

# Obituary

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HENRY J. GRAY

1918—1971



Henry Gray, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Lands with responsibility for the Forest and Wildlife Service, died suddenly on 19th November last in Portumna. He was on a tour of inspection with particular emphasis on multiple use of forest land, the integration of timber production with wildlife management, recreation and environmental improvement, a development with which his name will always be associated.

He entered the department of Lands in Dublin in 1936 and as an executive Officer and later as a Higher Executive Officer in the combined Land Commission/Forestry Establishment Branch, he came in contact with Forestry problems, policies and personalities. But his forestry career began in earnest with his promotion to Assistant Principal Officer in charge of the newly formed Forestry Establishment Branch in 1951. In 1954 he was appointed Principal Officer with administrative responsibilities and in 1967 he became Assistant Secretary in charge of the Forestry Division.

These are the bare bones of his official life. However, through his determination, his dedication to his work, a rare ability assisted by a phenomenal memory, he invariably succeeded in exerting an influence on events far beyond what might be inferred from his rank. While he may have appeared on superficial acquaintance to have been a "typical Civil Servant" his constant search for new approaches to problems and his refusal to accept the conventional restraints and precedents belied the outward appearance.

He came to the Forestry Division at a time when it was recovering from wartime restrictions and when afforestation policy was being reviewed. In 1951 the FAO Cameron Report recommended a planting programme of 25,000 acres per annum at a time when the forest area was only 150,000 acres. Its implementation involved enormous expenditure and led to an administrative reorganisation to bring forestry more closely into line with Irish Civil Service practice, a change which was not easily achieved. As the new structure evolved he became more closely identified with and more deeply committed to forestry as something far more than just the arm of the public service in which he happened to serve. He fought hard and successfully for the funds, the staff and the conditions of service which he considered necessary for fully efficient working. He introduced or supported many innovations and saw them through their teething troubles. An outstanding example was the introduction of work study and incentive bonus payment for the labour staff at a time (1957) when industry generally was only cautiously feeling its way in this field. In 1958 he was responsible for an economic analysis and forecast for state forestry which was a remarkably able assessment of the contribution of forestry to the national economy and which formed the basis for the forestry sector of the Government's First Programme for Economic Expansion.

An event which turned out to have far reaching repercussions for himself and for forestry was his appointment as Irish delegate to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources of the Council of Europe in 1963. His chairmanship of this Committee (1965-7) was a recognition on an

international scale of his abilities but it also alerted him to the growing importance of multiple land use and of scientific and recreational values which was to become the dominant pre-occupation of his later work in the Forestry Division. He was a natural choice to become the administrative director of the National Committee for European Conservation Year 1970 to which he made such a dynamic contribution as Vice-Chairman under the Minister for Lands. These events, followed by the transfer of wildlife activities into his area of responsibility ensured a radical change in the outlook and activities of the Forestry Division in accordance with modern trends. The shift of emphasis was epitomised in the change of title to Forest and Wildlife Service in 1971.

One tends to emphasise these, as it were, external stimuli which he brought to bear on a service founded to provide a national timber supply. But his contribution to the original goal was also considerable. In particular his part in freeing land acquisition in 1967 from "ceiling price" limitations and in the adoption of a realistic land price structure deserves mention as a most significant development in forest policy.

His concentration on the development of the Forest Service was such as to appear to leave little time or energy for other activities. Yet he was extremely active in the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau of the Dublin Diocese of which he was Honorary Secretary from 1942 until his death. His knowledge of emigrant problems gained in the Bureau led to his appointment in 1969 by the Minister for Labour to the Committee on Emigrants, where his experience and advice were greatly valued. He still found time for a happy family life which included skilled woodwork and the creation of a remarkably fine rock garden.

What kind of man lay behind all these activities? Essentially he was a man who fulfilled himself in creative action, one who did not relax easily who had little time for small talk and social trivia who was less interested in the study of people *qua* people than in action for their betterment. He had exceptional self-confidence which, combined with his all-round ability, ensured success in many diverse fields. He was not wont to accept readily the views of others but subjected every proposal to close analysis, made up his mind and, having done so, pursued his objective unrelentingly. He was, of course, a perfectionist and found delegation difficult. Yet he pioneered assignment of ultimate responsibility to technical staff, for instance, in important aspects of land acquisition and he recognised the necessity for further delegation in the field of forest management, especially at Divisional level.

In the end the unrelenting pressure took its toll. But he had seen forestry through a critical period of expansion to acceptance as an important and permanent element in our pattern of land use. Forestry and in particular the Forest and Wildlife Service will for ever be in his debt. May he rest in peace.

T. McEVOY

A. M. S. HANAN

We regret to announce the death of Tony Hanan, which occurred while this issue was in press. A full obituary notice will appear in our next issue.

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