

To Double Philippine Consumption of Factory Sugar

*In this problem much depends on reaching the outlying villages with a product rivaling the locally made *carmelo**

When Magellan landed in the Philippines the Chinese had taught an open-kettle process of sugar-making to the Filipinos that is still in common use throughout the islands. Boiling the cane juice in a shallow kettle resembling a large skillet, when it had sugared and while it was still hot, but tending to solidify, it was cut into flat segments. This is the *carmelo* made in practically all Philippine villages today. Something very similar to it, by descriptions extant, was among the luxuries of the islands offered Magellan's men and eagerly accepted by them because their bodies hungered for sugar. So extended is the history of the Philippine sugar industry. It is only during the past 20 years that modern *centrals* accommodated by their own railway systems, feeding into their crushers train from the plantations by the trainload, have raised production to more than a million tons of centrifugal sugar a year and confronted the industry with opposition to the marketing of so much sugar from the islands in the United States.

Sugar producers, the mills and planters, through the Philippine Sugar Association, were the first entities representing a local farm industry to unite and employ scientific men to promote the industry. H. Atherton Lee, an agronomist, heads these experts. Lee has lately been studying the Philippine sugar market with the view to marketing more centrifugal sugar here. He finds consumption of centrifugal, or granulated, sugar here very low, no more than 75,000 metric tons a year.

Such a consumption of sugar signifies no more than 11 pounds per capita a year, comparing with 117 pounds in Denmark, 116 pounds in Australia, 108 pounds in the United States, 106 pounds in the United Kingdom. But to the consumption of centrifugal sugar must be added (by estimate only, accuracy being impossible to arrive at) something on account of *carmelo*; and perhaps this should be 3 times the known consumption of centrifugal sugar, bringing the annual sugar consumption in the islands to 44 pounds per capita. This is still a very low figure. Health and science authorities support Lee's contention that Filipinos eat too little sugar, to add much more sugar to their diet would be good for their health. Lee believes much more may be added, that demand may be created for at least 300,000 metric tons of centrifugal sugar in the islands a year.

The problem of how to do this is a knotty one. The people must be reached with propaganda about sugar, and then the sugar must be at hand in convenient form. Neither the village store or its cottages have means of keeping granulated sugar from moisture and ants. The store keeps a small stock of *carmelo* cakes, slices 3 inches long, the immediate day's stock in an herb jar such as druggists use. These are sold cake by cake; they are sent out for when a household is to enjoy the luxury of coffee, tea or chocolate. Granulated sugar, kept in the ordinary cottage, would soon syrup and an unfailling decoy for a myriad ants. Soft drinks are another practical way of marketing sugar in the villages, but don't suffice to meet the situation.

The sugar association will not be able to boost sales of centrifugal sugar in the Philippines until it solves the problem

of getting this sugar in small clean units into the hands of the cottagers making up the general population. Penny candies wrapped in paper probably account for the bulk of the 75,000 tons of centrifugal sugar yearly consumed in the islands now. Could a cheap and serviceable shaker be made: an automatic vent keeping out the humid air when closed, the shaker proper impervious to the water in which it would have to stand to keep ants away from it? Who will come forward with a practical idea for a sugar-container for the Philippine cottage? The *carmelo*, you know, may be wrapped in old newspaper and hung from a kitchen rafter; so rats and mice won't gnaw it nor ants usually reach it. A paper bag, for the granulated sugar, would not equal the convenience and economy of this.

Carmelo cakes, though melting instantly in water, seem to resist moisture in the air— are far less deliquescent than granulated sugar.

"Distribution of sugar," says Lee, "must be provided to make sugar available at prices within the reach of the laboring man and his family. Such requirements necessitate study of the manufacture of sugar products and distribution of such products throughout the islands. . . . It must be apparent that a great deal of fundamental study is necessary before embarking upon any campaign of advertising."

How to advertise is also a problem the sugar association is now considering. It is a problem worthy everyone's attention, since doubling or trebling domestic consumption of factory sugar would be a substantial boon to general business.

It would seem that the first step in this propaganda would be to get the sugar into satisfactory form, or forms, for village use. The supply should be ready for the demand, and should recommend itself by its convenience and attractiveness. The second step should be the poster, through which in a hundred ways effective appeals could be made to children. If cooperation of the schools were obtained, the third step would be lessons to the children on the food value of sugar. There is no doubt that Filipinos eat too little sugar, a source of both physical and mental energy. There is also no doubt they will eat no more sugar than they now do until they get it in more convenient and appetizing forms and the lessons of its value are impressed on them. There might be something worth while in studying the *carmelo* with the purpose of duplicating its cheapness and convenience and surpassing its excellence. It is a sugar cake. Sugar cakes pressed more firmly, more compact for handling, wrapped individually in colored paper, might supplant it. On the other hand, they might have to be puffed out with air, to give the advantage of bulkiness over the *carmelo*.

Whatever the product may be, with which the sugar association finally attacks the village markets, it must, to succeed, be something with an instant appeal to the Chinese storekeeper. This will be something pleasing the storekeeper's customers, especially the children always loitering at his counter. This storekeeper dispenses drinking water, with *carmelo* cakes, cookies and what not. Try for something to rival or substitute these and you are a long way on the solution of your sugar-marketing problem.

To give the Philippine people sugar in better forms than they have used in the past is a worthy objective. Thus some of the mills in the sugar association are packaging granulated sugar in kilo units and attractive cartons tending to keep it dry until it is all consumed. If sugar can be substituted for other foods in the Philippine diet that are less nutritious, that will benefit both the industry and the country; and if more sugar is added to the people's diet and something added for the cost of it to household budgets, this new appetite will be an incentive for men to produce more, work harder and support their families on a higher standard of living. The trick will be for the mills to avoid pricing their sugar too high and get it to the consumer at little more than the export value plus costs of preparation and distribution. A Mr. Lee's viewpoint, "prices within the reach of the laboring man," is a good one—the right one.



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H. ATHERTON LEE