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The Lumberman and the lumber industry in the 1950s Philippines

Brendan Luyt

In 1954, a new Philippine trade periodical published its first issue, one of many to follow. The Lumberman, *as well as providing a wealth of detail about the early post-war logging and lumber industry in the Philippines, also records a sustained attempt to imbue readers with a progressive forestry ethos capable of combating entrenched notions of the forests as wastelands and trees as a hindrance to civilisation. It would be easy to dismiss this project as naive, and the magazine itself provides a foreshadowing of the wholesale destruction of forests during the 1960s and 1970s, but for those caught up in the events of the 1950s the future was not so certain. The possibility of a capital-intensive industry using the forests of the country in a sustainable manner was not to be ruled out. Although in the end the social forces interested in this project were not strong enough to prevail, this should not stop our recognition that attempts were made to advocate a different path. This study of* The Lumberman *acknowledges this point.*

Limited use of the Philippine forests had taken place for centuries before European colonisation, mostly to supply Chinese demand for exotic woods, while under the Spanish exploitation increased in certain of the more accessible forests. Most of this lumber was to supply a developing domestic market for wood in the major urban centres, including Manila, as well as the requirements of the Philippine shipyards of the Spanish navy.[1] Towards the end of Spanish rule, the government began to take more interest in the colony's forests and other natural resources, establishing the Inspección general de Montes in 1863. However, much of the work of this institution was destroyed by fire in 1897. The American regime that replaced the Spanish in 1898 was equally interested in the forests as a source of wealth, establishing a Bureau of Forestry as early as 1900. Finding it difficult to recruit Americans as forest officers a forestry school was established in 1910, which had the effect of producing qualified local foresters who quickly assumed high levels of responsibility in the Bureau and the industry. American lumber interests also introduced to the country in these early years mechanised logging and milling operations,

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1 Richard Tucker, *Insatiable appetite: The United States and the ecological degradation of the tropical world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 366; Joseph Burzynski, 'The timber trade and the growth of Manila 1864–1881', *Philippine Studies* 50, 2 (2002): 168–92; Gerhard van den Top, *Social dynamics of deforestation in the Philippines* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2003), pp. 78–9.

two of the earliest being the Insular Lumber Co., located on the island of Negros, and Cadwallader-Gibson, which worked out of the forests of Bataan, just across from Manila.[2] Much of the lumber production was still sold locally and this remained the case until the First World War disrupted traditional sources of supply for tropical hardwoods in the United States and other countries. Philippine lumber filled the gap and gained a reputation as a good product. Under the trade name Philippine mahogany (a misnomer since genuine mahogany doesn't grow in its forests), exports grew steadily in the years after the war. By 1939, logging was one of the major industries in the Philippines, ranking fifth in capital investment, fourth in value of production, and second in the size of its workforce.[3]

The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines in 1941 abruptly put a stop to the export trade. Although the Japanese saw the forests as an invaluable asset, their main focus was on supplying the needs of the occupying army and administration. They tried to encourage logging and milling, but production remained a fraction of what it had been before the war. A lack of spare parts, sabotage, and the rise of a formidable black market remained intractable problems. The final months of the war contributed still further damage with 141 out of 163 milling and logging operations sustaining damage or entirely destroyed.[4] The destruction was so great that the United States had to import portable sawmills to produce lumber for its army as it fought the Japanese for control of the country in 1944 and 1945. However, this equipment, when eventually sold to the private sector, proved sufficient to revive the industry. By the end of 1946 daily capacity had doubled to 957,750 board feet, compared to 423,000 board feet for the same period in 1945.[5]

The export trade took somewhat longer to be re-established. The newly independent Philippine government put into place a total ban on the export of logs and lumber in August 1946, due to the huge need for construction materials, although the order was altered in June of 1947 to allow for the export of veneer and peeler logs and changed yet again in December 1947 to allow for 20 per cent of total log production to be shipped overseas.[6] In 1949, the industry accounted for only $US3.3 million in exports, ranking seventh, after copra, sugar, abaca, desiccated coconut, coconut oil, canned pineapple, and copra meal.[7] However, it was poised for rapid growth. The US Army had left behind not only its sawmills, but a vast array of trucks and tractors that ended up in the hands of logging operators as war surplus equipment. By the early 1950s, Winslow Gooch could write that 'early methods of hand or carabao logging with handsawing of boards' could now only be found in the more remote parts of the country, a fact that was recognised when the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) opted to hold a six-month mechanical logging

2 Tucker, *Insatiable appetite*, pp. 371–2; Van den Top, *Social dynamics of deforestation*, p. 78.
3 Tucker, *Insatiable appetite*, p. 381.
4 Carlos Sulit, 'Forestry in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation', *Philippine Journal of Forestry* 5, 1 (1947): 22–47.
5 Gregorio Poblacion, 'The lumber industry in 1946', *Philippine Journal of Forestry* 5, 1 (1947): 71–4.
6 Carlos Sulit, 'Brief history of forestry and lumbering in the Philippines', *Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* January (1963): 16–24.
7 Robert Baldwin, *Foreign trade regimes and economic development: The Philippines* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1975), pp. 8–9.

course for Southeast Asian loggers in the Philippines.[8] This increase in mechanisation gave the country an edge in supplying export markets and made it a regional leader in the industry. The next decade was to be a turning point in its fortunes.

By 1954, the ranking of top exports had dramatically changed with only copra and sugar doing better than the US$35.6 million in exports raked in by logs and lumber. The industry remained in third position for the next six years.[9] Despite this significance, little has been written of the industry during this time. Most accounts of the history of forestry in the Philippines usually mention the 1950s fleetingly, if at all, it being usually passed over instead for the years of Marcos and his crony capitalism.[10,11] This article does not attempt a detailed history, but instead examines a part of that story; namely, the content and more importantly, the stance of *The Lumberman* (later the *Philippine Lumberman*), the main trade magazine devoted to the industry and published within the country. Like the 1950s, this trade periodical has tended to be ignored by those writing of Philippine forestry, at most being used as a source of information regarding forest conditions in the country at the time. But *The Lumberman* is interesting not just as a source. While certain international agencies and US-based foresters recommended that the Philippine forestry industry move towards a modernised and conservation-based model, *The Lumberman*, a Philippine-owned private sector institution, in a very public way, embarked on a project aiming to create these same conditions. This point has been completely unexamined in the literature.

