

# IRISH FORESTRY

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## Editorial

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### Whereto we pass

Where America leads, we usually, like it or like it not, follow. Let us examine then our future.

At present in the southeastern states they are planting the "third forest." The first was the primeval; the second was regrowth, now almost cut out. The third will, they hope, provide more timber on less land. For this they will depend heavily on genetically improved stock. Everything is mechanised: site preparation (90-ton tree crushers); planting (1000 seedlings per hour); and logging, with a lone man in an air-conditioned cab doing the work of dozens of labourers with simpler machines.

In the Douglas fir region of the Pacific Northwest the Weyerhaeuser Company has laid cold-blooded plans to increase productivity on 5.6 million acres of woodland. Every stage will be monitored, even the weather conditions under which nursery stock may be lifted will be specified. Spacing control, fertilisation with nitrogen (from helicopters), thinning, all will be scheduled and varied according to site class, which is being intensively mapped.

Sentiment, clearly, is out. Would advocates of the "alternative species" please note.

Then there is the other pressure, from the effects of industry. During the 1860s sulphur dioxide from a smelting plant killed nearly 20,000 acres of trees in Tennessee. In the 1920s trees were killed up to 40 miles from a copper smelter in British Columbia. In 1949 fouride poisoning damaged trees within 50 miles of an aluminium ore plant in Washington. Other serious cases led to control measures. We are at the very beginning of this phase. We have had damage; we have few if any effective control measures; we plan more industries.

Planned and dragooned from one side, poisoned and polluted from the other, our future may look bleak. One thing is sure, though; it will be bleaker still unless we ourselves get vigorously involved in its planning and management.