

LAND USE—A PERSPECTIVE FROM SCOTLAND

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EXTENSION'S CHANGING ROLE

It is a great honor to be speaking to you about land use planning in Scotland, a country which, after all, is smaller than many of your American states. But perhaps it is the limited area which makes land use planning of particular significance.

Since 84 percent of land is in agricultural use, any discussion on land use in Scotland should start with agriculture. My own work in extension is concerned first with agricultural land use. But in extension work of this kind one inevitably becomes concerned with the effect on agricultural land of nonagricultural development.

It is important to appreciate that criteria other than hard economics must be considered in land use planning. Land use change of any kind affects the environment and its quality. It can affect the sensible preservation of what may be old but is aesthetically or historically good to preserve. Within agriculture it may affect soil fertility and future productivity. But above all, it can affect ordinary people, their work, their prospects, and the social structure in which they live.

BACKGROUND HISTORY

By the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Scots had patched up their quarrels with the English, what is now known as the Agricultural Revolution was under way. Scottish "lairds" (landowners) who had become members of Parliament after the union of the English and Scottish Parliaments in 1707 were bringing back new ideas from England and Europe and applying them on lands which they owned in Scotland. Land was enclosed and made into fields. Trees and hedges were planted. Land was drained. New crops were introduced. The introduction of the turnip, for example, had a profound influence on Scottish agriculture. It meant a cleaning crop in the rotation, but above all it supplied more food for cattle in the winter months. This meant more and better fed cattle which produced more farmyard manure. The more farmyard manure, the better the crops. The better the crops, the

more cattle could be kept. Livestock production became, and still is, the major segment of Scotland's agricultural economy.

All through the nineteenth century enlightened landlords and farmers kept improving and developing. A divinity student in Dundee invented the first practical reaper in 1827. Tile drainage was introduced. The use of artificial fertilizers was developed and increased. Big substantial farm houses and buildings were built.

The loss of land for urbanization because of the industrial revolution was not regarded as a problem as it is today. For one thing, urbanization created a greatly increased "doorstep" demand for food. For another, better road and rail communications and the coming of the steamship opened up the rapidly expanding markets in England. All this made the middle part of the nineteenth century a golden age for Scottish agriculture in the Lowlands. There was a recession from the 1870's to the beginning of this century, partly because of imports of cheap surplus grain from America. Yet by the time of the first World War, farming was in a position to make a tremendous contribution to much needed food supplies.

Unfortunately there was a great slump in agricultural prices in the 1920's and early 1930's, with the result that many farmers went bankrupt, and although few farms in Scotland were abandoned altogether, many of them, even good arable farms, were run with a major proportion in grass and grazing livestock. Farms could be bought at throw-away prices, and landlords were hard put to to get anything but very small rents from tenants.

POSTWAR YEARS

Since the last war we have had another agricultural revolution, which has been profound, and which has taken place at a speed that has been almost bewildering at times. Not only have we had great changes in agriculture, but the pressures on land for industrialization have become very great indeed. Excluding land lost to forestry, we have been losing an average of almost 6,000 acres per annum since 1960, for roads, housing, industrial development, sports and recreation grounds, and other uses. At first sight this may not appear to be very serious, in view of the fact that agriculture and forestry will still be using about 90 percent of Scotland's total land acreage. But if development continues to follow the pattern which has emerged over the postwar years, the land lost will tend to be better quality agricultural land. Now better quality agricultural land is a scarce commodity in Scotland, for out of the 16.5 million acres classified as land in agricultural use, only a little over 4 million acres is classified as arable and grassland.

THE HIGHLANDS

The hill areas or Highlands of Scotland are in many ways a self-contained problem. After centuries of feuds and cattle stealing between clans, the eighteenth century saw an important stock breeding industry established on the high pastures. The sturdy strain of black cattle were driven over the drove roads of Scotland to markets in the south and in England, a tale which in some ways parallels your cattle droving days in the Far West.

But after the middle of the eighteenth century the Highland lairds discovered the greater money making possibilities of large sheep farms. Many of the small tenants who had depended on their cattle were literally driven out to make room for sheep. It was then that the great exodus of Gaels to America and the towns began.

Sheep farming prospered for a time but after the Napoleonic wars in the early nineteenth century there was a recession. The sheep in turn were all but driven out, and the areas of deer forest and grouse moor kept purely for sporting purposes increased. Again there was an exodus of people, and again the land suffered from neglect.

Some of the people settled on poorer land around the coasts of the northern parts of Scotland. Others remained in Shetland and on the Western Isles, and in some pockets on the mainland where evictions had not been wholesale in the first place. These areas now constitute what is known as the crofting areas of Scotland.

THE CROFTING PROBLEM

Now fewer than 16,000 crofters occupy just over 18,000 crofts. Most of the crofts are small. Eighty-five percent of them provide less than two days' work, or two days' income per week. Nevertheless crofters occupy more than 2 million acres of land, much of it in the most beautiful parts of the country, where the balance between development and conservation is delicate, and where the care of the countryside is of great importance.