I argue that beyond the obvious commercial motivations (sales of advertising and copies of the magazine), the editors of *The Lumberman* articulated a project for the industry they wrote about. By no means were they mere journalistic hacks pandering to the immediate and craven interests of the industry they represented in their periodical. They had a vision for that industry, wanting to see it unified, modernised in its

8 Winslow Gooch, *Forest industries of the Philippines* (Manila: Bureau of Forestry and US Mutual Security Agency), pp. 20, 23.

9 Baldwin, *Foreign trade regimes*, pp. 8–9.

10 There is a small body of work dealing with the Spanish and American forestry regimes in the Philippines. These include Jose Nano, 'Brief history of forestry in the Philippines', *Philippine Journal of Forestry* 8, 1–4 (1951): 9–128; Dennis Roth, 'Philippine forests and forestry: 1565–1920', in *Global deforestation and the nineteenth century world economy*, ed. Richard Tucker and John F. Richards (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983); Tucker, *Insatiable appetite*; Lesley Potter, 'Forests versus agriculture: Colonial forest services, environmental ideas and the regulation of land-use change in Southeast Asia', in *The political ecology of forests in Southeast Asia: Historical perspectives*, ed. Lye Tuck-Po, Wil de Jong and Abe Kenichi (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2003); Greg Bankoff, 'One island too many: Reappraising the extent of deforestation in the Philippines prior to 1946', *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, 2 (2007): 314–34; Greg Bankoff, 'A month in the life of José Salud, forester in the Spanish Philippines', *Global Environment* 2, 3 (2009): 8–47; Greg Bankoff, 'Breaking new ground? Gifford Pinchot and the birth of empire forestry in the Philippines', *Environment and History* 15, 3 (2009): 369–93; Brendan Luyt, 'Empire forestry and its failure in the Philippines', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 47, 1 (2016): 66–87.

11 For postwar Philippine forestry see Ooi Jin Bee, *Depletion of the forest resources in the Philippines* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1983); Germelino Bautista, 'The forestry crisis in the Philippines', *Developing Economies* 28, 1 (1990): 67–93; David M. Kummer, *Deforestation in the postwar Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992); Marites Vitug, *Power from the forest* (Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1993); Michael Ross, *Timber booms and institutional breakdown in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Tucker, *Insatiable appetite*; Van den Top, *Social dynamics of deforestation*; Bao Maohong, 'Deforestation in the Philippines, 1946–1995', *Philippine Studies* 60, 1 (2012): 117–30.

methods and equipment, and conservation-minded in its operations. *The Lumberman* was used to make a case for the forest as a cash crop, rather than wasteland needing to be cleared or burnt to make way for agriculture or as a natural resource to be mined until exhausted. Its pages represent a sustained attempt on the part of its editors to establish a readership imbued with a progressive forestry ethos capable of creating a unified, modernised and conservation-minded industry that could combat entrenched notions that saw forests as wastelands and trees as a hindrance to civilisation. The editor instead believed and wanted others to do the same, that 'the forest of the country is a replaceable national resource: it is not a "mine" that can be exhausted in its use … by proper management a forest concession can be cut indefinitely without impairing its value'.[12]

Calling for a technocratic approach to the management of the forests, *The Lumberman* hoped to secure victory in the deeper struggle waged since Spanish times between, on the one hand, a view of the forest as a crop and on the other, a view of the forest as an obstacle to agriculture. Out of such a victory, the equivalent of the economists' *homo economicus*, a kind of *homo silva*, was to be created standing in sharp contrast to those others seen as beyond the pale: shifting agriculturalists, corrupt government officials and 'fly-by-night' operators.

It would be easy to dismiss *The Lumberman* as either naive or deceitful in the stance it took, namely that the Philippine forest could be treated other than as a mine—for that was exactly what it became. But while a reading of the magazine certainly reveals that the seeds of the forest's destruction were present in the 1950s, the future, to those facing it at the time, would not have been so clear. The early progress of the plywood industry suggests that a different path could have been taken, one opening up the possibilities for a capital-intensive industry utilising the country's forests in a more sustainable manner. In his comparative study of the Taiwanese and Philippines plywood industry, Cheng-Tian Kuo concludes that 'the Philippine plywood industry emerged early and performed well', noting that the 'the growth rates of production and exports of Philippine plywood were remarkable in the 1950s' and that 'the quality of products and the size of firms in the Philippines were comparable to those of the United States and Europe'.[13] The industry was also reasonably united and interested in improving their operations with seminars organised on quality control and surveys undertaken of overseas plants, their technology and management.[14] The pages of *The Lumberman* even report on the beginnings of a quasi-Fordist approach to labour relations with some plywood firms working with unions instead of trying their best to get rid of them.[15]

Furthermore, the work of Yusuke Takagi suggests that the Philippines of the 1950s had numerous individuals who were not only well educated, but capable and interested in putting into place institutions abiding by the technical norms of modernisation. Takagi demonstrates how the Central Bank of the Philippines in the 1950s under its governor Miguel Cuaderno, became an 'island of state strength' based on its

12 'Our reason for being', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 4.
13 Cheng-Tian Kuo, *Global competitiveness and industrial growth in Taiwan and the Philippines* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), pp. 133–4.
14 Ibid.
15 'Santa Clara inks pact with union', *The Lumberman* 3, 5 (1957): 8.

technocratic expertise and prestige while Amando Doronila in the 1980s suggested that the bank 'may well be the cradle of Filipino technocracy … [and] Cuaderno the first Filipino technocrat'.[16] Looking at the record of the Bureau of Forestry during the 1950s it is impossible to think of it as forming a second 'island of strength' or bastion of a rule-based technocratic elite. However, it is also clear that the Philippines in the 1950s had a growing, if 'amorphous stratum of educated professionals, technicians and managerial people commonly identified as the "new middle classes"', which was becoming 'increasingly significant in the conduct of economic and political life in the Philippines'.[17] Elements of this new middle class, educated and modern in outlook, I would argue, lay behind the voice and aspirations of *The Lumberman* in the 1950s. In other words, the magazine was an aspiring voice for a forest technocracy struggling to be born in postwar Philippines. Although in the end the social forces interested in this project were not strong enough to prevail in the long term, this should not stop recognition that attempts were made to advocate a radically different path. This study of *The Lumberman* aims to acknowledge this point.[18]

