

The Management of the Philippine Forests

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The Philippine forests, which constitute 59 per cent of the land area of the country, is managed by the Bureau of Forestry which is charged by law with the administration, protection, and conservation of all public forests. The forests belong to the State, and like other natural resources, with the exception of public agricultural lands, can not be alienated.

The whole area of the Philippines from the tops of mountains to the seacoast might have been covered with forest, or similar vegetation. Subjected to cutting and clearing, over 5 million hectares, or about 17 per cent of our land area, is open grassland, abandoned by the original occupants due to loss of soil fertility.

This commercial forest of the Philippines covering more than 13 million hectares with an average stand of 90 cubic meters per hectare, has a volume of about one billion cubic meters. This forest wealth is worth more than two billion pesos in forest charges, and its commercial value is approximately 58 billion pesos.

These forest supports the Philippine lumber industry with about 48 million pesos capital investment, employing 70,000 laborers and supporting 350,000 persons, including their dependents.

Our forests do not only produce materials for construction purposes, wood for fuel, and other useful products, but also prevent or reduce erosion and destructive effects of floods; increase watershed protection, and provide aesthetic or recreational grounds, and wildlife coverage.

For these purposes, this Bureau regulates the exploitation of our forests and the cutting rules are embodied in the licenses or permits issued.

On mountain tops and steep slopes, as lit-

tle cutting as possible is allowed, in order to retain the forest cover thereon for protection purposes. The retention of forest on critical areas prevents landslides and erosion, and minimizes the destructive force of floods.

On potential agricultural lands, after the conditions therein had been carefully studied, the clear cutting method may be allowed.

Forest reserves are established for the protection of public interests and the preservation of valuable trees from being depleted. They are managed under strict application of rules and regulations.

Likewise, timberlands are not subjected to entry except portions thereof for forest purposes.

In other public forests, not reserved for definite purposes, where most of the Bureau's timber licensees operate, specific rules are imposed, whereby no trees may be cut below the minimum diameter set for certain species.

Communal forests are set aside to provide free timber, fuel, and other minor forest products for the residents of the municipality for which they are established. They cannot be exploited for commercial purposes or entered for cultivation.

National Parks are established for their historical, geological, and aesthetic value. They are managed for recreational, educational, and scientific purposes.

In the management of our forests, only the annual increment is allowed to be cut and removed, based on growth studies and valuation surveys taken in connection with the collection of other data for the preparation of forest working plans.

The Philippine forests are administered, managed, and protected by 120 foresters, 432 rangers, and 177 forest guards, whose time is

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SUMMER CAMPING . . .

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jungle, we saw what seemed like a city park ground, somberly lit by silvery sun-rays filtering through the thick foliage overhead. Dead, brown leaves covered the ground like a soft golden carpet and there were numerous places where, save for the rippling murmur of a little stream, not a sound could be heard, not even birds or insects, nothing but the gentle moan of the wind or the scarcely audible cawing of a far-off *kalaw*—only those and the deep silence; that, and a vague awareness that there, one is in union with nature itself, in a state of oneness with the Infinite.

Night in the giant woodlands is so different from the daytime. But before I proceed, may I beg your tolerance if I, in my greenness regard the trees we have seen as giants? If you have been used to nothing but coconut trees or santols in your backyards or to the acacias and banabas that line some of the city's better streets, how else could you look upon three or four-log red lauans usually about one meter in diameter and sometimes as wide as two meters.

Those mammoth hulks, of course, we could not see at night. We could only feel their presence around us as we lie in our rude open hut and stare through the cracks in the anahaw roofing at the dark boughs above over which the pale starlight was glimmering.

With the quick advent of nightfall the creatures of the forest gradually come to life, breaking the stillness of the daytime as the cool mountain air is filled with the myriad chirps and twittering of insects in the dark mingled with the screech of night birds. Far away from the flickering campfire, a deer would bellow and a hunter's shots would ring out. We would talk in low tones and speculate on the origin of the phosphorescent bits of matter that litter the ground like so many green coals in the dark, but always that nocturnal forest trill

STANDARDIZATION . . .

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give us a salary commensurate with our capability, education and training.

We members of the forestry profession must admit that the fault is partly ours. We have never been vociferous in our bid for better wages. We used to believe that "silence is the better part of virtue."

It will be to the best interest of the employees of the Bureau of Forestry if the foresters' salaries will be standardized at once and those concerned will include in its calendar of activities a campaign, personal and otherwise, to this end.

It is with high hopes that our plea—"standardization of foresters' salaries will meet proper recognition and reward very soon and the forestry profession raised to the standard in which it rightfully belongs.

THE MANAGEMENT . . (Cont. from p. 11)
devoted to protection, administration, and supervision of forest utilization.

In view of the limited personnel and funds available, it is your civic duty as Filipinos to cooperate in the prevention of unnecessary destruction to our forests, especially against illegal *cañgin*-making. The conservation of our forests by wise use is the only means by which we can pass this great natural wealth from the present to future generations. You alone can help to protect and save it from destruction.

would prevail until, weary from the day's hard grind, we would be carried off into the deep oblivion of sleep.

For the hospitality of the District Forester's Staff in the area under Forester Severino Nablo, we will always be grateful. So are we thankful to the different sawmills in the area where we met many alumni of our school who gave us much sensible advice and made our stay a very enjoyable one in spite of the hard work. Last but not least in our esteem are the kind people of Bahi, Tuaca and elsewhere where we were welcomed.