

## SENATOR ON PLIGHT OF COCONUT INDUSTRY

### BETTER SYSTEM SUGGESTED

The very serious state of the coconut industry today was commented on by the Chairman of the Southern Province Planters' Association, Senator Thomas Amarasuriya, at a general meeting held in the New Oriental Hotel, Galle.

He said that coconut oil and copra prices were considerably reduced. The Indian government had stopped issuing licences for import of oil and copra from Ceylon to India. But still the Ceylon government had not reviewed the export duty on these products.

The rubber industry had been assisted by reduction of export duty. But the coconut industry had not been afforded any relief.

In addition to coconut oil and copra prices, desiccated coconut sales were well below normal. As the coconut industry consisted greatly of small-holders and producers in rural areas, considerable hardship was being experienced by those concerned.

### Barter System

He suggested that it might be possible to enter into barter arrangements with countries interested in these Ceylon products, but that something should be done immediately to afford relief to the industry.

Europe was buying copra from the Philippines, as this was cheaper than copra from Ceylon, due to high export duty.

Mr. Bertie Warusawithana said that it was not only a matter of a ban on imports to India which had reduced the demand for Ceylon coconut oil. In Europe and America soya bean oil was being used where previously coconut oil had been purchased. In his opinion, not enough advertising of Ceylon coconut industry products was being done in Europe and America.

The Secretary was requested to write to the parent body of the Planters' Association regarding the outcome of a meeting between a joint deputation of the Planters' Association and the Low-Country Planters' Association with the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Commerce.

Mr. G.A. Wells said that a new kind of United States synthetic rubber, which would sell for 80 cents, made a sliding scale of export duty on rubber more or less a necessity, if they hoped to compete in the world market.

### Labour Problems

Mr. H.B. Goonawardena criticised the present set-up whereby after the local Labour Department had taken up and decided upon local labour cases, these cases were again taken up by a Labour Tribunal, and in some cases by Industrial Courts in Colombo. If it was considered that the local labour office was not competent to decide those small cases, then why have a Labour Department at all he asked.

The meeting decided to invite the Minister of Labour and his Permanent Secretary, with the Commissioner of Labour, to the next meeting to enable members to express their views.

The acquisition of estate roads without compensation was referred to at length. Members said that after acquisition roads were allowed to deteriorate.

It was ironically suggested that Senator Thomas Amarasuriya should request the government to take a census of all roads acquired from estates, and to ascertain the amount spent on maintenance before and after acquisition.

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