

Forestry News

COILLTE TEORANTA – THE NEW IRISH FORESTRY BOARD IS LAUNCHED

The Minister for Energy, Michael Smith T.D. announced the formation of Coillte Teoranta, the Irish Forestry Board, on Wednesday 21st December 1988 at Avondale, Co. Wicklow.

In his speech to an invited audience of approximately 300 people, representing various sectors of the community, Mr. Smith briefly outlined the evolution of Irish forestry. He paid tribute to the people responsible for the early years of forestry development in this country, and he also commended the efforts of both the public and private sectors in bringing forestry to the healthy state that it is now in.

He went on to state that "in recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to exploit the full commercial potential of forestry and to operate it as a business. It has become increasingly obvious that a Civil Service structure was not the best way to achieve these objectives. While the Forest Service had done a very good job in operating Forestry within a Civil Service context, it lacked the necessary freedoms to respond to the commercial demands of forestry development and to ensure that forestry operations fully reflect commercial standards and criteria.

The Government, therefore, decided



The former Minister for Energy, Mr. Michael Smith T.D. left, photographed at Avondale with Mr. Pat Cooney, the chairman of the board of the new State forestry company, Coillte Teoranta.

to establish a new commercial state-sponsored forestry company, Coillte Teoranta, and to assign to it the major functions previously undertaken by the Forest Service. This decision was implemented through the Forestry Act, 1988."

In discussing the funding of the new company, Mr. Smith said "the Government recognise that, despite the progress which has been made in forestry development in recent years, and it has been very real progress, public forestry has not yet reached the stage where receipts from sales and other miscellaneous activities cover costs. The Government, therefore, accepts that the company will require substantial financial assistance in its early years, especially if it is to maintain significant planting programmes. All this is reflected in the Forestry Act, 1988, but I want to stress that the financial provisions in that Act are expressions of the upper limits which might be provided and are not to be regarded as self-operating mechanisms which will automatically provide the indicated funds on demand. The actual funding to be made available will depend on the particular circumstances prevailing and on the development plans and progress of the company.

It would be a serious illusion if the company saw the Exchequer as a constant source of financing. That certainly will not be the case. The Government expects the company to stand on its own feet, to conduct its business in accordance with the requirements of the marketplace, and to reach profitability as quickly as possible. I should also say that Coillte Teoranta is in the very fortunate position in that substantial assets, financed over the years through

taxpayers' monies, are being transferred to it without any obligation to repay the expenditures incurred in their creation. For any company this is a tremendous head start. Accordingly, the onus is now on Coillte to put its inherited house in order and to provide substantial returns on the taxpayers' investment.

I will, therefore, critically examine the performance of the company in assessing its funding requirements. While I will, of course, be prepared to provide financial support where warranted, I do not intend to give Coillte a comfortable existence. In particular, I intend to look very hard at any proposals for the guaranteeing of the company's loans. In this regard, I will be very anxious to avoid anything which might give the impression that the State has any responsibility for the financial outcome of the company's activities. That responsibility rests with Coillte. A commitment to commerciality must permeate all parts of its organisation, from the Board downwards. The company is now being freed from Civil Service constraints and it will have the necessary flexibility and freedom to conduct its business in a commercial way like any other private sector company. It will have no excuse to do otherwise and I do not intend to accept any excuses.

The current development of our forest estate will have a major influence on the cash break-even date of the company. Because our trees are at a certain stage of growth, it will take some time before overall profitability is reached. There is not much the company can do to increase the growth of trees, but it can certainly do a lot in terms of increasing its revenues and reducing its operating costs. I expect it to do so and, in this

way, achieve a much earlier break-even position than would have been the case if forestry had continued to be operated within a civil service structure.

Because of the very important public business involved in this enterprise, it was inevitable that the Oireachtas would include in the legislation which it enacted a number of provisions giving various powers to Ministers of the Government. I want to assure the board that these powers will be exercised in a realistic manner. Obviously, we will expect the company to continue to achieve the national planting targets as otherwise we would not be able to bring into being the larger forestry activity which we foresee for the future. The burdens of achieving those targets will be diminished by providing access to Community funds and it must be expected, too that the Government will take them into account in considering the overall financial position of the company.

