

Arbor Day in Italy

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One impressive ceremony I attended while in Rome was the celebration of the Italian tree festival on November 21, 1951. It was a national holiday with the celebration sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest of Italy, Hon. Amintore Fanfani. The day is known as *FESTA DEGLI ALBERI*. The following excerpts from the published announcement of the festival give the background of the celebration.

"This manifestation, instituted in the far-off 1899, by the then Minister of Public Instruction Guido Baccelli, has the scope of creating in the Italian people—more particularly in the younger generation—'a forestal mentality' through the new constitution of the economical and social importance of the trees.

"The well-known political events and the two world wars later on caused this congenital manifestation to be interrupted and more especially so, during the last ten years. During the Spring of 1948, this initiative was in part resumed in the 'rafforestation yards'. This year (1951)—in all the Com-



The children in action to the accompaniment of music.

munes—the local authorities, the population and, in particular, the children of the high and elementary schools will play the principal part in the manifestation. Hundreds of thousands of nursery plants will be planted, and entrusted to the care of everyone."

In this celebration, the President of the Republic of Italy was the main speaker in the program. As a customary feature of the program, a high dignitary of the Vatican City opens the program with benediction and the delegates of all nations present in Italy were the special guests among the thousands who attended the celebration. There were some 65 foreign nations' representatives who were asked to plant trees in the designated area where the program was held. Our Undersecretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Jose S. Camus, whose picture appears in one of the herein illustrations, was among those included in the special guests, being the head of the

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During the Tree Festival—Italian Schoolchildren ready to plant their trees.

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Philippine delegation to the 6th Session of the FAO Conference, to plant the Philippine tree.

This was one of the most colorful tree ceremonies I have ever witnessed. There were literally thousands of children of the high and elementary schools who came out to participate in this big celebration. Each one had a tree to plant at a given signal. After the speechmaking and tree-planting sponsored by the representatives of the different nations then present, music was played from across another hill by the military band gorgeously attired for the occasion. The music is the signal for the children to plant their respective trees. I enjoyed seeing them planting the trees to the accompaniment of the music. I wished I had my moving picture camera then so I could have registered the colorful uniforms of children from different schools busy planting trees on the hillside.

One interesting thing I noticed was that not only the small boys and girls were present in the celebration but also their parents who helped the children plant, thus the occasion was meant not only for teaching the children the meaning and idea of tree planting, but also for affording their fathers and mothers they brought along the opportunity to help them out plant trees in the field. Also, after the representatives of foreign countries had planted their respective trees and, perhaps, as a reminder of the pleasure and satisfaction one may derive from planting a tree, every guest from foreign countries present in that celebration was given a basket full of assorted fruits and nuts like apples, pears, grapes, walnuts, chestnuts, etc. by an association of fruit and timber growers.

This celebration coincided with the meeting of the FAO wherein the Division of Forestry on the panel of Agriculture and Working Committee on Forestry passed and adopted a resolution that a tree festival be

instituted in every member country of the FAO and the world at large.

Please take note that the resolution calls for a tree festival. The original idea was to have an arbor day a year. However, it was brought out by other European countries that their arbor day is celebrated not only in a day. For example, Finland counts weeks and months during which she celebrates her tree festival. So, following the consensus of the representatives of the nations present in the meeting it was unanimously agreed that the tree festival be inaugurated in all member countries and for the FAO to sponsor and start a world wide tree planting movement. The duration of the festival will depend on the country's interest and demand for either longer or shorter period of tree planting.

You can praise yourself from weakness into strength, from ignorance into intelligence, from poverty into affluence, from sickness into health.

—Charles Fillmore

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