



A TRIBUTE TO THE PAST

By

DR. A. W. R. JOACHIM,

Chairman.

REPLYING to the address of the Hon'ble Minister, Dr. Joachim said : I am sure that many of you present here who have been connected with this Scheme in one way or another are as happy as I am, that we are able to participate in the celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of the Institute. During these years the Institute has, within the limitations of its funds and personnel, endeavoured to the fullest extent possible to serve the needs of the Coconut Industry in regard to the functions assigned to it. An occasion such as this is therefore an appropriate one to survey the work that has been done in the past, to take stock of the present position and to plan for the future. In briefly doing so, it will be my duty to give thanks to whom thanks are due for the part they have played in the Scheme's welfare. In regard to the contribution of the Institute to our knowledge of the coconut palm and of the cultivation of the crop, in other words, its contribution to production research, the Director is in the best position to speak and he will do so after me. It is necessary, however, for me to indicate that our output of research has been restricted mainly because of the limitation of funds and of research personnel. Strangely enough, it took several years before the original rate of cess on coconut products which the Government imposed on the Industry were increased for this purpose. It was not until 1950 that the first increase in cess was approved by Government. I am pleased to record that on the presentation of a strong case for the further requirement of funds, the Minister of Agriculture has just secured Parliamentary authority for a four-fold increase in the cess on that obtaining in 1950. This would ensure that for a long time to come the Institute's work would proceed unhampered by this limitation.

One point that needs mention in this connection is that during the past five years Government has made available funds through the Department of Agriculture for the production of coconut seedlings for replanting purposes. It is gratifying to record that during this period the Institute has produced seedlings adequate to replant about 25,000 acres of the crop. This work on the Minister's direction is to continue in a more intensive form, the replanting target having been fixed at about 15,000 acres per annum. An adequate grant is to be accordingly made for this purpose to the Institute. The Advisory Service which is a part and parcel of the Scheme will hereafter become a more important function of the Institute's activities and from merely producing seedlings it will extend its operations to advisory and follow-up work in connection with the replanting scheme.

Another matter to which reference may be made here and which has been the subject of some criticism is the lack of adequate attention given in the Institute's programme of research in the past to consumption or technological investigational work. I do not propose to deal in detail with this matter but I should in fairness to the Institute say that the fault does not lie with it. On grounds of policy it was determined early in the Institute's career that the Scheme should maintain an agricultural bias and concentrate on production rather than on consumption research, and attempts to increase the cess on the ground of its need for personnel to do consumption research met with no success. In 1949 it was decided that the Institute should restrict its activities only to laboratory scale technological research. I am pleased to say that the Minister of Agriculture has now determined that industrial research as outlined in the Scheme's programme could be carried out by the Institute without duplication of effort on the part of the two organisations concerned, namely the Institute and the Department of Industries. He, however, urged that there should be the fullest co-operation between the two organizations on this question.

And now to the present. The Institute has attained its present position entirely because of the efforts of three main groups, namely, the Board, the Staff and the Chairman. Our thanks are due in the first place to Government for its foresight in having initiated the Research Scheme and providing the means for carrying out its functions. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the Low-Country Products' Association and the Planters' Association of Ceylon, and to individual coconut planters too numerous to mention for the interest they took in seeing that the Scheme came into operation. Mention should also be made of the work done by the late Sir Frank Stockdale, Director of Agriculture up to 1928, in fostering the creation of this Institute. His successor in office, Dr. W. Small, was the first Chairman of the Board and did a great deal of the pioneering work for the Institute. Following him were Dr. W. Youngman, Mr. Edmund Rodrigo, C.C.S., Mr. L. J. de S. Seneviratne, C.C.S., and Mr. Rhind all of whom during the periods of their service as Director of Agriculture, guided and directed the Institute and the Board in their capacities as Chairmen. I am pleased that we have here with us Mr. Seneviratne, who during the period of his office carried out a useful reorganization scheme within the limitations of the Institute's personnel and funds.

To the Board of Management of the Research Institute must go a large share of the success which has attended the Institute during the period of its existence. These gentlemen who served on these Boards have done so at sacrifice of their personal time for no reward. They have all given of their very best and placed at the disposal of the Institute their advice, practical knowledge and experience of the crop. It is encouraging to see a number of the older members of the Board present here today and in particular the Hon. Mr. Albert Peiris and Sir Arunachalam Mahadeva. I must pay a special tribute to the present members of the Board who have been in office almost since the time I took over its Chairmanship about three years ago. I should publicly state that

as members of a Board they have left nothing to be desired—so thoroughly have they appreciated their responsibilities and co-operated in furthering the interests of the Institute and of the Industry's research progress.

And now I come to the staff who form perhaps the most important sector of the Institute. Referring to the staff, I must make special mention of one who served this Institute for well-nigh 20 years in various capacities and with unstinted devotion to duty. I refer to Dr. Reginald Child who was the Technological Chemist and Director of the Institute for a number of years. Child's technological contribution was considerable. Mr. Cooke, the present Director whose service with us during the past five years, has also been characterised by a strong devotion to duty and singleness of purpose towards the development of the Coconut Industry of the Island. We thank both these officers sincerely for their service to the Coconut Industry of the country. Among our own nationals mention must be made of Mr. W. V. D. Pieris, Geneticist, who served us for about 16 years and only recently completed an assignment in the South Pacific Islands in connection with the development of the coconut industry of that region. And of the present staff, Dr. Salgado has been with us for nearly 21 years, during which time he has made valuable contributions to our knowledge of the nutrition and manuring of the coconut crop. He is shortly leaving the Island for a well deserved refresher course in Australia. I must also refer to Mr. O. B. M. Cheyne who is now no longer a member of the Institute, but who during the past five years was in charge of the Planting and Advisory Division and did good work in organizing this important section of the Institute's activities. I need not mention other officers by name, but I can assure them all, whether they are of staff grade or belong to other categories, that the whole Industry is grateful to them for their contribution to the agronomy of the crop. We rely on them to advance our knowledge of the crop much further and I am sure, that, equipped as they are now both in technical know-how and with adequate amenities for research, the Industry can look forward to a fruitful period of research activity in the immediate years to come.

And now for the future. The Institute as now organised and with the funds available at its disposal is well poised for making great advances in our knowledge of the cultivation, management and utilization of the coconut crop. Up to the present, as mentioned before, the Institute has been guided by the Directors of Agriculture who were the *ex-officio* Chairmen of its Board of Management. I feel myself that the time has come when the responsibilities which were discharged so efficiently and selflessly by these Chairmen should now, as in the case of the two other Crop Research Institutes, devolve on an unofficial member. I consider that as Government proposes to allocate to the Institute all the funds required for the replanting scheme on an intensive scale, the Institute should manage its own affairs without official direction and under an unofficial Chairman. This suggestion I commend to the Hon'ble the Minister who will, I have no doubt, give it his favourable consideration.

And now gentlemen, I have a last duty to perform and that is to thank you all sincerely for having come to rejoice with us on this occasion. I must specially thank the Hon'ble Ministers of Agriculture and Commerce and the Hon'ble the Speaker for their encouragement by their presence here. I am sure that the Coconut Research Institute in collaboration with its younger sister, the Ceylon Coconut Board, can make the coconut industry with which so many of the people of this country are vitally concerned, a most prosperous and efficient one, ready to overcome agricultural and economic adversity and to be able to meet competition from other producing countries. I call upon you gentlemen to drink to the success and prosperity of the Coconut Research Institute.

I will now call on the Director to tell us more about the future of the Institute.