Another area in which the need for some control arises is the question of disposal of the company's basic assets outside what might be regarded as the normal course of its business. We are expecting the company to get the most out of the working of its assets and we could not look with equanimity at a situation in which bad performance is cloaked by the company selling off parts of its heritage to balance the books. On the question of performance we will also be looking to the company to establish accounting and management procedures which have the effect of placing responsibility for the achievement of results on the appropriate shoulders and enabling speedy action to be taken to ensure that the enterprise as a whole and all its constituent parts are maintained on

course to reach the goals which we lay down for it."

In relation to the restructuring of the State forestry organisation, Mr. Smith said that the Forest Service, like any other organisation, is capable of improvement. He stated that "in my view, there is considerable scope for organisational reform, for the elimination of unwieldy and costly procedures, for the adoption of better practices in the forests, for the introduction of new arrangements to reduce outgoings on purchases and increase income per unit of sales and for the identification of the optimum utilisation of land and other assets. There is a need in general for the creation of an entirely new culture in relation to forestry which will eliminate outdated procedures and emphasise instead the need to run an efficient operation which will give the people of Ireland a better deal for their money.

In short, I expect Coillte Teoranta to have a fundamental look at forestry organisation, structures and practices, to identify the most efficient and cost effective way of conducting the business of forestry within a commercial environment, and to bring about radical improvements in productivity at an early date.

To the Board of the company I therefore say this: You have been given very great responsibilities. You are now the custodian of public forestry development. I look to you to discharge your mandate wisely and to take the necessary action to ensure that Coillte Teoranta operates to the highest standards of effectiveness in dealing with the important public assets which are being placed in your care. If you provide the proper leadership and motivation I have

little doubt that you will procure the proper response from the staff of the company who also have such a vital role to play.

I know that I have set the company, its Board and staff hard tasks. But I am also very confident that they will meet these challenges with confidence and

commitment and that Coillte will fulfill our high hopes for it. I am sure that it will be a company of which we all can be proud and will be a standard bearer among state-sponsored bodies."

Mr. Smith finally announced the board members of Coillte Teoranta as follows:

Chairman

Pat Cooney

M.D. Tipperary Water.

Board Members

John O'Halloran

Mary Leonard

Tony Stapleton

John Costin

Benny Moloney

Jan Alexander

Paddy Glennon

Patrick Flynn

Woodfab, Aughrim, Co. Wicklow.

Stokes, Kennedy, Crowley.

47 Woodlands, Navan.

Portgloriam, Kilcock.

Former Asst. Chief Inspector Forest Service.

Crann, Killegar, Co. Leitrim.

Glennon Bros., Longford.

Federated Workers' Union of Ireland.

Coillte's New Chief Executive

Mr. Martin Lowery (right) was appointed on the 11th January as Chief Executive of Coillte Teoranta, the new State sponsored company with responsibility for forestry. Mr. Lowery is a native of Galway and left the position of an executive director of the Industrial Development Authority where he was responsible for natural resources, Irish industry and company development divisions. He was formerly operations research analyst with Aer Lingus. Mr. Lowery now takes responsibility for Coillte's 2,500 strong workforce and faces the task of changing a State controlled venture into a commercial business.

We wish him every success with his new appointment.



TROPICAL DEFORESTATION – WHY BOTHER?

