

Obituary

SEAN MacBRIDE, S.C.
1904-1988



Sean MacBride will not be remembered by the foresters of Ireland as an international Statesman, as a Nobel Peace Prize winner or as a Lenin Peace Prize winner.

He will be remembered by us as the man with the unshakable view of the importance of forestry and of the possibility of forestry for this island. More than that – when it was not popular to hold such ideas he spoke of his conviction to those who would hear, and to those who would not hear, and his words were of metal that stood out in their logic against the immutability of men of lesser vision.

Where a country has no trees neither policy nor science will create forests – it takes vision to do that: it takes vision in a man who can give that vision political expression.

The Committee on Irish Forestry appointed by the Department of Agriculture in 1907 concluded that “All the men of experience and expert knowledge are agreed that in soil and climate, Ireland, for forestry purposes, is particularly well favoured . . . On the question of her capacity to grow timber as well as any other country in Northern Europe there can be no doubt whatsoever”.

Sean MacBride said that one of the reasons which prompted him to undertake the founding of Clann na Poblachata in 1946 was his failure to convince Mr. Eamon de Valera to pursue a more active afforestation policy.

He secured in the first Inter-Party Government an annual planting rate of 25,000 acres per year and succeeded in getting this endorsed by Dail Eireann in the Economic Recovery Programme.

In correspondance with the Taoiseach in 1981 he expressed the view that: "our state forests are probably the most valuable natural renewable resource we have".

At the AGM of Trees for Ireland in 1980, at which the author was present, Mr. MacBride expressed the view that "we should seriously consider increasing our plantation rate from the present 25,000 acres per year to 40,000 acres per year by annual increments of 1,000 additional acres each year".

"For a human being to reveal truly exceptional qualities, he must be observed over a long period of years." This is an extract from *The Man who Planted Trees* by the French writer Jean Giono. Sean MacBride's sustained belief in the value of forestry must allow us to conclude that he too had exceptional quality in this regard. He will now be missed. He will be missed by those who believe in the potential of Irish forestry.

Pat McCusker