

# THE FUTURE OF TEA PRODUCTION

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In the latter part of last year, round about the time it became necessary to give serious thought to the subject of this Conference, I read a most interesting paper in the 'Journal of the Royal Society of Arts'. This paper, by R. W. Willet of the British Commonwealth Scientific Office, was on the subject of the mineral resources of the British Commonwealth and dealt in particular with some recent developments.

When I reached the first table and gave it some thought it suggested to me the theme for this Conference.

Table 1—*Mineral resources in the Commonwealth*

	Australia	Canada	Ceylon	Colombia	India	New Zealand	Pakistan	South Africa	Southern Rhodesia	United Kingdom
<i>Fertilizer group</i>										
Potash ...	L	A	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	A
Phosphate ...	N	N	N	A	L	N	N	A	A	N
Sulphur minerals ...	L	A	N	L	L	N	N	A	L	L
<i>Energy group</i>										
Coal ...	A	A	N	N	A	L	N	A	L	A
Petroleum ...	N	A	N	A	L	N	L	N	N	N
Oil shales ...	L	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	L
<i>Iron ores</i>	A	A	N	A	A	L	N	A	A	A
<i>Ferro-alloy group</i>										
Chromium ...	L	A	N	L	L	N	A	A	A	N
Cobalt ...	L	A	N	A	N	N	N	L	N	N
Manganese ...	A	N	N	A	A	N	N	A	N	N
Molybdenum ...	L	L	N	N	N	N	N	L	L	N
Niobium ...	L	L	N	A	N	N	N	L	L	N
Tungsten ...	A	L	N	L	N	L	N	A	A	N
Vanadium ...	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	L	L	N
<i>Non-ferrous group</i>										
Aluminium ...	A	N	N	A	A	N	N	N	N	N
Copper ...	A	A	N	A	L	N	N	A	N	N
Lead-zinc ...	A	A	N	A	N	N	N	L	N	L
Nickel ...	N	A	N	L	N	N	N	L	L	N
Tin ...	L	L	N	A	N	N	N	L	L	N
Titanium ...	A	A	N	N	A	A	N	A	L	N
<i>Minor metals group</i>										
Beryllium ...	L	N	N	L	A	N	N	A	A	N
Germanium ...	L	N	N	N	N	N	N	L	A	N
Lithium ...	L	L	N	A	L	N	N	L	A	N
Selenium ...	A	A	N	N	N	N	N	N	A	N
<i>Non-metallic group</i>										
Gypsum ...	A	A	L	A	A	N	A	A	N	A
Mica ...	L	L	N	A	A	L	N	A	L	N

A—adequate, or potentially adequate resources, or an actual or potential large surplus available for export.

L—low; a deficiency made up by import, or where there is negligible local consumption it indicates a minor export.

N—negligible; exploitable deposits are very small or at most there is no more than a token output. No reserves of any significance.

Ceylon's resources are shown in the table (Table 1) to consist only of a meagre supply of gypsum, so low in fact that it will apparently be necessary to import gypsum or some other source of sulphur if sulphate of ammonia is manufactured in Ceylon.

Having no claims to speak as an authority on economics or industrialisation I do not wish to make any sweeping generalisations about the conclusions which may be drawn from this lack of mineral resources. On the grounds of general scientific knowledge and commonsense I do, however, question the wisdom of thinking in terms of any appreciable degree of manufacturing industrialisation in this country.

It appears reasonable to assume that Ceylon must remain, as it is today, primarily an agricultural country and I do not believe that it places the economy at any real disadvantage.

What has been termed the 'Industrial Revolution'; an era in the history of mankind which has been marked by unprecedented concentrations of populations with attendant slums and squalor, by bloody international strife and unrest, by ruthless exploitation of prairie and forest, is gradually losing its momentum.

Skill in the management of land is becoming as important as skill in mining and manufacturing industry. The value of agricultural products relative to industrial products is rising and I believe the rise will continue, with fluctuations, until there is a much fairer balance between the two. The industrialists cry for cheap food should be countered by agriculturists with a demand for cheap industrial products.