A report of Chuck Lankester's visit to Ireland

by

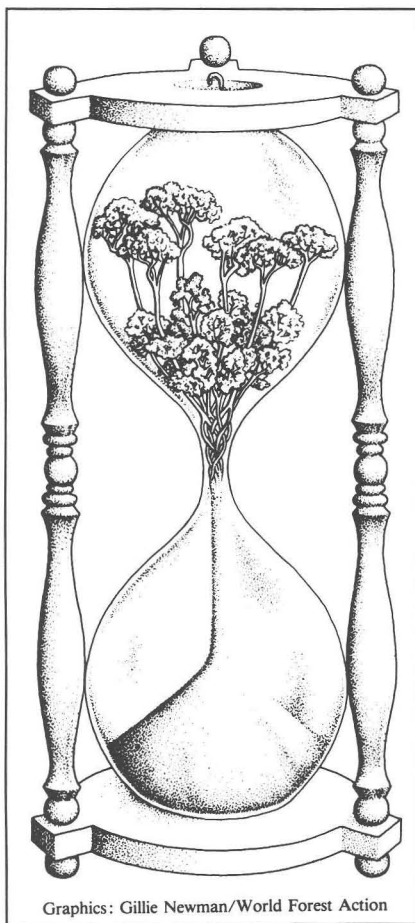
John Gilliland

The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) was started in 1985 and acts as an umbrella organisation for international agencies and governmental and non-governmental aid agencies to combat tropical deforestation. It co-ordinates strategy and policies on a national level to ensure a unity of approach and purpose. TFAP hope to channel \$800,000 to stopping deforestation over the next five years. Chuck Lankester of the United Nations Development Programme was one of the founders of the Programme and is deeply committed to its success.

Chuck Lankester agreed to address a meeting organised and partly sponsored by the Society of Irish Foresters on December 3rd entitled 'Tropical Deforestation – why bother?' On the day of the meeting the Forest Service hosted a lunch for him at Avondale House where he met representatives from the Forest Service, Society of Irish Foresters, Department of Foreign Affairs, UCD Forestry and Agricultural faculties and from various overseas aid and development agencies.

The meeting, which was open to the public, was held on a Saturday night in Belfield where over 250 people filled a lecture hall to capacity. Chuck Lankester is a natural orator who believes with a passion in the cause of stopping deforestation and as a result his lecture was excellent.

He explained that tropical forests are being destroyed at a rate equivalent to clearing the Phoenix Park every 50



Graphics: Gillie Newman/World Forest Action

minutes. Such wide-scale destruction of forests results in water and wind erosion, loss of species and genetic diversity, lack of forest produce and the removal of peoples' natural environment. Some

three hundred million people are sustained directly by the existence of forests, nearly one hundred million can now no longer find enough fuel to satisfy their cooking and heating needs. One species of life form in the tropical forests becomes extinct every day where 40% of all life forms are present. Recent famine in Ethiopia can be linked to loss of forest where forest cover has dropped from 40% to 4% resulting in large-scale desertification in only a hundred years. Floods in Bangladesh are directly related to felling of the watershed areas on the Himalayas. Degradation of apparently lush rainforests can easily occur as most of the sites' nutrients are locked up in living matter and in many cases the underlying soil is poor and impoverished. Deforestation can also affect climate. It is estimated that the burning of forests contribute to 20% of all the carbon dioxide produced which adversely affects the ozone layer as well as removing a sink for carbon and a source for producing oxygen.

He went on to state that clearly deforestation is having dramatic global consequences. The main agent of forest clearance is the slash and burn practice whereby landless farmers clear a plot of land to farm for one or two years before the site is devoid of nutrients and then move on. Other reasons are logging, roading and development operations, agricultural expansion, resettlement programmes and urbanisation. These may not completely destroy the forest cover but can result in a degradation of the site which becomes increasingly worse over time.

Those clearing the forests, however, are only the agents and not the cause of deforestation. The underlying problem

is poverty and the inequitable distribution of land. The solution is primarily a political one allied to education, financial and technical support. The aim of the TFAP is the management of trees and forests for sustained output of forest goods and services without destroying soil, genetic and other environmental resources. It has taken 60 million years to create the tropical forests but only 60 years to destroy half of them.

