The writer of this editorial would go somewhat further than Mr. Houston. He would suggest that in addition to the continuation of all the measures being carried out to assist the producers through government encouragement of cooperative organizations, warehousing, loans and credits, the irrigation program, fertilizer supply, agricultural extension work, pest control, etc., the local trade in rice and the importation of rice be thrown open to private distributors and importers using their own credit and capital, free of any kind of price control, and, in the matter of imports, free of both the exchange tax and customs duties, at least for some period of time.

This simple and direct return to the procedures of free enterprise is the sovereign cure for the frustrations the Government has suffered since the first organization of the NARIC. Competition will take care of the price.

The *Cadang-cadang* Disease of the Coconut

Attention is called to a short but comprehensive article on the cadang-cadang disease of the coconut palm by G. C. Kent, visiting professor of plant pathology from Cornell University, in the *Philippine Agriculturist* (Vol. 37, Nos. 5-6) published by the College of Agriculture and Central Experiment Station, University of the Philippines.

Professor Kent summarizes the earlier writings on the subject (Calica, Bigornia, Celino, De Leon, Fajardo, Hansen, Ocfemia, and Reinking) and adds some observations of his own, but the cause of this serious disease, not known elsewhere in the world, first reported in Nabua, Camarines Sur, as early as 1914, and now serious in all provinces of the area, still remains a great mystery.

Cadang-cadang is a local term signifying yellowing, growth failure, but is now generally used for this particular disease which appears to consist of a loss of chlorophyll and a subsequent starvation of the plant. No coconut trees have ever been known to recover from the disease. Considerable evidence has accumulated to indicate that the disease is not caused by a fungus, by a bacterium, or by insect-feeding, and the two current theories attribute it, in the one, to a virus, and in the other to nutrient deficiency.

Professor Kent states that experiments on possible control measures are underway and a search for resistant coconut varieties has also been begun. Histological studies have not yet been undertaken and are badly needed.

It has been estimated that in the Bicol area out of a total of some 16,780,000 trees, 1,788,000 were destroyed by cadang-cadang in 1951, 4,569,000 in 1952, and 5,527,000 in 1953.

The seriousness of the threat of the disease is in proportion to the importance of the coconut industry to the country. Copra is still by far our most important export product, the value amounting to ₱232,000,000 in 1953 (as against the next most important product, sugar, the value of which was ₱193,000,000 that same year). Add to this the value of our coconut oil exports, ₱35,000,000; desiccated coconut, ₱31,000,000, and copra meal and cake, ₱8,500,000. These are only the export values and do not include the values of the local consumption.

Fortunately, it appears that strenuous measures will now be undertaken to combat cadang-cadang. The Government recently formed the Philippine Coconut Administration and one of its primary functions will be to conduct research studies in this disease. When the formation of this Administration was being discussed, the coconut industry consented to a proposed assessment of ₱1.00 per ton of copra as its contribution toward financing its work, and it is believed that the copra exporters, the coconut oil mills, and the desiccated coconut factories all are ready to give considerable support to any really serious efforts to eliminate the threat.

Total Banning of Certain Imports

There recently was offered to businessmen, with a view to inviting their comment, a long list of items the importation of which it has been proposed the Government totally "ban". The list was compiled in the Department of Commerce and Industry as an appendix to another long list with which importers are already familiar,—"The Statistical Classification of Commodities", implementing Circular No. 44 of the Central Bank, which classifies many thousands of articles of import either as "highly essential" or "essential", whether to producers or to consumers, and as "non-essential", leaving certain items which are designated as "unclassified."

It is fortunate indeed that Secretary Oscar Ledesma thus has given businessmen an opportunity to comment not only on the inclusion of many of the items in the list, but also on the whole banning procedure, before the Government actually takes such radical action.

For, first of all, there is the fundamental objection to any total banning of given items of import.

The ban, or prohibition, is always among the most arbitrary resorts of autocracy, and positively has no place in any wise regulation of trade. And objectionable as it is in spirit, it is even more so as a method of practical application. The adoption of the "all-or-none" principle is hardly ever advisable in any connection as it eliminates all possibility of prompt modification to meet conditions as they develop. In the case of a banning of imports, it is fatally easy to include any number of items in a list drawn up *a priori*, but if mistakes are made, as they are bound to be made, it might be some time before this became apparent; more time would be lost in obtaining the lifting of the ban, and still more time in making good the shortage, however damaging it would be. Such shortages would seriously block various productive enterprises and would also result in fatal consumption wants.

