

# THE CEYLON COCONUT QUARTERLY

## EDITORIAL

### LEBENSRAUM—LIVING SPACE

Ceylon's population is expanding—and that an estimated rate of 200000 per annum.

The Government of the country, its administrators as well as policy makers—the more enlightened citizens, the economists, sociologists, teachers and preachers, the agriculturists, and the engineers—are all alarmed, nay staggered, when they contemplate on the future prospect of Sri Lanka, that will be blessed with an estimated population of twelve million or more in ten years, in the foreseeable future, with a slowly expanding economy.

Amidst the many Jeremiahs painting lurid pictures of a grim future for the country, let us now pause to consider, with scientific deliberation, whether the remedy lies primarily along the path of least resistance 'FAMILY LIMITATION', or that, on the basis of historical analogies under similar conditions in other countries, should we first, not merely analyse the fundamental causes for this phenomenal increase in population, and without getting unduly alarmed, consider in a sober scientific method of approach, whether the Malthusian Theories, are as inscrutable as the Law of Survival of the Fittest.

*Socio-Economic Laws* are not *Laws*—they are mere *Hypotheses*, based not on objective data, but on presumptions and assumptions. Once these assumptions are defective the whole structure of the hypothesis collapses.

It has even been recently suggested in the highest scientific platforms of Ceylon that Malthusian theories are myths (The origin, growth and consequences of a Myth\*).

It is not our purpose to enter into this mythical controversy, but consider it opportune to discuss dispassionately the problems of our increasing—phenomenally increasing—population trends in the light of Ceylon's agricultural economy and that with particular reference to the premier agricultural economy of this country—COCONUTS.

The following are the main considerations to be kept in perspective in analysing the situation.

*Can food production in Ceylon keep pace with the expanding population?*

While population appears to increase in geometrical progression, food production is said to be expanding not even in arithmetical progression.

\*Presidential Address by Dr. A. C. J. Weerakoon (Section-D) delivered at the Sessions of the Ceylon Association for Advancement of Science 1954.



It was estimated by us in 1952 *Ceylon Coconut Quarterly* that the extent of manuring with artificial manures was no more than 115,000 acres.† It may come as a complete surprise that in 1956, the applications for the two seasons for subsidised manure during S.W. and N.E. Monsoons, even before the Manure Subsidy Scheme has come into full operation, the acreage covered is 314,428, composed of 106,532 acres by smallholders (those owning less than 20 acres) and 207,896 acres by estate owners.

We do not propose to deal further on this aspect, except that increased manuring and cultivation will undoubtedly absorb an increasing amount of labour in agricultural work in application of manure, cutting manure trenches, and in ancillary cultivation operations such as ploughing, harrowing, draining, husk burying, which in due course will create a tradition of good agricultural husbandry that should no doubt by example and precept, by propaganda and ocular demonstration, become general agricultural practice and which will eventually increase employment: an increase of employment and national income by a process of self-generation.

In discussing living space, *LEBENSRAUM*—the major source of finding Living Space is by maximising the coconut economy by opening up new land—and yet more crown jungle, the thousands of acres of which lie fallow and await development.

A perusal of the Report of the Land Utilisation Committee (Sessional Paper III of 1953) will show that the future expansion of the economy of this country, so far as non-irrigable highland, is concerned, lies not in ' *Village Expansion Schemes* ', by taking over developed estates for allocation to villagers (the very road to the creation of an army of Village Squatters), often, in spite of Land Development Supervisors and Overseers, living parasitically on the newly fragmented Coconut Estates created thereby—but in creating *Colonisation Schemes*, if you may call them, or ' *Pilot Schemes* ' and various steps for Land Development under coconuts along methods suggested in Part III of the Land Utilisation Report.

Already the Soil Chemist's Division during the last few years have carried out extensive *Reconnaissance Soil Surveys* of thousands of acres of Crown Jungles, suitable for coconut cultivation (vide 1953, 1954 and 1955 Annual Reports), and at the moment of writing is completing a detailed soil survey of 7,000 acres forming the Forest Reserve, at Wilpotha in Pitigal Korale North of the Chilaw District.

While we do not for a moment overlook the importance of Forestry, need we make a plea that there must be a reorientation in Forest Policy from old Colonial Patterns and that reafforestation should be integrated and that maintenance of Forest Reserves, and Proposed Reserves, village reserves, on the basis of a planned Agricultural Development of Ceylon—keeping in mind the dictum that ' *Forestry begins where agriculture ends* '.

Besides the cultivation of the permanent economic crop coconuts on new land a scientific system of catch cropping based on the traditional ' *Goiya* ' system of opening of coconuts, will help to increase the production of a variety of food crops—from cereals such as kurakkan sorghum, meneri, cash crops such as plantains, gingelly, mustard, chillies, vegetables, such as pumpkins, gourds and water melons—and legumes such as green gram and cow peas—to provide a balanced diet to the people and even tobacco, cigarette tobacco to supply local needs.

In future issues of this Journal it is proposed to examine this Thesis yet further and make concrete proposals for the consideration of all those individuals, corporate bodies, and the Government that have the interest of the country at heart.

Then Lebensraum—Living Space—will be no problem; and even if war comes and there be not enough rice and chillies and onions for a ' *Pol-Sambol and Rice* ' diet, the population of Sri Lanka may well feed on a balanced diet of ' *kurumba* '.

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†Vide 'Some New Aspects of Coconut Manuring' by M. L. M. Salgado in the present issue of the *Ceylon Coconut Quarterly*, page 69.