

SCHOOL FORESTS *

Love of trees is essential to an understanding of the importance of forests to national welfare and prosperity.

Civilizations have disappeared through a lack of this understanding. Proud and powerful empires have vanished under the stress, not of an invading army, but of the reckless destruction of their trees and the consequent loss of the soil and water which supported human life. The threat of similar disaster exists today. It may be seen in the spread of the Rajputana desert gnawing into the very heart of India, and in the desert encroachment on to marginal lands south of the Sahara.

Apart from the protection which forest cover gives to a nation's soil, water resources and climate, the tree is a thing of beauty and of use in man's immediate needs. This is well expressed in "The Prayer of the Forest" appearing in a special Arbor Day number of *Unser Wald*, a German forestry publication:

"Man! I am the Warmth of your home
in the cold winter night and the protective
shade when summer's sun is strong.

I am the Framework of the roof to your
house and the Top to your table;

The Bed in which you sleep and the
Timber which you fashion your boats.

I am the Handle to your hoe
and the Door to your hut.

I am the Wood of your cradle
and the Boards of your coffin.

I am the Bread of kindness
and the Flower of beauty.

Hear my prayer: destroy me not!"
Trees adorn our homesteads and our cities.
They shelter our farms and our wildlife
and afford peace and rest from the worries

and turmoil of our daily toil when we seek healing presence in recreational parks and national reserves.

Their abundance or absence may bear a direct relationship to industrial development and expansion, social progress and national strength.

From a wider view, the protective role of forests may affect not just one nation but an entire region, for their influence takes no account of national frontiers. Productive forests, too, are unevenly distributed over the world's surface, as are the varieties of hard and soft woods, the broad-leaved and the coniferous species. A natural deficiency in one place may have to be made up from elsewhere. Therefore, international understanding is also essential to a more equitable distribution of the produce of the forest, and to a worldwide raising of standards of living as they depend on forest values.

For all these reasons, and having considered the initial step required, the Sixth Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations adopted the following resolution:

The Conference,

Recognizing the need of arousing mass consciousness of the aesthetic, physical and economic value of trees,

Recommends that a World Festival of the Trees be celebrated annually in each member country on a date suited to local conditions.

It has long been a tradition in many countries to hold annually a tree or forest festival. The origin may indeed date back to antiquity, and be lost in the dawn of religious feeling and awe for what trees represented. Tree mythology, at which we

* Extract from World Festival of Trees, Forestry Development Paper No. 2).

may perhaps now smile tolerantly, may still contain the germ of sound physiology and natural scientific wisdom. Therefore, whatever may be the origin of tree festivals, it is worth turning to good account such manifestations towards FAO's goal—the conservation and wise use of forests everywhere.

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In this regard, consideration must be given to the education of children in the understanding of forest values. Schools can ensure full attendance and participation in forest festivals, and therefore offer the most valuable opportunity for instituting a successful drive for national, and, as we shall see later, international co-operation in safeguarding and developing forest resources.

Continuity of effort and of purpose are vital to success. It is not enough to put a tree in the ground and sing a song or say a prayer over it. Someone must see to its subsequent care, its needs of light, water, and fertile soil, and guard it against damage. If these requirements are neglected, the fruits of the planting are thrown away and, what is worse, the hopes of establishing an inspiring example to maintain and even to increase the enthusiasm of subsequent organizers of Arbor Day, are destroyed. The needs of a tree may be attended to by park-keepers, public garden employees and qualified state foresters, but if these needs remain the responsibility of the individual who planted the tree in the first instance, the planting ceremony is of far greater educative value.

Schools are one of the few organized institutions which have a lasting influence on almost every individual making up a nation's population; impressions gained from teaching, precept or example during the earliest formative years of a child's development last to old age. Schools are, furthermore, admirably suited to care continuously for the young trees planted in the neighborhood, especially where forestry and

the maintenance of woodland become a regular feature of their activities.

