

Review.

The Management of Forests.

by E. C. Osmaston; Published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.

"In comparison with other uses of land forests are large, sometimes very large covering hundreds of square miles, often scattered in many pieces so that one forest may be used for a variety of purposes and worked in several different ways on separate time tables of work and with separate units of manpower."

Consider with this quotation from the work under review the fact that the production processes involved together with the interaction of factors which effects that process take place over a a period of fifty years or more and one is presented with a very close appreciation of the complexities of the forest maanagement field. The process of management has been defined as the dynamic factor which provides cohesion and purpose to the various activities of people working in co-operation with each other towards a common objective.

This envisages an application and appreciation of management elements under the headings of planning, co-ordination, leadership and controls in the efficient working of the process. The interpretation of these basic principles in the context of a forest management process is because of the factors mentioned above an extremely difficult task. It requires a cohesive presentation of interacting precepts relative to various sciences, viz., economics, silviculture, mensuration, pedalogy, hydrology etc., in the light of their impact on the process of achievement of forest objectives, a truly herculean undertaking.

"The Management of Forests" achieves this in a most creditable manner. At the outset the basic scope of the forest management process is outlined in a manner which places in perspective all the interacting factors which are going to influence the process. It defines the objects of forest management in the most modern interpretation of what these objects are. It stresses the multiple land use aspects of forestry enterprises. The service and social functions of the forest in modern society are not overlooked.

The most up to date statistical analyses of the trends of world and national demands for forest produce are made available for study and interpretation.

This creates the setting for a presentation of the ideal — the normal Forest and a policy of sustained yield. Mr. Osmaston here however shows a very keen appreciation of realities when he refers to the necessity for flexibility in striving for perfection and emphasises the achievement of what is "practically attainable" rather than the rigid pursuance of an ideal. "The forester always has to deal with the growing stock and land in his charge as they actually are. It is

their present condition tempered by their potential productive capacity in relation to current and expected future markets that influences all planning and action."

This concept inevitably leads to consideration of the Growing Stock and its Increment and their impact on Yield Regulation. This indeed is the most significant sector in any work on Forest Management. The business of Forest Management is basically a process of control and/or manipulation of Growing Stock to meet predetermined yield objectives. This is dealt with in a most comprehensive style. To assist towards a clearer understanding of the principles inherent in various methods of regulation the well worked out hypothetical examples are extremely helpful. The whole purpose is summed up in the following extracts.

"The several methods of yield regulation that have been described demonstrate methods that have been devised to satisfy the principles that effect yield regulation. The basic principle is to prescribe a cut which guides the existing growing stock closer to that state which best satisfies the objects of management."

And in the context of our own (Irish) particular state of development . . .

"Yield regulation then becomes in reality a matter of combining the utmost use of what is available with the wise conservation of growth potential until more precision of purpose and method can be attained."

Having developed the principles applicable and the methods to be adopted in their application the vehicle of implementation must then be considered. Thus quite logically one is led to an analysis of the preparation and implementation of working plans. Again the presentation here is eminently practical and takes cognisance of an existing state of development with a phased approach which must necessarily be flexible towards the attainment of ultimate and evolving planning objectives. Well documented examples again facilitate understanding.

A most interesting and enlightening chapter is that devoted to an outline of the development of forest management from the earliest times. For any student of management or indeed for any manager a knowledge of the background from which the present science has evolved is very necessary to a true and proper appreciation that science. Mr. Osmaston has traced the development of forest management from the very earliest references of Biblical origin through the eras of the Roman Empire, Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, right through to the present day. He outlines developments in particular countries, Britain, France, Germany. He concludes with a resumé of the factors which have resulted in the complex management process which is forest management as we know it to-day. The scope of the process is enlarged out of all recognition to what it formerly was. Nevertheless development of new techniques involving use of specialist personnel, in the fields of O. and M., computerisation

of field data, photogrammetry as an aid to survey and assessment, have resulted in a more efficient implementation of the process. Finally the importance of an integrated organisation structure to ensure co-ordination of effort of all the varied interests involved is stressed. This is the framework within which the dynamic influence is exercised in the process so that decisions are taken which lead to action. In the long run success in this field will depend on human activity. "The human factor of a man being able to cope with a mass of varied activities, assess their relative values and make sound decisions remains and will always remain the prime influence on success or failure."

Mr. Osmaston's work, "The Management of Forests" can be recommended to any student of forest management. In particular it will be of value to any working managers at any level insofar as it presents a balanced and assimilable picture of management in action in the most up to date context. The profession should benefit from its perusal and study.

L.C.