

Prospective New Mindanao

• *Planned Agriculture Goes With New Roads*

Oscar Campbell is an owner in a coconut plantation in Lanao. He lives in Palo Alto, California, and is well pleased with his Lanao plantation investment. Just now he is in Manila, where formerly he practiced as a civil engineer and contractor. Probably the prospect of the opening of bids for construction of the High Commissioner's official residence on Dewey Boulevard was one thing inducing his visit to Manila, but the Lanao plantation was a drawing card too. All our older readers either know Oscar Campbell personally or by hearsay, hence they know of his shrewdness. It is quite surprising to learn of the number of shrewd Americans who have plantations in Mindanao, or considerable investments in such plantations.

So far as we learn, there is general satisfaction with these investments.

This situation is worth nothing just now, because it is soon going to change. If all goes well, it will change for the better.

Mindanao is almost as large as Luzon, but may not have a million inhabitants. Luzon has some 6,500,000 inhabitants, 40% of the Islands' total population. It also has 6,500 kilometers of first class roads, a kilometer for every 1,000 inhabitants. But this comparison is of no significance; really, Luzon supports such a population because of the network of good highways with which the island is provided. That is why the bulk of merchants' markets in the Philippines is on Luzon. Over the highways, products reach their markets, producers go to town to buy supplies; and along the highways the country is laid out in farms actively cultivated because the roads enable the farmer to sell all the surplus his fields will yield.

This is the great change that is now to take place—indeed, has for more than two years been actually taking place—in the wilderness of Mindanao. That island has only some 2,500 kilometers of highway today. It is so fertile that it ought to have as much highway as Luzon, if not more. To give it new highways, President Quezon has begun pouring millions of pesos into Mindanao. For at last the government has found that highways are actual keys to the wilderness. They open territory, otherwise impenetrable, as a key serves to open a door. Settlers come without bidding, and soon have crops in the wild soil; and from the outset these settlers are self-supporting, deriving some wages of course from working on the very roads that make their homestead tenable—as the western settler in the United States

derived wages from teaming on the railroads built to haul their crops to market.

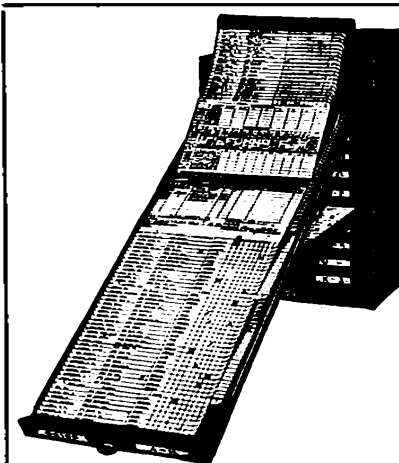
President Quezon's plans in Mindanao go farther than the highways, which in part have military objectives. They embracing planning Mindanao's new agriculture, to a degree. Is this Mindanao's long-sought redemption from noxious vegetating, physical and sociological? If plans are carried out in full, it may well be.

Mindanao is potentially a farmer's El Dorado. For a number of good crops, its climate as affected by its rainfall is superior to Luzon's. President Quezon plans to plot the new farming opened by means of the new Mindanao roads, and to this end, to employ agricultural experts—for example, rubber experts from the Goodyear company, who gained practical experience at Goodyear's Sumatra rubber plantation. For eight years, Goodyear has had an experimental plantation on the mainland of Zamboanga. It was provided with selected seed and seedlings, from high-yield trees. It has been entirely successful, and now the Philippines have from this plantation a supply of seed for new farmers falling in with the idea of growing rubber for their cash crop—also of course, for new plantations.

To Mindanao, President Quezon would adapt the method of the sugar mill in Philippine cane territory. The planter owns his fields, but contracts during a long term to let the mill handle his cane. Thus the mill, while it may loan the farmer money, is spared the expense and responsibility of owning and cultivating the cane lands; and at the same time, it is just as certain of a cane supply as if it owned the fields as well as the mill. This comports with Malay psychology respecting land ownership, therefore it succeeds. (Most rubber grows in Malaysia, though only a very little of it in the Philippines, and 50% of the supply comes from small groves tapped and cultivated by the families that own the land).

