

The Importance of FAO Mechanical Logging Training Centre

Address delivered by Acting President Enrique T. Virata at
the College of Forestry, University of the Philippines, Los
Baños, Laguna, on October 19, 1952.

When I was requested to speak before this body of foresters, my first thought was that in this group of highly specialized trained men, I would very likely lose myself. And since there is a lot more in the mechanics of chopping down a tree than I am acquainted with, I was afraid that to talk on such matters would be leading me more and more into unfamiliar territory. Therefore, let me leave this kind of speech-making to the formidable array of speakers who will lecture to you in the short period of one month that you are going to spend in this Mechanical Logging Training Centre at Los Baños.

Fortunately, however, when Dean Tamesis of this College called at my office the other day to invite me to speak before you, he mentioned in a theme which I shall now exploit; he impressed me with the significance of your presence here—with the fact that you are all men from every corner of Southeast Asia, in one of those rare instances of such comings-together, for the common purpose of learning newer and better mechanical logging methods in order to apply it to the joint and gigantic effort of building our countries sounder and more stable economies through the exploitation of our forest resources, resources which our countries each and severally can often boast of having.

I do not know how it is with your own countries, but at least here in our country, the men who have trained and later become foresters and loggers have all been fired with a sort of pioneering spirit which is not so often found in other branches of learning and occupation, with the result that the ex-

ploitation of lumber and timber resources had gradually risen to that importance which it now holds in the Philippines. Especially responsible for that high level of development are two men who had the vision, the spirit, and the devotion to make their life work the harvesting and conservation of Nature's bounties. They are Dean Tamesis and his predecessor, Dean Fischer.

I like to think that the reasons why such a Centre was established here at Los Baños are that it is a recognition of the success of the lumber industry in the Philippines, and the role of the College of Forestry of the University of the Philippines in the building of that industry. It should be mentioned, in passing, that lumber now numbers among the ten major exports of the Philippines. Our countries are alike in many ways. Blessed as we are with ample forest resources, and almost identical non-technological cultures, we are beset by similar problems of how best to develop a technology with which to take advantage of such resources in the most efficient manner and the fastest possible time. We have been for a long time considered the poorer relations of the technological civilizations of the West and consequently have been considered as underdeveloped countries.

There is a danger which I might mention in passing. In adopting the technological methods of the more advanced countries, we might learn more the *abuse* rather than the *use* of such methods. I think here is an excellent opportunity for us to effect a blend of the two cultures: the mechanical proficiency of the West, and the conservative wisdom of the East, for which for a long

time we were branded an impractical people. I have heard, and noticed, that the indiscriminate use of mechanical logging methods—at least in my country—could result in the depletion of our forests if not accompanied by a sound program of forest conservation. This is an example that to me best illustrates, for our purposes, what I mentioned as the abuse rather than the use of advanced methods. For what is the use of the best methods when they are in the long run self-destroying? A wiser application and a guided program of exploitation would, in the ultimate analysis, be more productive of those things that we think are necessary for the people's well-being.

The countries you represent: Burma, China, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaya, Cambodia, Pakistan, North Borneo, and Laos, not infrequently have in the past worked in relative ignorance of each other's way of doing the same things. What could have been a cooperative economy has not been possible as yet; what one needed, the other, even if it possessed it, could not supply it, because of certain barriers that were more serious than the geographical ones.

Now it is my greatest hope that such situation can even if slowly, be remedied. That is why I am viewing this Centre that has been established here with high hopes and expectations, knowing that eventually we in this part of the world, through the help and guidance of each other, will overcome our own difficulties and propel ourselves in the direction of greater prosperity and understanding.

The present generation of Southeast Asians is the inheritor of a gift of freedom. The circumstances attending this gift vary in different countries. We in the Philippines believe that we were favored by special circumstances because the Spaniards and the Americans who ruled this country before we became a republic did not really exploit our country for their benefit. Rather they assisted us and trained us in the act of self-government so that when the time came to

be let alone we were prepared to govern ourselves.

The greatest and most advanced democracies of the world are convinced that no enduring peace can be established among the different peoples if more than one-half of the people is in poverty because of a colonial system of economy while the remaining part is in relative prosperity because of an advanced industrial technology. This pattern of world economy creates social tensions, the pressures of which are bound in the end to explode in violent social revolutions.

The most powerful instrument—political independence—for the amelioration of the long downtrodden masses of Southeast Asia is in our possession. The responsibility of the Southeast Asian leaders so that this new possession is used wisely and effectively for the welfare of the peoples of this part of the world, is great and their task most difficult. But the outlook is not hopeless because there are many friends willing, ready and capable in assisting and guiding us in our endeavor. The United Nations Organization and its subsidiary organizations, like the Food and Agriculture Organization, stand ready to assist us in raising the standard of living of the peoples of Southeast Asia so that the disparity between the well-being of the peoples of the West and that of the East may be lessened. We should not waver in our faith in the ultimate success of our work because if we do so and fail we shall have lost the golden opportunity to demonstrate to the rest of the world that we the Southeast Asians fully deserve and are as equally capable as the peoples of the West to become worthy members of the federation of free men. The responsibility of our leaders is great because if we should fail, our posterity will never forgive us for our failure to leave behind to them a legacy of greater freedom and a justifiable sense of pride in the feeling that they are the equal of their fellowmen.

I thank you.