FOREWORD

to

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEA FACTORY ORGANISATION

by

The Minister of Agriculture and Food

The Hon. Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, K.C.M.G., K.B.E.

The vital importance of the tea industry in the economy of Ceylon is well illustrated by the values of the domestic exports in the last two years.

	1950	1951
Tea	Rs. 752 million	Rs. 800 million
All other products	Rs. 743 million	Rs. 1,023 million

A decline in the prosperity of the tea industry must therefore have profound repercussions on the prosperity of the whole Island. The world's supply of tea has, during the past several years, fallen short of the demand for the beverage but in recent months the gap between supply and demand has been steadily closing and we are on the point of over-production.

Scarcity of a product not only compels the buyer to pay higher prices to the producer, but also to some extent to accept lower standards. The process reverses when over-production occurs. Ceylon can be justifiably proud of the fact that the standards of teas produced during the boom years did not fall to the same extent as they have done in other producing countries, and the reward for integrity is now being reaped in the form of competition for Ceylon teas in markets which are daily becoming more discriminating. We must now face the unpleasant reality of increasingly discriminating markets, and the future of the Island is clearly linked with our ability to maintain our lead in competition with other producers.

I understand that the Tea Research Institute has, in recent years, stressed the elementary fact that plants obtain the greater part of their food from the air in the form of carbon dioxide and that the tea plant, being no exception, obtains a greater part of its food through its leaves than through its roots. Success with both yield and quality therefore depends on leaving an equitable share of the leaf for the tea bush's own requirements and on the exercise of restraint in the amount taken for manufacture. Greed in harvesting not only results in lower standards of quality and appearance in the made tea, but also in debilitating the bush and lowering its capacity to produce.

I commend these facts to the serious attention of those who hope for quick profits.

It has been recently pointed out that the fundamental economic change taken place in the process generally known as " Ceylonisation of Estates " is a change from Company to private ownership and that Companies are primarily concerned

with preservation of capital values and the payment of regular dividends, whereas the private owner is too often concerned with quick profits. Quick profits are no longer possible on a discriminating tea market and the conservative management practised by Companies is to be strongly recommended to all owners not only in their own interests but in the interest of the country.

Although high quality tea depends very largely on high standards of leaf, the processing in the factory must preserve the quality and produce the types and grades required by the market. Haphazard manufacture cannot attain the standards demanded by a discriminating market if we wish to satisfy our customers and to induce them to buy our teas in preference to those of our competitors. Although there is undoubtedly skill needed in the manufacture of tea, I have no doubt that organising ability and attention to detail have more substantial rewards than any inspired genius. I recommend a close study of the methods for systematising manufacture described by Mr. Newton.