

Forest Policy on Kaingin in the Philippines

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INTRODUCTORY

The people of the Republic of the Philippines being fully aware of the fast receding timberline and the ever increasing area of open cogon and grasslands brought about by the willful destruction and thoughtless unabated clearing and cultivation of forest lands for illegal kaingins; where agricultural development and practices have lagged behind the yearly increases in population; where there is not now enough food to feed a hungry nation; where only about *five per cent* of the population appreciates the value of forests; where illegal kaingins have always been a problem that has not yet been solved after over a century of continuous and sustained effort; where fears of an impending timber shortage brought about by the brisk activities and exploitation on the part of agriculture and forestry makes imperative the launching or restatement of a national forest policy on kaingins before it is too late, or else the nation may some day wake up to find the timber resources of the country gone which condition will need years and years to regenerate and restore the forests to their former state and may bring about the attendant farm bankruptcy, national bankruptcy, and wanton destructions occasioned by floods and soil erosion; where the young and independent republic with its various problems besetting its very existence cannot undertake the job without great sacrifice, it behooves the Filipino people to take positive action before the situation gets beyond control.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Philippine forest policy on kaingins, pressured on all sides by the country's economic,

social, and political policies, ignorance and indifferent public consciousness and now impotent before such pressures, needs to be invigorated with a *new restatement* of policy; *realistic and practical to be workable, Philippine made* to apply to local conditions, hammered out and fashioned by dominant forces in its own environment; resilient, strong, and durable as the molave as an expression of national character, and yet sensitive to popular and reasonable demands. The yardstick to be applied to test the wisdom of such demands should be whether or not they will redound to "the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

The interdependence of the forces of agriculture and forestry, recognized but oftentimes wholly ignored, should be a deciding factor in determining what lands should be devoted to agriculture or forestry, providing in between marginal and sub-marginal types of lands pulsating to cycles and demands of social, political and economic forces, rising and falling with the undulating tide of prosperity and depression. So that if agricultural production is inadequate to satisfy the demands of a fast-growing populace, and if forest lands must give way to economic, social and political demands, then kaingins, in the interest of national economy, must only be confined within shifting cultivation blocks in the intermediate types of marginal and sub-marginal lands mentioned above, where their problems, activities, and techniques could best be directed, supervised, and managed for the public good. Forest absolutism under excessive pressures may give way to public agricultural demands provided the productive, protective, and accessory benefits

of forests are not impaired. Likewise, agricultural interests must give way to forestry demands if the national interest is endangered, but both meeting halfway on common ground in the shifting cultivation blocks worked on a system of rotation where production and protection become common objectives of agriculture and forestry.

There should be no distinction as to what comes first, agriculture or forestry for both are interlocking, supplementing, and co-existing for balance and harmony. Each has its own place however, where one can not and should not encroach upon the other, but both should meet on a common strip of marginal and submarginal lands where shifting cultivations can be made to oscillate along rhythmic movements of economics.

Forest properties, 97.5% of which is owned and administered by the national government through the Bureau of Forestry should be considered as highly complex biological units where if ordinary or faulty methods of agriculture avail, forestry comes to the rescue and takes over the lands for the application of corrective treatments.

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

To put this policy into full force and effect, the Bureau of Forestry must endeavor to do the following:

1. Establish clear-cut, visible, and permanent forest zone boundaries.
2. Classify all lands of the public domain into alienable and disposable and forest lands.
3. Secure the right to recommend the expropriation without cost if possible of private marginal and sub-marginal lands where faulty methods of agriculture imperil the national economic safety by depriving the public of the productive, protective, and accessory benefits of forests.
4. Reinforce and/or introduce ground and aerial patrol to meet the threats of fires and *kaiñgins*.
5. Undertake mass education in forestry.

6. Enforce all present and future laws and regulations.
7. Secure additional government backing and sponsorship with the appropriation of more substantial funds exclusively for the implementation of this policy.
8. Provide economic incentives.
9. Provide reservations, community and settlement sites.

Forest Zone Boundaries.—

When there are no clear-cut, visible, and unmistakable forest zone boundaries, the public cannot be expected to be able to distinguish between alienable and disposable lands from forest lands. Even some forest officers find difficulty in relocating old forest zone boundaries because these lines at present are hidden from view, superficial in nature, and at times only imaginary.

Henceforth, all forest zone boundaries already established should be relocated, and those to be established should be provided with a cut line or patrol trail following the zonline, painting the trees on one or both sides of the trail or line with a conspicuous color, and monumenting the line at important points. At intersections of this line with trails, roads, waterways or along natural boundaries like rivers, streams and creeks, signboards indicating the direction and distances of the line and carrying "No Trespassing" warnings must be posted.

Land Classification.—

The Division of Land Classification of the Bureau of Forestry being equipped with all the facilities for forest surveys should undertake intensive land classification in all the provinces. Land classification parties should not only be concerned with the release of alienable and disposable lands but should also "block out" and delimit pasture lands, mangrove swamps, protection forests, production forests, parks, communal forests, license areas, shifting cultivation blocks, and all other types of forest lands establishing the boundary lines as in forest zone lines,

with clear-cut, visible and permanent, unmistakable lines.

Secure Passage of Additional Forest Legislation.—

Additional forest laws and regulations to supplement or amend existing ones should be passed by Congress. One of such laws should empower the Director of Forestry to recommend the expropriation of unproductive marginal and submarginal lands brought about by economic conditions, or inadequate or faulty methods of agriculture when they imperil the national economy as regards production, protection, and accessory benefits.

