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One World—One Forest

By SIR JOHN BOYD ORR

THE tie between forests and the good things of the earth runs back through history.

“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together,” wrote the prophet Isaiah. Solomon the King sang of “a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” There are in the Bible more than a hundred references to the cedars of Lebanon and countless other references to the richness of the land lying near them.

Today those forests have gone, and the once fruitful countryside is an arid waste. There is a story of the shocked surprise of the late President Roosevelt, flying to Tehran, upon realizing that the bare waste of rocks below his plane was all that remained of Lebanon’s cedars and the one-time heart of the biblical land of milk and honey. The impression bit deep and was an added reason for the United States’s firm belief that the projected Food and Agriculture Organization should have a strong forestry division.

In recent months my own experience has underscored the link between forests and human well-being. On my last two trips through Europe, I saw on almost every hand what war had done to the people’s homes. I became convinced that next to the great crisis in food, the housing problem is the most widespread and pressing emergency for cities and towns on the Continent and in the British Isles. The crying need is for lumber.

The recent timber conference in Czechoslovakia was an effort to speed and stimulate the great task of reconstruction that lies ahead. I am glad the delegates at that conference were able to agree on constructive plans for co-operation among governments to alleviate the timber shortage and for attention at the same time to longer-range problems of maintaining and restoring forests.

There are many other examples, but these two instances show the place of forestry in the work of FAO. In the long march of civilization man has always looked to the forest for many of his necessities and comforts. In our complex modern world, wood continues to stand first as a building material, is indispensable as fuel, and supplies practically all of the world’s paper and a host of other essential industrial materials. Recent discoveries in ways of treating and using

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forest products may be bringing us to the threshold of a great new era in the use of wood. Moreover, forests are now universally recognized as guardians of soil and water, exerting a tremendous influence for good or evil over field agriculture in all parts of the world.

Despite an emphasis on timber supply, this introduction to the first issue of *Unasyilva* makes it clear that from the beginning FAO was aware of the global importance of forests in the provision of goods and services, and recognized that forest conservation was essential to the Organization’s goals of improving the lives of rural people.

THUS, forestry and the use of forest products are inevitably and inseparably a part of the work of FAO. The fundamental aims of FAO are set forth clearly in the Preamble to the Organization's Constitution. These aims are—first, raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of people everywhere; second, bringing about more efficient production and distribution of all food and agriculture products; third, bettering the condition of rural populations; and fourth, as the end result of these three great lines of effort, contributing toward an expanding world economy. FAO could not make a well-rounded effort to reach any of its major objectives without full attention to the forests and their problems.

In the fields of forestry and forest products the forty-eight nations working together through FAO are following a world policy with three main objectives—the conservation of all forests that perform useful social or protective functions; wise use of the world's forest soils for continuing an adequate production of raw materials; and new and better ways of processing and using forest products as a means of raising standards of living.

In forestry, as in its other fields, FAO is not interested solely in studying and solving technical problems for their own sake. Instead, our work in forestry is part of the broader stream of FAO's work as a whole.

ON a world-wide basis, the problems of forestry and forest products offer a great challenge. One set of problems concerns the present emergency arising from the devastation and disruption of war. At the very time when the need for lumber to repair war damage and for the building of millions of new homes and other structures is reaching its height, the capacity of the currently accessible forests has become insufficient to meet these extra demands. During the next few years, the increased cuttings from present commercial forest areas must be made with as much attention to long-range conservation as possible, and meanwhile, new forest areas not hitherto exploited must be brought into production.

The second and long-range world forest problem is that of keeping pace with growing demands for lumber and other forest products, and at the same time seeing to it that forests are in a condition to continue to produce. The world already has experienced far too much of wasteful and heedless forest exploitation. The depressing cut-over areas of both hemispheres are only one indication of the physical and social ills that follow upon this course.

Both the short-range and the long-range problems call for world-wide efforts. The tasks are too large for any one man or group of men, or any one nation or small group of nations. Already, what happens in Europe makes its effects felt in the forests of Siberia and of North and South America. Just as it is becoming clear that the diverse lands and peoples of this troubled planet form one world, both literally and figuratively, so it becomes clear that the world's forest areas are in reality one forest. FAO's part in the task that lies ahead is that of co-ordinating, stimulating, and guiding the work of public and private institutions in many lands. FAO, in turn, will be only one of many agencies co-operating in the work.

The name of FAO's new magazine, *Unasylva*, is well chosen—one world, one forest. This new review will attempt to shed light on all manner of problems in the field of forestry and forest products, to compare methods that are being used in different countries, and to present the opinions and suggestions of experts in the various fields. I hope and believe it will be a keen new blade in the world-wide battle for freedom from want.