

# Keep the Philippines Green

FRANCISCO ABJAY

*District Forester \**

It is indeed a pleasure as well as a distinct privilege to be invited as your guest speaker in this gathering tonight. I feel highly honored in having given this rare opportunity of presenting before this distinguished group of Leyte Rotarians a forestry subject many of you, I presume, may have but a very superficial idea of its importance insofar as it affects our well-being as a nation. I propose to talk tonight on "Forest Conservation Program" as adopted by the First Philippine Forest Conservation and Reforestation Conference on October 1, 1954.

"Forest" as a theme of convention appears dull and quite uninteresting when it is treated in its limited sense as being merely a source of raw materials commonly known in the market as lumber. However, when we think of the forest as a living matter, a woodland, or a large area of land densely covered with tall plants we call trees, which is of vital importance to the welfare of every community not only in affording a steady supply of timber and other forest products of economic value but also for its influence in minimizing erosion, regulating stream flow and conserving water for irrigation and water power, our idea of a forest becomes broader in scope to the extent of urging us to come to realize our inescapable obligation as a civic organization or as a simple civic-spirited citizens to do something toward helping implement in some measure the present forest conservation program as adopted by our government. We come to understand that the forest is at once very

indispensable for the economic prosperity of the people and for the sustained development of industries necessarily dependent on raw materials extracted from the forest. Consequently, and in consideration, therefore, of the foregoing proposition of facts, the Bureau of Forestry, has come to promulgate the basic policy in the management of the forest.

In line with this policy adequate measures are adopted from time to time aimed at regulating the cutting and utilization of timber and other forest products of economic importance so as to maintain the condition of the public forest in as high a state of productivity as possible and to prevent undue destruction of its natural power of reproduction. In the execution of this forest policy, the Bureau of Forestry never lost sight of the fact that the public forest is the patrimony of the people and as such it must be properly managed for the benefit not only of the present generation but also of the generation yet unborn. In providing, therefore, for the disposition of timber and other products of value from the public forest, and for the use of forest land, the interest and welfare of the nation are being considered always of paramount importance over and above those of private entities or corporations.

Aware of the tremendous drain of our forest resources in recent years brought about by destructive method used in mechanized logging operations in some section of the country and by indiscriminate clearing of the public forest in the practice of cultivation known as "kaiñgin system"

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by our Filipino brothers, both Christian and non-Christian alike, the Honorable Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources deemed it necessary to call the First Philippine Forest Conservation and Reforestation Conference in Manila late September, 1954 for the purpose of adopting a comprehensive and workable program of forest conservation in the management of our forest resources. As adopted on October 1, 1954, the main features of the program may be briefly stated as follows:

#### *I—Natural Balance of Forest Cover:*

1. As soon as possible but not later than three years from the promulgation of the program, permanent forest areas shall be determined and that the permanent forest blocks shall be classified as follows:

(a) Protection forest including National Parks, and

(b) Production forest.

2. Protection of Forest shall be subjected to minimize logging operations.

3. Unforested areas of protection forests shall be given priority in reforestation to be undertaken either by the government or by private initiative including civic organization.

4. In the provinces or areas where the forest has already been reduced to an amount less than the required minimum, no new forest concession will be granted until the area of forest has again reached the required minimum, provided, however, that this prohibition will not apply to forest capable of sustained yield management.

#### *II—Logging System Under Sustained Yield:*

1. Logging operations on all areas declared permanent forest or areas not yet declared permanent forests but likely to be declared as such will be under sustained yield management. To this end, all such areas, as a general rule, the selective logging system will be enforced. This new regulation will be enforced beginning July 1, 1955.

2. All cutting rules shall be enforced.

3. Licenses who cooperated fully in the efficient management of the forest will be granted an extension of their licenses up to 25 years, renewable for another 25 years.

4. Forest research will be intensified.

#### *III—Forest Utilization in Relation to Forest Conservation:*

1. The Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources will create a Departmental Committee to—

a. Promote the commercial utilization of by-products from logging and sawmilling operation for possible manufacture into paper pulp, etc.

b. Encourage the utilization of commercial and industrial purposes the bulk of tree species not at present utilized but left to die and rot.

c. Study the economic use of wood shavings and sawdust especially for fuel of trucks.

d. Promote the reduction of sawmill waste through the use of improved and more efficient method.

#### *IV—Physical Protection of the Forests:*

1. Boundaries of permanent forests will be clearly marked by stenciling trees along the boundaries with a legend "Permanent Forest".

2. Provide one forest guard to protect a forest sector of about 2,000 hectares each.

3. In the expenditures of reforestation fees, priority shall be given to protection of the forest ahead of reforestation.

There are major problems confronting the Bureau of Forestry in the management of the public forest and in implementing the conservation program as adopted since October 1, 1954. These problems may be summarized as follows:

(1) Insufficiency of technically trained personnel for the early implementation of program one (1): Selective Logging.

(2) Survey and establishment of per-

*(Continued on page 63)*

## School Forests . . .

(Continued from page 53)

another school, coming from another country, and bringing with it the unmistakable evidence of its origin, as a reward for the care given by the child to trees in the school forest originating from the woodlands of that distant and foreign land. The incentive to learn something of the geography, the history and the language of that country would be further enhanced, and ties of friendship strengthened, if the reward could take the form of a holiday in that land, among the children of the same school age and from the school which sent the seeds and was thus symbolically bound by the trees to the child's own school.

With the development of radio and television broadcasts in the classroom and the showing of films of other countries, the relations between schools of different nations can be made even closer, and the co-operation and friendship between the schoolchildren of the nations made more real to them.

In closing, it is desired to stress once more the broad aspects and far-reaching effect of a festival of trees observed on a world-wide basis. The use of the tree as a symbol of peace around which international celebration is concentrated, and the development of mutual understanding through the exchange of forestry knowledge on the occasion of such a festival might contribute greatly to the feeling of co-operation among nations. The role of forests affects regions, and not nations alone, so that it is well suited to this purpose. In addition to the forest's importance in world economy, the consideration of its influences, and of world conservation and protection problems, encourages a better mutual understanding among nations, and this can be brought home to the peoples of the world through the occasion of a "World Festival of Trees," when the publicity and educational programs developed for national purposes may be extended to international significance.

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(Continued from page 48)

manent forest blocks (3) on research work and other major phases of forestry activities, requiring technically trained men for the efficient prosecution of the projects;

(3) Insufficiency of fund or allotment to finance the projects;

(4) The indifference and lack of cooperation on the part of the local officials in extending positive cooperation with the Bureau of Forestry in the protection of the public forest against wanton destruction. Political influence of municipal mayors toward his constituents can be incalculable assets in preventing forest destruction in their respective localities.

In the over-all program on forest conservation, I believe the Leyte Rotary Club, being a civic organization can help greatly towards keeping the forest land in Leyte perpetually verdant with luxurious forest vegetation for the prosperity and happiness of the people of this province.

*Compliments*

*of*

**Mindanao Lumber  
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