

Opening of the 16th IUFRO World Congress, 21st June 1976.

I wish all participants and guests of the 16th IUFRO World Congress welcome to Norway.

A large preparatory work for this Congress has been carried out by our foresters in the Government Forest Service in public and private forest enterprises and in our research institutions. The University of Oslo has opened its doors for you, and I hope you will find these facilities satisfactory for the Congress.

This Congress brings together delegates from all over the world. You come from countries widely different

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in climate, size, social structure, and political systems. But you all share the same professional interest in forests and forest research. I think that the sharing of a common interest in such a subject does create a platform for mutual understanding and personal contact. Attempts by governments to create larger international understanding can bring results when they are supported by professional personal contacts like this Congress.

Forests play an important and a complex role in the life of man. There are several different ties between forest and human life.

First, forests provide raw materials for basic human functions. In this country the forests have traditionally provided us with fire-wood, building materials for our houses and materials for our ships. Even to-day you find wooden

houses in this country to a larger extent than in most other countries. Technological developments have gradually reduced the importance of wood as a raw material for the building industry, but has increased its importance as an input in the chemical industry.

Moreover, forests provide employment to people in remote areas of countries, often in combination with agriculture.

Furthermore, forests provide the home for wild-life and a varied vegetation, which are some of the basic values nature has given us for a rational use. Forests have an impact on the climate and on conservation of water in the soil

Finally, our impression of a landscape is always made richer and more beautiful when there is a forest.

I come myself from a forest area in Norway, and I have always deeply sensed a devotion and a respect for the

forests. One generation of trees replace the other, but the forest itself stands unshattered, as a symbol of the endless circle of life.

About one quarter of the surface of this country is forested. Only three - four per cent is cultivated land, and the rest, almost three quarters of the country are mountains and areas where climate is too harsh for forests to grow. In the southern part of the country, where we are now, the timber line is about 900 meters above the sea level, but as we go north, the timber line sinks deeper and deeper, and in the northern-most parts of the country the timber line goes right down to the sea level.

I have been told that in tropical areas soft wood forests grow so fast that you have a cycle of only twenty years from planting to felling. In the more unfavourable

climatic conditions under which we live, we have a cycle of seventy - eighty years. This implies that farmers and foresters when planting new trees, will never survive the harvesting of their work. Correspondingly, in forest research the hard long-term work will have a time perspective which goes far beyond the life-time of the individual research workers.

I think this expresses very strongly the quality of human long term dispositions with a view to secure life for future generations. I believe that human society is at its best when it deliberately makes efforts not only to satisfy the needs of to-day, but when ample thought is being given to the day of to-morrow. The people who work with forests and forest problems have in their daily work this strong call for thinking of the day of to-morrow. Maybe this is one of the reasons why I have found that people working in forestry,

have a relaxed philosophic attitude to life more than the ordinary city dweller.

I know that forest research to-day deals with other questions than those related to the concrete work in the forests. But I hope that you will never lose sight of the important part of nature with which you have been assigned to work. I hope that in your work in your home countries, and at this Congress, you will be able to combine your professional expertise, your national background, with the respect for the eternal values of forests, as a part of life, as a part of nature in our world.

Finally, I hope that in addition to the serious work and professional discussions at this Congress, you will have time to enjoy yourselves, to see various parts of our country,

get new friends and finally return happily to your homes
again.

Herewith I declare the 16th IUFRO World Congress
opened.