

*ASPECTS OF FOREST MANAGEMENT.* A. Noifalaise. Council of Europe. 1968.

THIS booklet of twenty-eight pages, subtitled *Ecological consequences of the intensive cultivation of resinous (sic) trees in the deciduous zone of temperate Europe*, has just reached us. Although it is stated that "the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe", nevertheless the association with that body require that we at least accord to the booklet the courtesy of careful examination. On doing so we find that it overstates its case to a degree which to any careful and informed reader will do it more harm than good. We find many of the old arguments which we are familiar with from our own "anti conifer" lobby, arguments which should be countered whenever possible in order to reduce, if possible, the very great amount of public misinformation on this subject.

There is hardly a page without a questionable assertion, but space is limited and printing is expensive, so we must limit ourselves to a few examples.

"The growing of conifers . . . can podsolise such soils to a depth of 20 or 30 cm. So what? If conifers grow happily on podsoles and greatly outproduce hardwoods why object if they bring the soil into a condition which is more natural for them?"

"It is also frequently noted that on such soils there is a drop in productivity from the second plantation onwards." So would there be also under agricultural crops if they were grown without adding fertilizers to replace the nutrients removed by the crop. Presumably the reason that no such drop has been observed under hardwoods is because the production is so low and the rotation so long that it is not worth looking for.

Irish foresters will be interested to read that "it is a well-known fact that plantations are unlikely to succeed when the depth of peat exceeds 100 cm or 40 cm depending on whether the subsoil is sandy and permeable or clayey and impermeable". (Remember Lewis Carroll's Bellman's classification of Snarks: *Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite, | From those that have whiskers, and scratch.*)

On page 16 we are given a "hypothesis requiring checking", about the relative water consumption of conifers and hardwoods. A paragraph later this has become "initial conclusions" which are "supported in theory by what is known nowadays about the mechanism of water and energy exchange in plant masses".—As nice an attempt at "blinding with science" as you would be likely to meet with in a day's walk.

But perhaps the kernal of the matter may be found in the state-

ment that "nature can be commanded only by obedience to her laws". This is a craven and defeatist attitude. The essence of civilization is the overcoming of natural laws and instincts, and the subjection of natural processes, through understanding, to the rational will of mankind.

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