

POST-WAR FOREST POLICY—PRIVATE WOODLANDS.

Supplementary Report by H.M. Forestry Commissioners, January, 1944.

(H. M. Stationery Office: Price 2d.)

In their Report on Post-War Forest Policy, June, 1943, the Forestry Commissioners devoted Chapter 3 (Paras. 259 to 333) to the future of Private Woodlands. In paragraph 297 it was stated that, in working out and applying the details of the scheme, the Central Landowners' Association, the Scottish Land and Property Federation and the Royal Scottish and English Forestry Societies should be freely taken into consultation.

Private Woodland owners had already expressed their dis-satisfaction with the proposals so the Commissioners invited those four bodies to nominate two representatives each to meet them and discuss the proposals in greater detail. The Conference so constituted held four meetings in all, namely on 21st July, 22nd September, 27th October and 28th October, 1943.

The Basic Considerations and the seven fundamental principles derived therefrom for the dedication of woodlands were agreed. The undertakings to be assumed by Private Owners in return for State

financial assistance were defined and ensure that dedicated woodlands would be devoted permanently to timber production, that Private owners would prepare their own forestry plans to be approved by the Forest Authority, that skilled supervision should be employed or alternatively provided by the owners themselves, and that adequate forest accounts would be kept.

In return the Commissioners would be prepared to contribute 25% of the ascertained costs of establishment and maintenance until the woods became self-supporting. Alternatively the owners would have the option of availing themselves of the following proposals:—

- (a) An initial Planting Grant of £7 10/- per statute acre.
- (b) Loans in addition to (a), amounts depending upon individual circumstances, and to bear interest at the same rate at which the Forest Authority is financed plus a small operating charge.
- (c) A Maintenance Grant for 15 years at 2/6 per acre per annum for every acre planted and properly maintained.
- (d) A Maintenance Grant for 15 years of 2/6 per acre per annum from the date of dedication of all productive woodlands other than plantations covered by (a) above.
- (e) Grants to be revised after 5 years on the basis of ascertained costs.

The Report also deals with discussions on the Dedication of Small Woods for which a satisfactory solution does not yet appear to have been found; State outlay on Private Woodlands, which is estimated to cost £2,000,000 in the first decade; Administration of Private Forests, Forestry Education and Miscellaneous Questions.

Little enthusiasm can be summoned for these niggardly proposals. Great Britain could not have maintained her war-time needs for timber without the contribution from native woodlands of which the Commissioners from their own resources provided a meagre 4%. Private estates have, in the past, contributed more to Forestry than the Commissioners, and will continue to do so in future. It seems to be a case of the tail trying to wag the dog. The only redeeming feature is that loans may be granted at nearly the same rate as the Forest Authority is itself being financed—an admission that Private Woodlands, from a national point of view, are almost a gilt-edged investment. Apparently the Commissioners will be the sole judges of what constitute adequate Forest Accounts for which a simple form is provided in Appendix I. Estate labour has to do all the estate work of which Forestry forms only a part. Allocation of wet time and holidays with pay will be troublesome and the Commissioners will be able to pry into every item of estate expenditure, particularly when the grants come up for revision at the end of five years. It would have been better to have made an out and out grant—the final instalment to be paid in five years when the plantations would be established. In Eire the grant is £10, what it should be in Great Britain we do not venture to express an opinion.

CONIFERS.

A Booklet issued in connection with a display of the different varieties of Coniferous trees growing in Newtown School Grounds, Waterford, 1945.

This is a well-arranged little booklet which describes the morphology of the commoner coniferous forest trees, portions of which were arranged in a display in the school show case by the pupils. The trees, most of which are apparently growing in the school grounds, are taken in turn and quite a full description of the form, twigs, flowers, cones is given, with a note on the usefulness of the timber and the natural habitat of each tree. Besides the common forest trees, Cedar, Ginkgo, Monkey Puzzle, Juniper and others are described and the booklet is decoratively illustrated with small pencil sketches. It is apparent that the compilers had a good elementary grounding in forest botany and the production seems a very good way of interesting young people in trees.