

CHAPTER SEVEN
MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE INDUSTRY

The foregoing chapters have outlined in some details, some of the facts and problems of the coconut industry. Facts have shown that the coconut industry is the third significant industry in Malaya, but the industry is on the decline. The coconut farmers, left to themselves, are unable to improve the industry as indicated by the present state of the coconut industry. The Government had in the past neglected the industry, and only recently has the Government begin in a small way to help improve the industry.

In the light of the present facts and problems of the industry, the followings are some of the recommended measures which should be implemented by the Government to help bring relief and improvement in the coconut industry. The recommended measures are:

(1) A scheme should be drawn up and immediately implemented with a view to improve the drainage system of coconut-growing areas, adversely affected by seasonal flooding and salt-water invasion.

(2) A coconut replanting scheme along the same line as the Rubber Replanting Scheme should be drawn up and implemented as mature palm density and healthy palm density is very low. As coconut replanting entails higher costs than rubber replanting, government subsidy per acre should be sufficiently high to ensure the success of the scheme. Coconut farms need a good system of internal drainage and hygienic farm conditions more than rubber farms. Moreover, the destroying of coconut stems is difficult and costly.¹

In areas where coconut is planted with other crops, the farmers are more prosperous than in areas where coconut occurs in pure or almost pure stands.² It is, therefore, important that replanting schemes be made to fit into these circumstances. Care should be taken not to have it on crops which have known deleterious effect on coconut yields.

In West Johore, many farms have peaty soil which are not suitable for coconut farming. Replanting should not be allowed on these farms

1. Wilson, op. cit., p. 40

2. Wilson, op. cit., Appendix A, p. 45

but farmers should be encouraged to replace coconut palms by other high-yielding crops, more suitable to soil conditions. New planting should be discouraged.

(3) A 'rate-free-period' of 6 years' should be given to the coconut farmers as an additional incentive to encourage farmers to replant their farms. The 'rate-free-period' is to start as soon as replanting takes place. Quit rents and D.I.D. dues should not be collected during rate-free-period".

(4) Thrift and Loan Cooperative Societies should foster thrift among the farmers and to give credits on easy terms to the farmers over temporary difficulties and for improving the farms. This would keep them out of debts and thus, not be exploited by unscrupulous moneylenders.

(5) Coconut farmers' associations should be established to help the Department of Agriculture to disseminate latest planting techniques to the coconut farmers.

These recommendations are some of the measures which in my opinion, would help a long way to bring relief and improvement to the coconut industry.