

Current Science

Vol. XVIII]

APRIL 1949

[No. 4

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THE FAR-EASTERN CONFERENCE ON FORESTRY AND TIMBER UTILISATION

THE Far-Eastern Conference on Forestry and Timber Utilisation which has just concluded its session at Mysore is the Third Regional Conference to be organised by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. The first of these was held in 1947 in Czecho-Slovakia to cater primarily to European needs; the second was held in 1948, in Brazil, for the Latin American countries; and now, the third of these, devoted to the problems of the Asian and Pacific countries, has completed its work. It may be added that the *Ecafe* also suggested the convening of the Conference. India offered to be the host

and the Government of Mysore provided the necessary facilities at Mysore City which has thus had the privilege of being the venue of the first International Conference in its long history.

Delegates from Burma, Ceylon, France, India, Malaya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Siam and the United Kingdom attended the Conference. Observers were present on behalf of Bhutan, Indonesia, Korea, Nepal, Portugal, *Unesco*, *Scap* (Japan), and the International Meteorological Organisation. Russia was a notable absentee. The Indian Delegation was led by Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya,

and on his later election to the Chairmanship of the Conference, by Mr. A. P. F. Hamilton, I. G. of Forests, whose colleagues on the Delegation were Mr. C. R. Ranganathan and Mr. R. Bhadran. The Delegation was assisted by Dr. S. Kamesam and a number of Chief Conservators of Forests of the Indian Provinces and States as alternate Delegates and Advisers. M. Marcel Leloup, Director of Forestry, FAO, was in general charge of the Conference assisted by Dr. Morris A. Hubermann, Secretary-General, and Dr. D. Y. Lin and Dr. Leslie Vernell, Technical Secretaries. Mr. M. A. Muthanna, Chief Conservator of Forests, Mysore, was, besides his place in the Indian Delegation, in charge of the local arrangements of the Conference.

The general pattern of work for the Conference was on the same lines followed in the two earlier regional conferences, *viz.*, to assess the forest assets and liabilities of each region, to estimate the gap between the supply and the demand for forest products, discuss remedies and to set up machinery and to implement on a regional basis, the recommendations of the Conference.

The Conference for which elaborate preparations had been made by the Governments of India and Mysore opened at the Cheluvamba Mansions, Mysore, on the 28th March 1949. The Hon'ble Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram, Minister for Food and Agriculture, inaugurated the Conference. His Highness, the Maharaja of Mysore in his gracious speech expressed his pleasure to welcome such a distinguished international gathering to the capital of the State, referred to the salient features of Mysore Forests and expressed his hope that the deliberations of the Conference would be crowned with success. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, expressed his great regret at being unable to be present, and his inspiring message wishing success said, "To the people in the East, as

indeed in the whole world, the numerous problems of Forestry hold out a great challenge. It must be met if the world is to be made a better place to live in. Fundamentally, the problems are the same in all countries and I am sure this Conference will not only provide the means of pooling the world's knowledge and experience of Forestry but will also, by bringing together the foresters of the East, strengthen the Brotherhood of Forestry and the bonds of friendship which already exist among the Nations participating. I send my best wishes for the success of the Conference." Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram, in his speech, felicitously indicated how appropriate it was that the first International Forestry Conference was held in India, which led the Asian countries in some aspects of forest technique and administration and whose wise men had turned to and not away forests for spiritual solace. He referred at the unwisdom of planning for agricultural self-sufficiency without adequate protection of the soil. He pleaded for a rational appreciation of the rural and the industrial demands made on forest resources and concluded by freely offering the facilities available in and the results garnered by India in forestry research.

Mr. Norris E. Dodd, Director-General of the FAO, in his message, dwelt on the interdependence of the well-being of the land and the community, while M. Marcel Leloup, Director of Forestry, FAO, explained the magnitude of the problems they had to face in Asia and the machinery needed to translate the recommendations of the Conference.

