

# The Discovery of the Year

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**I**N looking back to the year 1942 and appraising its progress in industry, I am reminded of Dr. Pardo de Tavera and his famous list of five enemies of the Filipino people, one of which was the coconut. This learned statesman-scholar even coined the word "Dejicultura", from the Spanish "dejar" or to neglect or abandon, for he claimed that the coconut planters of the Philippines were not engaged in agriculture but in "dejicultura", for the usual thing to do was for the planter to neglect the plantation and let the "kasama" or tenant do everything. It was undoubtedly because of that general condition prevailing in the coconut industry that the Philippine copra was reputed to be the worst in the world, and commercial utilization of the coconut was confined to the making of oil and its by-products, copra meal and lard in the factory, and of dessicated coconut for export mostly to the United States. The two other important parts of the nut, the husk and the shell, were not commercially exploited. Dr. Tavera considered the coconut as an enemy of the people because, according to the colonial economy prevailing at the time, there was no

incentive to exert greater effort for its commercial utilization.

## ***Friend in Need***

The year that has just passed has completely changed the status of the coconut. Were Dr. Tavera alive today, I am confident he would be the first to revise his list and regard the coconut not the enemy but the friend of the Filipino people—a friend in need, indeed. For if I may be permitted to make a suggestion, I submit that the coconut was the Discovery of the Year 1942.

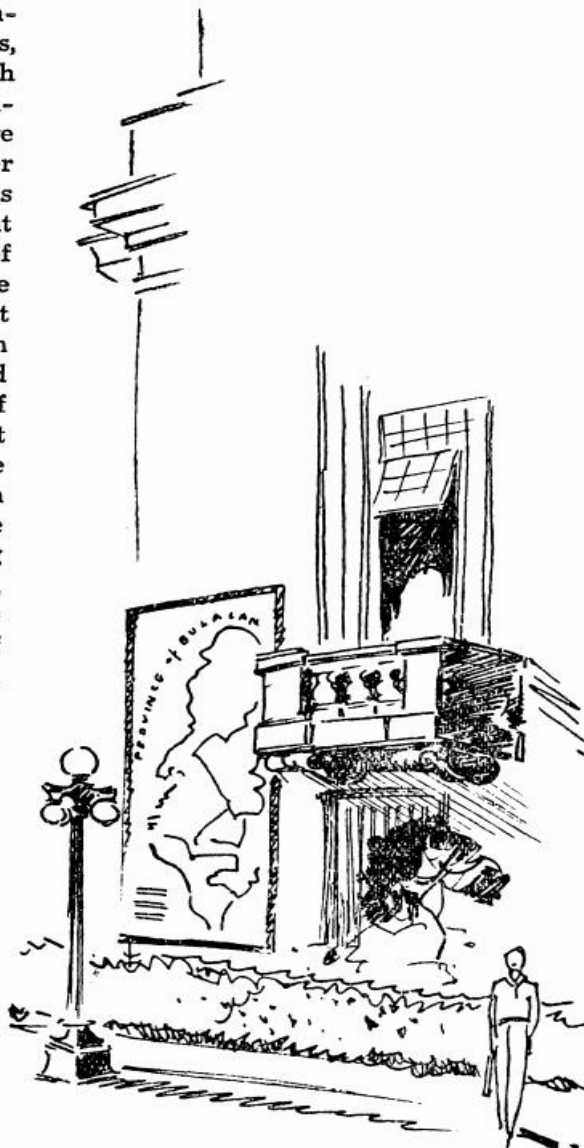
Allow me to adduce some facts and figures to prove my contention.

That the coconut is a friend in need of our people was revealed soon after the Japanese occupation of Manila when there was scarcity of this essential food in the market. All that the Nacoco had to do to encourage the bringing in of more nuts was to announce that it was going to engage in supplying Manila with fresh coconuts. That mere announcement was sufficient stimulus to encourage the individual

merchants and transportation men to supply Manila with increasing quantity of coconuts, so that the consumption of fresh nuts in the Manila region increased from one million before the war to four million per month. We need not at this time go into a detailed account of how this increased supply of nuts has been utilized by the people. We only need to point to the necessary implications in the social life of the nation and the resulting enhancement of human welfare because of that economic phenomenon. One implication is the consumption of more nutritious food, because with the loss of flour coming from wheat, the use of rice, and cassava and other native products for the making of cakes has been resorted to, and, of course, the greater use of the more nutritious coconut. Another important implication is the creation of home industries for the making of coconut food products. This movement led by the National Coconut Corporation and the Bureau of Science and Plant Industry with the establishment of a model plant for the making of coconut milk and its many by-products. This plant is the first of its kind in the world and may be considered as an important discovery of the year 1942.

