
Report of the Minister for Lands on Forestry for the Year ended 31st March, 1960

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THIS report covers a year of record achievement by the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands. The Department's planting target of 25,000 acres was achieved; this was the highest figure for area planted in a single year since State forestry operations began. Other record figures claimed are—201 miles of forest roads constructed in the year, and income at £380,295, the highest income level achieved for any year up to then.

There is a welcome return of some features, the absence of which was commented on by the reviewer last year. The table showing the area and condition of State forest lands at the end of the season 1959/'60 included in the appendix is a welcome and most interesting addition to the report, as is the map showing distribution of forest units in each county. A further refinement that it might be possible to include and which would be interesting to general readers is a table showing the percentage of forest to total area of each country.

While on this question of additional tables, it is still very difficult to get information on statistics of forests and forest industries in Ireland. It is laid down in the Forestry Act 1960 that the Minister may undertake the collection, preparation, publication and distribution of statistics relating to forestry and that he may disseminate, or aid in the dissemination of, information likely, in his opinion, to arouse, stimulate, or increase, public interest in forestry or woodland industries. I have to hand data about Forestry in the Netherlands in English, which gives, for example, information on the State Forest Service, including a chart showing the organisation and staffing and the numbers and grades of forest officers. Here also one can get all information on woodland area and ownership with private woodlands as well as State woodlands listed according to size category, as well as figures for the woodland area giving percentage of species and also yearly production, total growing, stock and increment and so on. A booklet on Statistics of Forests and Forest Industries of New Zealand (3rd Edition, 1961) gives 'in the language of figures' the story of New Zealand forestry during the last forty years, with close on ninety pages of statistical information.

While the Report of the Minister gives much information, it still leaves the general reader very ignorant of many aspects of forestry, and there are many examples from other countries of the type of information that would be of value to all interested in forestry in the country, particularly foresters, economists and students.

It is only when one reads, for review purposes, reports from other forestry services, where there are similar programmes of forest extension, that one misses in our own reports in recent times any reference to forest policy or any statement by the Minister on the aims and targets of forestry in this country. No doubt there is a well-defined forest policy for Ireland and the case for this can be backed by convincing reasons but there is no mention of policy in this report. Even when we come to target figures, there is some doubt as to what is meant. The report for the year ended 31st March, 1959, states that the planting target of 22,500 acres for the year was met. The present report, for the year to the 31st March, 1960, states that the Department's planting target of 25,000 acres was achieved! There are people who appreciate that this is the target set by the Government and is the average the Department must maintain to achieve the programme approved by the nation. There are also many people in this country and abroad who

do not know what is the aim of Irish Forestry or why we should be planting 25,000 acres each year and spending nearly £2½ million on State forestry.

On this matter of public relations and propaganda, the report states that, during the year, the Department continued to keep the public informed of the objectives and progress of the national afforestation programme by various means, but it is suggested here that it should be appropriate to include matter of this kind in the report.

T.C.
