

## Obituary

### THOMAS REA 1931-1988

"Death is a poor untidy thing" wrote George Moore, misremembering Synge, but how apt it is we often have occasion to realise, never more so than with the death on 18th October 1988 of Tommy Rea, Assistant Secretary in the Forest Service of the Department of Energy. He was with the Minister on a journey to the U.S. to promote investment in forestry in Ireland when he died in his sleep in New York.

Tommy was born in Dublin on 30th September 1931. His formal educational qualifications included a B.Comm. (U.C.D., 1958) and M.Sc. (Economics/Statistics, T.C.D., 1976). He joined the Civil service in 1949 and served in the Department of Social Welfare before joining the Forest Service in June 1963. From November 1976 until his promotion to Principal in July 1980 he was analyst in the Forest Service. He became Assistant Secretary in December 1985.

In the course of his work in the Service Tommy was involved in a number of major developments. Perhaps the first of these was an interdepartmental study of the State planting programme (1974) which concluded that "the rates of return on the investment were sufficient to justify continuance of present afforestation policy". He was also deeply involved in the study published as *The Case for Forestry* in 1984 and which also led to confirmation of the Government's overall policy objective of an annual planting target of



10,000 ha. One of his tasks as Principal was to organise the servicing of the heavy demands for information and analysis which emerged from the Review Group on Forestry which reported in 1985, and whose report led eventually to the setting up of Coillte Teoranta by the Government in 1989.

A development which gave him particular satisfaction was the creation of the holiday chalet enterprise at Killykeen Forest Park, Co. Cavan, in which he played a central role.

This journal also is indebted to him for his carefully researched paper entitled *Irish State forestry: government policy 1948-1959*, which sorted out finally the history of that policy.

Tommy's personal character is easy to describe. He was a public servant of the highest integrity. At the same time he was one of the best known, most popular and highly respected officers of his own Department. He moved with equal ease in all other organisations with which he came in contact. He was serious about his work, but even the most earnest and difficult discussion or meeting would invariably be lightened by one of his witty remarks, always appropriate to the occasion.

Tommy was conscious of the achievement which the national forest estate represents, and of the

extent of the human resource in terms of experience and knowledge which had been dedicated to that achievement. He was very concerned that the difficulties which have beset the public service in recent years should not be allowed to jeopardise any of that achievement. Time, of course, will be the ultimate arbiter of that.

Our sympathy goes to Betty and Susan as we say with Catullus: "*Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*".

Niall O Carroll.