SUGAR WORKERS BENEFIT

A MEMORANDUM of agreement publish during the week between the Barbados Sugar Producers Association and the Government shows the figures of increased benefits for workers in the sugar industry. It is a document made in as concept and in terms, and should serve as a satisfactory basis for the future relations of sugar workers and employers.

The benefits are the two ways over, the sugar industry in this island struggles to maintain its position as one of the major sources of revenue but at the same time suffering from the injustices of the British Government and the serious competition of foreign sugars. The living conditions of the workers in the industry were far from satisfactory, but provision has now been made that the factors have tended to bring about the present change. The demand for Colonial sugar brought better prices during a guarantee period and the realization by the British Government that the social and economic conditions affecting the business of the industry in crops years which are above the average, sugar producers have now offered certain benefits which have been accepted by the Government.

In the larger field, Barbados sugar was tied up with British and sugar and no longer competed with sugar or other crops in the British market.

Prospects are very bright and with the desire "to improve the goods which went astern between employers and employees in the sugar industry by providing both directly and indirectly for larger pecuniary benefits to workers in the industry in crops years which are above the average," sugar producers have now offered certain benefits which have been accepted by the Government.

The kernel of the agreement is that an additional $2.48 per ton will be added to the Labour Welfare Fund which now values $2.48 of each sugar for the purposes of the proposals. For the year 1951 the sum will be added to the Fund, that is, it will be $2.48 per ton.

The R.I.P. crop has been estimated at 10,000 tons, and the fund benefits to the extent of over one million dollars, but this provision is a provision for the repair, reconstruction or erection of houses for workers in the sugar industry.

If the terms of the agreement went further it would make a considerable contribution to the social welfare of the island. At the best or worst the minimum standard of existence and protection can be said to have been bound in the 1951 crop the new bonus will be 15% of the basic wages.

With the long term view that the production of the industry would be sustained if proper facilities are to be made for the export of this produce, the Sugar Producers have also included an additional bonus of $2.48 per ton to a Harbours Fund Scheme. There is a little provision also for education for the workers. It is to be feared that the demand for a Deep Water Harbour like that of St. Lucia is going to be made by the Government, and that the part of the Sugar Producers, were intended to safeguard the position of the sugar industry and that of the island. To this end they are prepared to make every effort while the position is serious to the enormous outcry which the Government is to be expected.

If there ever was an occasion when practical action has been given to the desire to share the profit sharing in industry it is this occasion. The Sugar Producers have done much to remove the feeling of envy between the industrial workers in the industry that they existed merely for the purpose of getting out of those employed in the industry the last part of its total value of goods produced. The sugar is a part of their policy to share the profits of the year with their wage in the form of increased wages to the extent of payments during earlier years that the industry was not making such larger financial burdens. It is a tribute to those who say that they could only comment on the economic position and the extent which were not even reported.

This new agreement might well be regarded as a point of ground in a social revolution which has taken place in this island during the last two years.