

MAKES REPORT ON LUMBER INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES

H. N. Whitford, chief of the division of Forest Investigations of the Philippine Bureau of Forestry, under Major George P. Ahern, writes to a member of the United States Forest Service that the total amount of lumber imported into the Philippines during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1908, was 13,765,828 board feet, most of which came from the United States, and that the lumber exported during the same period amounted to 925,000 board feet, mostly to the United States, Mr. Whitford says:

"A comparison of these figures with those of former years found in the annual reports of this bureau shows that the trend is toward a decrease in the imports and an increase in exports. The imports have been mainly Oregon pine which is being replaced, principally, by red and white Luan, woods belonging to the family 'dipterocarpacea.' While these timbers are hardwoods in the sense that they are broad leaved and do not belong to the conifers, yet in hardness, strength, and durability, they grade with Oregon pine, and with the heavier and more durable apitong, another dipterocarp, are gradually being substituted for it.

"This leads to another statement that may be of interest to you. The investigations of this bureau show that the great wealth of the Philippine island forests is in the lighter grades of timber that belong to this family (dipterocarp). The work of the division of forest investigation for the past two years in locating large bodies of timber has convinced us that this is the fact. From our experience here and from such information as we can obtain indirectly from India and Borneo, it is believed that this is the case for the eastern tropics in general. We should not be surprised to find that it is also true of South America and Africa with some other family yielding the softer varieties. If it be true that the tropics in general are rich in woods of the grade of the conifers as are the Philippines, it is of great interest to conifer producing countries. It means that they can look to tropical regions for substitutes.

"The prevalent belief that the tropics produce only hardwoods and that none can replace the conifers is due to a number of reasons:

"First, compared with the hardwoods the softer ones yield to the attacks of the fungi and white ants very readily. Destructive agencies of all kinds are much stronger in the tropics than in temperate regions, hence for permanent construction the harder woods are chosen.

"Second, the local demand for cheap construction timbers is supplied principally by bamboo.

"Third, the difficulty of handling the logs of the softer kind without modern machinery makes the expenses too great for their exploitation. The much higher prices paid for the harder classes offset the expense of exploiting them. With the introduction of modern methods of logging this handicap will be overcome."

It is conservatively estimated that there are about 16 million acres of timber in the Philippines which it is possible to export on a large scale, and that the total amount of standing timber on this area is not less than 40 billion board feet. These forests with proper management should furnish by annual growth a supply of at least 400 million feet of timber. The consumption of saw-timber in the Philippines at present is less than 100 million board feet. It would be possible for the Philippine forests, therefore, to supply all the present requirements of the home market with a balance of 300 million feet left over for export trade. Continuing, Mr. Whitford, says:

"It is not at all likely that much of the hard timbers will be exported for the supply is limited and the home market is strong. This leaves third and fourth group timbers for the export trade. There is no doubt that a very large proportion of this trade will be in the softer varieties of the dipterocarps, viz., the lauan, and the hard variety, apitong. How much of this will reach the United States is questionable, and depends mainly upon the cost of production and transportation. The cost of production with modern methods is about the same as in the United States, but, at present the cost of transportation is high. Unless this can be overcome the Philippines must look to some nearer market than the United States. It is probable that China will be that market. However, woods like the better grades of red lauan and the slightly harder one known as tanguile have found a market in the United States as woods for fine finishing purposes. Though about equal to Oregon pine for rough construction, they give a very fine finish and will probably rank high in the United States. How much of our supply your market can consume at high prices, you are better able to judge than this bureau.

"It may be well to add that the dipterocarp family also produces woods of very high grade, both in quality and durability, but the supply of these is limited to the softer varieties. There is mentioned in this place yacal and a number of closely related species. There is a great local demand for these."

The prevailing prices in gold of native and imported lumber at Manila range about as follows:

Lauan, \$30 to \$40 per thousand board feet.

Apitong, \$35 to \$50 per thousand board feet.

Red Narra, \$125 to \$150 per thousand board feet.

Oregon pine, \$30 per thousand board feet.

California redwood, \$47 per thousand board feet.

"The lumber industry is mostly in a primitive condition in the Philippines up to the present time, as a large part of the native timber used is whipl sawn. There are 31 sawmills in the islands but their total products does not exceed 250 thousand board feet per day. Of this quantity, the five mills in Manila can turn out 90 thousand feet per day. There are, however, a few large operations just being undertaken which indicate the possibility of lumbering in the Philippines on a scale comparable to that of many operations in the United States. A modern band sawmill, which is expected to turn out 60 thousand board feet per day, has recently been installed in Negros Occidental. This mill will cut from a very heavy stand of timber and it will be able to deliver lauan and apitong lumber in Manila at a lower price than is received for imported Oregon pine and California redwood.

"The stumpage prices charged by the Philippine government are low, ranging approximately from \$1 to \$5 per thousand board feet in gold. One dollar per thousand board feet is charged for lauan stumpage. For narra and the other most valuable woods the rate is \$5 per thousand board feet."

A circular recently issued by the Philippine bureau of forestry, contains the following statements concerning the manner in which lumbermen may secure cutting licenses:

"The public forests of the Philippines islands are not sold, but are exploited under a license system. Small cutters generally operate under ordinary yearly licenses for definite small areas. In the case of large operations involving the investment of considerable capital in permanent enterprises, exclusive licenses are granted for periods up to twenty years for definite large tracts of timber, which licenses are practically equivalent to concessions.

"Applications for exclusive licenses on tracts not exceeding 2,500 acres in area are forwarded by the director of forestry, after due investigation, to the Secretary of the Interior with recommendation. The secretary may then grant an exclusive license if he decides that it is in the public interest. For an area of more than 2,500 acres when the Secretary of the Interior is convinced that the granting of an exclusive license is in the public interest, proposals for bids to secure the said privilege are published in the Official Gazette and other newspapers. The license will then be granted to the highest and best bidder who offers to install the most complete and efficient plant most promptly and to do the greatest amount of annual development work and who furnishes the best bond as a guarantee of performance."

There is evidently good reason to think that before long the Philippines will become the seat of a comparatively small but steady and profitable lumber industry which will supply the home market and near-by foreign ports, and which will also send some of its most valuable hardwood products to the United States. It is futile, however, for this country to look to the Philippines for any considerable quantity of the classes of timber needed in general construction work. Nothing makes this clearer than the simple statement that the total estimated stand of saw-timber in the islands is no

greater than the quantity annually cut for lumber alone in the United States.

It is becoming more and more evident that the great bulk of timber which the United States will use in the future must come from its own forests. In short, that this country must produce our own timber or do without it. This is one reason why the present movement for the conservation of our natural resources is receiving such hearty support from leading men in every walk of life. They realize, as did the conference of governors at the White House in May, that it is a subject of transcendent importance, and also so far as timber is concerned it is possible by right management to make the forests of the United States produce yearly all the timber we really need. To bring our forests up to this point, however, is a task of such magnitude that it will require years of patient effort and heavy expense on the part of all the large owners of timberland, whether they be private individuals, corporations, states, or the national government. That this task will be undertaken and carried through, no one who has faith in our institutions and the destiny of America can doubt.

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