

FORESTS OF THE TROPICS

The history of every country in the process of development shows that excessive waste accompanies the exploitation of its natural resources. Primitive people of the tropics, by cutting and burning the virgin forest areas to practice a shifting system of agriculture, have in the past been the greatest enemies of tropical forests. Thus two-thirds of the area of the original forest of the Philippines disappeared before the remainder was brought under forest management. The virgin forest area of countries of Central America and the West Indies had either been completely destroyed or badly damaged.

In temperate countries excessive waste has been the rule everywhere until proper forest policies checked such waste.

The economic development of the tropics will be greatly aided by the avoidance of the mistakes made in handling the forest resources of temperate regions. This can be done only by the adoption of a suitable forest policy during the early stages of exploitation.

What is Needed

What is needed is public appreciation of the value of the undeveloped forest resources and of the possibility of making them a permanent asset. This can be brought about by expert foresters who will not only direct operations in the woods but also arouse the public to the need of forest conservation, and assist in the formulating of a proper forest policy and in the enactment and enforcement of suitable legislation.—*Yale Forest School Bulletin.*



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