

REVIEWS

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS

No. 2—Co-Operation in Forestry (4s.)

No. 3—Forestry Credit (no price quoted).

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Dr. Kissen's bulletins make refreshing reading. These are times of State planning, State control and State interference in all walks of life and not least in forestry, and we in Ireland, are in danger of forgetting the importance of individual action and neglecting the advantages which individuals with a common aim find in banding themselves in groups for voluntary co-operation.

Communication No. 2 is a comprehensive survey of the history, objects and achievements of forestry co-operative bodies in many countries. The societies in Great Britain receive most attention because, as the writer says, they had never received any before and also because he was on the spot to do the work. Denmark, Finland, Sweden, America are also dealt with as well as some account being given of workers' societies in Russia and some Balkan countries.

Co-operation has been applied mainly to Management and Marketing, the principal difficulties of the small woodlot owner throughout the world. Management covers advisory services in many branches such as preparation of ground for planting, drainage, selection of species, and establishment of plantations, but probably the most valuable service, and the one most in demand, is in the marking of thinnings. This service must be a boon to the inexperienced woodland owner with plantations needing thinning, and it is one capable of doing great good. Some societies undertake the entire management of members' woods. They work to an agreed plan and are responsible for engaging labour and carrying on all operations.

The small owner is at a serious disadvantage when it comes to marketing. In many cases he does not know the value of his produce or how to go about obtaining the best price for what he has to sell. A member of a co-operative society is saved all this uncertainty. The society's skilled staff will measure up and value his trees and give advice on advertising and sale agreements. By combining several lots belonging to members in one district they may attract larger buyers and obtain an enhanced price. At all times by keeping closely in touch with timber supply and demand they can advise members on the advisability of selling.

Considering the benefits derived from membership of co-operative societies, it is surprising that in 1939 only 500 landowners in Great Britain were members of the three societies operating there, and that the total area of woods involved amounted to a bare 254,000 acres.

Communication No. 3 on Forestry Credit, deals with the facilities for credit available in Germany, Norway, Denmark, U.S.A., Great Britain and some of the Dominions. Owing to the length of time between sowing and harvest credit is a greater necessity in forestry than in most industries. These loans are of two kinds, short-term credits for the purchase of implements or to tide an owner over a temporary financial crisis pending the realisation of an existing forest crop, and long-term credits for the purchase of forests, of land for afforestation or to meet the costs of laying down and maintaining forests and of undertaking various works in them.

Long-term loans against such an intangible asset as a growing crop in its early years are not easy to negotiate and commercial banks will not usually advance more than the value of the land and ignore the expectation value of the young trees. Some of the credit agencies which specialise in rural business have a similar limit to their advances, and those which accept growing stock as well as land as security do so only where a forest is mortgaged jointly with agricultural property. This disability is a serious drawback to private forestry, and the question has been under examination in America, where a Bill has been drafted to enable Federal land banks to make advances on forest property, provided that the wood is managed satisfactorily, or that proper management is established with the proceeds of the loan. In Great Britain the Forestry Commission is empowered by the Act of 1919 to make loans for afforestation and replanting, but they do not appear to have made use of this provision. In the recent White Paper on British Post-War Forest Policy it is suggested that public loans should be made available for private owners who conform to approved forestry practices, and it hoped to provide such loans to owners of "dedicated" woods at a reasonable interest rate.