

Forest losses and climate probed at OU conference

The rapid depletion of the world's forests has ceased to be a matter that concerns only environmentalists.

Now policy makers fear consequences that range from Third World energy and food problems to a possible carbon dioxide build-up which could alter the earth's climate, an Oakland University professor says.

Richard Tucker of Birmingham, a professor of Asian and environmental history, organized the May 12-15 research conference on "The Global Economy and Changing Forest Use in the 19th Century."

Historians, private and government foresters and scientists will meet in OU's Meadow Brook Hall to examine the problems.

"FOR THE PAST five years, policy makers have been increasingly alarmed at the rapid depletion of the world's forests, especially in the tropics but also in other fragile environments such as mountain regions," Tucker said.

"One of the difficulties we face, however, is that we know relatively little about how long the deforestation problem has been with us. In Third World countries, how fast it is accelerating and what factors are crucial to the problem. In other words, we have little historical perspective on the issue."

Now specialists on each continent in the 19th century will map a tentative pattern for the era and plan a more thorough research agenda for the immediate future. The 20th century will be discussed in 1982 at Duke University.

"One of the most important findings in preliminary papers for the conference," Tucker said, "is that in many regions forests were cut down to make way for food crops and plantation crops including sugar, tea and rubber."

A hundred years ago or more, the world's forests seemed infinite to many farmers and merchants, and the need to feed growing populations was obvious. In years before modern forestry management, forests in some regions were not cut for timber but simply destroyed.

"Today's debate over world good supplies, soil erosion and farmland preservation, stems directly from the trends of a century ago."

AMONG GUESTS attending the conference will be Dr. Marion Clawson, who is a Forest History Society Board member and a senior member of Resources for the Future in Washington, D.C.

His writings on the history of North American forests and on forestry policy are well known. One of RFF's major research interests these days is the world energy systems, including forests for firewood.

Another participant will be Jack Westoby, who recently retired as a senior forester for the United Nations. Westoby represented UN forestry headquarters in Rome for many years, and has helped plan forestry programs for many non-Western countries.

Tucker said, "Recently we have discovered another policy-related issue which the conference may help to clarify: the problem of atmospheric carbon dioxide. As the Clean Air Act comes up for renewal, revision or cancellation this year in Congress, it looks to become the most important environmental debate of the year in this country. Its implications are very far-reaching."

Scientists in research labs including the Ecotone Center of the Marine Biological Lab at Woods Hole, Mass., and the Atomic Physics Lab at Oak Ridge, Tenn., have been warning that the concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are increasing at rates which could raise our standard atmospheric temperatures by several degrees within another few decades.

"If this happens, we may well see major changes in climate which may severely reduce food production in the planet's dry areas. We may also see major melting of the polar ice caps, which could raise ocean levels enough to inundate low-lying coastlands and some of the world's major port cities."

County chamber raps Proposal A

Officers and directors of the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce are opposing Proposal A on the statewide May 19 ballot.

President Earl A. Kreps called the proposal "a give" with "loopholes which can be interpreted in many ways."

Proposal A would amend the state constitution to reduce operating property taxes and city income taxes by half, replacing lost local revenue with a 1.5 percent hike in the state sales tax and returning the state revenue to local units. It is the only question on the ballot.

THE CHAMBER cited these specific objections:

- Local units of government are burdened with sending homestead exemption affidavits to local property owners who wish to receive the proposed 50 percent cut in operating property taxes.

• The increase in the sales tax from 4 to 5.5 percent "is, in fact, a tax that can be levied each year, and the tax could be a value-added tax on any product sold at all levels, from manufacturers to wholesalers to retailers and finally to the consumer, and, therefore, could result in the loss of any savings on their property tax. It would also result in higher expenses for consumers in general."

• The 1.5 percent increase would result heavily on the auto industry and add additional cost for new cars plus the additional cost at the gas pumps, which would become one of the highest taxes on gasoline in the nation."

MEANWHILE, groups opposed to Proposal A held five franks and beans banquets last weekend Oakland County to raise funds for an advertising campaign.

No report from either Pat Crilley, of Citizens United for Tax, or Donald Eby, of the Michigan "T" Party, was immediately available on how many persons attended or how much was raised.

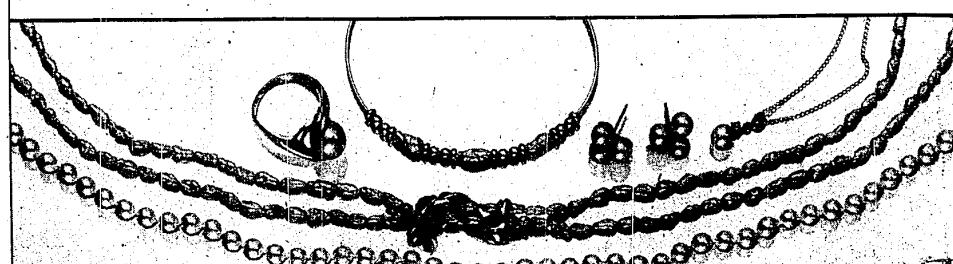
Mother's Day, May 10



Treat her to
a rare delicacy...
precious pearls
from the sea

Start the celebration off with a romantic dinner. Order oysters on the half shell, vintage wine, then the piece de resistance, glowing pearls from the sea. Imagine her surprise. Lustrous little wonders to adorn her neck, ears and hands. Choose from: strands, 16" to 30" lengths, \$250 to \$500; delicate stud earrings, from \$20 to \$48; delightful bracelets, \$125 to \$300; and stunning rings with gleaming 14K gold settings, \$100 to \$500. She'll treasure them always. From Fine Jewelry at Hudson's. Selection may vary by store.

hudson's



Open Monday through Saturday: Northland, Eastland, Pontiac, Westland, Oakland, Southland, Fairlane, Twelve Oaks, and Lakeside 9:30 till 9; Flint 10 till 9:30. Downriver 10 till 9:30.