

true that the probability of an accident is greater for a young person than for an adult.

The Chief Inspector directs attention to the increase in accidents due to transport other than rail, where the 1958 figure was more than double that for 1948, and to the need for much more attention to problems of safety in the use of road transport within factories and other work-places: greater care, for example, might be exercised in selecting drivers and operators of such transport. Accidents associated with the use of power presses again increased in spite of great efforts to evolve better designs and methods of guarding, and greater attention to maintenance of these machines and their guards appears to be needed.

The new arrangement of the report gives prominence to the aspects of special interest to the scientist. There is a separate chapter on the problems encountered by the Inspectorate in relation to nuclear energy and ionizing radiations, which covers electrical instrumentation and the control of nuclear reactors, as well as the preparation and fabrication of special metals used in reactors, the preparation of enriched uranium, the handling and treatment of irradiated

fuel rods and sealed and open sources of radiation. A chapter on fire prevention stresses the need to report dangerous occurrences which are not associated with personal injury, and attention is directed to the possibilities of eliminating sources of ignition by less hazardous arrangements as well as to the hazards associated with waste and with the handling of inflammable liquids even on a relatively small scale. The limitations of devices based on developments in modern telecommunications techniques are discussed and special attention is directed to the hazards associated with organic peroxides. Here and for the handling of mercury the report details a number of specific precautions, and the advantage of placing any potentially explosive plant, such as that for handling hydrogen, outside any occupied room and where explosion is unlikely to injure anyone if it occurs, is indicated. The scientific interest of the work of the Inspectorate is further illustrated by the list of inter-departmental committees on which inspectors have served, and the report records 407 inspectors of all grades in posts at the end of the year with vacancies for nine general, eleven chemical, eight engineering and two medical inspectors.

THE BRITISH FORESTRY COMMISSION

THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT

AS remarked in the opening sentence of this report*, by far the most important event of the year in British forestry was the statement on policy made in Parliament. In view of the developments and progress since the post-war policy was adopted in 1946, planting is to continue at approximately the current annual rate of 60,000 acres for another five years, after which a significant reduction, about a fifth, is envisaged, when the older plantations will be coming into full production at an age of around fifty years. There is no specific abandonment of the old national target of five million acres of productive woodland for Britain as a whole, though it is recognized that its strategic basis has altered considerably. No specific target is set for the planting of private woodlands, currently running at 32,000 acres annually, but the policy of encouraging planting and more intensive management is continued, the acreage grants being raised and somewhat modified. Action is also being taken to improve the marketing of produce from these private woodlands as it has long been recognized as unsatisfactory, with consequent discouragement to owners and potential investors. The increased grants were offered on condition that owners organized an effective association for marketing and connected purposes, and they have in fact now done this on a regional basis; at the same time, the warning is given that the grants are not to be viewed as a permanent subsidy, but only as an initial stimulus and help which should fairly soon become unnecessary. Felling licences will be continued, not to restrict felling to a predetermined quota, but to ensure acceptable felling practices and replanting where necessary.

* Forestry Commission. Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Forestry Commissioners for the year ended 30th September 1958. Pp. 84+7 plates. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1959.) 5s. net.

Once again, difficulties in acquiring the necessary land for the annual planting programme constitute a major handicap, and the necessity of paying rather higher prices than in the past is accepted. It is hoped that more land will become available particularly in Scotland and Wales, where the expansion of forestry will provide diversification of employment and important social benefits.

Although one of the most direct benefits of increased timber production in Great Britain should obviously be a gradual reduction of imports which run at present at around £170 million per annum, we should now be entering a phase of quite considerable development of wood-based industries; this should more than compensate for some drop in consumption of unprocessed wood, such as has occurred with pit-props and railway timbers. The opening of a large hardwood pulp mill on the Severn estuary is an important event and is being followed by similar developments in various parts of Great Britain. The possibilities of small-scale pulping are under special consideration and seem quite promising.

Expenditure on research now stands at more than £300,000 annually. A short summary of progress in the several branches of the work is included in this report though a full account is published separately. Research facilities have been greatly improved during the year by the provision of a large new building which was formally opened in July.

Reviewing the situation as a whole, it is clear that the decision taken forty years ago to remedy the extremely unsatisfactory forestry position in Britain has been acted on with a measure of success that rarely attends such long-term ventures, and we are now rapidly approaching the time when the returns, both direct and indirect, will be coming in at a rapidly increasing rate: already sales of produce are bringing in more than £3,000,000 in the year.