

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.

Attention is called to a short but comprehensive article on the *cadang-cadang* disease of the coconut palm by G. C.

The *Cadang-cadang* Disease of the Coconut
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.

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

Total Banning of Certain Imports
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.

¹The 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.