

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Statistics, it is said, can be manipulated to prove anything. The same it could be said to hold true for quotations. With this in mind I cannot allow the editorial comment in *Irish Forestry* (Vol. 33, No. 2) to lie fallow without comment.

Let me too, start with a quotation—a quotation from William James' book—*The Varieties of Religious Experience*—"Our normal consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lies potential forms of consciousness entirely different".

Applied logic has its place: It is however not of greater importance than other means of perception. Many discoveries in science were spawned not from the application of scientific principles but through flashes of insight beyond the realms of logic. With vaulting righteousness we hold firmly to the belief that until an event can be proven mathematically it must be held suspect. Yet we accept that mathematical reasoning itself rests on the soft ground of supposition.

On the question of landscape, response to beauty appears to be a reflex action towards the recognition of symmetry and proportion—hence as the editor suggests, a modern aeroplane can be considered beautiful. On the question of function, a primeval forest is truly functional in the intricate workings of its tightly woven fabric. A modern forest block has an arrested function where the full expression of that landscape is suspended for the production of a limited objective. The amenity work carried out in these production forests, and which is so shallowly referred to in the editorial as a "sagging boundary here . . ." etc., are developments to relieve some of the visual starch of these production forest stands.

On the matter of forests and the general public the answer is unguardedly simple—the public are looking for "Beauty". We come to play. We come seeking the opportunity to be raised above our ordinary existence and to swirl around ourselves the great evolutionary tapestry at least for a few hours. And we come to walk the lonely forest roads with the wind and rain on our faces and to reflect in this honest and uncompromising world, on ourselves and on our private circumstances. And last of all, we come because we know not why—but we come for reasons beyond logic, for reasons that lie in our hearts beyond the expression of words.

And as I began, let me conclude with a quotation, a quotation from the German poet Goethe: "We should do our utmost to encourage the Beautiful, for the Useful encourages itself".

Yours faithfully,

P. MacOscair

**Editor's Note:** Due to the length of the Symposium proceedings other features have been held over to the next issue.