

INAUGURATION: COCONUT SEED GARDEN

April 23rd, 1955, could with justifiable pride be called the ' D-Day ' for the coconut industry. Honourable J. R. Jayawardena, Minister of Agriculture and Food inaugurated an isolated garden for coconuts. The venue was in the heart of a crown forest reserve and this gravated the solemnity of the occasion.

Since methods of vegetative propagation are not possible with coconut palms and further the palms are cross-fertilised, an isolated seed garden for coconuts has been a long felt need of the industry. This project has now materialised with the alienation of 200 acres from the Pakalle forest reserve in the Chilaw district.

In spite of the remoteness and isolation of the place, the site for the seed garden looked a picture in gay decorative flags and buntings, freshly-terraced lawns and neat roads, not to mention trees of large trees spared by man, which gave the place the atmosphere of a park. A ' Bull-dog ' worked in the distance gradually undoing the work of nature over the ages.

Dr. A. W. R. Joachim, Chairman of the Coconut Research Board, and Mr. F. C. Cooke, Director, welcomed the ministerial party and introduced the members of the Board, heads of divisions of the Institute and the Superintendent of the seed garden to the Honourable Minister. The party proceeded on foot up to the main gate where an unique opening ceremony was witnessed.

A pair of pliers and galvanised wire replaced the customary pair of scissors and ribbon. Mr. Jayawardena cut the wire stretched taut across the gate, and this switched on six pairs of trumpet horns which emitted a loud blast. Incidentally, this was a demonstration of a system adopted to scare away wild elephants that dare to tread on these precious surroundings. The Minister then hoisted the Lion Flag to the strains of ' Namo Namo Matha ' sung by the Coconut Research Institute choir, and subsequently planted a seed-coconut derived through artificial propagation, to the accompaniment of ' Magul Bera '.

From there the ministerial party was conducted to a stall where with the aid of specimens, illustrations and apparatus, Dr. D. V. Liyanage, Botanist, explained to the visitors the floral biology of the coconut palm, the yield pattern of an estate, techniques of pollination and the methods for a seed garden.

The next item in the programme was a public meeting. Dr. A. W. R. Joachim in welcoming the present said that it was an occasion which might well be regarded as one of the most important in the history of the Institute, which should in years to come revolutionise the economics of the coconut industry. Botanical science is taking another step forward to provide the industry with improved planting material.

Mr. F. C. Cooke said that this is an unique development project which would place Ceylon above the other coconut producing countries and thanked the various organisations and

individuals that helped in its implementation. The Honourable S. C. Shirley Corea thanked the Institute for taking another step in the right direction. Finally, the Honourable J. R. Jayawardena, spoke on the rehabilitation schemes that are proposed and commented that this seed garden would be a great asset to the coconut industry.

The heterogeneous gathering that came to view this ceremony connected with an equally heterogeneous palm was then entertained to tea. The ceremony then ended, but the interests of the Honourable J. R. Jayawardena and many other visitors were so kindled by the day's proceedings that they revisited the stall and collected further information. It was now dusk and the nocturnal jungle life warned the visitors to leave.

M. A. P. MANTHRIRATNE

SELF-COLONIZATION OF THE COCONUT PALM

THE QUESTION WHETHER THE COCONUT PALM IS CAPABLE OF ESTABLISHING ITSELF ON OCEANIC ISLANDS, OR OTHER SHORES FOR THE MATTER OF THAT, FROM SEED CAST ASHORE, WAS LONG DOUBTED; AND IF THE RECENT EVIDENCE COLLECTED BY PROF. MOSELEY, MR. H. O. FORBES, AND DR. GUPPY, TOGETHER WITH THE GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PALM, BE NOT SUFFICIENT TO CONVINCE THE MOST SCEPTICAL PERSON ON THIS POINT, THERE IS NOW ABSOLUTELY INCONTROVERTIBLE EVIDENCE THAT IT IS CAPABLE OF DOING SO, EVEN UNDER APPARENTLY VERY UNFAVOURABLE CONDITIONS.

IN THE CURRENT VOLUME OF *NATURE* (p. 276) CAPTAIN WHARTON DESCRIBES THE NEWLY-RAISED-FALCON ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC; AND IN THE LAST PART OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, MR. J. J. LISTER GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ISLAND. FROM THIS INTERESTING CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOURCES OF INSULAR FLORAS WE LEARN THAT HE FOUND TWO YOUNG COCONUT PALMS, NOT IN A VERY FLOURISHING CONDITION, IT IS TRUE; BUT THEY WERE THERE, AND HAD EVIDENTLY OBTAINED A FOOTING UNAIDED BY MAN. THERE WERE ALSO A GRASS, A LEGUMINOUS PLANT, AND A YOUNG CANDLE-NUT (ALEURITES), ON THIS NEW VOLCANIC ISLAND—A VERY GOOD START UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND SUGGESTIVE OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE COURSE OF CENTURIES.

W. BOTTING HEMSLEY.

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