The Lumberman project

The lumber industry in the Philippines was quickly emerging as a major industry in the country by the time *The Lumberman* published its first issue at the end of 1954. The magazine was equally successful as a commercial venture and continued to publish well beyond the period under consideration here—the last issue appeared in 2002. There is little information available about the owners and staff of the magazine. We know that it was based in Sampaloc in Manila and that it was a 'sister publication' of the *Philippine Architecture and Engineering Record*, which suggests that the publisher was in the business of catering to the rising professional classes of the Philippines. It seems at first that the editor, Jose Viado, was a trained forester, but from 1955 a certain Placido Urbanes was listed as editor-in-chief. In 1958, an assistant editor, Ambrosio Racho and an editorial assistant, Manuel Andaya Junior were appointed, an indication of the growing success of the magazine.

The editor provided in the first issue a statement of the magazine's intent:

> The lumber industry in the Philippines ranks among the leading industries in the amount of capital invested, in the volume of export, in the amount of taxes paid to government coffers as well as in the number of families dependent upon it … these industries have developed into such a stature as to create a need for an organ as a medium of expression, exchange of ideas and information, dedicated to the interest of such industries.[19]

A reading of *The Lumberman* suggests that beyond this generic set of aims, it fulfilled three functions. The first of these was to act as a kind of glue binding together the various firms and agencies involved in the forestry sector while the second was to

16 Yusuke Takagi, *Central banking as state building* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2016); Amando Doronila, 'Class formation and Filipino nationalism: 1950–1970', *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 2, 2 (1986): 39–52.

17 Michael Pinches, 'The Philippines: The regional exception', *Pacific Review* 5, 4 (1992): 390–401.

18 Whether this path, if taken, would ultimately have been environmentally sustainable in the long run is another question entirely.

19 'Our reason for being', p. 4.

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hold up a vision of the ideal forest industry as modernised, entrepreneurial, and wedded to norms of conservation. Finally, *The Lumberman* took on the role of whistleblower, reporting on failures of both the industry and government to live up to the ideal of the *homo silva*.

Creating a community

In the April/May 1960 issue of *The Lumberman* we find a heading extolling the PLPA (Philipine Lumber Producers Association) under which appeared a series of twelve photos taken at various functions, including two in which new members were officially accepted into the organisation.[20] The PLPA, founded in 1939, represented the major lumber and log producers in the country.[21] It was a select organisation, enrolling firms only if they met certain standards of financial strength, technical ability, and moral reputation. Hence the celebration surrounding the inauguration of new members.

Publicising this kind of event, one that brought together individuals and firms working in the industry, was a key part of the mission of *The Lumberman*. In earlier years, the magazine ran a feature, 'Know your forest district', in which a brief overview of the district was provided, accompanied by a photo of the foresters captioned with their names. In the first issue, for example, we find the spotlight on Forest District #9, headquartered in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija, which we are told 'with limited men administers 550,000 ha of forest lands'.[22] Starting in early 1957 and continuing right up to the end of the period under discussion here, the magazine included a section, 'People in the news', devoted to recording changes in management at various firms as well as those individuals receiving forestry scholarships to study overseas or for higher degrees. Staff of the Bureau of Forestry were not neglected here either—we learn of their overseas training activities, as well as the award winners for the Bureau's conservation prize.[23]

Another means of binding the forestry sector together were articles introducing individual firms—their histories, management teams and operations. These articles will be examined more closely in the next section, for as well as fostering a sense of community, they can be seen as exemplars of the vision of the industry promoted by *The Lumberman*. Similarly, there were histories of logging in the Philippines and of earlier associations of log and lumber producers—all of which were likely to create a common bond between producers.[24]

Perhaps most important to the mission of creating a sense of community was the space *The Lumberman* provided for the various trade associations representing the industry to present their views. Foremost among these organisations was the PLPA, already briefly mentioned above. The magazine published the text of several of the organisation's annual reports as well as the speeches of its president. The annual

20 'PLPA in the limelight', *The Lumberman* 6, 2 (1960): 28.
21 'History of PLPA', *The Lumberman* 2, 1 (1956): 8–9, 25.
22 'Know your forest district: Forest District #9', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 25–6.
23 People in the news, *The Lumberman* 3, 3 (1957): 22; 'People in the news', *The Lumberman* 3, 6 (1958): 36.
24 'Brief history of forestry and lumbering in the Philippines', *The Lumberman* 4, 4 (1958): 5–6, 13; 'History of PLPA', pp. 8–9, 25.

reports summarised not only the activities of the association, but its perspective on the industry. In these documents the individual firms that make up the sector were portrayed as essentially having the same interests; interests that could only be advanced by a strong association. It lambasted those producers 'who have taken the attitude of utilizing to their own selfish advantage the benefits derived from the efforts and representations made by the Association, without contributing their share'.[25] To stand outside the PLPA while engaging in the industry was in effect to be morally bankrupt and a freeloader.

However, the PLPA was not the only association representing the industry. The Plywood Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (PMAP), established in 1952, also had its day in *The Lumberman* sun, with the magazine publishing speeches of its president, articles outlining its position on major issues of concern, and so on. Founded even later than the PMAP was the Philippine Association of Log Producers and Exporters (PALPE) which aimed to represent smaller log producers. It too had space allotted in *The Lumberman* for the speeches and pronouncements of its president, Brigido Valencia. By incorporating all these associations within its pages, rather than focusing on only one, *The Lumberman* would have been seen as a common ground for all members, and hence a unifying force.