Mr. Fergal Mulloy of the Forest Service gave a reply to the paper from an Irish Foresters perspective. He explained that over £21 million of tropical hardwoods were imported in 1987 mainly from West Africa. This represents the clearing of an area of tropical forest of some 4,000 ha. He said that there is a role for Irish species such as lodgepole pine and ash which, if suitably processed and treated, can substitute for many of the tropical imports. There is also a role for Ireland to play in helping to change the ecological, social and economic disasters that face tropical countries.

The meeting created a great awareness about the problem of deforestation amongst the media. Chuck Lankester was interviewed for several radio programmes and accounts of his talk appeared in the national press.

Such a visit cannot be achieved without sponsorship and the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Environmental Studies, UCD and the Forest Service in gratefully acknowledged.

An interesting postscript to Ireland's role in tropical forestry is the recent appointment of Ray Keogh of Coillte to identify and develop the potential of overseas forestry consultancy work.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SILVICULTURE

by

Gerard Murphy

Cherry

– A Forgotten Species

S. N. Pryor, in a publication entitled "The Silviculture and Yield of Wild Cherry", (Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 75), describes the silvicultural characteristics of a rarely planted species. His findings are based on a study in which 40 stands throughout Britain were visited. The natural range of the species extends throughout Europe and into Western Asia and North Africa. The species thrives on deep moist well drained soils. Light sandy or badly drained soils should be avoided, as should exposed sites.

The species is easy to establish and is a rapid early grower. Spacing can be as wide as 3 x 3m (110 per ha) provided regular pruning is carried out. The species is a light demander and heavy thinnings are recommended to produce large diameter stems as soon as possible. This is essential for a species which is short-lived with a marked tendency to form heart rot. Heart rot is considered to be an economically devastating disease. Pryor suggests that good silvicultural practices and site selection can reduce it to an acceptable level. The yield class of the species is higher than most other hardwoods grown in Britain. A rotation of 55-60 years is feasible provided regular and heavy thinnings are carried out. The wood is much in demand for its good wood properties. It appears to have the same kind of potential as ash in terms of profitability of hardwood species.

Containerised Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce

Provisional regimes for growing containerised Douglas fir and Sitka spruce are described in Research Information Note 141, issued by the Forestry Commission Research Division. The type of polythene greenhouse together with container design are described. Growing medium, fertiliser and fungicide requirements are outlined. Conditioning of the plants by drought stressing or manipulation of photoperiod are discussed.

Heterobasidion Annosum (Fomes Annosus)

– Two Devastating Cases

In an article published in Forestry Vol. 61, No. 4, Pratt and Greig outline a rapid spread of Fomes in two young first rotation stands of Norway spruce. Evidence points to the fact that infection of inadequately protected or unprotected stumps served as the origin of the disease. Although most infection appeared to occur from stumps created in first thinning, it was also possible that infection may have occurred from some cut Christmas tree stumps on one of the sites. Also the second site, which had an intimate mixture of Scots pine and Norway spruce, had a rapid spread of the disease into the surrounding crop when the nurse species of Scots pine was removed. The reason for the rapid spread appeared to be a combination of susceptible species interplanted at close

spacing, and a light sandy soil which allowed effective disease transmission. There was a major economic impact on both sites, not only in terms of volume loss but in the decision to clearfell prematurely. Estimates of economic impact are provided. In one site they estimated a loss of potential revenue of 91 per cent. These case histories highlight the potential of the disease to markedly reduce the economics of a forest crop and the importance of proper stump protection.

Root Growth in Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir Transplants

J. J. Philipson, in a paper published in *Tree Physiology* Vol. 4, pp 101-108, provides an interesting study on the relationship of root growth in Sitka spruce and Douglas fir transplants with carbohydrate reserves and shoot phytosynthate. He found that new root growth in Sitka spruce was relatively independent of shoot growth compared with Douglas fir. Sitka spruce relied more on the starch reserves within the root. New root growth in Douglas fir transplants was dependent on a living connection with the shoot. These findings are discussed in relation to the establishment of these species on forest sites. Rough handling of Douglas fir may result in a reduction of current phytosynthate, thereby inhibiting root growth and reducing establishment success. In contrast new root growth in SS can rely on starch reserves in the roots, giving the plant a chance to recover from handling damage.

