

ental tuberculosis animals. The need for such a room arose during the war years, when the chemotherapy of tuberculosis was under investigation, and precautions were necessary to prevent the transmission of infection from inoculated animals to either uninoculated controls or to the workers. The room has now been in use for several years, and periodic tests of the atmosphere by split sampler counts or falling organism counts have invariably given good results.

A series of three papers by the West Midland and Aberystwyth workers of the Ministry of Agriculture discussed temperature-compensated tests on raw milk with particular reference to the resazurin and methylene blue tests.

The four demonstrations were a welcome innovation at a meeting of this Society. Dr. C. B. Taylor illustrated a silica gel medium prepared by a new method, and the same worker demonstrated a new type of colony-illuminating chamber. Dr. C. L. Hannay, of Reading, also demonstrated two forms of colony illuminators—one suitable for petri dishes and the other for rolled tubes. Mr. H. P. Sherwood, of Conway, demonstrated a small roll-tube apparatus, for single tubes and suitable for laboratories where such an apparatus may be required only at infrequent intervals.

Notes on these demonstrations together with the full papers will be published in due course in the *Proceedings* of the Society, the editor of which is Dr. T. Richards, Bacteriology Department, University, Reading.

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT

THE twenty-ninth annual report of the Forestry Commissioners for the year ending September 30, 1948, has been recently published*, and from the point of view of Great Britain as a whole, the three most interesting items are the dedication scheme, timber production and the progress of land acquisition. Also of interest is the present arrangement between the Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The area of forest that has been planted, namely, 36,404 acres, is 10,048 acres more than in the previous year, but is 6,600 acres short of the area aimed at. The total area of land acquired by the Commission is now 1,477,000 acres, 36,350 acres having been acquired during the year. This was in deficit of the area laid down. Of the area planted, 23,932 acres were on new land, and 12,472 acres were replanted on felled woodlands. Soft woods were chiefly employed, such as Norway and Sitka spruces, Scots and Corsican pines, and the larches, European and Japanese. The principal hardwoods, a small percentage of the area planted, were oak and birch, and this is a serious problem because the brunt of the present-day excess fellings in Great Britain is falling on the hardwoods.

The most contentious question, which the report deals with in a rather slurred fashion, is the dedication scheme. With a greater realization of what the scheme implies and aims at, even when modified, private owners are mostly strongly opposed to some of the clauses. In fact, any owner of land would

object to saddling it in perpetuity with some of the conditions set forth in the dedication proposals. It is this naturally strong objection much more than the question of timber prices, curiously referred to in the report as a "burning question", which forms the weakest link in the scheme. As is being pointed out, at present wage-scales and other items, forestry can scarcely do more than make ends meet. On the other hand, the capital value of the asset is great. Dedication precludes the owner for all time from utilizing this asset.

As regards timber production, the report is very discouraging. Owing to economic difficulties and restrictions on the imports of timber, fellings in the remaining woods of such a small island as Great Britain still continue at an inordinate rate, mainly in oak and other hardwoods on private estates. Sixty-seven million cubic feet were licensed for felling, an increase of twelve million cubic feet over that for the year ending September 1945. It may be asked, who is actually responsible for this state of affairs? The fair face of Britain, an asset which attracts a multitude of visitors to its shores, is being threatened with a rapid and deteriorating change. Moreover, the fellings, apparently entirely uncontrolled, are often wantonly and wastefully extravagant, as is commonly to be seen in the felling of the younger and smaller sized standards in a crop with a coppice undergrowth. The scale of these hardwood fellings is far exceeding the annual growth being put on to the existing woods and can in effect, as the Commissioners point out, only be maintained for a very limited period. We now have, and the taxpayer pays for, a Forest Service in Great Britain. At least it should be left to lay down the total annual amount of felling safely possible in Britain, and this figure should be accepted by the Cabinet Minister responsible.

The Commissioners say that the progress of land acquisition is disappointing, and they attribute it to the general economic situation, rendering owners unwilling to part with their land, and with the greater importance of food production. The attitude of some of the officers of the Commission on this subject is curious. They appear to regard it as almost a duty of a landowner to sell his land for afforestation purposes if required and to disregard all ideas of sentiment, long ownership and so forth. On the other side, a close and friendly liaison has come about with the agricultural departments, all land now acquired being subject to a settlement as to how it should be used, for planting or agriculture. Under the Forestry Act of 1945, land acquired through the Forestry Fund is vested in the appropriate Minister for England or Scotland. The Minister may place such land at the disposal of the Forestry Commissioners or may manage any of it for agricultural purposes. As a result of this new procedure, large areas of land hitherto managed by the Forestry Commission, but either unsuitable for afforestation or unlikely to be required for planting in the near future, are being transferred to the agricultural departments. This is a wise and notable departure. A forestry department, especially a young one, saddled with large areas of useless (for forestry purposes) land and having to act and carry out the duties of a land agent or factor, suffers a grievous handicap, as has been proved times without number in the past, to the detriment of the real work for which the forest officer is trained.

E. P. STEBBING

* Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Forestry Commissioners for the Year ending September 30, 1948. Pp. 68. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1949.) 1s. 3d. net.