

- This is a privileged speech delivered by Congressman Aquino before the House of Representatives March 21, 1966. Being a logger himself, he defends his side.

OF FORESTS, FLOODS, AND THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

A great misconception has swept the minds of many of our people on the subject. They blame those who produce dollars for our economy out of our timber resources, for many ills due to other causes.

Mr. Speaker, it is about time the mistaken notion on floods and forests be ended. It is for this reason that today I have decided to take the floor for a vital industry.

The timber industry is a relatively new industry. It was only in the middle of the '1950's that our country has found a thriving market for our wood products abroad. In such market, it has strong competition. As an infant industry therefore, it needs earnest and sustained government support.

Not so many, Mr. Speaker, have succeeded in taking off from the crude manner of utilizing our timber resources

to mechanized process. For one to be successful, he must be backed up by adequate capital. For capital to be adequate, it must be substantial.

Such requisite for an industry to grow has imposed on those engaged to sink lifetime earnings, millions of pesos in their ventures. They face big risks and hazards. But they contribute immensely to the nation's economy.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the timber industry, in a little over 10 years, has grown to the third biggest dollar earning export industry of the country. Credit its growth to the enterprise of those who succeeded in the business. Credit it, to the labors and sacrifices of those who have cast their lot in the industry; credit it to their daring, their sustained effort, their capacity for hardships, and to their tenacity and de-

termination to succeed in life. Credit such success to the vast experience they harnessed and to their outlook in business, economics and management.

To those who pioneered in the industry and succeeded should go the honor and laurels in having transformed our timber resources which lay idle and prostrate and without utility for centuries into dollar resources, into economic goods, into money circulated for economic growth and for the good life and advancement of our people and of the nation.

However, on the other side of the ledger, Mr. Speaker, the industry and those engaged in it are heaped with endless blame for the wanton and criminal destruction of our forests. Those in the industry are blamed for the tragedy brought by typhoons and floods, and for almost anything which causes harassment to our national patrimony.

Justice and fairness demand utmost caution, Mr. Speaker, for many have hazard and advanced erroneous conclusions destructive to the industry. Many have

poisoned the minds of our people that the industry has caused national catastrophe. Those in this preoccupation have maligned, impaired, and degraded the good name of an industry which brings tremendous benefits to our people. They do not realize, that anything destructive to the industry is destructive to our economy. It is doubly destructive to the nation and its leadership.

It all started perhaps, with the layman's sharp approach to mass psychology, that a belief has firmed up on the effects of forestal cutting on the flow of floods. Such belief, baseless as it is in fact and in truth, has been so articulated that at the drop of a hat, the timber industry gets the ax. Even our media of information has been carried to the conclusion that it spells disaster.

I wish to clear this misconception, Mr. Speaker, I wish to do justice to the industry and, on the basis of scientific findings shatter to pieces the notion that the timber industry is the reason for floods, for damages to life and property, for des-

truction of our much valued watersheds.

The Republic of the Philippines has not done much in this particular line of study, but long years of scientific study and research in the United States has elicited the following findings.

According to the findings of Kittredge at the time director of the US Weather Bureau and a ranking member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, in his book entitled, "Forest Influences," deforestation or reforestation do not affect considerably the water flow of streams or rivers. In no occasion, Kittredge stated, has reforestation appeared as a method of flood control. Conversely, the authority added, it cannot be alleged that deforestation causes floods.

These findings of Kittredge was supported by the findings of Col. H. M. Chittenden of the US Corps of Engineers, also an influential member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Colonel Chittenden, in a paper submitted to the American Society of Civil Engineers, entitled: "Forests

and Reservoirs in their relation to stream flow, with particular reference to navigable rivers," stated in his findings that forests have no material influence on stream flow.

This conclusion of Colonel Chittenden was subsequently supported by a report of the Special Committee on Flood Prevention of American Society of Civil Engineers. In a report submitted to the Society on its findings, the Special Committee on Flood Prevention pointed out that even advocates of reforestation as a means of flood control failed to give any quantitative determination on effects of forests upon floods.

Again, these findings of the American Society of Civil Engineers' Special Committee on Flood Prevention, was corroborated by the late Allen Hazen, another reputable member of the society, who, after extensive and meticulous investigation has reached the same conclusion.

These findings, Mr. Speaker, are beyond question by laymen like us. Unless further scientific studies and research show otherwise, it is only fair and just and reasonable that we submit our-

selves to the binding effect of what has been found true and valid conclusions. It is such a valuable document which should be preserved for policy guidance, for which reason, Mr. Speaker, I ask that same be included, in the proceedings, as part of my speech.

I admit, Mr. Speaker, that there has been wanton and criminal destruction of certain forest areas. But certainly, such criminal acts were not and are not committed by legitimate loggers. They who invest millions in the timber industry want it to stay and grow. They have taken leadership in the economic field and have nurtured the industry to the third biggest dollar earning export of the country.

