

Planting Trees, A Lasting Investment

By FRANCISCO N. TAMOLANG
Senior Forester
Bureau of Forestry

A year ago, Arbor Day in the Philippines became a more significant celebration by virtue of the Presidential Proclamation extending it to a one-week nation-wide affair. Arbor Week does not only mean the extolling of the importance of trees but, to a great extent, the practical implementation of the so-called "lip service" to forest conservation into actual planting and conservation of trees. Its noble purpose is to make the country green with trees throughout the length and breadth of the land. Unlike other civic organizations, the Bureau of Forestry does not solicit monetary contributions nor beg for material things but merely enjoins every able-bodied citizen to plant a tree, two or more, every year, as a contribution to the country's bank of trees. It is this spirit which I believe should be inculcated into every Filipino, whether a school child, a farmer, a professional or a soldier, during every Arbor Week celebration. Because while trees are sure lucrative investments, with assured interests in form of wood increment or growth, it takes them time to mature. Because of this fact, we are dismayed at times in realizing that we cannot reap the fruits of our labor within a short time. When we plant trees, therefore, let us fully understand that we do it in the spirit of depositing a new capital investment to the country's tree resources.

It was Washington Irving who said long ago: "He who plants an oak cannot expect to sit in its shade nor enjoy its shelter; but exults in the idea that the acorn shall grow to benefit mankind long after."

Although trees are slow of growth, no

one can deny after seeing the boulevards and parks of the cities of the country, particularly Manila and Quezon City, where trees were planted just after liberation that the former eyesores are now beautiful with trees, whose shade serve the pedestrians as protection from the drenching rain and the oppressive summer heat. In other places like Forbes Park, Clark Field, Fort McKinley, U.S. Battle Monument, the University of the Philippines, Sto. Tomas University, and in many school grounds of Laguna and several provinces as well, the once barren hills now abound with evergreen lovely trees. You very well know that besides rendering to the community and its environs their shade and their loveliness, they give other benefits to man such as fresh air, invigorating climate, erosion control, wind-breaks or protection against typhoons, sanctuaries for birds and other wild life, recreational grounds, sanatoria and ever-ready cathedrals for those who wish to commune more closely with nature.

When we plant trees during Arbor Week, we do it with several objectives in mind, depending upon the particular purpose of our project. Our objectives in planting trees may be one of the following or a combination of two or more of them: (1) for shade, (2) for enhancing the landscape, (3) for fruits, (4) for beautiful or aromatic flowers, (5) for timber, (6) for honey-bee culture, (7) for medicinal sources, and last but not the least, (8) for historical, anniversary or memorial landmarks. If half of the population of the country would only celebrate their birthdays by planting trees,

it would mean a yearly increase of planted trees. It would mean also that had we followed this practice years ago we should now be having over ten million trees. This can be further increased by the thousands more, if at every high school and college graduation, graduates are made to plant their respective trees to mark the "red letter" event. Of course, this is not all that there is to it. But to my mind, what counts more is the care of the trees after they are planted. As a growing child they should be tended at least for the first three years until they are able to take care of themselves. In this way we can rest assured that whatever effort we exert in tree-planting will not be wasted.

May I conclude by enjoining every citizen of the country during Arbor Week to zen of the country during Arbor Week celebrations to invest at least a part of their precious time and effort to planting trees and nursing them until they can take care of themselves. It would not be asking too much each civic-minded citizen to spend a part of his leisure throughout the year in tree planting. Whatever planting he does, whether in a big or a small scale, would surely contribute to the nation's wealth of trees. *Invest now by planting trees and the future reward for all your efforts will be enjoyed not only by you but also by your children and the other generations yet to come.* President Roosevelt in 1907 wrote in an Arbor Day letter to the American school children the following:

"A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as hopeless; forests which are so used that they cannot renew themselves will soon vanish, and with them all their benefits. A true forest is not merely a storehouse of wood but, as it were, a factory of wood and a reservoir of water.

"When you help to preserve our forests or plant new ones you are

acting the part of good citizens. The value of forestry deserves, therefore, to be taught in the schools which aim to make good citizens of you. If your Arbor Day exercises help you to realize what benefits each one of you receives from the forests and how by your assistance these benefits may continue, they will serve a good end."

THE WORK OF . . .

(Continued from page 79)

tions in both the Standard International Trade Classification and national trade accounts would be made at the next session of the Working Party.

Participation

This first session was held under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. Keller (Switzerland). The following countries nominated representatives: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and the U.S.S.R. A representative of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) also participated. The Working Party decided to hold a second session in Geneva from 12-17 November 1956 when it would discuss statistics relating to manpower, forest fires, prices, end-use and investments.

All the strength and force of man comes from his faith in things unseen. He who believes is strong; he who doubts weak. Strong convictions precede great actions. The man strongly possessed of an idea is the master . . . Clear, deep, living convictions rule the world.

—James Freeman Clarke

* * *

Apathy can only be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal which takes the imagination by storm, and, second, a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice.

—Arnold Toynbee