

# IRISH FORESTRY

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## *Editorial.*

THE announcement in the Dáil last May by the Minister for Lands, Mr. Erskine Childers, that the Government had increased the grant for private planting from £10 to £20 per acre was received in forestry circles with great satisfaction.

While nobody who is acquainted with the problems of state afforestation is stinting in his praise of the great strides made by the Forestry Division, particularly in recent years, there are many who feel that it would be desirable both socially and economically if a much greater share of the work of building the nation's forests were assumed by the private land owner.

In every country in Western Europe the proportion of the forest area owned privately is much greater than that owned by the state. Denmark, a country which always affords us standards for comparison, since it is, like our own, mainly agricultural and composed of small holdings, has only 23% of its forests in the hands of the state. In this country the state owns 75% and before the recent announcement on private forestry it looked as if that proportion would continue to increase rapidly.

The backward position of private forestry in this country is regrettable. Ever since the 1880's it has been losing ground. One result of the breaking up of the estate woodlands on the passing of ownership from landlord to tenant was the clearance of large areas of forests. Statistics show that the area dropped from 340,000 acres in 1881 to 280,000 acres in 1921 of which 240,000 acres were in the 26 counties. As a result of further clearing and, also, the acquisition by the state of 85,000 acres of woodland the area of private forests in the Republic is now 90,000 acres only.

The grant of £10 per acre for private planting which has been available since 1946 did not prove sufficiently attractive as can be seen from the fact that in the last nine years planting under this scheme averaged a mere 350 acres *per annum*.

To the average Irish farmer, who needs all his available cash for developing and modernising his agriculture, forestry, if he thinks of it at all, is an undertaking which makes demands on capital and which gives no direct financial return during the early years of a plantation.

With notable exceptions the Irish farmer, in common with farmers in many other countries, lacks a knowledge of the rudiments of the

science and practice of silviculture and has little appreciation of the benefits to be derived from a carefully-tended plantation on his holding.

The increased grant will go far in solving the difficulties in regard to the availability of capital and we are glad to note that the Minister has announced his intention of launching a campaign of promotion of the idea of private forestry and of spreading a knowledge of the techniques of forest establishment and management by means of lectures and advisory inspections by competent forest officers and by the distribution of forestry literature.

This advisory and educational work is, of course, of the highest importance as the success of the scheme will depend not merely on the careful planting of an area with the correct species but on the proper care and maintenance of the plantation all through its life as well.

The case for private forestry is a good one. The aim in furthering it is to use the waste land of the country to the best advantage.

Elsewhere in this journal we publish a summary of a recent talk on the subject by the Minister for Lands which gives his arguments for private forestry as well as his plans for increasing the area under forests in private hands.

We congratulate the Minister on such a substantial increase in the planting grant and we assure him of our utmost co-operation in his efforts to convert the waste lands on the farms of Ireland into productive forest.

### **The Journal.**

For many years it has been the practice to publish a summer and a winter issue of "Irish Forestry". Some difficulties have been experienced in getting the numbers out on time due to holidays intervening and to pressure on the printers around the Christmas period. This has resulted in number 2 of each year's volume appearing in a different year from number 1. There was another disadvantage in that the summer number was published at a time when many members were on holidays or busily preparing for them.

The Council have decided, therefore, to publish future issues in Spring and Autumn each year and to effect the change-over this issue comprises numbers 1 and 2 for 1958.

### *Machinery Notes.*

In this issue we publish a note concerning a new chain saw. In future issues it is proposed to devote some space to any new forest machinery that would be considered to be of interest to members.

### **List of Members.**

In accordance with the policy of the Society that the roll of members should occasionally be published in the journal a complete list of the names and addresses is given in this issue. The list was last published in June 1955.