

Notes and News

MINISTER'S SPEECH

The Minister for Lands, Mr. Tom Fitzpatrick, T.D., spoke as follows at a Press Reception given by the Society in Dublin on 5th. October 1973 to introduce the 1973 series of Guided Forest Walks:—

It was with pleasure that I accepted the invitation to say a few words here this afternoon. Dedication is a rare enough commodity nowadays when self-interest tends to dominate much modern thinking and when the Society of Irish Foresters invited me as Minister for Lands to launch their 1973 Programme of forest walks, I was very happy to take up that invitation. In our country where afforestation necessarily has, to a great extent, been left to the Government rather than to the individual and where, for that reason, there might be a dividing gulf as it were between the ordinary man and the State undertaking, it is very rewarding to find a dedicated group such as the Society of Irish Foresters forming a bridge in communications.

This, I think, is the fourth year in which the Society have sponsored these guided walks which, I am aware, have grown tremendously in popularity even in that very short time. This year's programme of walks covers the length and breadth of the country and, as always with the Society of Irish Foresters, it is happily true to say that the programme embraces north and south. Thankfully in these troubled days when bridges between men are liable to be burned as quickly as they are built the Society recognize no boundaries in their dedication to the profession that they are proud to follow.

I am very happy that as always there has been full co-operation between the Society and the Forest and Wildlife Service of my Department in this initiative and I can give an assurance that such co-operation will continue to be forthcoming. It would be my wish that as many people as possible should take part in the scheduled walks during the coming week-end so that they may not alone enjoy an afternoon in the woodlands but can acquire, as the Society's leaflet says "a deeper understanding of the role our forests play in the economic and aesthetic development of the country."

There is little more for me to say, ladies and gentlemen. Actions speak louder than words and the work of the Society of Irish Foresters in giving of their time and expertise in this initiative is something that merits the highest commendation.

In concluding, I would wish to convey my personal thanks to them and to express the wish that this year's programme will be, as I expect it to be, an even greater success than those that have gone before.

CONTINUING DAMAGE TO SITKA SPRUCE

Mr. O. V. Mooney (Forest and Wildlife Service, Dublin) has supplied the following note.

Severe damage to Sitka spruce and to a lesser extent to contorta pine was noticed in many places from May onwards in 1973. The general impression is that the most severe damage was experienced approximately north of a line from Galway to Dublin but particularly in the north western counties, and even in situations near the sea. Where damage was severe all live needles and almost all buds even on trees up to 5 m or so on Sitka spruce appeared to be killed, while with contorta pine the few centimetres of spring shoot growth had been rendered flaccid in some places.

The date suspected for this frost is the 29th April, 1973 when there were a number of records of temperatures below -10°C (grass min.). For instance, temperatures of -13°C at Glenties, -14°C at Lullymore, -12.8°C at Ballinamore and -10°C at Birr were recorded for that date.

Sitka spruce has been subject to severe punishment in recent times. It was damaged in the same northern and western regions by an extraordinary frost in September 1972* and there has been continual and exceptional infestation of *Elatobium abietinum* in the last three years or so, all of which one feels must combine to result in substantial loss of increment.

*See Irish Forestry Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 21-24.

RACISM IN DEER — AN ETHICAL DISTINCTION

The article in this issue by Rory Harrington may cause some readers to feel uneasy about its purpose. They should not. We must draw a clear distinction between the aim to preserve genetical integrity in plants and animals, and the idea of racial purity among human groups which has been advocated, and indeed put into practice from time to time. The preservation of genetical integrity in animal and plant species and races is a perfectly legitimate exercise, being little more than an attempt to slow down the approach of that overall randomness which will be the ultimate victory of time (with a little help from the thoughtlessness of mankind). A similar attempt with the human species is now generally

agreed to be completely wrong, although further discussion of this would be outside the scope of this journal.

LONG-SERVING AUDITOR

All members will wish to join in an expression of gratitude to Mr. D. M. Craig who resigned as Honorary Auditor at the end of 1972. Mr. Craig has held the office of Honorary Auditor since the foundation of the Society in 1942. The auditor's work is not immediately obvious to the general membership, but a succession of treasurers have paid tribute to Mr. Craig's professional skill and patience in his annual sorting out and putting into order of the Society's accounts.

THE CASE FOR FORESTS AS CROPS

An attempt to educate one of the better-informed sections of British public opinion as to what foresters are really trying to do, and why, was made in a detailed article entitled "Forests Are Crops" by Edward Hyams in the weekly *New Statesman* in September. Mr. Hyams is a well-known serious writer on a wide range of subjects, his books including a sumptuous volume on Irish gardens. In this article he is particularly harsh on the "haters of change." He admits some sympathy for what he terms the "aristocratic" attitude which "puts money returns where they belong . . . in third place after aesthetic and social considerations" but claims there is a long way between that and "objection to planting over-grazed and exhausted upland because you happen to like a particular kind of view." He points out the various subsidiary effects of forestry, well known to foresters, and draws attention to the situation where the forester can never be right. Having planted an against all opposition he then comes back at the end of rotation to clear-fell, to face a further uproar at his vandalism.

ENERGY GROWS IN TREES

Imagine this advertisement appearing on your television screen:
Man, no longer young, plump, balding, smug. Leans nonchalantly against tree in woodland setting. Speaks:
"Invest your energy in trees and forests, and earn 600 per cent. Tax free."
Taps tree trunk twice with proprietorial air.
"Get with the right one."

If that advertisement did appear it could be more truthful than most.

Gordan F. Weetman and Stuart B. Hill, two Canadian forest research workers, have recently done some calculations on the rate of return, in terms of energy, from fertiliser use in forests. In a paper given at a forest fertilisation symposium New York State University, College of Environmental Science and Forestry in August 1972, they worked on the assumption that urea, spread at 400 pounds per acre on spruce forest growing at 40 cubic feet per acre per year (very low by Irish standards), would produce an increase in growth of about 30% per year over ten years. The extra timber produced would have an energy content of about 120 million B. t. u. or six times the combined amount in the raw material and energy source used to manufacture the fertiliser.

REPLACEMENT FOR OAK

Oak has been the traditional material for the manufacture of canal lock gates. But because of the severe conditions to which they are subjected they have to be replaced at regular intervals. In England in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to get home-grown oak in the large dimensions needed for lock gates, and a recent issue of *Timber Review* (No. 24) records the use of African Dahoma to build gates for the Wey and Godalming recreational waterway in Surrey. Tests on Dahoma indicate that it has qualities, including durability, similar to those of European oak.

NATIONAL FORESTRY DAY, MOSCOW

In Moscow, according to Alan Brien writing in *The Sunday Times* last August, each industry is given a day to itself on television, to explain what it has done. Since there are four channels the programmes have to be good to hold their audiences. National Forestry Day apparently did not succeed in doing that. "But that was our fault," they told him. "If we had used a really creative approach, it should have been entertaining to all."

LAST ISSUE'S COVER

Due to an error the details of the cover picture on our last issue were omitted. The portrait was of Augustine Henry (1857-1930), plant collector, pioneer tree breeder and Professor of Forestry at the Royal College of Science, Dublin. The original, in the Henry Herbarium, National Botanic Gardens, Dublin, was painted by Celia Harrison and was reproduced by kind permission of Mr. Aidan Brady, Director.