RESTORATION OF TROPICAL FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

Tasks for vegetation science 30

Series Editors

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Restoration of Tropical Forest Ecosystems

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Preface

The destruction of the tropical forests proceeds rapidly. We all know that this has global ecological and economical consequences. The problem is of such magnitude that it can only be compared to warfare. The destruction of tropical forests is not only detrimental to the global ecology but also poses a serious threat to the people living in this area. Furthermore the over-utilization of such a valuable resource poses a serious threat to the next generations.

Apart from the problem generated for the people in those regions and on earth in general there is a moral obligation to preserve the vast biological diversity in the tropical forests. We have a commitment to all species on earth as well as man and, therefore, need to preserve as many of them as possible, if not all.

The threats to the tropical forests come from two main directions: First from increasing population in the tropical countries, and second from large improper timber harvesting operations in the tropics.

Mitsubishi Corporation had asked to organize this symposium. The company was attacked as being a member of the second group but was under the impression that they were acting in the best interests of the population when they initiated their logging operations, until such time when environmentalists came and demonstrated against their activities. Therefore they asked the initiators of this symposium to have the problem discussed openly. If they were doing something which was not in the interests of the local population or to the global environment, they wanted to know about it and they wanted to hear the solutions to the problem.

The discussion during this symposium included all aspects of the problem. We had invited people who could discuss the problem from different angles: forestry, ecology and nature conservation. We had a lively discussion but no outright demonstrations or accusations.

Nobody at the symposium believed that the tropical forest area would remain untouched. The population explosion takes care of that argument. The two main problem areas before us are first the wise utilization of that portion of the forest which will be used — especially the introduction of planned forestry in such areas, and second, the development of a good plan for nature conservation in the tropics.

The papers presented at the symposium will most certainly not solve all the problems but we hope they contribute to the very much needed, continued discussion of possible solutions which must be implemented in the near future.

The organizers of the symposium thank the officials of Mitsubishi Intl. who sponsored this meeting and especially the officers of its Düsseldorf head office, Mr. Mita, Mr. Hatanaka, Mrs. Linke, Mrs. Littig, Mrs. Shulze and Mr. Serbesow, as well as Mrs. Bruns and Dr. Rheker for their help in organizing the meeting.

As a follow up of the symposium in Bonn, another International Symposium on Rehabilitation of Tropical Rainforest Ecosystems was held in Kuching/Sarawak, Malaysia on Sept. 2nd–7th 1992. During this symposium the problems with integrating the “forest people”, the Penan, were presented by Hatta and Jayl who are actively engaged in integrating these people into a modern society.

The topic of the Penan was presented by NGOs during the Bonn symposium. We had the government of Malaysia invited to present their views but the invitation came too late.

We are, therefore, glad that the authors of the paper and the organizers of the symposium in Kuching permitted us to add that paper to the publication of the Bonn symposium. The editors of this volume are especially thankful because it shows now the problem of the Penan in Sarawak in a different light.

The inclusion of this paper initiated a further

discussion of the paper presented by Wakker and Hüttche who were invited to provide a written version of their verbal presentation and videos. The paper by Hatta and Jayl shows the problems of forest dwelling populations from a different

Osnabrück and Yokohama

perspective. The juxtaposition of the two papers in the context of this volume was kept intentional because this problem requires careful attention in the future use of tropical forest utilization.

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