The Conference, after electing its permanent Chairman, Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya (India), proposed by Pakistan, seconded by Burma and unanimously elected, decided its rules of business under a steering committee which also acted as the credentials committee. Then, splitting its work amongst a number of expert committees,

resolutions were drafted and, after critical discussion, were finally adopted by the plenary sessions of the Conference, on the following subjects:—(1) Forest Resources; (2) Forest Policy; (3) Soil Conservation; (4) International Control in Erosion Control; (5) Forestry and Weather; (6) Control of Grazing; (7) Roving Agriculture; (8) Large-scale Afforestation and Reforestation; (9) Domestic Needs; (10) Increased Production; (11) Balancing Supplies and Demand; (12) Distribution of Timber; (13) Standardisation and Grading; (14) Forest Inventions; (15) Enumeration Methods; (16) Minor Forest Products; (17) Statistics; (18) Research; (19) Exchange of Information; (20) Dissemination of Information; (21) Training and Education and (22) Conservation of Wild Life.

While considerations of space unfortunately preclude us from reproducing the text of all the resolutions *in extenso*, even the listing of the titles of the subjects dealt with indicate the range and comprehensiveness of the deliberations. This is not surprising, as the preamble and the constitution of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations include: raising standards of living, securing improvements in the efficiency of production and distribution and bettering the conditions of rural populations. And, forestry touches so broad a front at many, many points.

The recommendations of the Conference naturally fall into two categories, *viz.*, the immediate needs and the long-term requirements. The former have an element of sameness all over the world. Forests have been cut, in many instances grossly overcut, during the war years in pursuance of 'win the war at any cost' policy. In forestry, the first tenet is conservation and conservation is the first casualty in any war. And these over-exploited forest resources are now called upon and provide the accumulated needs and pent up demand of this

period of colossal material destruction. And since forest products form part of the goods ranging from aeroplanes to matchsticks, the magnitude and complexity of meeting the needs of a starved world will become clear.

While the Conference took note of these extremely urgent needs and made specific recommendations to meet them, even more valuable was its contribution for the long-term rehabilitation and development of the forest resources of the region. Forestry is, in the best sense of the term, the best of investments but long dated. And, nemesis for lapses in forestry is not always swift or readily visible but terribly sure. These characteristic elements of forestry make it peculiarly difficult for uninitiated public opinion to appreciate or sometimes even recognise the implications of indifferent forest management. The temptation to cash in now the forest benefits that rightly belong to posterity is always there; and to index and measure the apparent efficiency of forest management by the fallacious yardstick of immediate financial return. These are matters of such grave import that the Conference rendered signal public service in dealing with them in its first resolution which reads as follows:

"The Importance of Forest Resources.

"The Conference,

"Recognising, that forests, as renewable, are essential to a country's agricultural life, industrial development, economic stability and national security;

"Recognising also, that forests and forest products both major and minor are essential to the life of the rural and urban population;

"Calls the attention of the governments of all countries of the region to the need for dynamic policies for the conservation, development and utilisation of forest resources, according, to the needs and possibilities of each country;

"Declares that any failure by governments to accord due recognition to the great value

of forest resources will have disastrous consequences for the economy of the country, both rural and industrial;

“Urges governments so to manage their forests as to serve the rural and urban population and thus enlist the support of the masses for the implementation of a sound policy for the protection and development of forests, even though this may involve some restriction on the action of individuals in the interests of the community as a whole. Thus the precious heritage of forest resources can be passed on unimpaired from generation to generation;

“Recommends that the attention of the governments of the region be drawn to the desirability of giving a high priority in their national financial and economic plans to the claims of forestry and the improvement of harvesting facilities.”

We should like to draw attention to three other resolutions passed at the Conference and of special importance to India.

Resolution III deals with the menace of soil erosion and recommends, *inter alia*, the setting up in each country a central authority for the co-ordination, in both planning and execution, of land utilisation policies. The pressure on land of population, the planning and construction of vast irrigation and multipurpose River projects and the fact that in a vast country like ours the watercourses of many of these rivers lie within the control of different provincial authorities render it imperative that we have recourse to some central authority in such matters if the insidious and terrible chain of events consequent upon soil erosion is to be insured against. Also, even within a given province, the clamour for land cultivation at the expense of forest lands is a development which must be sternly put down. Taking the country as a whole, the area under forest is well below the safe minimum of about 25 to 30 per cent. of the land area, and it would be very short-sighted policy indeed if our effort at self-sufficiency in food should make inroads

into our already inadequate forest areas—losing sight of the basic fact that forestry and agriculture are two different methods of utilising the common capital of both, *viz.*, the soil.