#### Girls in Industry

It may now be set down on record that although the coco-milk plant had only a limited capacity, the mere fact that a milk substitute was produced last year stopped the rise in price of canned milk which characterized the market during the early days of the Japanese occupation. An important social discovery made in connection with the coconut milk plant was the willingness of our college girls, especially those trained in Home Economics, to train themselves for coconut food production with a view to starting individual home industries. This was indeed an encouraging revelation of our girls' love of work and industry and of their readiness to adapt themselves to a new social and economic situation. This experiment in coconut food-making by our girls has proved so successful that this activity has been taken over by other units of the government, such as the Bureaus of Plant Industry and Public Welfare in addition to private individuals who have gone into business on their own account.



#### Other Discoveries

ANOTHER important economic discovery has been the manufacture of vinegar from coconut water heretofore allowed to go to waste. By the use of a certain organism, it is possible to hasten the making of vinegar from coconut water. Here we have the beginning of an entirely new industry possible in every coconut plantation where copra is being made.

During the year 1942, also, the ordinary coconut oil has revealed itself as something more than a commodity for export of no particular use to us locally. With the shortage of imported materials on which we had relied completely, we discovered that coconut oil could operate our Diesel engines, to take the place of crude oil; that a refined form of it could light our Petromax lamps and other lamps of the same type in substitution of petroleum; and that it could be utilized for the making of all kinds of medicinal ointment and shampoo. Modern lamps have been made to use ordinary coconut oil and are increasingly being manufactured by local producers.

One epoch-making discovery in connection with the utilization of the coconut meat is the Philippine Nacoco Drier designed to meet peculiar Philippine conditions. The imported types of copra driers could not satisfy Philippine planters for they were either difficult and expensive to operate or too costly to construct. In the case of the Ceylon copra drier for example, which was much advertised, there is need of the use of coconut shells for fuel and it took more than thirty-six (36) hours to cook the copra. The Philippine Nacoco Drier makes use of the same pit of the present "tapahan" and by utilizing hollow tiles and a chimney, is able to prevent the smoke from contacting the meat. Thus, by direct firing, using any kind of fuel, it is possible to make white copra in the short time required by the old "tapahan". One of the important objectives of the National Coconut Corporation has been the improvement of Philippine copra, and with the greater control possible now under the paternal policy of the new government, I believe it is still possible to carry out one of Nacoco's slogans, *Make White Copra Only, by 1943.*

Still another revelation in connection with the copra trade has been the elimination of middlemen by the

establishment of a Copra-Buying Union. And recently the control of fresh coconuts has been instituted to regulate prices. With copra buying thus centralized and with the whole government coördinating all efforts connected with the coconut, I see the possibility of so regulating the whole industry that all requirements upon it would be adequately met, such as the need of all the mills for copra, and the need of all the people in the Manila area for fresh nuts.

So far I have referred to new uses of the coconut meat revealed during the year 1942.

### *The Husk and the Shell*

**D**URING this period of transition I am able to state that the other two important parts of the coconut—the husk and the shell—have assumed the same level of importance as the meat—a great and significant discovery indeed!

The husk, whose utilization was initiated by the National Coconut Corporation, is now a necessary raw material in the making of sacks. In view of our inability to secure jute sacks, the use of coir sacks for copra and corn has given rise to a new industry, providing work to thousands of people in Manila with the coöperation of the Bureau of Public Welfare, and in the provinces. Spinning and weaving centers under the National Coconut Corporation are now being revived and are helping in a material way in the rapid rehabilitation of our national life. Because of this coir sack industry no man or woman is turned away from work.

The third part of the coconut which has become important under the present set up is the shell because of the scarcity of gasoline and alcohol for motor vehicles. The manufacture of charcoal gas producers which was initiated by the National Coconut Corporation has become a vital industry, and at present trucks and automobiles are being operated by means of this new device, thereby creating an unusually large demand for coconut shell charcoal and giving additional income to the coconut planter. As a result of this new development, transportation has undergone a revolution for it is now possible to operate motor vehicles at a comparatively low cost.

