

Your New Forestry Laws

By

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and

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During the Second Session of the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, many important bills on agriculture, trade and commerce, forestry and the like were passed by both Houses. Through the resplendent leadership of Hon. Guillermo R. Sanchez, Congressman for Agusan, and Chairman, Committee on Forests, several forestry bills were introduced. Some were signed by President Magsaysay, and the others are still pending in said Committee for further study and improvement.

Among those signed by the President are:

(1) *Republic Act No. 1252*—A law amending certain sections of the "Pasture Land Act," by requiring persons leasing or using public land for pasture to put up at least one head of large cattle belonging to the lessee or permittee for every five hectares thereof, and providing additional penalty for the violation of said Act. This amending Act remedies the defects of the old "Pasture Land Act." The old provision regulates the issuance of lease or permit to use or occupy pasture or grazing lands but there are no penal provisions for the violation thereof. So that, a lessee or permittee most often uses the land not for pasture purposes, but for agricultural ones, thereby defeating the very purpose of the law. The old provision also fails to provide certain requirement for a lessee or permittee to fulfill immediately upon being granted a lease or permit to use a pasture land. Because of lack of such requirement, a lessee or permittee may not begin the contemplated

cattle industry for two or more years after the approval of his lease or permit, thereby making the pasture lands applied for to remain idle and unused. This amending law, with its penal provision, will surely improve our cattle industry, for failure for the lessee or permittee to put up at least one head of large cattle for every five hectares of pasture land within the designated time, will cause the automatic cancellation of his lease or permit. And if our cattle industry is improved, it means also — great saving of our "dollar allocation."

(2) *Republic Act No. 1239*—A law requiring the registration of agents, contractors and dealers in logs, lumber and commercial piles with the Bureau of Forestry. This will add income to the government and at the same time will regulate the *illegal activities* of so many "river loggers" and "subcontractor loggers" who are active in many places throughout the Philippines and, apparently, seem not cooperative with our forest officers.

(3) *Republic Act No. 1273*—A law amending Section 90 of Commonwealth Act No. 141, otherwise known as the "Public Land Act." The amended Section provides, "that the applicant agrees that a strip forty meters wide starting from the bank on each side of any river or stream that may be found on the land applied for, shall be demarcated and preserved as permanent timberland to be planted exclusively to trees of known economic value, and that he shall not make any clearing thereon or utilize the same for ordinary farming purposes even

after patent shall have been issued to him or a contract of lease shall have been executed in his favor." The painful experience of China, United States, and even our provinces such as Cebu, Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte where disastrous consequences always occur of allowing farmers to cut down indiscriminately the forests that serve as a protecting cover on the lands that border streams and rivers, greatly impresses our legislators. This amending law will minimize wanton cutting of trees along banks of streams which causes the soil cover to become loose and openly exposed to wind and water erosion; check and/or minimize disastrous floods which always cause and inflict a heavy damage on standing agricultural and commercial crops; conserve the moisture in the soil along the banks of streams; and reduce the effects of sudden inundations.

(4) *Republic Act No. 1288*—A law regulating the planting, gathering or selling of "tubli" and other poisonous plants and to penalize any violation thereof. This will stop the evil and most common practice of fishermen along the coastal towns throughout the Philippines of catching fish by means of poisoning them with "tubli." This will also improve our fishing industry. Incidentally, this provision also applies and regulates government bureaus and agencies which conduct "tubli" planting within the public domain.

(5) *Republic Act No. 1342*—A law providing for the appropriation of one hundred eighty thousand pesos (P180,000.00) for the procurement and propagation of coffee and cacao seeds and seedlings for distribution at cost to planters in the Philippines, and for other purposes. We take cognizance that the consumption of coffee and cacao all over the world has increased steadily and prices have gone up. The Bureau of Plant Industry, at present, does not have enough funds to undertake this gigantic task, to help develop our coffee and cacao industries. So, this law provides sufficient funds for the acquisition and distribution at cost of coffee and cacao seeds and seedlings to planters in

the Philippines. This will minimize the shortage in the supply of coffee and cacao in the islands and to meet the increasing demand of the people who are addicted to those two profitable growing-concerned crops. Much have been said that too much "dollar" can be saved if we give material and technical encouragement to our Philippine agricultural capitalists. This Bureau implements *wise land-use policy* by the *Tree Farm Lease*.

(6) *Republic Act No. 1350*—A law which provides funds for the operation of the government of the Republic of the Philippines during the period from July 1, 1955 to June 30, 1956. This appropriates funds for the expenditure, operation and maintenance of the different branches, departments, bureaus, and other agencies of our government, and for other purposes.

To our fieldmen and other forestry co-employees, we greatly appeal to YOU that it is not enough that we, the more fortunate ones, know some of the forestry laws now existing and enforced; it is not enough that we observe and practice their prohibitions and limitations; and it is of less value if we only memorize them like we pray our "Holy Rosary," for to do so, we will only become like "perfect recording machines" — talking without understanding. What is most important and needed today is to let those people, our brethren, who are living in the remote towns, barrios and other places, be acquainted with our forestry laws. For us, who know less, are less probable to violate them; for those who know nothing, most often find themselves behind the "bars for not knowing." "Ignorance of the law excuses no one from compliance therewith"; ignorance of the people is not a tenable premise for their excuse. It is more of our primary concern in life, to let them know what are those past and recent legislations affecting forestry, rather than to leave them . . . for self-knowing. For unless we do this, unless we let the people love and cherish the forests, and unless we let them know the immediate
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