Resolution XVIII makes recommendations on the important subject of forest research. This is an important aspect of forestry in which this country has good reason to take modest pride but no ground whatever to be complacent. Dehra Dun is on the international map of forest research centres. But, the point is that while Dehra Dun is good, it is not alone sufficient to cover the needs of this vast country. Dehra Dun should be the focal point from which the traditions and experience of this premier institution should permeate a number of co-ordinated regional research centres strategically located over this subcontinent. It is pleasant to record that the Indian offer to co-operate fully by placing her available research facilities and experience at the disposal of the member nations at the Conference was appreciated.

Finally, we should like to refer to the question of forest education which is dealt with in Resolution XXI. Here again, what we have is undoubtedly good but demonstrably insufficient. And there are many who believe that forest education in India is much too expensive. The Indian Delegation made a positive contribution to the deliberations of the Conference on this subject. All our plans and machinery for forest education have been hemmed in by two considerations, to provide professional foresters, and to provide such professional foresters to man the forestry services—almost exclusively governmental. The time is now ripe to loosen these restrictive bonds. The ideal to be aimed at would be that while first-rate facilities should continue to be available to train the professional forester, we should also establish educational facilities whereby elementary forestry may take its due place as a subject of liberal education in the curricula of universities. Finland

presents a fine example of what could be done in this direction. Then, again, the forests are getting to be increasingly important as the store-house of industrial raw material to be processed into consumer goods. This trend has created a demand for the services of the specialist who, with a grounding in the fundamentals of forestry, is called upon not to manage forests, but run forest industries. The facilities for such specialised training are conspicuous by their almost total absence in our country. And, here, the U.S.A., Canada and Germany could give us valuable lessons.

The fact that such packed agenda was disposed of within the course of some eleven working days was a tribute as much to the efficient and business-like organisation and the preparatory technical work as to the ability, tact and genial personality of the distinguished Chairman, Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya, to whose work a chorus of tribute was paid by the delegates at the close of the Conference. The Conference was also fortunate in another respect. It was singularly free from rivalries and 'lobbyings'

which make some international gathering a nightmare. Foresters naturally fraternise; they fell, with axes but not with axes to grind and no secrets to jealously guard against prying eyes and ears. They are ready indeed anxious to share their experience and to pool their knowledge. This contributed to the amity and dignity of the international gathering.

As a postscript, it may be added that the immediate and concrete sequel to this Conference is the setting up of a new forestry office at Bangkok, with D. Lin as its first Director. The Delegation strongly urged the Government of India for the location of this office on suitable geographical grounds and on the basis of past experience and the great facilities for research which India affords. We were naturally disappointed that the vote of the Conference in this matter went against India, but, this by itself is not a matter and we wish every success to the new office and its distinguished Director in Bangkok in the discharge of their respective duties in the service of Forestry.

BRITISH INDUSTRIES FAIR

THE biggest trade fair in the world—the British Industries Fair—to which thousands of visitors and buyers flock from all parts of the world, will be held this year at London and Birmingham from May 2 to May 13.

Representative of all trades and industries in Britain, this year's Fair is expected to surpass all previous exhibitions in the quality, range and beauty of its exhibits.

India's interest in the British Industries Fair of 1948 was, in comparison to other countries, markedly high. Over 700 buyers attended the London section alone in a total of 12,505 buyers from nearly 100 countries. And the coming Fair is likely to attract even more buyers from India.

The lighter industries will exhibit in London, while the Engineering and Hardware Section will be organised, as usual, in Birmingham.

The 1949 Fair will include a major display by the Textile and Clothing industries and is expected to be the best exhibited so far.

Other industries exhibiting in London include brushes and brooms, chemicals, chemists' supplies, cutlery, jewellery, ware, silverware, watches and clockwork, domestic suction cleaners, fancy goods, types, foodstuffs, beverages and furniture, leather and leather goods, instruments, office machinery and equipment, plastics, pottery and glassware, printing, bookbinding machinery, radio sets and trades, scientific and photographic equipment, sports goods, stationery and paper, games and other general and sales sections.

At Birmingham, the buyer will find a conceivable item of equipment needed in the building trade, for electricity and engineering of all categories, for transport, for mining, colliery, road and oilfield. There will be a section for hardware, iron and brassfoundry and also metals of all kinds. In fact everything that India needs for setting up her own industries and modernising her state.