Homo silva: *Entrepreneurial, modern and following the norms of conservation*

The Lumberman was firmly wedded to the idea that Philippine capitalism was to be dynamic, entrepreneurial and harnessed to the development of the nation. In the preceding section I pointed out that *The Lumberman* published a number of 'biographies' of firms in the industry. As well as creating a sense of community these stories can be seen as didactic in so far as they set examples of proper behaviour for timber firms. In the profile for Santa Cecilia Sawmills Inc., for example, we read of the almost mythical origins of the firm as a tale of (relative) rags to riches: 'A logging firm that once used four carabaos in its logging business, but after fifty years of patient labor and careful planning it rose steadily and became one of the country's dollar producing enterprises'.[26] A similar story of entrepreneurial acumen is found in an article on Plaridel Lumber Co. about the brothers Sarmiento who 'with courage and fortitude … set about the herculean task of making the young enterprise among the pillars of the lumber industry in the Philippines today'.[27] Even more dramatic in tone is the narrative crafted for Valeriano C. Bueno and Butuan Lumber Manufacturing Co. where the petty rivalry of fellow concessionaires, lack of logging roads and sophisticated tastes of foreign buyers for quality logs 'are against him', but he succeeds in the end by sparing 'no effort' and leaving 'no stone unturned'.[28] Finally, there is the Mindanao Lumber Co., whose founder 'met failure after failure', but despite being faced with bankruptcy refused to give up and instead 'faced his losses squarely and

25 Pacifio de Ocampo, 'Lumber industry of the Philippines', *The Lumberman* 1, 5 (1955): 2.
26 'The history, progress and success of Sta. Cecilia', *The Lumberman* 4, 3 (1958): 23–6.
27 'The successful development story of Plaridel Lumber Company', *The Lumberman* 4, 5 (1958): 16–18.
28 'Story behind the success of Valeriano C. Bueno and Butuan Lumber Manufacturing Company', *The Lumberman* 5, 3 (1959): 19–25.

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calmly … [retrieving] whatever that remained of his business and learning from past experiences he tried to steer anew the enterprise with great vigor' so that 'after years of bitter struggles, laurels were his—the fruits of his guts and honest efforts'.[29]

All of these stories celebrate the success, usually of the firm's founder, over a series of challenges and obstacles. Although certainly exaggerated, they are exemplars of what the magazine wanted members of the industry to be like. The exploitation of the forest was a venture requiring determination and a pioneering frontier spirit, at least according to *The Lumberman*. And when such spirit was successful, it should be acknowledged as a triumph. But rugged determination and spirit was not enough. The ideal lumberman was also a modern one, availing himself of the latest technology to create an efficient and large-scale industrial operation. Not for nothing was the cover of the first issue of the magazine a photograph of Nasipit Lumber's sawmill, described as 'the biggest and most modern bandmill in the Philippines'.[30]

One key means of disseminating this norm of technological modernity were the same company profiles that magnified the achievements of lumber firms into mythical proportions in order to create an entrepreneurial mindset. These profiles always described firms in terms of the technology they employed, usually including at some point in the narrative a list of equipment. In one article it was recorded, for example, that Basilan Lumber 'uses a wide range of logging equipment … Its yarders are an assortment of three Berger diesels powered by Cummins engines, 150–200 hp, three D-8 Caterpillar tractor donkeys, 125 hp; and two Skagits (sled mounted) 150 hp'. This inventory was followed by a list of the firm's loading equipment, road construction vehicles and logging trucks, and concluded with a statement summarising that the total value of these assets amounted to over one million pesos.[31]

Also common in these profiles were general claims that the firm was using the latest technology available. Philippine Plywood Corp. had 'the most modern and latest designs for efficient production'.[32] The profile of the Findlay Millar Co. celebrated the modern in the guise of machinery, observing that 'machines and men make up a partnership in which one is useless without the other … much of the actual labor of making plywood and sawing lumber is made by the puffing steel giants … men's hands alone could not produce one thousandth of the five to seven thousand panels of plywood turned out a day and shipped to all parts of the world'.[33] Another article described Lawanit, a wall board product made in the Philippines, as being 'manufactured in a completely modern plant [that was] fully automatic', incorporating 'machineries of the latest designs'.[34]

Nasipit Lumber earned extra praise in *The Lumberman* for its manufacture of Lawanit as it emphasised both the entrepreneurial and technologically-savvy characteristics of the ideal lumber firm; characteristics that would naturally create a vibrant and more efficent industry:

29 'The story of the Mindanao Lumber Company', *The Lumberman* 5, 4 (1959): 23–4, 26, 28–30.
30 'Our cover', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 3.
31 'Basilan Lumber Co.: Using modern equipment', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 11.
32 'Philippine Plywood Corporation', *The Lumberman* 2, 6 (1956/57): 10.
33 'The Findlay Milar Timber Co. Story', *The Lumberman* 3, 6 (1958): 22, 44.
34 'Lawanit—the utility board', *The Lumberman* 3, 3 (1957): 4.

> Congratulations to Nasipit Lumber Company for its pioneering spirit which has led to the establishment of this industrial plant, the first plant of its kind in the Philippines … Normally out of a Philippine log the ratio of utilisation is seldom higher than 42%, meaning 58% waste. By making use of this large quantity of waste material the Philippine lumber industry might achieve this degree of efficiency necessary to compete effectively with the wood-working plants abroad.[35]

Entrepreneurship and the use of modern technology to achieve economies of scale also came together in the magazine's stance on the question over whether the industry should be encouraged to ascend the value-added chain by the implementation of a government policy banning log exports. In the June/July 1957 editorial the editor praised Bislig Industries and Nasipit Lumber for their work constructing 'a multi-million peso pulp and paper plant, the first factory to use native wood pulp' that would conserve foreign exchange (a major concern at the time) and utilise 'wood species hitherto unused and left to waste in our timberlands'.[36] Towards the end of the year the editor lent his voice to forester Jose B. Viado, a proponent of a gradual log ban, who argued that 'we should adopt the Canadian law prohibiting the export of forest products unless it is in manufactured form'.[37] And in the very next issue, the editor took up his pen to write 'we need to keep labor and money value here for processing into finished or partially finished products', arguing that political opposition 'will eventually relent and maybe a compromise will result in a gradual banning', if only proponents of the policy 'will press hard'.[38] Another editorial harnessed economic nationalism and memories of the last war to the cause: 'The American market [for Philippine manufactured plywood] should very well be our own were it not for our own undoing—we are giving the Japanese what they are unable to get from us by force'.[39]

