ARRIVING AT GRADE STANDARDS FOR PHILIPPINE WOODS

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INTRODUCTION

Lumbering in the Philippines is a big industry today. There are 111 sawmills using power machinery with about 1000 small licensees using hand sawing engaged in the exploitation of the Islands' timber. These operators are composed of different nationalities—American, British, Spanish, Belgian, Swiss, Chineses, Japanese and Filipino, with Americans and Filipinos operating 100 percent on their own capital and others operating with American or Filipino holding 60 percent of the capital stock. In 1934, about 122 million board feet of lumber and timber valued about 66 million dollars at $300 per M. bd. ft. were shipped to foreign countries like the United States, Hongkong, Canada, Netherlands, Guam, Australia, United Kingdom, China, Japan, British Africa, Hawaii, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Manchoco, Denmark, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, Dutch East Indies, Sweden and Singapore. Based on a five year average 14.76% of the production is exported while 85.24% is disposed of locally (about 700 million board feet) valued about 24 million dollars at $35 per M. bd. ft. Recently very little lumber was shipped to Japan. Most of the material shipped were logs, railroad ties and cross-arms for telegraph and telephone poles used in China and Manchoco.
The lumber industry, however, is not so flourishing as it should be. There is much confusion. The Philippine lumbermen are not organized in one single group. There is no law requiring the grading of lumber exports except in some cases like Australia who requires the grading of lumber sent to that country under the Bureau of Forestry. Exporting companies either employ their own graders using a certain grading rule, or some lumber is not graded at all. This is very detrimental to the interest of the industry. In fact, Cadwallader-Gibson Lumber Company, Los Angeles, California, dealer of Philippine woods for the last 29 years confirmed the existence of prejudices on Philippine Mahogany by some furniture dealers because of the unwise actions of some Philippine wood distributors in past years when they delivered stocks not of the proper grade. A misconception developed that Philippine mahogany is of soft-textured stock and that it could only be supplied in wormy grades. "Sweatening" the grade is also widely practiced and certainly this works to the detriment of those selling their stocks on established grades.

In the Philippines, with the construction of more roads, railroads and the improvement of inter-island shipping, much of the local lumber is shifted from one place to the other by the many lumber dealers and manufacturers. Confusion is prevalent. Consumers, distributors, manufacturers, architects and engineers do not have a common language with regard to the sizes, grades, trade practices and to a certain extent
to the nomenclatures of lumber. Operators producing good grade lumber get the same price as that obtained by another on lower grades. Consumers do not get their money's worth. Naturally, there is dissatisfaction everywhere. Lumber is losing its prestige in favor of wood substitutes. The Philippine woods consists of about 3000 species and certainly there is confusion in nomenclature, although the Bureau of Forestry had standardized official names for all commercial timber species. In this connection I noticed that one of the Philippine wood distributors in the United States is using different names for Philippine Mahogany, other than those officially set by the Philippine Bureau of Forestry.

The lumber industry in the Philippines is not, therefore, on a stable basis. There is much waste in manufacture; there is too much time and money wasted among builders who have to remanufacture factory sawn lumber to fit their own needs. In other words, building standards are not also set. The carpenter spends too much time in construction, to the disadvantage of the proprietors. The lumber mills could not manufacture for stocks as it is hardly possible to predict future demands. As a result production and employment are not steady. With different grades, standard prices are difficult to set.

The lumber industry is one of the biggest industries in the Philippines. It employs the second highest number of laborers, third in monthly wages, fifth in capital invested, and fourth in production. Revenue from government timber would be sufficient to pay about one third of the governments annual
expenses if the timber resources are utilized and managed as the forests of Europe. It is playing a great factor in the economic life of the people. It is, therefore, necessary that everything should be done to place it on a more permanent footing as well as to forestall more economy in the use of wood, to insure more profits to the lumberman and at the same time give better service to consumers.

It is the purpose of this paper to consider the problem of arriving at grade standards for Philippine woods as a measure to stabilize the Philippine Lumber Industry.

HISTORY OF LUMBER STANDARDIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES:

The stability of the United States lumber industry is attributed in a big measure to its highly standardized product. A perusal on the effort at standardization of American lumber and timber would be of benefit in arriving at the standardization of Philippine woods.

The history of American Lumber Standardization dates back as far as 1919 when the American Lumber Congress convened for the first time to lay the foundation of subsequent meetings that developed the present standards. It was not until 1922, however, that the work was really started. The Secretary of Commerce who was then ex-president, Herbert Hoover, called representative of organizations interested in lumber like retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, as well as government experts, architects and engineers to a meeting under the auspices of the Division of Simplified Practice of the De-
partment of Commerce to formulate and adopt necessary standards in sizes, grades, and methods of interpreting, enforcing, and applying these standards. A Central Committee on Lumber Standards was formed to act as executive steering organization charged to formulating concrete recommendations and submitting them to the constituent association. This committee, until later years, acted as the sole arbiter on the question of standards. It considered and passed judgement on necessary additions and revisions to set standards. The actual detailed work of formulation and setting of set standards, however, was directly under the charge of another committee, the consulting Committee on Lumber Standards whose membership comes from all the different organizations. These two committees held meetings, discussions, and hearings over proposed standards with the aim of attaining the most acceptable standard to all concerned. Finally in 1923, 168 representatives of all lumber interests, manufacturers, distributors, and consumers, including the various government groups, as well as architects, engineers, and other experts assembled to consider the first draft of these committees. Everybody was allowed to discuss and deliberate. The standardization of sizes, grades, nomenclature and trade practices on softwood yard lumber was set after three years of continued efforts.