Moreover, a child's pride of achievement in school tree-planting and tending activities may be communicated to, and also shared by, its parents. And if the child returns as a parent to visit the school he will revisit the trees he planted, take an interest in their exploitation and usefulness to the school in repairs to buildings, in new constructions or in the wood-working classes, and he will in turn communicate this interest and enthusiasm to his own children.

Schools therefore offer the greatest scope for inculcating and awareness of the values of trees and woodlands, and for keeping these values present even in the adult mind.

All this was early realized in the country where Arbor Day originated. To quote from *Arbor Day*, a bulletin issued by the United States Department of Agriculture: "Under the direction of (the) Superintendent of Schools . . . the schoolchildren of the city had a prominent part in the celebration, which included a parade through the streets to Eden Park, where trees were planted in memory of distinguished men. About 20,000 children participated in the singing and reciting and in putting the soil about the trees, which had already been set in place. Two new elements were introduced into the Arbor Day plan on this occasion—the day was made a school festival and the practice of planting memorial trees and groves was inaugurated."

Such developments were largely responsible for the spread of the movement throughout the country, and the occasion became a festival for schoolchildren combining utility with instruction and pleasure, and served to impress the value of trees and the need for conservation on the minds of the young.

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Laws throughout almost all the States of the United States of America relating to Arbor Day now include mention of schools. For example, the provisions of the

laws of Arizona read: "The authorities in every public school shall assemble the pupils in their charge on Arbor Day and provide for and conduct, under the general supervision of the State superintendent of public instruction, such exercises as tend to encourage the planting, protection, and preservation of trees and shrubs and an acquaintance with the best methods to be adopted to accomplish such results and shall cause trees to be planted around the school buildings with appropriate and attractive ceremonies."

In Arkansas, the study of fire prevention is included in the course of study in the primary grades of all public schools, "and definite instruction in the said subject shall be given to each pupil and student therein, and a period of not less than 20 minutes during each scholastic week shall be devoted to the study and consideration of the said subject." Authorization is also given to adopt textbooks to be used in the teaching and study of fire prevention. California sets a date for the observance by schools of a conservation, bird and arbor day. Its observance will not constitute a holiday "but by including in the school work of the day suitable exercises having for their object instruction as to the economic value of birds and trees and the promotion of a spirit of protection toward them and as to the economic value of natural resources, and the desirability of their conservation." Boards of school trustees and city boards of education are empowered to conduct courses in forestry, acquire forest land by lease or purchase, afforest or reforest and plant trees, shrubs and vines on these lands or any public lands placed at their disposal, and transport pupils to places where forestry work is being done and practical demonstrations can be held.

In many other States, Arbor Day is a holiday, and educational officers and teachers are required to have the pupils observe the day by the "planting of trees or other

appropriate exercises." As a variant, a list of school holidays includes Arbor Day provided it is observed "for the purpose for which it is designated by the Governor and Council."

In Iceland there is a Students' Afforestation Day of Act by which tree planting is made compulsory on one day a year during school term and at a time when afforestation conditions are favourable. The planting is under the control of a competent foreman and in the vicinity of the school. Other provisions are also made in cases where the conditions in a given locality are not suitable.

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Schools have in many countries taken an active part in planting ceremonies organized by governments. In the case of city schools or where school grounds are fully planted or unavailable, the ceremonies may take the form of avenue or street planting, or the adorning of parks, memorials and entrances to public buildings in urban districts. In rural communities planting activities may be more extensive and range from roadside planting to village firewood plots, shelter belts, school forests or watershed and soil-protection schemes. In some countries, as for instance the United Kingdom, the need for a broader scope is recognized and the national forestry authority, in this case the Forestry Commission, as well as providing the seedlings for "Arbor Day" planting ceremonies, also allocates plots of existing forest in various stages of development to schools who "adopt" them and are responsible for their care and maintenance. Such a system offers all-the-year-round opportunity to schools or to smaller units within the school, such as clubs and Scout groups, for forest activity.

