

IRISH FORESTRY

Volume 29

1972

No. 2

Editorial

The Forester as Advocate

The drumlin region of Leitrim, Fermanagh, Cavan and Monaghan has in recent decades come to be regarded as prime forest land, the forestry equivalent of Meath for beef or Manitoba for wheat. This same land is classed by soils experts as, at best, marginal for agriculture, and that view appears to be gaining some ground among politicians.

Historical events in Ireland, however, have led to a sense of "land hunger" within the farming community. Any land capable of producing a blade of grass should be allowed to do so (is the belief) and its ownership assigned to some individual to supervise that activity and to profit from it, even at the expense of heavy subsidies from other sources.

This feeling has come to the surface in Leitrim recently, culminating in a public meeting which appeared to question the descent of forestry operations from the mountains and bogs. The attitude displayed is probably due to a considerable extent to ignorance of the potential contribution which forestry in that region can make to both national and regional prosperity.

Clearly a public relations campaign is necessary. This is something to which each individual member can contribute, in private discussions in pub, club and by the fireside. The basic facts have already been published in this journal. "Spruce growth rates on drumlin soils" (Volume 27, No. 1, 1970) establishes the extraordinarily high rates of growth which can be achieved, and "Forestry and Irish Economic and Social Development" (Volume 27, No. 2, 1970) gives the general economic arguments, and details the many ways in which successful timber production can benefit the community.

The facts and arguments are there, but need to be disseminated. You can advance the aims of this society, and the national interest, by assimilating all of these and using your individual contacts to make them widely known.