

IRISH FORESTRY

Volume 30

1973

No. 1

Editorial

The media and us

I suppose foresters may take some consolation from the fact that the spate of recent writing about our agricultural potential in the EEC will at least marginally increase the consumption of wood pulp. Doubtless the use of paper wrapping in the presentation of the merchandise will also be envisaged.

This is poor enough comfort.

The sheer brainwashing effect which the prospect of apparently unlimited goodies has on the agricultural lobby can be seen in the following example. Last February the agricultural correspondent of a daily paper took up the story of the use of helicopters by the Forest and Wildlife Service of the Department of Lands for the fertiliser treatment of forest crops. In a farming supplement in the same paper in March this has become "the work being carried out by the Department of Lands on aerial fertilisation. This involved the use of helicopters to spread fertilisers on land . . . where output of grass and vegetation can be dramatically boosted to carry vastly increased stocking rates". (No mention of forestry or trees).

Writing in the same supplement on "The potential of hill and marginal land", a prominent agricultural research manager classifies such land into five categories. He deals in some detail with one, the dry mineral hills, which he sees as having the greatest agricultural potential; cursorily with another, the shallow peats; and of a third, deep peat, he says that beef production is "technically feasible", a phrase which usually means that something is just not on. We are thus left with the impression that all marginal land has great agricultural potential, although no consideration at all has been given to one of the five categories, the drumlin soils of the North and North-west Midlands. Such are the subtle methods which must be met and countered.

What is conspicuously absent, though, from all these dithyrambic fantasies, is any attempt to reconcile their message with the Mansholt proposal of 1968 to remove at least 5 million hectares from agricultural use in the EEC countries over a period of ten years.