The social and economic problems of the crofter are peculiar. Geographically crofters are mostly in remote and underpopulated areas, and until recent years there was the feeling that official planning paid scant attention to their specific problems.

A crofter, provided he complies with the statutory conditions of his tenancy, can hold the croft in perpetuity and pass it to his heirs, but his tenancy is still, at law, an annual one. His security

of tenure is subject to the landlord's right to resume part of the common grazings or inbye land, or indeed the whole croft for "a reasonable purpose," a very comprehensive category indeed! A crofter is under a statutory obligation to provide a house and buildings which he does not own, which he cannot sell, and which he cannot use as security if he wishes to borrow money. These, and other anomalies, make up what has become known as the crofting problem.

But fresh legislation is on the way. The special problems of the crofting areas led to the appointment of the Crofting Commission in 1955, and in 1968 that commission submitted to the Secretary of State its recommendations for modernizing crofting. Among the recommendations was the conversion of crofting tenure to owner occupancy for all crofts on an appointed day. Another suggestion was the offering of standard grants for non-agricultural developments on part-time crofts. There has been long and concentrated discussion of these and other suggestions which are now in the final stages of debate in Parliament.

A most important fact about crofting land is that in the Highlands, unlike in most other agricultural areas which have structural problems, the poor land is much more fragmented than the good. The enlargement of a holding therefore does not necessarily produce a viable farm. It simply means that the crofter holds a larger area of land. It may make sense to amalgamate areas of good land, but the amalgamation of crofts on poor land to make viable agricultural units would mean the end of a social system which can support far more people than could an economy based on agriculture alone. It is far better to work toward a part-time or more properly a spare-time crofter, who obtains employment within reach of his croft, or by fishing, weaving, and tourism as many indeed do now.

AFFORESTATION

Since the last war a fairly large tree-planting program has been undertaken in Scotland, invariably on hill land where sheep farming predominated. Controversy arose in the postwar years because of what upland and sheep farmers described as indiscriminate planting of large areas of hill land. Because the Forestry Commission already owned the land, there was a tendency to plant trees without due concern about the integration of forestry and agriculture. Fortunately that phase has passed to some extent, and farmers on the uplands and hills now realize that fairly large blocks of trees planted judiciously over a wide area can alter the micro climate to the benefit of farming and livestock production.

The annual planting rate for forestry is now approximately 40,000 acres, about half of which is in the crofting areas. The Forestry Commission must discuss any proposals to acquire farm land with the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, so that due account can be taken of the relative advantages of leaving it in agriculture or taking it for afforestation.

In recent years private forestry investment groups have been purchasing farms at above agricultural value for extensive afforestation on behalf of clients who wish to secure the 60 percent remission of death duties at present allowed on land used for forestry or agriculture. There is as yet no mechanism for preventing what is proving to be considerable inroads into good uplands suitable for the rearing of cattle and sheep.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING THE HIGHLANDS

According to the most recent report issued by the Highlands and Islands Development Board (which is responsible to the Scottish Development Department), it is expected that by the last decade of this century 6,500 acres of land in the Northeast of Scotland will be needed for housing and industrial development. In 1968 a case was made for industrial development there and as a result a big aluminum smelting plant is now in operation. More recently the discovery of oil in quantity in the North Sea has led to unprecedented activity around the coasts in the East and Northeast of Scotland.

This latest report, however, makes a courageous effort to assess farming, which is on very good land, in the rapidly changing environment of the region. While it is accepted that some agricultural land will be needed to allow economic development, agriculture itself will benefit because of the greatly increased population largely dependent on oil-based employment. This report should ensure that farming interests in the area are fully taken into account as economic development goes ahead, and it should also strengthen the understanding between industrialists, planners, and the farming population. But the report does not offer a solution for the problem of relatively low paid workers employed in agriculture and forestry or engaged in catering for tourism, leaving more distant glens and Highland areas for the big money oil-based jobs.

THE ROLE OF EXTENSION IN LAND USE

As the pressures on land grow, agricultural extension workers must become more and more aware of, and involved in, the problems which arise from change in land use. There are special pressures and problems for those farming on the fringe of urban and

industrial development. Here, the extension worker must be active in promoting better understanding between the urban population and those who earn their living from the land. We should make full use not only of specialists involved in agriculture as such, but also of those attached to official organizations concerned with other facets of land use.

CONCLUSION

In the back of my mind is the belief that any country which does not produce a high proportion of its own basic food supply is strategically weak, and vulnerable to "demand" prices for imported foodstuffs. Remarkable progress has been made in the intensification of production, particularly from our better land, and no doubt scientists and farmers have many innovations in store which will raise yields per acre and the capacity of grassland to carry more stock. But more intensive use of resources can lead to problems of husbandry, maintenance of soil fertility, and ecological balance. This emphasizes the necessity of a realistic land use policy in relation to current and anticipated economic and social pressures.

PART IV

*Agricultural and Foreign
Trade*