This is not to exaggerate the matter in the slightest; rather it is an understatement. Numerous items, actually included in the list as released, would definitely result in a blocking of important industries in the country, and also in considerable deprivation affecting not merely the comfort but the health and the very lives of the people.

The importation of a great many items involves highly technical considerations which are all too likely to be overlooked by administrative authorities.

Take such a seemingly simple type of article as wooden tool-handles, included in the banned list. Surely, with our great forest-stands we can make our own pick-handles, for example! The fact is that the old limitation on this item has plagued the mining industry especially for some time because no Philippine wood has the qualities of ash or hickory, the wood of choice. Handles of inferior wood cause not only much loss in production-time, but are physically dangerous to the man who is forced to use them.[1]

Take such a well-known product as tallow, included in the list. This is a major ingredient in the manufacture of soaps, a flourishing industry here. Tallow is not produced locally in any quantity, and coconut-oil can not entirely take its place.

Take caustic soda. This is a most important chemical, used in numerous Philippine industries. It is being produced here, but the local production satisfies only some 12% of the consumption demand and the present plants, operating at maximum capacity, could not produce more than from 20% to 25% of the requirement.

Hydrochloric or muriatic acid: It is true that commercial hydrochloric acid is produced in the Philippines, but the C.P. (chemically pure) acid is not produced locally and is an absolute essential in mill laboratories and assay offices. The critical demand for this as well as many other pure chemicals is probably so small that local manufacture on an economic basis can not be expected for a long time to come.

[1]The brief comments offered here on various of the items proposed to be banned are based on a study conducted by the Chamber's Committee on Foreign and Domestic Trade Controls of which Mr. Paul H. Wood is the Counselor and Messrs. L. B. Nestle and Newland Baldwin are respectively the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

"Alcohols, n.e.s." One might, indeed, suppose that in view of our large sugar industry and our many distilleries, the importation of "alcohols" might well be banned; *but* under this classification the Philippines is bringing in benzyl alcohol and veratryl alcohol which are not obtainable locally and are needed in the manufacture of certain important pharmaceuticals.

The importation of varnish and "Others, prepared n.e.s. paint" would be banned under the list, although, last year, Miguel Cuaderno, Governor of the Central Bank, in recommending certain products for free entry under the "Selective Free Trade" plan, proposed that paints and varnishes be allowed to come in duty-free. Paints are manufactured in the Philippines, but the plants now in existence and about to be established could not fill more than approximately 40% of the demand, and there are certain special paints of the greatest importance for the protection of machinery and various types of construction which are not produced here at all, among them marine and industrial varnishes, latex and poly-vinyl-acetate paints, and paints for the proper coating of galvanized iron. At the same time, "Other oils from seeds, nuts, and kernels, n.e.s." are on the proposed banned list, but among them are highly essential specialty drying-oils needed by Philippine paint producers. And "Copper powder used for pigments" is on the list, presumably because the Philippines produces copper; but this product is a concentrate, not copper in a pure form at all. To produce pure metallic copper, and copper-powder from that, is a long and expensive process, not likely to be undertaken in the Philippines for a long time.

The importation of various types of paper,—writing paper, bond, envelope, and tablet paper, stencil paper, carbon paper, pasteboard and cardboard (except corrugated carton, boxes, and chipboard), "Others (paper bags and other containers of paper, n.e.s.)", all would be banned under the list, but only the most ordinary grades of paper are manufactured in the Philippines and only certain grades of chipboard. The designations are much too general and cover too many grades which can not be produced locally. Most of the paper manufactured here is made from bagasse and turns brittle and falls apart after a few years; it simply can not be used for any purpose of permanent record. Many local manufacturers require types of paper boxes and bags which can not be made locally. As for carbon paper, there is only one factory in the Philippines making it and the quantity and quality is far below the country's requirements.

"Ink, printing and mimeograph" would be banned under the list. While some inks are compounded locally, there are a great number of printing inks which are not be made here, including inks used for the aniline printing process, for printing on textiles, tin sheets, etc., and it is furthermore highly doubtful that the local manufacturers could supply the full market requirements even of the types of ink they make.

"Reinforced steel bars and merchant bars". There are a few small local rolling mills, but can they manufacture such types as deformed bars, corrugated bars, twisted bars, square plain bars, square deformed bars, etc., all needed for various kinds of construction? It is certain that these manufacturers can not turn out the grades of these products to meet government standards.