However, as well as the company profiles and editorials, the emphasis on technology was communicated through a dedicated section reviewing the newest logging and plywood technologies. This section was part of *The Lumberman* right from the start with the first issue including an article on chain saws.[40] A few issues later we discover a similar piece recommending the use of dynamite in road construction, as the author observed its usefulness 'in one of the progressive logging operations I visited'.[41] It is clear that the line between advertising and content is blurred in many of these equipment articles. Titles such as 'CAT D9—World's most powerful single engine crawler tractor—to boost Philippine lumber production' number among these.[42] But others appear more wholeheartedly interested in educating the industry about new technical developments. A piece introducing the Wyssen skyline

35 Ibid., p. 4.
36 'New ventures in wood utilization', *The Lumberman* 3, 3 (1957): 4.
37 'The Lumberman outlook', *The Lumberman* 3, 6 (1957/58): 4.
38 'The Lumberman outlook', *The Lumberman* 4, 1 (1958): 3.
39 'Will the Philippine veneer and plywood industry survive', *The Lumberman* 4, 2 (1958): 4.
40 'Chain saws—a lumberman's friend', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 32.
41 'Dynamite use lessens the cost of road construction', *The Lumberman* 1, 5 (1955): 21.
42 'CAT D9—World's most powerful single engine crawler tractor', *The Lumberman* 1, 6 (1955/56): 3.

crane logging system and another reviewing Nasipit Lumber's experimentation with timber cruising using aerial surveys are examples.[43]

Allied to the use of the newest technology was the incorporation of forestry science into the operation of lumber firms. *The Lumberman* published many articles on the work of the Forest Products Research Institute (FPRI), helping to disseminate the findings of this organisation. The first of these described the new facilities recently built near the University of the Philippines School of Forestry at Los Banos, Laguna, noting that 'when fully equipped, it will be the biggest in the Far East. Patterned after the famous laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, it is expected to give out vital findings to spark the creation of additional wood-using industries and improve the already established forest industries of the Philippines'.[44]

In a later issue, *The Lumberman* published in full the annual report of the laboratory.[45] This was followed by a series of articles by the institute's scientific staff reporting their research findings. The first of these was a piece by Faustino C. Francia, an entomologist, who wrote a comprehensive overview of the insects responsible for pinholes in Philippine lumber.[46] In later issues, Simplicio Bellosillo wrote on 'Glue laminated wood construction, its status and future in the Philippines' and E.M. Davis and Dominador G. Faustino informed readers of the 'Machining properties of eight Philippine hardwoods'.[47] In fact, from 1958 to the end of the period under consideration most issues had at least one contribution from the FPRI.

The final characteristic of *homo silva* was adherence to norms of conservation. The editorials demonstrate this clearly. In the first anniversary issue of the magazine the editor chastised the Bureau of Forestry, arguing that given its age 'we should now have several forests under "sustained yield" management', the implication being that despite much talk there were none so far.[48] In another editorial the magazine took issue with the claim made by many in the government and industry that the Philippine forests were inexhaustible, arguing that the 'remaining virgin stands are few and scattered' so that if current rates of logging continued 'we shall be faced with the prospect of seeing, within our lifetimes our forests denuded … This is a gloomy picture, dark and frightening'.[49] The following years saw only increases in logging rates, leading *The Lumberman* to write in 1958 that 'the way we are cutting our forest makes us appear as though we are in a hurry to liquidate it, the sooner the better and why not make money doing it?', concluding that 'this attitude is … abominable. Every right-thinking Filipino should condemn it'.[50] Later in the same year *The Lumberman* repeated its denunciation of the myth of forest inexhaustibility, taking

43 Juni Rosales, 'The Wyssen skyline crane logging system', *The Lumberman* 2, 1 (1956): 31; 'Nasipit goes airborne on timber cruising', *The Lumberman* 2, 2 (1956): 25.
44 'Philippine Forest Products Laboratory', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 34.
45 George Hunt, 'Report of the Forest Products Laboratory', *The Lumberman* 2, 6 (1956/57): 20–21, 24, 27.
46 Faustino Francia, 'Pinholes in logs and lumber', *The Lumberman* 3, 5 (1957): 16–18, 30.
47 Simplicio Bellosillo, 'Glue laminated wood construction, its status and future in the Philippines', *The Lumberman* 4, 3 (1958): 17–22; E.F. Roldan, 'Stain discoloration in native wooden footwear popularly known as "bakya"', *The Lumberman* 4, 4 (1958): 8–9; E.M. Davis and Dominador Faustino, 'Machining properties of eight Philippine hardwoods', *The Lumberman* 4, 4 (1958): 17–20.
48 'First milestone', *The Lumberman* 1, 6 (1956): 4.
49 'The Philippine forests are vast', *The Lumberman* 2, 2 (1956): 13.
50 'Will the Philippine veneer and plywood industry survive', *The Lumberman* 4, 2 (1958): 4.

direct aim at high-ranking officials who constantly downplayed the problems: 'Did not a former Director of Forestry say "we are not even cutting the growth of our standing timber"? The growth of our forest is so great we were made to believe that even with the combined efforts of kaingineros and the loggers, our forest wealth is hardly dented', ending with a call to both foresters and the industry to change this mindset and 'hold the present line [so that] through intensified management and improved utilization will see to it that the remaining forest will serve the future generations'.[51]

But as well as editorials, *The Lumberman* published a number of articles advocating conservation measures and strategies. The majority of the articles in the very first issue were devoted to various aspects of conservation, including one by Perry Donaldson of Basilan Lumber. This piece outlined the forest management plan developed by his company, heralded as being in the vanguard of conservation efforts in the country at the time.[52]

Throughout the rest of the 1950s further articles on conservation appeared. Some were public remarks made by government officials or logging firm managers. In 1960, the Secretary of Public Works spoke about the need for conservation to an audience at the Barrio Farmers Week, while the president of Aras-Aras Timber, Jose Sanvictores spoke at the 20th Forestry Day Convocation at the University of the Philippines, Laguna. Both speeches were published in *The Lumberman*.[53]

