

Forestry Day Address *

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Mr. Dickson asked me to convey to you his great regret that he is unable to be with you on this occasion to speak to you personally. He had been looking forward to this occasion with a great deal of pleasure. Unfortunately, as Dean Mabesa has probably told you, Mr. Dickson was obliged to attend an important meeting in another country. You can be sure that nothing less than that would have prevented him from being here today. He has, nevertheless, prepared some thoughts for this occasion, and has delegated me to express them to you.

Today is Forestry Day, and it is also National Heroes Day. This coincidence is both significant and most appropriate. It is significant because it invites the mind to reflect on those ideals which motivated the heroes of this country and guided their lives, the welfare of the Philippine Nation and of Filipino people, and at the same time we are invited also to think of forestry and its ideals and objectives. It is singularly appropriate because the essence of forestry is the national interest, the public good, the welfare of the Philippines and her people, and thus coincides with the aims and objects to which the great Filipino patriots dedicated their lives.

That this is no more unwarranted assumption, I feel requires no proof. Nevertheless I would like to quote a few excerpts from a speech delivered in 1936 by that great Filipino patriot and leader, former late President Quezon.

"I want to call the attention of everyone

present that the public forests do not belong to any province but to the nation.

"The Philippines is a rich country because of her natural resources. I, therefore, want to remind the people that they should not merely cut down and burn our trees wastefully but they should use them properly. The people should understand that forests are instrumental in giving or attracting rain. Where forest exists, the soil of the farm is rich, but in its absence the country is arid. Without forest, when it rains the river overflows its banks and destroys lives and property.

"Many, especially political candidates, are loud in their public utterance about their love for their country. But I wonder, if the word patriotism is rightly interpreted. To me it is the magnitude of veneration we paid our ancestors, to our fathers, grandfathers and, that source of responsibility to provide for those who will come after us. There are two kinds of people, one is selfish and the other thinks in terms of his people and his country. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the former only thinks of his own welfare without any thought of doing something for others. If he is rich, he is the most unhappy man because what is permanent to him is to acquire more wealth at the expense of his fellow men, and he is never at peace thinking how best to preserve his richness. Whereas, one whose life is dedicated to the services of his fellowmen and his country is not even afraid to die any time, knowing that he has done something for others to

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remember him by. The rich and the selfish are afraid to die because they prize their wealth more than anything else.

"My fellow countrymen, there can be no real patriotism without displaying the traits of veneration for those who have gone before us in the same manner as for our descendants. You can show true patriotism and love of country by conserving and utilizing wisely our forest resources. I repeat do not simply delight to cut down and burn trees, otherwise, you deprive our country of income which means school for your children, roads, and public improvements. We should not think in terms of ourselves, but of our children, and their children's children. We have no right to deprive them of their inherent share of the patrimony of our country — our forest."

It is this aspect of forestry, the relation of forestry and true unselfish patriotism, so firmly and so eloquently emphasized by President Quezon 20 years ago that I would like to discuss on this occasion when both forestry and the ideals of Philippine national heroes are being given prominence.

President Quezon was addressing his remarks to all of the people of the Philippines, and if they apply to all Filipinos in all walks of life, think how much more they apply to the foresters, on whose shoulders lies the direct responsibility for the conservation and wise utilization of the Philippine forest resources.

There is no need for me to remind you that a major area of the Philippines is now and will continue to find its highest economic use in the dual functions of forestry, production and protection. There is no need for me to review the details of the role of forestry in the Philippine economy. This knowledge you now have acquired or are in the process of acquiring here in the College of Forestry at Los Baños, along with all the technical and scientific details which you need to operate in the field of forestry. All of this is essential, but unless you use this knowledge, unless you apply

these techniques in the true spirit of public service and in the national interest, you will have fallen short of the real goal of forestry. The distinction here is one between a mere technician working in the forestry field and in true professional forester. In the field of forestry, this distinction has a most important practical application. It is not one of mere academic interest. Why?, because as President Quezon pointed out the public interest factor in the forest resources is a major one and a permanent one. In the Philippines, this is immediately obvious because more than 95 percent of the Philippine forests remain in direct public ownership. But even in those countries where legal title to forest lands has passed into private hands, the public still retains an important stake, the public interest factor still remains at a high level, and the necessity for foresters to function within the guidelines of this philosophy does not diminish. This concept of the public interest in all of a nation's forests regardless of existing title has been upheld by the courts many times in countries where title to important areas of forest land reside in private hands. In reading court decisions on this matter one cannot help but be impressed by the remarkable unanimity of the judges in agreeing that the public retains a stake in private forest lands, that the rights conveyed by the title cannot infringe on the rights of succeeding generations. In a recent case in the state of Oregon, the judge mentioned in his decision, "The great unbreakable even though unwritten compact which exists between the living, the dead, and the unborn". The very same philosophy which President Quezon expressed many years earlier when he spoke of the real patriotism "displaying traits of veneration for those who have gone before us in the same manner as our descendants." Indeed, there are few other fields where the necessity of keeping the public interest in mind is so essential and so permanent as in the field of Forestry.