Another important industry developed out of coconut shell charcoal is the making of dry batteries. This activity of the National Coconut Corporation is now directly under the administration of the Army.

There are other by-products of the coconut which we are pushing under the present regime for the main purpose of producing articles needed by the community and creating work for the unemployed. Among the articles are hats, helmets, slippers, door-mats, kitchen utensils, insulating board, fertilizers from coir dust, copra meal, tooth powder and many others. As far as the coconut industry is concerned, I predict a bright future under the new regime. Already there are indications that new markets for coconut by-products are available in Japan and in Asia. But even disregarding the demand for export, the greater utili-

zation of the various coconut by-products, for food, for fuel, and for sacks, is bound to redound to the benefit and welfare of the four million and a half Filipinos who depend upon this plant aptly named "the tree of life," and of the nation as a whole.

### *Paternalism*

**I**T is especially gratifying to observe that the economic policy under the new order making possible this remarkable progress in the coconut industry, is the same policy advocated by the Filipino participation in the government during the last quarter of a century. That policy is characterized by government paternalism, with the government as a protecting father and the planter and the tenants as the needy children. Unregulated, individualistic policy leading to profiteering and unjust distribution of the share of production is not in harmony with the present economic policy. Likewise, training for production, the inculcation of "love of work" and emphasis on vocational training are leading features of the new economic policy.

In connection with the discovery of the year 1942 and the government's policy of paternalism and regulated control of industry, it is opportune to state that such policy is inspired by the benevolent principles enunciated by the Emperor of Japan in 1868 in the famous "Five Articles of the Charter Oath" which underlie Japanese political, social and economic policy. As two of these principles have to do with economic and social relations among those under the Emperor's benevolent protection, it is fit and proper that we remember them in order that we may the better interpret Japanese policy in connection with contemporary affairs. These two are the following:

"1. To unite the high and the low in order to develop economic policies.

"2. To enable everyone in all classes or professions, military or civil, down to the lowest ranks of people, to reach his aim, and to give him no cause for discontent."

The first proclaims national unity and solidarity for economic welfare. It corresponds to what we call a policy of social justice, which means to give social security and economic welfare to all the people. The second principle is similar to what we have been used to call equality of opportunity for every person according to his ability and irrespective of his station in life.

In the light of this fundamental state policy, may I be permitted by way of conclusion to ask what role is assigned to a governmental agency like the National Coconut Corporation in the solution of the great national problem of developing and utilizing the coconut for the rehabilitation of the Philippines and the welfare of its people?

### *One's Duty*

**I**N connection with this question I was interested to read in the Sunday Tribune of last December 20th about what in Japanese is called the "bun", or

the definition of one's position, the understanding of one's role, in order that one may know definitely what duty one has to perform. I was impressed by this way of analyzing one's responsibility in order to define one's corresponding duty. I believe it was clear comprehension of Nacoco's role in relation to the utilization and improvement of coconut products that induced us to continue operation during the whole period of Japanese occupation. Undoubtedly, it was the consciousness of our task in the coconut industry that prompted us to make official representation concerning what this government corporation could do during this period of economic rehabilitation. We had formed a definite idea of Nacoco's "bun" or role and we were ready to do our duty if given an opportunity.

The "bun" of the National Coconut Corporation remains the same today. It is the government's central instrumentality for rehabilitating the coconut industry, by the utilization and improvement of coconut products. Through it and around it shall center all gov-

ernment activities dealing with the coconut and its uses. With three billion coconuts produced annually in the Philippines—the largest in any country in the world—two billions in the Luzon areas and one billion in the Mindanao and Visayan areas—there is no reason why the government, through its central agency of control, cannot meet the demand for copra, for fresh nuts, for charcoal, for sacks and the many newly discovered products of the coconut. Fortunately, under the present government policy of paternalism and regulated control the National Coconut Corporation is in a better position to carry out its mission and play the role assigned to it. That is why I look with high hopes to the year 1943 as "the year of glorious achievement" for the coconut industry, as desired by His Excellency, General Tanaka in his New Year's Message, just as the coconut was the "Discovery of the Year" in 1942, especially if all the government agencies concerned cooperate and coordinate their efforts in line with the present policy of the state.