Foreign government advisers were also given voice on the topic of conservation. Paul Zehngraff, an American forestry expert invited to the Philippines in the early 1960s, provides one example as his speech at the College of Forestry Convocation of 1961 was published whole by *The Lumberman*. His was a rather tame address. Asking why, after years of regulation, 'there are found … practically no second-growth forests in the Philippines, but instead millions of hectares of idle lands, splattered with scarred snags and stumps and covered with cogon grass on areas formerly covered by dense virgin forest?' his answer was simply a 'lack of public information on the importance of conservation'.[54]

A marked contrast to Zehngraff was the 1959 speech by another advisor, Tom Gill. Early in the speech he recounted that his own experiences flying over and visiting the Visayas

> made me think I was back again in Korea, north China, or the man-made deserts of Mexico. For I saw thousands upon thousands of hectares of cut-over, burned-over, and abandoned land, pock-marked with red and yellow scars of bare earth at the mercy of sun, wind and rain. It will take a long, long time and many millions of pesos before these hectares ever add one centavo to the natural wealth or one handful of corn to the food supply. Yet these same hectares might have been a permanent source of wealth and employment.[55]

51 'Forest conservation', *The Lumberman* 4, 4 (1958): 4.
52 'Basilan island, the proving ground for the first forest management plan of the Philippines', *The Lumberman* 1, 1 (1954/55): 7, 20–23, 24.
53 Florencio Moreno, 'Imperatives in our conservation effort', *The Lumberman* 6, 1 (1961): 26, 54–5; Jose Sanvictores, 'What are we doing on forest conservation', *The Lumberman* 5, 4 (1959): 6, 8.
54 Paul Zehngraff, 'Forest resource conservation', *The Lumberman* 7, 2 (1961): 5–7.
55 Tom Gill, 'The Philippine forest—its representation, happenings and consequences', *The Lumberman* 5, 1 (1959): 5.

He continued by highlighting a number of other countries that denuded their forests (Mexico, India and even the United States provided examples) and outlining the problems faced by those interested in encouraging second-growth forest. After discussing his policy recommendations, he concluded on an optimistic note, but one laced with caution. Although he recognised there were many dedicated foresters, loggers and members of the press, all of whom were fighting for conservation, the question was time: 'some day a halt will be called in this destruction. But the question is when? … Every year's delay makes the task of rehabilitation more costly and less rewarding'.[56]

Reading these articles in the twenty-first century one feels that much of this was 'whistling in the wind'—few people were really listening. The result was that the image of the forest as a vast mine to be exploited as quickly as possible remained dominant. The editor of *The Lumberman* therefore had plenty of scope to exercise the magazine's third function: to act as a whistleblower.

The Lumberman *as whistleblower*

On the occasion of the magazine's sixth anniversary we find the following message from the editor: 'The Lumberman has always followed a militant policy, has always called a spade a spade regardless of whoever gets hurt.'[57] This was not just empty boasting. *The Lumberman* didn't just champion its vision for the forestry sector in the Philippines in a passive manner. It directly challenged those who threatened that vision—errant lumbermen, politicians and especially government officials. In its first year of operation, for example, we find the editor saddened at 'the very apparent indifference of the lumbermen to more dynamic and long-term measures … very few lumbermen took serious efforts themselves to see that the necessary reforestation is being done … Apparently, almost all are simply interested in making money'.[58] This was not a isolated instance, with the editor lambasting the industry the following year for ignoring

> the resultant effects of the booming log and timber business on our forests … [experts] repeatedly sound their warnings about dangers of over-cutting our forest. Their warnings, it seems, have gone on unheeded. For only recently, a prominent lumber man told us personally that the amount of good timber being wasted is tremendous; that the sight of the amount of materials being wasted which could be put to good use, will make a man sick. And to compound this wastefulness with another form, we have the thoughtless logger who gives no thought to the future—the 'fly-by-night' operator whose one consuming ambition is make a killing overnight, and the bonanza in the booming log-trade over, shake the saw-dust from his shoes, and seek greener pastures. True, we do not have many of this type of operators, but as long as we have one of them, we have one too many.[59]

Sadly, there were more than a few of these operators and the complaints continued.

56 Ibid., p. 5.
57 'On our sixth anniversary', *The Lumberman* 6, 1 (1959/60): 4, 85.
58 'Soul searching in the lumber industry', *The Lumberman* 1, 3 (1955): 4.
59 'The Philippine forests are vast', *The Lumberman* 2, 1 (1956): 13.

The Lumberman was also annoyed at those in the industry who wished to pay lower fees for the privilege of cutting the country's forest. In 1961, the editor publicly appealed to Paul Zendgraff, the ICA Forestry Advisor to the government, to write an article he had apparently promised them 'so we could show to the Filipino lumbermen who are agitating to cut down on what they are paying the government for cutting the patrimony of the nation'.[60]

Politicians were also the target of *The Lumberman*. In 1957 the editor took issue with Bartolome Cabangbang, a Congressman from Bohol and one of President Garcia's close supporters. Cabangbang was expected to 'denounce' Marino Corpus, a prominent official at the Central Bank, 'for allegedly blocking the economic program of President Garcia'. *The Lumberman* did not believe this, instead labelling the attack as 'politically motivated' as Corpus was investigating 'the alleged connivance of certain Filipino lumbermen and Japanese log and lumber exporters' in various kickback schemes. The editorial concluded that 'some Japanese importers together with a small segment of Filipino lumber exporters must have contributed a big financial amount to the Garcia for President Movement'.[61]