The moving spirits of these efforts at stabilization through standardized product was Secretary Hoover who always offered the cooperation of the government. The Forest Products Laboratory and the Consulting Committee supplied the technical service
for research and studies that formed the basis of standardiza-
tion. The Department of Commerce through the Division of
Simplified Practice organized the means by which representa-
tives of the various interested groups came together to
formulate the provision of lumber standardizations. It also
approved memberships of the central committee who were selec-
ted from the industry, and sponsored the functioning of the
consulting committee and the necessary standardization proce-
dure.

In the Philippines, the Secretary of Agriculture through
the Division of Standards, Bureau of Science, could likewise
be the leading officer to push standardization of Philippine
woods. Technical research and assistance could be given by
the Bureaus of Science, Forestry, Commerce and Public Works.
Like in the case of the United States all those concerned
should be represented. Representatives of exporters should
be given special mention in this connection so that they could
air their views. The Bureau of Public Works, charged with
all building construction in the Islands, should be in a position
to give substantial advice on grades, sizes, and stresses. The
Bureau of Forestry and Science has to do with the nomenclature
and strength, and the Bureau of Commerce with trade practices.

ITEMS AFFECTING POLICY

There are many factors affecting the policy in setting a
standard that would be agreeable to all parties. For instance,
consideration should be taken where the product is shipped, in
what form, what sizes and its use.

Exported lumber as stated somewhere in this paper goes to many countries but the greatest bulk goes to the United States, South Africa, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Shipments are mostly rough yard lumber, sometimes in fleeces, squared timber, as well as dimension stocks.

According to sales manual of the Cadwallader-Gibson Lumber Company, Los Angeles, Philippine woods are used for the manufacture of furniture, cabinet works, bar tops, box fixtures, counters, pannelling for recreation rooms, living rooms, dining rooms, flooring, and, in recent times for structural materials for automobile and truck body parts, for boat building, for heavy timbers used in the construction of docks and oil wells, box car floor, station platforms, and freight car timber. In other countries, the use would be more or less the same.

Philippine Mahogany lumber is sold in the United States by some distributors with the standard Hardwood grades of Firsts and Seconds, Clear Strips, Selects, #1 Common and Selects, #1 Common, #1 Common Strips and #2 Common graded free from worm holes, and also in wormy grades.

Trends in the use of Philippine wood in foreign countries is spreading and for structural, both dimensioned and timber as shown in the exports to Japan and the United States on species of timber belonging to the Mahogany group.
FORMULATION OF GRADING RULES

Establishing a general set of rules for both exports and for domestic use carries with it complex implications. For example, practices and methods of house and other constructions in the Philippines are very different from those of the United States due to climatic conditions and customs of the people, and in the use for which Philippine woods in the United States vary with the use of those in the Philippines. Japan needs small, thin, and short pieces differing in pattern and form to those used in the Philippines and the United States for her manufacture of toys and construction of small houses. In fact one of the reasons for Japan preferring the importation of logs over lumber is to save extra costs that are incurred in remanufacturing imported stocks. Another thing is, that present lumbering operators as stated somewhere in this report is composed of different nationalities catering to markets having different standards. It would be hard to set standards that would suit everybody, and, a government set of rules may be hard to enforce without disrupting the progress of the industry. At the same time setting standard grades for Philippine lumber is very necessary not only to safeguard the interest of the industry but also to serve as a measure to utilize this valuable material in the most economical manner. Standardiation will bring savings in cost of labor as well as speed in construction. Houses and other structures are easier to construct if their parts are standardized.
At the present time most of the export lumber sent to the United States and Australia are graded under the United States Standard Harwood grading rules. These stocks are rough yard lumber of various thickness, width and length and usually kiln-dried. Some are in fleeches, structural timbers and dimension stocks. It is the practice of the Cadwallader Gibson Lumber Company at Los Angeles to import Philippine woods in this way but remanufacture them to different stocks to suit demands of different consumers. This company has a lumber yard at Longbeach equipped with planning mill, dry kiln, and other facilities that are used for prompt and accurate handling of all specifications.

It is recommendable to use American Hardwood Standard rules for Philippine woods exported to the United States and elsewhere. However, it will be impracticable to adopt it in toto for local use in the Philippines. Standards will have to be changed to suit Philippine conditions and building practices. For example, house framing stocks have different forms, sizes, grades, and strength requirements, from those used in the United States and so with flooring, siding, mouldings, etc. Building practices throughout the islands are the same and so with the method of utilization, and it will be very laudable to standardized Philippine wood materials in sizes, strength, nomenclature, sale practices, and also their use. The basis used for arriving at certain standards, nevertheless, should be employed, that is, structural materials should be graded on the basis of strength,
dimension lumber on strength and appearance, factory lumber on the basis of the amount of clear usable lumber in the piece and yard lumber on the basis of appearance and amount of defects.

For exports to other countries special rules will have to be devised to suit individual cases. I think this is the only way to maintain present markets of Philippine woods. Grading rules in the United States vary with the different species and for different uses. Likewise, devising special rules in the Philippines for certain purposes will not be hard to do.