But take the kaingineros, Mr. Speaker, they ravage our forests and do not even contribute to the coffers of the State. They do not pay taxes. They invest no capital. And there are the pirates of the trade who, without permit or license, and against the regulations, invade our forestal zones and destroy the trees indiscriminately. They are not legi-

itimate operators, Mr. Speaker, they are enemies of public good and public interest. They are also enemies of loggers whose good name and business they destroy. For, most often, they are being mistaken for loggers. And they have aroused public hatred, indignation and condemnation against those righteously engaged in the industry.

The kaingineros and the pirates of the logging industry, who do not care to what will happen to our patrimony, deserve severe penalty. They should be metted heavier penalty, and our laws should provide more punishment against these sinister group who dastardly destroy our forests.

In justice to the Bureau of Forestry and the Department of Agriculture, and the personnel who comprise the working forces of these agencies, we cannot blame them for the rampant denudation of our forest areas. They lack the force that can execute effectively our forest laws and regulations. They also lack funds enough to cover program of effective enforcement. These agen-

cies, Mr. Speaker, need more fiscal support to employ men adequate to apply forest laws and regulations and enforce them.

The loggers, Mr. Speaker, also deserve government assistance. They need more credit facilities. They desire more sound policy on forest exploitation and utilization so that they can employ sound planning and programming of their operations. It is now our duty in Congress to provide this, Mr. Speaker.

To discourage squatters and kaingineros from ravaging our forest resources, they should be relocated. Vast and fertile lands along opened roads and highways in Mindanao and other places of the country are lying idle. They have been cleared and made ready for cultivation. But they are still, in our records of government, classified as forest lands. Many have squatted on and cultivated these areas. But they cannot call these land their own. The release of these areas, Mr. Speaker, to those who have established possession and have made improvements on them will help lo-

cate squatters and kaingineros. Giving them lands they can call their own may prevent them from destroying our forests zones. It is high time, therefore, that our forest classification be updated.

The Administration, Mr. Speaker, is committed to a program which will provide more incentive and encouragement to the processing of wood products. This is very laudable. I fully agree with President Ferdinand Marcos, and I completely endorse his commitment to the wood industry in his State of the Nation Address and I quote—

The promotion of the wood production industry by lifting the percentage tax on all domestic sales of logs for manufacture or production into wood products and by imposing a tax on all foreign sales of logs. We have the necessary capacity and potential for producing veneer, plywood, wood pulp and other wood products for export. If there be a necessity for setting up new wood processing factories or expanding existing ones, a portion of the increment from this tax policy shall be made available as loans for finan-

cing these industries. It is indeed incongruous that by our expensive logging exports are provided foreign competition of our wood products with the valuable raw materials which makes strong competition possible — unquote. To this, I add that circular sawmills should be discouraged by reason of the small recovery made on raw materials.

The loggers, want a new light of day in business. Mr. Speaker, that is why, it is the desire of both entrepreneurs and investors in the logging business that the Bureau of Forestry be headed by one of experience. It's director must be seasoned in forestry matters. He must understand the logging business and the mechanics of logging operations. The Director of Forestry must also have the capacity to anticipate problems which may come the way of the industry.

A limit to the cutting of timber, in order to preserve our patrimony, deserves support. Such limit is needed in order that we can carry on for a long time the supply of the best mahogany in the world market. Limit to

timber cutting must also be coupled with sustained conservation and reforestation. Our source of raw material supply and of our valuable dollar earnings must be conserved if not augmented.

This underscores the need for selective logging, Mr. Speaker, and, with the policy to encourage wood processing to realize more dollar earnings from our wood products should be a policy of long-term license grant to wood processors. It is in keeping with sound policy, to discourage short-term grant of licenses to loggers. It only impels fly-by-night operators to rush accumulation of profit. As a consequence, they often disregard regulations. They labor on the fear that next time their licenses will not be renewed or extended. This stifles investment, Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, long-term licenses affords them sound planning. It gives them boldness in investment for they can find stability in operations and foresee more guarantee of return of capital and of profit.

This forum, Mr. Speaker, must bring realization to

the truth. Let us not entertain fear that the cutting of big trees in our forests will cause us less water supply or that such cutting will cause deluge or big floods. Let us not labor under a mistaken notion, a misconception that the loggers have caused undue depletion of our patrimony. Let us submit to the scientific findings of authorities who made studies in the field.

Let us wage a bigger campaign against the kaingineros

and the pirates for they comprise the group of men who philander our forests. Let us put more teeth to policy involving the wood industry. Let us line up measures which can firm up these ends. Let us prevent reckless destruction of our forests as we give incentive and encouragement to wood processing. Those engaged in this industry deserve added support from the Government. — *By Rep. Jose C. Aquino.*

MENTAL DECAY THRU INDOLENCE

The failure of the mind in old age is often less the result of natural decay than of disuse. — Ambition has ceased to operate; contentment breeds indolence, and indolence decay of mental power, ennui, and sometimes death. — Men have been known to die, literally speaking, of disease induced by intellectual vacancy. — *Sir B. Brodie.*