

MESSAGE

Providence bestowed our country with bountiful resources found anywhere and everywhere in the vast span of our territory, making us potentially one of the richest countries in the world.

As a tropical country, we are blessed with perennial plenty, possessing within our boundaries every conceivable raw materials which we may need for a well rounded industrialization. While we cannot pretend to be a self-sufficient and sustaining economic unit—no nation is and will ever be in the natural scheme of things, no matter how advanced it may be materially—we are more favorably situated than many of the leading industrial nations of today, which must draw for their raw materials from foreign sources of supply.

One such Philippine riches is our forest resources. It is the greatest among our natural resources potentially now, and eventually later, when fully utilized. The total land area in the Philippines is 29,740,972 hectares. Of this area of actual soil cover, only 11,637,968 hectares is open land and cultivated land. The remaining is forest, 13,198,406 hectares commercial forest, 4,297,786 non-commercial forest, and 606,812 swamps (fresh marsh and mangrove). Our timber stand is estimated to be 464 billion board feet.

The eloquence of these statistical data, obtained from the 1946 Yearbook of Philippine Statistics, reveals the importance of our forests in the national economy. The figures may be modified at present with the possible increase of cultivated land area, alienated to agriculture, but undisputably forestry looms high and will continue in this commanding position for many years to come, and if the lumber industry forges ahead unabated in its progress, given the necessary incentive and encouragement, it will be kept there in its eventual contribution to our national income.

Our lumber and timber export is not listed among the ten principal exports of the Philippines, which in 1950 were copra, abaca, desiccated coconut, sugar, coconut oil, embroideries, pineapple (canned), copra cake, chromite, and rope. Although we are making progress in our export shipments of lumber and logs, exporting in 1950, 69,206,123 board feet, against 58,608,996 board feet in 1940, the lumber industry is still far from what could be expected in view of its potentiality. For this reason we are exerting every effort to develop and make our domestic market more dependable and stable.

The Philippine Lumber Association is also focusing its preferential attention on how to increase foreign demand for the products of the lumber industry. Before the war we were enjoying a very lucrative lumber market in the United States. During the war and on account of the ban decreed against the exportation of lumber shortly after liberation, our lumber was dislodged by competitive lumber from other sources of supply. We found it extremely hard to regain our lost foreign markets. But our association is sparing no effort to regain our position in the United States Market. Much headway has already been accomplished and we feel confident that our lumber will ultimately dominate the rich American Market.

A new industry, the plywood industry definitely established, is a new user of our timber in our own domestic market. We have already started to export plywood and

there is every reason to believe that it can be developed into one of our principal export products.

The export of forestry products to the United States, whether it be in the form of lumber, logs or plywood, is clothed with special importance and significance in this country. One of our serious problems is the conservation of our dollar reserve in order to maintain the international stability of our currency. The exportation to America of our forestry products precisely will help most effectively in the solution of that problem.

I am extremely elated to address a message to the 1952 graduates of the College of Forestry, University of the Philippines, with the opportunity the invitation of the Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Martin R. Reyes, of the "Forestry Leaves", has afforded me.

The choice of your profession is wise. The training and experience you have acquired during your years in this College enable you to perform a very important task of nation building. You have been taught all there is to learn on foresting, how to avoid and fight wasteful *kaiñgins*, how to cut timber but preserve it for generations to come. Indeed you have chosen a career as important as any that can be imagined. However, it might not be as lucrative as few others and the path you have to tread might even be thorny. But you will have the grand satisfaction of rendering signal service to your country.

You are confronted with a challenge. We are politically independent. After treading long and hard towards our ultimate goal, liberty, we enjoy full and complete sovereignty under a Constitution of our own making. We need it, to shape, untrammelled, our national destiny. Political freedom is not, however, enough. We must have economic independence as well. With both we can chart the course for the ship of state in a manner to best suit our national interests, and we can build a solid, stable and impervious foundation for our hard earned freedom.

Those of us who have been in business for quite a while, have a wholesome realization of this dual need for our survival as a nation. You will be, in due time, possessed and overwhelmed by this urge.

As you leave the portals of your College, make a vow and hold to it as long as you live. Give enthusiastically your service to the cause of forestry in the magnitude you have been imbued during your studies. Do not accept employment in other lines foreign to your technical knowledge. Seek the cooperation of your fellow-graduates and pool resources together in organizing business forestry units, so that with your technical know-how jointly with business training and experience of other Filipinos, you may contribute to the full development of the lumber industry and thus be a positive factor in building up in this country a stable and solid economy which will give our people the prosperity and happiness for which they perennially strive.

(Sgd.) A. DE LAS ALAS

President

Philippine Lumber Producers' Assn'.