But it was the Bureau of Forestry and especially its director that was most often on the receiving end of *The Lumberman* commentary, starting as early as the third issue when doubt was expressed about the director's strength of character: 'only time will tell how Mr. Amos shall be able to resist political pressure … If he gives in his field-men will be demoralized'. According to *The Lumberman* certain elements of the lumber industry were dissatisfied over how Amos was awarding concessions, claiming decisions were being made based on political connections rather than merit. For those on the receiving end of these decisions it appeared that the director was 'afraid of Nationalista politicians' because, it was said, 'on the mere telephone call of a Nationalista politician, he will immediately personally attend to the application represented by the politician'.[62] It is hard to believe that Amos would have enjoyed reading this description of himself in the magazine and four years later the stress of the difficult position he was in finally took its toll—he collapsed in the middle of a closed Senate Committee hearing on the problems of the Bureau. When he eventually retired, he described himself as 'a broken man' and the Bureau as infested with 'anay' (white ants or termites).[63]

Clearly the jabs of *The Lumberman* were not sufficient to stiffen his resolve. However, the magazine did have one success: the cancellation of a ten million peso bond fund for reforestation. Enabled by law in 1957 under the Republic Act 1880, the fund was to be spread over a three-year period. On the surface, argued *The Lumberman*, the fund was a fine idea, 'everybody seems to benefit for the next three years at least', but would the envisioned forests really materialise? And as the editor pointedly noted: 'one thing is sure, however, is that the ten cold million pesos will be gone' and that, being a bond, would need to be paid back. This was the crux of the matter. *The Lumberman* had discovered that it was the Bureau of Forestry itself which was to repay the money over a period of 17 years and with

60 'Lumberman outlook', *The Lumberman* 7, 2 (1961): 3.
61 'Lumberman outlook: On Marino Corpus', *The Lumberman* 3, 3 (1957): 3.
62 'Lumberman outlook', *The Lumberman* 2, 5 (1956): 3.
63 'Forestry head hits intrigue', *Manila Times*, 12 Apr. 1960, 20A.

interest. Given the state of the Bureau's budget, hardly adequate to cover its current operation, this would have been a disaster. *The Lumberman* ironically concluded that 'when we surveyed the situation in the Bureau of Forestry we found that the top men in that office are all retiring within three years having reached compulsory retirement age'.[64] In the end the size of the bond issue was cut and the money budgeted from the government's general funds.[65]

Unfortunately, this was only one battle in the magazine's war. Amos' description of the Bureau as plagued by 'anay' appeared all too true. In 1959 we read in another editorial that 'the Bureau of Forestry nowadays has become a special haven for influence peddlers' going on to describe that a forester, a certain Marababol, who refused to report to his assigned station, had returned to Manila. Marababol showed up at the Bureau's headquarters one day 'asking whether the directions from Malacanang had already reached the office. The Director he made it understood was directed to place him as Chief of any vacant division'. *The Lumberman* ended with an appeal to President Garcia: 'Mr. President, what will you do about it? We know you cannot tolerate these things'.[66] While it appeared that the President did not care, members of the Bureau apparently did, commending the magazine on its 'uncompromising stand'.[67] Nevertheless, the influence peddling continued, with *The Lumberman* forced to report on the resulting corruption in an increasingly resigned and pessimistic tone. By 1960 it recorded that 'the Bureau of Forestry is no longer what it was before the war and … something is definitely wrong with it'.[68]

Sowing the seeds of future forest liquidation

Of course, the grand vision that animated *The Lumberman* in the 1950s failed miserably. *Homo silva* was not created in the Philippines, so that the technocracy that was to manage the forest sustainably never rose to the challenge. Instead the forest was decimated and agriculture took over the land left behind by the loggers. The seeds of this destruction were sown in the 1950s, but much of the forest was lost not then, but over the course of the 1960s and the early 1970s.[69] The available statistics show the inexorable decline of what was supposed to be a resource to last forever. In 1960 5.5 million hectares were held by forest licensees; this amount nearly doubled over the next 11 years. E.L. Boado considers that the peak years for the industry were between 1961 and 1976 with an average of 8.8 million hectares cut annually during this time.[70] Gerhard van der Top notes that in the late 1960s the mining of the forest was at such a rate that one year's cut was equivalent to the entire volume of logs taken out between 1902 and 1932.[71] The problem was not just the amount being cut, but that it was not accompanied by any form of systematic conservation or even control

64 'Whose benefit?', *The Lumberman* 3, 4 (1957): 4.
65 'Our mark', *The Lumberman* 4, 1 (1958): 4.
66 'Lumberman outlook', *The Lumberman* 5, 2 (1959): 3.
67 'Mr. Marababol's case', *The Lumberman* 5, 3 (1959): 3–4.
68 'Now what?', *The Lumberman* 6, 3 (1960): 4, 36.
69 E.L. Boado, 'Incentive policies and forest in the Philippines', in *Public policies and the misuse of forest resources*, ed. Robert Repetto and Malcolm Gillis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 167.
70 Ibid., p. 173.
71 Van den Top, *Social dynamics of deforestation*, p. 86.

so that the forests contracted inexorably, from covering approximately half of the country's land area in 1950 to a little over 20 per cent by 1987.[72]

After the mid-1970s the industry and not just the forests entered a period of decline so that by 1984 the production of logs and lumber was back to its 1955 level.[73] The contribution of the industry to the country's foreign exchange reserves fell equally dramatically from a high of 32.5 per cent in 1968 to 10 per cent in 1974, with the earlier decline in the value of the exports (as opposed to the volume of logs produced) likely due to the widespread practice of log smuggling.[74] This widespread practice was itself indicative of the collapse of technocratic control over the forest.

Although *The Lumberman* held out the prospect of a radically different future for the industry and capitalism in the Philippines more generally, it was a path not taken. The plywood industry may be seen as a bellwether of the industry as a whole, representing as it does its most advanced segment. We have already seen how that industry was out-performing all of its regional competitors except Japan during the 1950s. That status dramatically changed over the course of the 1960s. Taiwan overtook the Philippines in the production of plywood in 1963. Close on its heels was Korea in 1965, followed by Malaysia in 1975 and Indonesia in 1979. By 1987 the industry had roughly the same number of plants as it did in 1964.[75] Clearly something was wrong—the industry was unable or unwilling to move to higher value manufacturing. The disgrace of it all was that the Philippines supplied its earliest competitors with the raw materials they needed to develop their own industry.