Take the item, only one of a large number of pharmaceuticals[2] recommended to be banned, "Serums, toxins, antitoxins, and toxide for human use". It is true that the Government maintains the Alabang Serum and Vaccine Institute, but the output meets only a small fraction of the demand. Suppose the country is suddenly afflicted by some epidemic,—of typhus, diptheria, dysentery. The health authorities would be helpless; thousands of people would die.

A great many food products appear in the list, including various meats and sausages, fresh fruits, fruit juices, jams, vegetables, tomato catsup, and coffee. Many of these items are not and can not be produced in the Philippines and are highly essential to the public wellbeing and health. Coffee is produced here but requires mixing with imported coffee. Locally made "tomato" catsup is a very inferior product, most of it made not from tomatoes but from bananas!

[2] Under the "n.e.s." (not elsewhere specified) stipulation all newly discovered and produced pharmaceuticals would be banned.

As for the proposed ban on "Textbooks for college", is it necessary here to say anything? Could any other proposal than this reflect more seriously on the state of culture in the country?

It is hard, indeed, to take the list seriously. But the list, long as it is, actually names only a fraction of the total items which would be banned under it. The reader will have noted the abbreviation, "n.e.s." in some of the categories briefly referred to in this editorial. These letters stand for the words, "Not elsewhere specified", and this and such general expressions as "other manufactures of copper" and "other manufactures of other base metals" almost infinitely expand the banned list and leave it practically impossible to determine which types of articles would *not* be banned.

A cursory comparison of the basic Central Bank list and the list of articles proposed to be banned, shows that no type of product classified as "highly essential" in the first list would be banned; but in the "essential producer" category 9 out of 571 items would be banned[3]; in the "essential consumer" category 8 out of 107[4]; in the "non-essential consumer" category, 42 out of 366; and in the "unclassified" list, no less than 433 out of 477. And it should be understood that the basic Central Bank list already includes in the "non-essential" and "unclassified" categories many items which have proved to be "essential" and even "highly essential".

It is plain enough that the list was prepared on the basis of recommendations received from various individuals and entities and it also can be assumed that it was prepared more as a means to gather information than as a list of items which it has already been decided actually to ban.

But if such a ban were to go into effect, something very close to industrial chaos would develop, for while some local manufacturers might be, briefly, benefited, other manufacturers would be driven out of production and employees would be laid-off, living costs would rise, and the wellbeing, comfort, and health of the people would suffer.

And no matter how the list might be modified or reduced on the strength of the general criticism that can now be offered, it would still remain a most dangerous measure inasmuch as many of the end-effects could not possibly be fully foreseen now.

[3] These 9 types of products in the "essential producer" category are: (1) Poultry feed concentrates (bran, pollar, sharps), and other by-products from the preparation of cereals and cereal products; (2) Rubber sheeting and soling; (3) Tire manufacturing and repair materials; (4) Cotton yarn (except weaving yarn) bleached, dyed or mercerized; (5) Twines, cotton for sewing sails and sacks; (6) Wicks, lamps, and candles; (7) Steel bars and rods-reinforced steel bars and merchant bars; (8) Plows, cultivators, and harrows (animal drawn); (9) Stoppers, crown corks, bottle caps, capsules, and other packing accessories of base metal-crown cork caps.

[4] In the "essential consumer" category, the 8 types of products banned are: (1) Other medicinal and pharmaceutical products, n.e.s.; (2) Writing paper; (3) Carbon and other copying papers (typewriter carbons); (4) Cotton thread, bleached, dyed or mercerized; (5) Hand tools, n.e.s. (blow lamps, hand sprayers, anvils, vises and clamps, portable forges, and grinding wheels, augers, drills, braces, gimlets, and reamers—boloes); (6) College and high school textbooks; (17) Writing ink; (8) Typewriter ribbons

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"THERE are voices in our country who daily sound alarms that our civilization is on the way out. Concentrated on the difficulties of our times, they see an early and dour end for us. But let me tell you that civilization does not decline and fall while people still possess dynamic creative faculties and devotion to religious faith and to liberty. The American people still possess those qualities. We are not at the bedside of a nation in death's agony.

"Eighty years is a long time for a man to live. And, as the shadows lengthen over my years, my confidence, my hopes and dreams for my countrymen are still undimmed. This confidence is that, with advancing knowledge, toil will grow less exacting; fear, hatred, and pain and tears may subside; the regenerating sun of creative ability and religious devotion will refresh each morning the strength and the progress of my country."—*HERBERT HOOVER, in a speech delivered on his 80th birthday anniversary.*