Mindanao agriculture is capable of immeasurable expansion under the Quezon policy, and surprising expansion within a very short time.

As to rubber, Basilan has the older more productive plantations—the large island forming a political part of Zamboanga and tailing the mainland on the southwest. But there is also a plantation in Cotabato, east of Zamboanga. The range of territory therefore for rubber in Mindanao is ample. Just as in northern Mindanao where Philippine Packing



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exploits pineapples, there is room for expansion of that industry. Jesuits grew and bought prices in Mindanao centuries ago; they were the missionaries down there, and in Ternate of the Spice Islands, and the commerce interested Zamboanga as well as Ternate. If spices can be revived profitably in Mindanao, this should be tried. Certainly there is room for the African palm.

In new plantations it ought to be determined whether coconuts should be grown, or African palm. We have it on good authority that 82% of the palm oil exported from Sumatra last year was sold in the United States and used largely in the manufacture of galvanized iron. What Sumatra can do, Mindanao can do—possibly to a little better advantage. At least, experienced men say Basilan produces plantation rubber at the lowest cost in the world. Coconuts and rubber in separate stands on the same plantation have been very satisfactory on Basilan, coconuts arriving at production age somewhat earlier than rubber, and the two rivaling one another as to net profit, depending on the relative market demand for them and on the effectivity of the price-pegging and production-pegging authority in the dominating British-Dutch field of Malaysia.

To sum up: a thorough-going road system in Mindanao will be greatly beneficial to the Islands if activity goes no farther, while it will be infinitely more beneficial if activity extends to manage agriculture embracing tropical products America requires in addition to the copra, hemp, tobacco and sugar the Islands have heretofore had to sell.

New & Old Highways

(Continued from page 13)

In the preparation of the five-year program, the contemplated plan of constructing a railroad from the city of Davao to the port of Cagayan, Oriental Misamis, was not taken into consideration. It is understood that this proposed railroad will utilize for its power the great potential energy stored in the Maria Cristina Falls in Lanao province and in the Polangui river flowing between the provinces of Bukidnon and Davao. Should this railway project be carried out it will have to be supplemented by roads as feeders, and our five-year program will have to be revised to avoid the construction of roads paralleling the railroad and thus prevent the destructive competition for traffic, such as now exists between the railroad companies and the motor truck transportation companies operating in the islands of Luzon and Cebu. If this proposed railroad is constructed, it will necessarily require as its complimentary service the operation of fast boats between Manila and Cagayan, Oriental Misamis, so that the time of travel between Manila and Cagayan de Misamis could be reduced to about 24 hours, and in conjunction with the proposed railroad, the travel between Davao and Manila can be accomplished within 30 hours.

