high cost is not explained.

As an indication of species to be used in future planting the figures for seed imported are revealing. These include 1,674 lbs. of Douglas fir, 3,136 of Norway spruce, close on 5,000 of Sitka and only 9 of Pinus contorta. Again only 62,000 contorta out of a total of 54 million plants were used in planting and beating up during the year. The Irish figures for the use of this species must be far higher, illustrating one of the most marked differences between practice in the two countries. Sitka at 21 million plants used is easily their most important species.

Incidentally the Commissioners seem to have made a happy choice in the naming of their forests, apparently avoiding the inappropriate association of ideas inseparable from the use of the names of towns.

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