

OUR SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE*

Interview with Forester P. San Buenaventura of the Bureau of Forestry

Mr. Canciller—Forester San Buenaventura, in general, in what ways does the Bureau of Forestry serve the people?

Forester San Buenaventura—The prime duty of the Bureau of Forestry is to administer the forests so that they can continuously and forever, produce timber and minor forest products such as firewood, rattans, resins, tan and dye barks, gums, wood oils, nipa, etc., for the use of the people, not only of the present, but of the future generations as well. The next important service of the Bureau of Forestry is land classification. The Bureau is the government office entrusted with the duty of classifying all public lands. Such areas which are not needed for forest purposes are certified as "alienable and disposable land" and are turned over to the Bureau of Lands for disposition to the people in the form of homesteads, free patents, sale or lease, for agricultural or industrial purposes, in connection with the land-for-the-landless policy of the government.

Mr. Canciller—Those two functions are very important, but are there other services rendered by your Bureau for the people?

Mr. San Buenaventura—Oh, yes, Mr. Canciller; the Bureau issues leases or permits on timberland for special uses, such as pasture, hotel site, logging camp or sawmill sites, rights-of-way, etc. By law grazing lands are considered forests lands. Furthermore, the Bureau of Forestry conducts studies and researches on how to grow forest trees; on the uses of different woods, and on many other forestry subjects. One of the most important activities of the Bureau of Forestry is its reforestation work in different parts

of the country, planting trees of economic value, not only to provide more forests in the future, but also to help minimize floods and soil erosion. Reforestation is done principally at the sources of destructive rivers. It grows trees in forest nurseries and distributes them either free or at cost, to government offices and private persons as well. Most of the trees you see planted along roads and streets and in plazas in Manila and in the provinces came from the Bureau.

In some places the Bureau of Forestry has developed portions of forest reserves and reforestation projects as recreation grounds where the people in the surrounding municipalities now enjoy their week-ends. I particularly refer to our forest nurseries and plantation in Los Baños, Laguna; Paraiso, Ilocos Norte; Caniaw, Ilocos Sur; Camp 7, Cebu; Impalatao, Bukidnon; Mamlucal, Negros Occidental; and other places.

The Bureau of Forestry also maintains in Bukidnon a plantation of cinchona trees whose bark produces quinine. It is the only plantation of its kind in the Philippines. If war comes again and we find ourselves destitute of quinine to protect us from the terrible scourge of malaria, we can look upon the cinchona plantation in Bukidnon to ameliorate our sufferings from such disease, as we, in Mindanao did during the last world war. It may not be amiss to mention here that the Bureau of Forestry during the war furnished the allied forces in Australia with quinine bark from this plantation.

Mr. Canciller—Now let us go to more details; how can a person be permitted to cut timber and minor forest products?

Mr. San Buenaventura—Timber and other

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forest products may be cut or gathered under a license issued by the Director of Forestry or his representative, or by the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, upon recommendation of the Bureau of Forestry. There are three kinds of license, viz., license agreements, ordinary licenses, and gratuitous licenses.

Mr. Cancellor—Who are entitled to gratuitous licenses?

Mr. San Buenaventura—Private gratuitous licenses are issued to any qualified person who will use the timber or forest products for his personal purposes only and not for sale or barter. The Bureau of Forestry has set aside communal forests for municipalities which request for them. Residents of a municipality may cut and remove second and lower group timber and minor forest products from such *communal forests* free of charge, usually upon permit of the municipal mayor. If first group timber is desired for personal use, about 30 cubic meters is allowed, but gratuitous license shall have to be secured from the Director of Forestry or the District Forester, on condition that the building to be constructed shall be of strong material. A house of strong materials is defined as one which has the posts, floor and sidings made of wood or material equal to or stronger than wood.

Public gratuitous licenses are issued to public officials who will use timber for public works.

Miners gratuitous licenses are for miners who will cut the timber within the mining claims and use them in the development of the mining claim.

I may state that, as a policy, the personal needs of the people are given priority in the disposition of timber and minor forest products from the public forests.

Mr. Cancellor—How are ordinary licenses secured?

Mr. San Buenaventura—A person, corporation, or partnership may apply for a license covering a specific forest area. The area is inspected by a forest officer and if it is found to be vacant, the same is open for

public bid (in case of application for timber, firewood, almaciga and lumbang nuts only). Certain conditions are specified in the advertisement for bid. The license is issued to the bidder who is found to be most capable of operating the area, provided he is qualified to hold a license under the forest laws and regulations.

