

THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE AND THE COLONIES*

FURTHER progress in investigational and intelligence work on Empire products is described in the annual report for 1935 of the Director of the Imperial Institute. A noticeable feature of this account is the prominence given to developments affecting the Colonial Empire, chief among which was the establishment by the Colonial Office of the Colonial Forest Resources Development Department and its location at the Institute. This arrangement has already been of much mutual benefit.

The main work of the Committee on Timbers during the year under review was in connection with the Report on Grading Rules and Standard Sizes for Empire Hardwoods. Suggested amendments from Nigeria and British Honduras, among others, are being considered. It was proposed to send to the United Kingdom a trial shipment of selected Nigerian timbers, graded according to the Rules, in order to provide a practical test of their applicability. Additions to the list of Colonial hardwoods approved by the London County Council's committee as fire-resisting materials include Sekondi Mahogany from the Gold Coast and Red Meranti from Malaya.

Besides recording the decision of the Admiralty in favour of tarred sisal cordage, the Committee on Vegetable Fibres report arrangements for an Exhibition of Empire Vegetable Fibres at the Institute in the spring of 1936, at which will be included, among the principal exhibits, sisal from East Africa, hemp from Mauritius, and coir from Ceylon. This Committee arranged for Institute co-operation in the research into the possibilities of further commercial utilisation of sisal, to be carried out at the laboratories of the Linen Industry Research Association.

Work on the problems involve in the production of tung oil from the fruits was continued by the Committee on Oils and Oilseeds, which is also endeavouring to make arrangements for crushing in the United Kingdom the produce of a number of small growers.

The Committee on Hides and Skins investigated the results of six different methods of curing hides, and found that only those hides prepared by the dry-salting or shade-drying methods, or by the modified sun-drying method recommended by the committee to the authorities in Kenya, could be considered satisfactory. The market possibilities of prime camel hides from Somaliland were studied, and small consignments tested gave promising results. Faults in finished leather are being correlated with specific diseases in the living animal.

PRODUCTS INVESTIGATED

The Investigations Section of the Plant and Animal Products Department was engaged on a wide variety of chemical and technical examinations, and furnished reports on 402 samples received chiefly from Agricultural

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and Forestry Departments overseas. Piassava from inland swamps in Sierra Leone submitted to the trade was considered to be worth a price well above that of Sulima piassava. *Abroma augusta* fibre from Uganda was pronounced by merchants to be about equal in quality to First Marks jute, and its suitability as a substitute is to be investigated. A sample of groundnut oil from the Sudan was regarded as a saleable in the United Kingdom at about the current price. An investigation into *Cymbopogon afronardus* oil from Kenya showed that it might be used as a source of geraniol. Inquiries in the trade indicated that consignments of peppermint oil from Kenya would be marketable at a price between those of American and English peppermint oils. Three out of seven samples of geranium oil from St. Helena were found to be of possible commercial interest. Derris root from the Amani Institute, Tanganyika, yielded materials of excellent quality, which should be readily saleable in the United Kingdom. Papain prepared in the Bahrel-Ghazal Province of the Sudan was considered to be of slightly higher quality than Ceylon papain. Mangrove bark from Tanganyika represented material which would meet the requirements of the United Kingdom and Continental markets for a "non-fibrous" bark, and both this and the "fibrous" bark could be disposed of in the United States. To suppliers of native-grown tobacco leaf in Jamaica it was suggested that, as the leaves were not large enough for use as binders by English cigar manufacturers, they should be supplied for use as fillers in the cheaper brands of cigars. The Department of Agriculture in Fiji was advised to concentrate the attention of tobacco growers on the production of cigar leaf only. A sample of beeswax from the Gambia was regarded as being quite suitable for the United Kingdom market. Other investigations related to banana flour from the Gold Coast, foodstuffs from Ceylon, ginger from British Honduras, castor seed from Ceylon, resin from the Solomon Islands, and gums from Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika.

MANUFACTURING AND MARKETING

Over a thousand inquiries were dealt with by the Intelligence Section, those from Colonies relating, among other matters, to the possibility of manufacturing coir products in Ceylon, the commercial production of sultanas and currants in Cyprus, improving the trade in Malayan tortoiseshell, large-scale planting of pyrethrum in Palestine, industrial developments in Fiji and fruit canning, in Ceylon, many of these inquiries being concerned with opportunities for marketing supplies in the United Kingdom.

Some inquirers sought information regarding machinery for preparing commodities for the market; others, usually manufacturers of machinery, required data concerning products not previously handled by them, such as "Kekuna" seed (candle nuts) from Ceylon. Information supplied also related to Empire sources of supply of products normally obtained from foreign countries, among such applications being one for chicle gum; British Honduras was named. The miscellaneous inquiries included the following: the preparation of ghee in Nigeria, the commercial utilisation of soya beans and oil, cultivation of the tonca bean tree in British Guiana and the preparation and marketing of the beans, the possibilities of an export trade in beeswax from Northern Rhodesia, the preparation of jute from the Sudan,

the possibilities of seaweed as manure in Zanzibar, and the method of preparing, drying and marketing rattans from Sarawak.

Numerous investigations on behalf of Colonial territories were made by the Mineral Resources Department of the Institute, the subjects ranging from Solomon Islands and East African soils to manures from Malta. Nigeria sent two samples of topaz, ilmenite came from Nyasaland, saline marls and muds from the Bahamas, coconut shell charcoal from British North Borneo, sand and pebbles from the Falkland Islands, peat from Palestine, lignite from the Cameroons, graphite rocks from Tanganyika, cinnamon-leaf compost from the Seychelles, and salt from Bechuanaland. On the Intelligence side, inquiries dealt with concerned Falkland Islands peat, pottery clays (for Kenya), prospecting in British Guiana, aluminium manufacture in Nyasaland, sources of columbite in Nigeria, Uganda and South-West Africa, Fijian coral for building purposes and cement, beryllium mineral production in East Africa, cobalt in Northern Rhodesia, zircon in Malaya, and many other subjects. In addition, the possibility of marketing gypsum from East Africa received attention, as did the following inquiries : guano on Ascension Island, market for marbles from Trans-Jordan, lignite in Trinidad, market for platiniferous ilmenite from Sierra Leone, Seychelles phosphate, and a market for Sudan natron.

COLONIAL COURTS

In the exhibition galleries of the Institute more vivid impressions of Empire countries are now being conveyed by representing as complete a picture as possible of the scenery, and arranging the exhibits in such a way as to give the visitor the effect of a journey through the country. Malta now has a new court, and the Palestine court is being completely reorganised and enlarged. Bermuda and Seychelles also have added to the attractions of their respective courts. Further, the chief economic products of each Dominion and Colony are displayed, and, where possible, their various applications illustrated by specimen articles.

For the first time the Report contains a complete record of officers of the Colonial Services visiting the Institute during the year, the number of such visitors being 100.