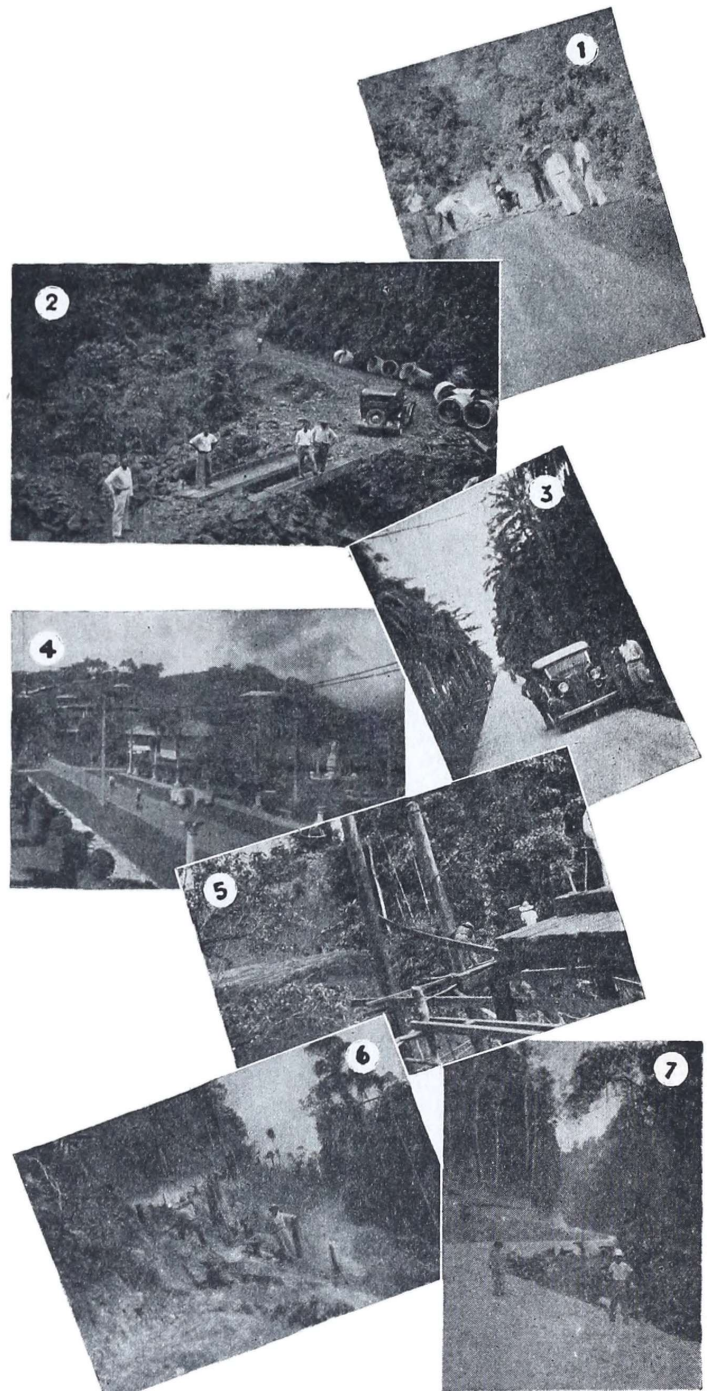
The latest step taken by the Commonwealth Government in connection with the policy of developing Mindanao and Sulu as rapidly as possible, was the creation of the position of Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu by the passage during last year's session of the National Assembly of Act No. 75. This Act provides among other things that, "besides his administrative functions, the Commissioner shall also be charged with the duty of directing the general development work in Mindanao and Sulu". Subsequently, His Excellency, the President, appointed, on January 1, 1937, the present Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu, who is a civil engineer, with station at Dansalan, Lanao, which has been declared as the capital of Mindanao and Sulu by reason of its easy accessibility from the different provinces therein. One of the important functions of the Commissioner is to prepare in conjunction with the Bureau of Public Works road construction programs and to supervise the execution of such programs.

The Agusan river in the province of Agusan, which extends as far as the province of Davao, and the Cotabato river in the province of Cotabato, are both navigable for good-sized

launches for long distances into the interior. By improving their condition of navigability they can be developed into cheap arteries of communication for transporting freight.

Along with road construction programs and the construction of the proposed railroad, the Government should encourage the establishment and maintenance of an efficient air service between Luzon, the Visayan islands and Mindanao, even to the extent of subsidizing it or, if necessary, the Government should operate its own air line.

The foregoing forms of transportations—roads, railroads, water and air—are all destined to play very important rôles in the rapid settlement and development of Mindanao and Sulu.



1 & 2. Cotabato-Lanao interprovincial road, Km. 37.

3. Port Pikit, Daito-Palangui road, Km. 15, Cotabato.

4. Plaza at Cotabato, Cotabato.

5. Taracan bridge under construction, Km. 48, Cotabato-Lanao interprovincial road.

6 & 7. Tamontaka-Upi road under construction, Km. 12 & 13, Cotabato.