Cheap food and living amenities have been used to attract people to live in herds and work in industrial concentration camps. The tendency has been to lavish expenditure on urban areas and neglect rural amenities. This is grossly unfair where agriculture is the main revenue earner.

The large stable and progressive agricultural industry which we are to discuss in the next two days has been the breadwinner of this country for a very long time past and must continue as such in the foreseeable future. In the past few years much has been written and said (especially in the electorates at week-ends) about plans for the future of the country, but little has been actually achieved by comparison with the solid, undramatised progress of tea production in which I am sure we are all proud to have taken part.

I feel therefore that consideration of the future of tea production is a suitable theme for this Conference.

The past two conferences have been very severely practical. Four years ago we discussed measures for dealing effectively with the most serious threat that the producers of tea have so far experienced, probably the darkest shadow over the prosperity of Ceylon since the coffee crash. Two years ago we looked back and consolidated our ideas about the principles of management of the tea bush.

This time I suggest we should look ahead to possible improvements, especially to those inherent in replanting and in the use of selected planting materials. In so doing I feel that we should not be concerned entirely with severely practical aspects but take a broad, long view, seeking stimulation rather than instruction.

The papers to be read by the staff will not on this occasion be dissertations upon how to do this, that or the other thing in the cheapest and most efficient way. In many cases we probably will not be able to answer questions on cost or give concrete suggestions about how specific objectives may be achieved. Nevertheless I believe we shall be able to give many good agricultural reasons why consideration should

be given to replanting with selected materials. You will note that I have said agricultural reasons. As an agriculturist I feel confident that exports of tea could be greatly increased. The present demand for tea should encourage expansion and I believe that exports could be doubled by replanting only half the existing acreage of tea in Ceylon. Nothing, however, but the blindest academic detachment could close my eyes to the fact that to replant 250,000 acres of tea will cost a minimum of 800 million rupees.

At this Conference we can only talk about the theory of replanting and advance the claims of an established, durable system of land management, which has maintained and even improved fertility of the land over the best part of a century, against other systems of land management and against other projects requiring land, labour and capital.

As I am shortly leaving the pleasing prospects of this island after twenty one years in the tea industry, and since I have been trained in tropical agriculture and have had the opportunity of seeing agricultural practices in a considerable number of tropical countries, perhaps I may be permitted to express an opinion on a subject which I believe to be of the greatest importance.

I feel that the people of Ceylon have not, and do not fully appreciate the contribution which the plantation system of agriculture, especially the tea industry, has made to the development of this island. By average standards in the tropical zone of the earth, Ceylon has made steady progress and has much to be proud of. The tea industry has provided a most substantial share of the funds which have made this progress possible. The tea industry is certainly something to be proud of, for the fact that yields are still increasing after so many years of monoculture under tropical conditions is a very real achievement. Even to the most casual traveller who has experience of the tropics, a journey through the neat, trim, green and fertile looking tea plantation areas cannot fail to make an impression.

The tea industry is the breadwinner of this country and does not deserve treatment either as a whipping boy or a milch cow. It should not be alternately cajoled and threatened but given continuous encouragement and, above all, confidence. The tea market is expanding and there is a world shortage of tea; tea production must be expanded while the opportunity is there.

At this Conference we are to discuss the golden opportunities which are before us, but I am sorely afraid that our visions will not be fulfilled unless much new capital is put into the industry. At the present moment foreign capital is tending to leave the industry rather than to come in to it.

Capital, however, is not my subject; I have very little personal experience of it. I will, therefore, in conclusion represent my views as an agriculturist to the rightist, the leftist, the 'uprist' and the 'downist', that the plantation, alias corporation, alias co-operative, alias collective farming system of agriculture is the one with the strongest claims. Ceylon does not have to emulate the kingdom of Lilliput described in Swift's political satire. There is no need at all for 'big endians' and 'little endians'. The plantation system has served Ceylon well and both the worker and the country derive far more benefit from it than they do from any other system. It is proved by long practice—give it the encouragement and confidence it requires to continue and to expand the good work it has done in the past.