

To the Clerk of Committee,

I have staggered my way through the proposed new Forestry Bill and find it very heavy going. Making I am sure very necessary Legislation for managing forestry in the future.

But I would like to make the following points.

1 FORESTRY NEVER WAS OR WILL BE VIABLE IN THIS COUNTRY.

Two years ago I was pleased to meet David Bill who was "headhunted" by the Forestry Commission in England to assess their woods and reported that they would never make money. As a major director in forests in Africa Australia and North America, he told me what I already knew, but he also gave me practical information and figures like:- That to be economical a wood should produce at least 25MAI. That is 25 tonnes per hectare annually for the life of the crop or 1000 tonnes after 40 years. The Forest Service is probably producing 400 tonnes after 50 years if they are lucky. We must accept that we cannot be profitable.

2 It should be the Objective to create Woods for the future generations

I spent my life in Forestry. I joined in 1954 and started work in Tollymore, after training in Benmore I started work in Barons court clearing up "windblow" I then went on to establish forest in East Fermanagh and North Antrim, followed by 12 years making Castlewella Forest Park. Before returning to Co. Antrim to harvest timber. I recall that after my first year there my assistant and I made an assessment of our costs against Income, and I do not recall the exact details, but there was very little profit when Labour PVM and Materials were totalled, without considering HQ.overheads etc. The next big "windblow" in 1984 stopped any further assessments. All this "windblow" made me realise that we must create more stable forests and I have written articles and letters about this to no avail and there is no effort being made even to this day. Though on a visit to Western Ireland, and recently on a Golf T.V.programme I seen hillsides using the type of draining and ground 'prep' I was promoting.

Where there is suitable ground conditions there should be a real effort to establish forests which would stand for ever and yield a crop of produce every 10years and be re-established either by natural re-generation or planting. This forest would be a haven for numerous species of animals and birds as well as being a beautiful place for walks etc.and if there were 100,000 ha. Of this type of forest there would be a constant supply of wood for sawmillers. I often think of my days in Castlewella, and of the men who planted the trees up past the Castle on the north shore round about 1740.

3 The Main areas of forests should be in Government Care

The forest should be created by the people for the people. If the emphasis is placed in investing in "Private" ownership, it will only preclude the population of the Land from having access to their investment, which should be free and made readily available to everyone.

This would involve designating areas for specific forms of recreation from wheelchairs to

rally cars, from shooting to bird watching, and be free.

*THE LARGE FICT AREAS OF BLANKET AND RAISED Bogs should be returned to NATURE*

As I mentioned before I was instrumental in establishing a large part of Breen Forest in North Antrim. I remember well walking over the mountain prior to Ploughing , there were between 8 & 10 coveys of Grouse on that hillside and top as well as a strong population of large mountain hares, when I left there were none . Between Breen Ballypatrick Slieveanorra and Ballybradden we succeeded in wiping out Grouse in North Antrim as have other plantings in Derry Tyrone and Fermanagh. As these areas will never be viable, they should be returned to nature. Some of the hillsides with shallow peat could be retained if a proper drainage system was established. A Research Officer Dave Dickson who spent a great deal of his time seeking chemical solutions to growing trees on peat once said when we were talking about how the trees would be taken off the deep peat that we should develop a machine which would lift the tree off the peat roots and all and forget about replanting ! He was right!

5 I have printed off parts of the Forestry Bill "explanatory and financial memo" and I see in clause 4 that the dept. is committed to a Woodland Assurance Standard of sustainable forest management. I do not know how this "standard" can be attained with the present policy of premature "clear-felling", causing a drastic change of habitat in 1 or 2 weeks. I have not had time to obtain the Environmental Impact Assessment (forestry) Regulations (NI) 2006 and would be thankful if you could send me a copy,

Yours Faithfully,

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*Fred Topping* 29/10/09

MOB 0798 987474!

*Sorry my red ink seems to have run out*