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The sense of responsibility, and the interest can be much greater if, either through government grants (as for example in Victoria, Australia) or by raising funds

by an appeal to parents and friends, the school were to procure land close by, and make it the children's responsibility to re-forest or plant the area. In Spain, plantings on "Tree Day" are actually being confined to "School Forest Plots." All facets of woodland development and care should be available, from seed collection and nursery work, to land preparation, planting, and the care and protection of young trees; and for the older boys as they grow up with the trees, initial thinning of their plots, forest mensuration, utilization and marketing of the older trees. The economic value of the forest will certainly be brought home to the older children when they have had a hand in the utilization and marketing of the produce from their school forest. In Ireland, the supply of seedlings to schools is reported a failure. Perhaps the active participation of children in tree nursery work would have taught them the value of each seedling.

Forestry and the care of woodland could become a regular feature of a school curriculum and "Arbor Day" could take the form of intensive planting by the entire school at the onset of the planting season. Lack of knowledge by teachers could be made good by qualified state foresters assisting and supervising the work, and forestry could be integrated in the more normal routine of lessons as a topic of almost every subject taught—in spelling and writing, literature, languages, mathematics, and even music, in addition to botany, biology and allied subjects of natural science, geography, drawing and woodwork.

The school forest could become a recreation ground and an open air classroom, and achievements in both planting and care, the collection of forestry material, or drawings, and writings in prose and poetry, in which the tree was the subject, could be stimulated and rewarded by nomination to a "forestry club," where the strong appeal of badges, pins or buttons as awards could be fully exploited.

Boy and Girl Scout organizations, often an important school activity, could also participate, especially during holidays, in the care of the school forest and of the nursery. One of the aims of this world-wide organization in forest protection, which has been put into practice in many countries by active planting schemes. From the United States we learn of conservation projects in compliance with the President's request that in 1954 they undertake "to arouse public recognition of the needs for adequate protection and wise management of our soil, water, mineral, forest, grassland and wildlife resources."

"Junior Forest Fire Fighter" groups have been formed in many communities, pledged to prevent and fight fires, and the effect of example on parents when the family is out on a picnic is invaluable, especially in areas where fires occur frequently.

Where school magazines are exchanged with other schools, articles and reports, drawings and photographs on the subject of the school forest can appear and would do much to encourage other schools to begin a similar scheme.

"Arbor Day," the culmination of a year of forest activity in the school, and the inspirational start of a new year with fresh courage and energy, when every child in the planting out of trees, could perhaps be preceded by the showing of films and by illustrated lectures, emphasizing the value of conservation of forest resources, and the effect of their misuse. Films and slides taken on previous tree festivals, pointing up the development and progress made since then, would be of especial interest. "Arbor Day" might be made to coincide with the principal annual school gathering or holiday, or with "Founder's Day," so that parents and friends, as well as prominent public figures, could be encouraged to assist and take part in tree planting ceremonies.

Where urban schools cannot either

"adopt" or own their school forest, a partnership between an urban and a rural school can be arranged, the city school providing the funds, for instance, and the country school doing the work and supervision of the area. Visits by the city school, especially on "Arbor Day" when the children can participate in the planting, would be of tremendous value in developing not only the forest but the interest of town dwellers in the subject for which "Arbor Day" is designed.

In India, government and state shields are annually awarded to educational centers, as well as to adult communities, for meritorious activities in forestry. In Italy, prizes are awarded to children who have given particular attention to the care of trees, and tours are arranged to observe the results obtained in other areas and in previous years.

"Arbor Day" for children and adults alike can and should be the culminating point of a year of achievement and the beginning of another year of working together. It appeals to the spirit of youth and carries with it the inspiration to work together toward the betterment of the community, the nation, the world.