Reinforce and/or Introduce Ground and Aerial Patrols.—

Where effective patrol is lacking or inadequate, it should be organized or reinforced, and where conditions make it urgent and necessary, aerial patrols with piper cubs or helicopters synchronized with ground units should be created. These patrols while civilian in nature could easily be converted into army units for defense in cases of national emergency. To make these units more effective, they should be furnished with radio equipment, like radio telephone, walkie-talkie, and the like, and their activities should be synchronized with the Philippine Air Force.

Mass Education in Forestry.—

A vigorous educational campaign headed by an assistant director of forestry, or a forester of equal rank, as public relations officer in the office of the director must be undertaken. The public relations office must be designed and equipped to arouse and create public opinion or bring about the enactment of forest legislation. In collaboration with the Bureau of Agricultural Extension, Bureau of Soil Conservation and Bureau of Public Schools, the public relations office of the Bureau of Forestry could bring about the successful dissemination and diffusion of forestry knowledge to arouse and create the needed public opinion, and to secure the best

results in the efforts of all parts of the forest service and bring about better protection. The masses could imbibe such forestry education better if enough efforts and pressure are brought to bear on the common mass at barrio levels. Likewise the PRO should seek the cooperation and awaken the interest of provincial, city and municipal officials, and even barrio lieutenants that they may help in obtaining better result in this educational campaign.

Schoolchildren in the primary grades could be an important medium in spreading forestry knowledge through the use of a combined agriculture and forestry primer to inject wholesome and beneficent agriculture and forestry ideas into the young receptive and pliable minds of school children. As an example of this we may cite Vocational Bulletin No. 9, series of 1936, prepared by the writer which has already been adopted as standard text by the Bureau of Public Schools in the yearly celebration of Arbor and Bird's Day in all the public schools of the Philippines since 1936 to date.

Formal and informal talks in groups or even to individuals by forest officers in the course of their contacts and associations with the public especially with barrio folks will go a long way in spreading forestry education designed to bring about public appreciation of the important role of forests in national life and the multiple benefits derived therefrom.

Handbills, posters freely distributed, newspaper publications, audio-visual projections, lantern slides, and radio talks in principal common dialects drummed into the public consciousness could bring about the much desired results.

In this connection, a *Special Poster* addressed to the Filipino people and signed by the Chief Executive enjoining the nation not to destroy the public forests and to observe the role and importance of conservation by wise use be framed. Direct and indirect benefit derived from the forests together with a list of the important forest laws and their

corresponding penalties should be included in this poster. This could be very effective in curbing the pernicious practice of shifting cultivations, and in helping promote a national forestry education. These handbills and posters, in English and vernacular, should get the widest distribution throughout the Philippines.

Enforcement of Present and Future Laws.—

A forest officer must not only be upright, but also fearless and courageous in the enforcement of forest laws and regulations. Politics should not enter into the enforcement of laws and where there is absolute necessity, the Constabulary and/or the Army devoid of any partisanship or political interference may be used in the enforcement of these laws and regulations including all future laws which may hereafter be enacted.

Secure Additional Government Backing and Sponsorship With the Appropriation of More Substantial Funds.—

The government should give to the Bureau of Forestry more of its earnings by increasing its budget for the implementation of this policy and as a means of getting more revenue, stabilizing the lumber industry and other industries dependent on wood, decreasing unemployment, and perpetuating the forest resources of the country. The Bureau realizes an average yearly income of over 6 million pesos and is presently allotted only from 2.5 to 3 million pesos in the budget. An increase of another million pesos to alleviate the present understaffed and undermanned bureau is necessary.

Provide Economic Incentives.—

Government subsidy is rarely, if ever, practiced in the Philippines. The people are inclined to be materialistic, and so is the government with an income that has always been said to be insufficient to meet its obligations and provide services. It has dispensed with the giving of economic incentives whether in business, agriculture or forestry.

With the present reforestation and nursery facilities of the Bureau of Forestry it is now in a position to distribute seeds and seedlings including the furnishing of technical aid and this should be exploited to encourage the planting of forest crops in *kainigins* inside forest lands owned by the state. Of the more than five million hectares of grass and open cogon lands, those areas which are adapted and needed for grazing purposes can be segregated and the rest could be reforested either by the state or by private enterprise with the government taking the initiative and providing economic incentives which may take the form of subsidies, tax concessions, and some controls. The same economic incentives could be applied to privately owned woodlands.

Provide Reservations, Settlements, and/or Community Sites.—

With all the above incentives, benefits, and remedies, there should also be a provision made to confine the non-Christian tribes in reservations. The Penal Code penalizes vagrancy as a criminal offense and while forced migration may sound undemocratic and too high handed, it might be the key to get rid of the country's economic parasites who sap the vitality of the nation.

A census by economic officials should be made to determine and make a record of all the unemployed and landless farmers in all towns and barrios of the Philippines. These landless and unemployed people who may be considered the economic parasites of the country should be "invited" (to use the term of the papers) to immigrate to certified alienable and disposable lands open for the landless especially where there are more lands than farmers and where communities and settlements with the maximum government inducements are not only offered but really provided in advance even at free cost to the settlers. In the long run the government will reap the benefits from those settlements in the form of up-to-date payments of real estate taxes from solvent farmers, happy, con-