Noble Fir for Christmas Trees

Research Note 3/88, published by the Research Branch of Coillte Teo.,

provides a long-awaited guide to the establishment and care of noble fir plantations for the production of Christmas trees. The Note provides information on the optimum seed sources, site selection, site preparation, planting stock, fertilisation, vegetation control, and pests and diseases. Seed from registered Danish and Irish stands should be the first choice. Noble fir grows on a wide variety of soil types but for Christmas trees moist mineral soils are recommended. A planting distance of 1.2m square is ideal. There is a great need for care in planting. Good quality 2+1 transplants or containerised plants should be used. Fertiliser and weed control schedules are supplied. The Note also outlines the various pests and diseases common to noble fir. Two fungal diseases, needle cast and a needle blight/root rot complex, are described. The length of time it takes for a crop to reach harvestable size (2m tall) depends on factors such as seed source, soil fertility and silvicultural management. However, harvesting normally starts at year 8 and is completed by year 10 or 11.

Harvesting Christmas Trees -Saw Attachment

A new clearing saw attachment that is said to increase the productivity of Christmas tree felling has been introduced by Husqvarna Power Products Company. The key to the design is a blunt six inch probe that acts as a sled to guide the saw along the ground and a guard that covers nearly three quarters of the blade. With the attachment the operator pushes the saw along the ground until the probe encounters the tree stem. The counter clockwise rotation of the blade pulls the attachment

snugly against the tree. This stabilises the saw until the cut, up to 6" in diameter, is complete. The probe also acts as a sled, allowing the operator to cut a very low stump while protecting the blade from dirt and rocks. The design

allows the operator to stand comfortably while cutting, eliminating the need for crouching. Blind cutting problems are eliminated.

(Journal of Forestry, January 1989)

SAFETY FIRST IN WICKLOW WOODS

by

Vanessa Downey

Lacken Wood in Glencree Valley, Co. Wicklow gave UCD forestry students the venue for their first chainsaw competition which was held on 8th April 1989.

The event, which took place on a beautiful spring day amid idyllic Wicklow scenery, was organised by Eoin Murphy, a third year forestry student at



Photographed at the students chainsaw competition were, left to right: Clare Boylan, 3rd Prize; Hugo McCormick, 2nd Prize; Andy Murphy, Liffey Distributors; John O'Sullivan, Coillte Training Centre; Gary Williamson, 1st Prize; Pacelli Breathnach, Coillte Training Centre; and Dave Higgs, Liffey Distributors.

UCD. FDB Insurance, Liffey Distributors and Carlow Farm Machinery, gave sponsorship with Coillte, the new State owned forest company, providing the site for the event. The stand of timber used for the competition had been sold to Woodfab of Aughrim.

In total 13 competitors, which were all students, participated in the event. Each competitor had eight minutes in which to fell, trim and cross-cut one tree into three lengths. The tree had to fall between posts placed two metres apart. The average diameter of trees felled was 27 centimeters but some less lucky competitors had to tackle trees measuring over 40 centimeters.

The judges, Mr. John O'Sullivan and Mr. Pacelli Breathnach of Coillte Training Centre in Mountrath, Co. Laois, emphasised safety in their assessment and awarded marks for safety clothing,

correct techniques and accuracy as well as speed and skill.

Gary Williamson (third year, UCD) won first prize. Hugo McCormick (also third year) came second, and Clare Boylan (fourth year) took the third position. Mr. Dave Higgs of Liffey Distributors presented prizes worth £200. Announcing the winners, Mr. O'Sullivan commended Gary Williamson for achieving the remarkable score of 146 out of a possible 152. He also commended Clare Boylan for her outstanding safety technique and expressed satisfaction that most competitors had paid particular attention to safety.

Mr. O'Sullivan said that he hoped the Wicklow chainsaw competition would become an annual event. The organiser, Eoin Murphy, stated that this would be the case and he hoped that it would attract spectators as well as competitors.