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That celebrations in which the tree is the subject have to date been a national rather than an international concern can readily be established by a rapid review of the diversity of names given, in different member countries, to occasions whose aims are essentially the same.

Apart from the more commonly used "Arbor Day," or "Arbor Week," "Tree Holiday" and "Festival of the Trees," we find such names as "Greening Week" of Japan, "The New Year's Day of the Trees" of Israel, "The Tree-loving Week" of Korea, "The Reforestation Week" of Yugoslavia, "The Students' Afforestation Day" of Iceland and "The National Festival of Tree Planting" of India as variations on a theme which denotes a specific opportunity for im-

pressing upon those present the aesthetic and utilitarian value of trees. The festival is therefore both a patriotic celebration and a symbol of faith in the future. How much more valuable then would the day of national celebration be if it could also convey a feeling of international friendship and co-operation.

As in awakening and developing a realization of the importance of trees, and in establishing a lasting appreciation and love of them, it is the younger generations that are best fitted to learn, so surely is this the case in fostering an international feeling of friendship and world peace.

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The exchange of indigenous tree seed between the schoolchildren of one country and another, and the establishment of "forests" or "groves of nations" would not only be of highly educative value to the children, but would also be a source of considerable community interest and an effective means of promoting goodwill among nations. Many nations have adopted trees, shrubs and flowers as national emblems. The supply of seeds of such plants to other nations' schools would provide for symbolic manifestation of friendship and co-operation. (In this connection, attention is drawn to the export and import formalities and quarantine regulations necessary for such exchanges.)

Around such practical demonstrations of the fellowship of nations the normal school activities in geography, natural science, history and languages, literature and even art could usefully revolve during the period of planting. Exchange of letters, herbarium collections, compositions and drawings on forestry topics could be made between the schools of the nations effecting exchanges of seed, and appropriate recognition of accomplishment established either within the school or by the schoolchildren and authorities of the other country. A child would attach especial value to a prize awarded by

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another school, coming from another country, and bringing with it the unmistakable evidence of its origin, as a reward for the care given by the child to trees in the school forest originating from the woodlands of that distant and foreign land. The incentive to learn something of the geography, the history and the language of that country would be further enhanced, and ties of friendship strengthened, if the reward could take the form of a holiday in that land, among the children of the same school age and from the school which sent the seeds and was thus symbolically bound by the trees to the child's own school.

With the development of radio and television broadcasts in the classroom and the showing of films of other countries, the relations between schools of different nations can be made even closer, and the co-operation and friendship between the schoolchildren of the nations made more real to them.

In closing, it is desired to stress once more the broad aspects and far-reaching effect of a festival of trees observed on a world-wide basis. The use of the tree as a symbol of peace around which international celebration is concentrated, and the development of mutual understanding through the exchange of forestry knowledge on the occasion of such a festival might contribute greatly to the feeling of co-operation among nations. The role of forests affects regions, and not nations alone, so that it is well suited to this purpose. In addition to the forest's importance in world economy, the consideration of its influences, and of world conservation and protection problems, encourages a better mutual understanding among nations, and this can be brought home to the peoples of the world through the occasion of a "World Festival of Trees," when the publicity and educational programs developed for national purposes may be extended to international significance.

Keep the . . .

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manent forest blocks (3) on research work and other major phases of forestry activities, requiring technically trained men for the efficient prosecution of the projects;

(3) Insufficiency of fund or allotment to finance the projects;

(4) The indifference and lack of cooperation on the part of the local officials in extending positive cooperation with the Bureau of Forestry in the protection of the public forest against wanton destruction. Political influence of municipal mayors toward his constituents can be incalculable assets in preventing forest destruction in their respective localities.

In the over-all program on forest conservation, I believe the Leyte Rotary Club, being a civic organization can help greatly towards keeping the forest land in Leyte perpetually verdant with luxurious forest vegetation for the prosperity and happiness of the people of this province.

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