

Conferences

LAND USE, CARLOW

A new organisation, *The Irish Society of Agronomy and Land Use*, held its inaugural meeting in Carlow on the 5th and 6th June, 1969. This society is a pioneering one in that it seeks to bring together all those with an interest in land use questions in the hope that, by inter-disciplinary discussion and argument, the basic facts will be established on which land use policy decisions can be made. The society concedes that policies will be decided by others, but hopes to provide the best possible factual basis for the policies.

Among the attendance of 175 there were about a dozen foresters representing the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands, the Agricultural Institute and the University.

Formal papers were given on soils, climate, systems analysis and crop production, forestry as a land use enterprise, horticulture as a land use enterprise, determinants in the alternative uses of land, and amenity uses of land.

In his introductory paper on the soils of Ireland, Dr. Pierce Ryan, who heads the National Soil Survey, described the four main use range classes into which our soils had been divided:

CLASS 1: Wide use range. 32% of area. These are the best soils on which agriculture could be economically competitive in an open free market. These soils are completely suitable for tillage, grassland, forestry, etc. 67% of the soils of Co. Carlow are in this category.

CLASS 2: Somewhat limited use range. 9% of area. These soils can be improved, but may not reach the level of economic competitiveness of the soils of Class 1. Suitable for grassland and forestry only.

CLASS 3: Restricted use range. 30% of area. These soils also can be improved, but not up to the productivity level of Classes 1 and 2, and can never be economically competitive under agriculture. This class includes many of the poorly drained mineral soils and accounts for 64% of the soils of Co. Leitrim.

CLASS 4: Extremely restricted use range, 29% of area. This class includes the bogs and iron pan podsols. In many cases these can be considerably improved.

Mr. T. McEvoy, Inspector General, Forestry Division, in a paper on forestry as a land use enterprise, put forward the case for forestry on good forestry land, emphasizing that this

was not necessarily synonymous with good agricultural land. As he described it, good forest land appeared to coincide largely with Dr. Ryan's Class 3.

An interesting view was put forward by Mr. K. McWhinny of the Institute for Physical Planning and Research (*An Foras Forbartha*). He suggested that, from an amenity point of view, afforestation impaired a unique feature of the Irish scenery, its openness.

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