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GRENADA.

19th December 1974

Vol 2 No 16

Please set "Westindian" as one word wherever so shown
Newsletter for publication in week ending December 21st 1974

COCONUT INDUSTRY THREATENED

Mr Wilfred Julien, Managing Director of Tempe Manufacturing Company, said this week that the company would be forced to close down unless more copra was made available to the factory soon.

The Tempe Manufacturing Co, which was established in 1941, is the island's sole producer of refined coconut oil, coconut meal and washing soap, but, because of declining supplies of copra, its operations have been curtailed considerably.

"We used to produce 200 drums of refined coconut oil every month", said Mr Julien, "but all we can manage now is 50. It takes us three to four weeks to accumulate enough copra to operate the grinder for three days, and, as a result, we have heavy production losses. The Company's shareholders and employees foresee a disastrous future".

During the past few months, 6 employees have been kept permanently on the payroll to do essential maintenance and to buy, receive and store copra. Then, when sufficient copra has been accumulated, the staff is increased to 30 for about a week when the factory goes into operation until the raw material is exhausted.

Mr Julien said that the factory will close on December 20th, and reopen in January. However, unless a better supply of copra is assured, there would have to be serious consideration of the situation if the Company is to remain open to business.

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Depressed

As to causes of the shortage of copra, Mr Julien pointed out that praedial larceny was on the increase and he thought that, in spite of the ban on exports of coconuts, large quantities were being exported illegally to Trinidad. In addition, because of depressed local economic conditions, Mr Julien thought that considerable quantities of coconuts were being used to produce unrefined home made coconut oil.

The whole industry, Mr Julien said, was in peril because the average Grenadian planter had never thought it necessary to give his coconut trees the same attention he would to cocoa, bananas and nutmegs. The result was that yields were declining. In addition, Red Ring disease was killing a lot of trees and plantations were now being subject to a mite infection which was thought to be new to the Caribbean and which was now being investigated in Jamaica.

A possible solution to the manufacture of edible oil in Grenada is the production of cotton seed oil, but this will not solve the current problems of Tempe Manufacturing Co. Some months ago, an adaption was made to the grinders of the factory in order to handle cotton seed which is available from Grenada's island dependency of Carriacou.

"We produced a good oil", said Mr. Julien, "but it is not as clear as our refined coconut oil, and the public did not accept it. Research is continuing and we hope that success will give Carriacou an outlet for its now unused cotton seed, and at the same time solve the problem of keeping our factory in operation".

(477 words)

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NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN

Negotiations for a new Agreement between the Shipping Agents and the Seamen & Waterfront Workers Union have broken down, and the matter has been referred to the Labour Commissioner in an effort to break the deadlock.

The present Agreement expires on January 9th, and, some two months ago, the Shipping Agents submitted proposals to the Union for a new three-year Agreement. Counter proposals were then put in by the Union, but, after several meetings, little headway was made, and, by letter dated December 11th, the Shipping Agents informed the Union that the matter was being referred to the Labour Commissioner.

The principal point on which a deadlock exists is that of wages. The Union wants an immediate increase of 40% in the first year, 15% in the second, and 10% in the third year. The Shipping Agents, however, are not prepared to make any wage increase in the first year. For the second year they offer 10%, and for the third, 5%.

Unrealistic

Sources close to the Shipping Agents point out that, under the current Agreement, Union workers received a 5% increase in January last plus a 25% cost of living allowance just five months ago. In the face of this, these sources say the present Union demands are unrealistic and so far removed from what the Shipping Agents have offered that it is essential to bring in the Labour Commissioner in order to have some chance of reaching a compromise.

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However, Senator Eric Pierre, Secretary General of the Union, said this week that he was not satisfied that negotiations between the Union and the Shipping Agents had been exhaustive enough to require the services of the Labour Commissioner at this stage.

(281 words)

FACTORY DESTROYED

On the night of Saturday 14th, a fire completely destroyed the garment and mattress making factory of Messrs. Grenada Industries Ltd. in the Grand Anse area, leaving some 60 employees jobless.

Grenada Industries Ltd. was established in July last year by three Trinidadian businessmen, Messrs. Habib Hadeed, Assad Elbawi and Edmond Karkour. At that time, they purchased for \$462,224.00 (EC) the assets of the locally established firm of Messrs. Grenada Manufacturing Co, which had been set up by Grenadian entrepreneur, Senator D. M. B. Cromwell.

Following the fire, Mr Hadeed said losses were estimated at (EC) \$300,000.00 for the building, a further \$300,000.00 (EC) for equipment and EC \$50,000.00 in manufactured stock awaiting shipment.

Origin of the fire is unknown.

(112 words)



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