Mr. Cancellor—What is the difference between a license agreement and an ordinary license?

Mr. San Buenaventura—An ordinary license is generally for one year duration; it terminates at the end of each fiscal year, renewable every year upon application and compliance with the terms thereof. A license agreement, under the present policy, is issued for a ten-year period, renewable for an equal period but not beyond 50 years. It is in the form of a contract between the concessioners and the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Mr. Cancellor—Are the timber licensees active in their operations? I understand that considerable amount of logs are now being exported.

Mr. San Buenaventura—Most of the licensees are active except in regions where peace and order are disturbed. During the last two years (1952 and 1953) our annual production was about 2,900,000 cubic meters or 1,200,000,000 board feet. In 1952, we have exported 246 million bd. ft. of lumber and logs and in 1953, 427 million bd. ft. of lumber. Most of the sawn lumber were shipped to the U.S.A. and most of the logs to Japan. It is estimated that 500,000 people are dependent upon the forest and forest industries for livelihood.

Mr. Cancellor—I suppose that the export of logs and lumber is a dollar-producing industry?

Mr. San Buenaventura—Yes, the value of our export logs and lumber during the fiscal year 1952, was over 16-1/2 million dollars; and in 1953, over 23 million dollars.

Mr. Cancellor—Referring to your land

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classification work, how much has your Bureau accomplished to date?

Mr. San Buenaventura—Of the total land area of 29,740,972 hectares of the Philippines, we have classified and certified to the Bureau of Lands as of June 30, 1952, 10,107,286 hectares (or 34%) as alienable and disposable land; 1,799,308 hectares (or 6%) has been declared as timber-lands; 17,834,378 hectares are still unclassified. In our long-range plan, about 42 to 45 % of the Philippines shall be permanently kept as forest or timberlands. With the aid of the MSA and PHILCUSA we now have 40 land classification parties distributed all over the Philippines, and a few smaller parties from our regular appropriations. Our aim is to classify 400,000 hectares a year. The greater part of these lands are in Mindanao, Cagayan Valley, Samar, Mindoro, Negros and Palawan.

Mr. Canciller—I see that your Bureau is a money-making office in the Government, but do you think the forest revenue can be increased?

Mr. San Buenaventura—I think so, if the Bureau is given more facilities. As an example, I may cite this: Our allotment for travelling expenses is about ₱139,000.00 a year. We have over 700 forest officers (Foresters, Rangers and Forest Guards) in the field, so each Officer has only about ₱15.00 per month for traveling expenses. This means that he can work in the field for only 3 to 4 days per month. Under our policy, a forest officer should be in the field at least 20 days a month. The longer a forest officer can go on field inspection, the more the forest taxes he would cause to be collected. In short, I can say this: for every additional peso given in our appropriations, at least two pesos would be returned to be National Treasury.

FLASH!

A communication received from Mexico City informs that Director Florencio Tamesis was admitted into the Society of American Foresters.

THE BUREAU OF . . .

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in Washington, D.C., last May and the peso requirements, description of the project and the guiding principles were just recently submitted to the PHILCUSA, it can be considered commendable work on the part of the PHILCUSA and MSA that within a short time, the Bureau of Forestry was informed that soon, the project agreements shall have been signed by the Chief of the U.S. Mission and the Chairman of PHILCUSA, and the project will start functioning within the first quarter of the fiscal year 1953-1954. The total American financial assistance for the purchase of vehicles and other equipment is \$204,000.00 and the PHILCUSA counterpart fund is ₱1,197,200.00. To this end we shall endeavor to collect the estimated two million pesos which the Bureau has failed to collect due to lack of transportation facilities, personnel and funds to defray the sundry expenses of the field personnel.

The Bureau of Forestry should endeavor to include in its 1954-1955 appropriation the running expenses of the project.

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LT DEAN FLORENCIO TAMESIS

DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY

MANILA FILIPINAS

SINCERAS FELICITACIONES POR HABER

SIDO UNANIME ELECTO SOCIO HONORARIO

SOCIEDAD FORESTAL AMERICANA

TOMAS GILL

ICFM

Compliments of

Hadji Datu Usman Mampen

TIMBER & FIREWOOD LICENSEE

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