Now, let us consider for a moment what implication this has for the immediate future. What is the specific application of these precepts to present day forestry in the Philippines? Nearly three years ago at the dedication of the new College of Forestry Building, one of the speakers pointed out that forestry in the Philippines was at a critical cross-road, that the next few years would determine whether it would take the hoped-for road leading to orderly beneficial development of the forest resources with the resultant national gain or whether it would take the road leading to progressive deterioration and serious national loss. While the intervening years have not brought forth a completely assured answer, there have appeared strong and hopeful indications that forestry is headed on the right road. If we could say three years ago that forestry is "at the crossroads", I believe we can characterize the situation now by saying that forestry is "coming of age" in the Philippines. The pioneer Filipino foresters, your predecessors have established it and succeeded in winning for its national recognition and respect. It becomes your task to develop it, to intensify and expand it and to guide its nation-wide application. The conversion of Philippine forest from a wild to a managed status, just now beginning, will be the responsibility of the generation of Filipino foresters represented by the present day students at Los Baños. This alone is a task fraught with most serious responsibility, because on it depend so many things basic to the national economy and well being. On it depend for example the development of forest based industrialization, the kinds of industries, the size and location of plants, the coordination with complementary and supplementary industries, the development and longevity of dependent communities and above all the welfare of many people will depend on just how this job is handled. That is what I mean when I say that forestry is "coming of age". It is no longer *only* a matter of silviculture, or

plant physiology, of wood technology or engineering but rather the application of all of these sciences and arts for specific purpose of developing and managing the Philippine forests in the national interest. Without an objective and unselfish consideration of the national interest to serve as a guide and framework, to provide focus and direction, the optimum benefits of the Philippine forests will not be realized by this nation. The decisions to be made, the problems to be solved involve both technique and policy. You cannot stop with merely handling the purely technical aspects and pay no attention to those which form the basis for policy decisions. If you do, then those policy decisions which involve the forest resource will be made without benefit of the best qualified sources to the detriment of the nation.

It is apparent then, as foresters, two things are expected of you: technical competence and a strong and continuing awareness of and continuing unselfish devotion to the national welfare. In stressing the latter so strongly during this discussion, I have no intention of disparaging the former. The two are equal and complementary, and both are essential characteristics of a real forester. You cannot be a good forester and at the same time be a bad citizen. If I have subordinated the matter of technical competence today it is only because technical competence is more readily understood and appreciated, more readily recognized and measurable. Lacking technical competence, a forester will soon be discovered as such and, consequently, rejected. Likewise, there are specific and familiar ways of acquiring technical competence, the famous twins: education and experience. Unfortunately, the same is not true of the other requisite. There is no certain way of acquiring devotion to the public welfare, no guaranteed way of maintaining it at a high level, and the lack of this quality is not always readily apparent. It rests basically as President Quezon has pointed

out on personal unselfishness. However, given this quality, there are ways in which it can be strengthened and made more effective. To a forester faced with recommending a course of action which involves not only trees but also people, some knowledge of the social sciences would be most helpful. Do not, therefore neglect your courses in economics, in history, or in forest policy. Many young foresters with a strong sense of the practical are inclined to look on these courses as frills, to their later regret. Also it is highly important to keep alive your professional contacts with other foresters through strong and progressive professional societies. Time and again it has been shown that one of the strongest bulwarks of integrity and the spirit of public service is loyalty to the ethics of one's chosen profession. Our profession is represented here in the Philippines by the Society of Filipino Foresters, dedicated to this very ideal of public service.

In thus sketching briefly some of the aspects involved in forestry's coming of age, I have deliberately, for reasons of time, avoided mention of many problems which

forestry is facing right now. I am sure that you are aware of these or are being made aware of them by your professors in a far more competent manner than I can possibly do. Serious problems of forest protection, management, research, and policy exist. While I feel that forestry has left the crossroads and is moving in the right direction, progress is still not easy or assured. I can only say here that we of ICA are also aware of these problems and we are proud to be actively associated with you in solving them. Some of our contributions to this joint effort are visible to you everyday here at Los Baños. The College classroom and some of its equipment, the Forest Products Research Institute with its equipment, and the Forest Experiment Station are tangible witnesses to our interest in assisting Philippine forestry in its important work. This cooperation is continuing. Our efforts to obtain further important assistance for the College of Forestry will shortly bear fruit, and this year also we are obtaining additional commodities for the Bureau of Forestry to intensify its work in forest management and silvicultural research.

I repeat that we of ICA are proud to be associated with you in your essential and important work, but we can travel with you only so far. We can perhaps be helpful in the practical and technical phases, but the essential spirit, specifically the devotion to the public good, the unselfish zeal for the welfare of your fellow Filipinos and for your country, without which even the most perfect technique is meaningless, is and must be entirely your own. It is, therefore, most appropriate that National Heroes Day should coincide with Forestry Day. The principle of devotion to the national interest as exemplified by these great patriots should be a continual inspiration to foresters. Continued adherence to this principle will be the Philippines best guarantee that its forest resources will be truly "conserved and wisely used".

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