There are at least two reasons, both related, why the modernising project of *The Lumberman* ultimately failed. The first had its roots in the economic conditions prevalent in the aftermath of the Pacific War. During the latter half of the 1940s the Philippines saw a large influx of US dollars—salaries of army personnel, veterans' benefits and war damage payments that enabled a level of imports far beyond normal levels (rehabilitation aid alone amounted to approximately US$1.2 billion between 1944 and 1950).[76] Much of this money was squandered on luxury consumer imports rather than invested in productive industries or ventures so that when the dollar tap was turned off, the country faced a severe balance-of-payments crisis. In the face of this crisis, the government turned to controls on the buying and selling of foreign exchange. While initially seen as a temporary measure, these controls were extended beyond the period of immediate crisis in order to encourage industrial development within the country. This had positive effects on the forest industry of the Philippines in so far as it encouraged the development of the plywood industry. However, it also had unintended and negative consequences.

One of the complaints levelled against the foreign exchange regime was that it hampered the growth of exports by depriving firms of the exchange needed to buy

72 David Kummer, 'Measuring forest decline in the Philippines: An exercise in historiography', *Forest and Conservation History* 36 (1992): 185–6.
73 Norman Meyers, 'Environmental degradation and some economic consequences in the Philippines', *Environmental Conservation* 15, 3 (1988): 205–14.
74 Boado, 'Incentive policies', p. 168.
75 Kuo, *Global competitiveness*, pp. 128, 133.
76 Baldwin, *Foreign trade regimes*, p. 7.

necessary equipment and spare parts. It further deprived, so the argument went, these same firms of the rewards of their supposedly risky investments as the state-set exchange rate favoured the government. The No Import Dollar Law of 1955 was designed to get around this problem by providing an incentive to exporters. Under its terms, exporters could barter logs in foreign markets for consumer goods and freely import these goods into the country. While the law did achieve its purpose of providing incentives to export, barter trade also created a system of windfall profits as it was difficult to get foreign exchange for the purchase of consumer imports and so demand for them was naturally high. These easy profits proved addictive to log exporters and elements of the wider political economy of the Philippines, which brings us to the second major obstacle confronting the continued modernisation of the lumber industry, the continuing strength of rent capitalism in the country.

Brian Fegan in a 1981 publication argued that much economic activity in the Philippines, both contemporary and historical, was governed by rent capitalism. Whereas the productive capitalism analysed by Marx saw the capitalist directly apply capital in the enterprise, the rent capitalist relied on others to do so. In other words, under this system, capitalists rented to others the means of production, extracting profit from the relations of dependency that inevitably followed.[77] Fegan provided a number of examples of rent capitalism at work, including the forest industry of the 1970s. He described this system as intimately intertwined with the highest levels of political power for it was the power of the state that created localised monopolies of forest exploitation in the form of concessions, and in turn the threat of state force that protected these monopoly rights from encroachment by others. Because of the crucial role of the state, political interests invariably came to the fore. Part of the price paid for a concession was political support, and defeat of a political candidate tended to result in a transfer of monopoly rights to the victor's supporters.

Clearly this encouraged, perhaps demanded, concessionaires to take 'a short-run "forest mining" perspective to the industry', an approach antithetical to all that *The Lumberman* championed.[78] But equally detrimental was the economics of the rent capitalist model that Fegan also outlined. In many cases, the owner of the concession did not have any direct contact with the forest. Instead he or she extracted '"tribute" from [the actual] loggers that he permits to exploit the concession' installing 'a set of checkers who operate alongside the Forestry and Philippine Constabulary (police) checkpoints to prevent breach of his monopoly'.[79] The loggers in turn extracted profit from the labourers cutting the trees through piece work payment arrangements, renting of chain saws and logger-owned stores charging monopoly prices. Those driving the logging trucks were similarly paid as though they were independent contractors, receiving a fixed amount for each trip, out of which they had to pay their crew and assume all costs of delay due to wet roads, breakdowns, accidents or sickness.[80] In such conditions, to expect sustainable and increasingly efficient, modernised logging and milling operations would be to expect a miracle.

77 Brian Fegan, *Rent-capitalism in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1981).
78 Ibid., p. 19.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., p. 20.

The logic of rent capitalism also collided with developing economies of scale in terms of concession area.[81] Relatively small concessions enabled politicians and bureaucrats to all obtain a slice of the rent 'pie' so there was little incentive on the part of the government as a whole to tighten restrictions on the allocation of these licences or making them move beyond the export of unprocessed logs to higher forms of manufacturing which would have meant thinning out the number of smaller operators. Likely many of these small concessionaires overlapped to an indeterminable extent with that category of loggers referred to in *The Lumberman* as 'fly-by-night' operators, a group that it thoroughly detested. For these individuals logging represented a quick way to make money with conservation a matter of no importance. They also likely represented a large proportion of logging operators in the Philippines—70 per cent worked concessions of less than 4,000 hectares in 1957.[82] Even after exchange controls had been abolished in 1961, the growing dominance of rent capitalism meant that any further development of the industry along the lines suggested by *The Lumberman* was unlikely to find favour with either the industry or the government.

Conclusion

I have shown in the preceding pages how *The Lumberman* presented in the 1950s at least, a project of creating what it considered to be a sustainable forestry industry in the country. It envisaged a *homo silva* that would abide by technocratic norms emphasising an entrepreneurial and technologically advanced approach to the industry, as well as adhering to a conservation mindset. *The Lumberman* also worked to unify the industry by providing a textual space for its various segments to come together. And when the industry, bureaucracy and politicians strayed from these norms, it took on the function of whistleblower. Although with hindsight it is easy to see that the project failed to create a viable industry (over the long term), this outcome was not so clear at the time. It was rather a path that potentially seemed to hold great promise for the future. The pages of *The Lumberman* bear eloquent testimony to this project, but it was a path ultimately not taken in the face of the stronger force of rent capitalism in both its economic and political forms, as well as the side effects of the industrialisation policy adopted in the Philippines over the course of the 1950s.

81 Ibid.

82 'List of forest concessionaires (as of August 26, 1957)', *The Lumberman* 3, 4 (1957): 27. 'List of forest concessionaires (continued)', *The Lumberman* 3, 5 (1957): 28–9.