

What was right and fair at one time may not be right and fair at another time, on account of changing conditions. We most respectfully submit that the present high labour cost has very materially altered the position of the cacao industry from the time when the export duty was first imposed—that our profit was considerably greater then than it is now.

6. MARKETING OF PRODUCE.

The marketing of our produce to the best advantage has always been—and still continues to be—one of our greatest problems. In view of the high cost of production it is very necessary we should secure the best possible price for our produce. Unfortunately, owing to lack of capital, many of us are unable to hold out for better prices when the market is unfavourable, being compelled to sell in order to secure the wherewithal to carry on.

We are paying the strictest attention to the curing and grading of our cacao in order to put on the market a clean, graded, and well-prepared product which will command a high price and turn out to the satisfaction of the manufacturer.

We have approached the Farmers' Union of New Zealand with a view to affiliating with them, and if we are successful we hope to be able to sell and buy through them. We would appreciate anything you could do to further our aims in this respect.

It is unfortunate we have not the necessary capital to start a co-operative factory in New Zealand for the manufacture of chocolates, &c., as we would then absorb all our cacao and distribute the manufactured goods to other countries, and in this way obtain the maximum results for our labour.

We would be very grateful if you could arrange to have samples of our cacao, together with the prices we would be prepared to accept, which could be changed from time to time, exhibited at the High Commissioner's Office in England, and also in New Zealand.

7. TRANSPORT.

Good roads are essential to the economic working of our plantations. Situated inland to the south-west of Apia are some twenty-two plantations, having a total area of over 4,000 acres. From this district an amount of cacao equal to over 60 per cent. of the total output for the Territory is produced. These estates are connected with Apia by the main Government road to the Wireless Station. Nothing has been done towards the maintenance of this road for the past eight or nine years, and as a consequence it resembles a tumbled succession of ruts and ridges, over which transport is of necessity both costly and slow. In view of the fact that the various interests dependant upon this road contribute something like £3,000 per annum in direct and indirect taxation to the Government revenue, we feel justified in asking that it may be put and kept in reasonable order.

8. DISEASE.

We are at a disadvantage in Samoa in not having attached to our Agricultural Department a qualified entomologist, although we thoroughly appreciate the fact that at the present juncture the country possibly cannot afford to maintain one. We are of the opinion, however, that the prevalence of disease among our cacao calls for some action, and we most respectfully suggest that the Samoan Administration might possibly be able to make arrangements with the Fijian Government to have their entomologist visit Samoa periodically to inspect our plantations and advise us on the best methods to be employed to combat our pests and diseases.

In conclusion we wish you to understand that the Government Administration have been sympathetic and have assisted us in many ways. In the first place, the Board of Control leased out several of their estates at nominal rentals. They have been most patient and lenient in the matter of moneys owing to them by the planters for overhead charges and rent. They have guaranteed some planters bank overdrafts, and have advanced moneys for dryers. We wish to assure you the planters feel very keenly their inability to meet their debts, and fully appreciate the Government's attitude towards them. It is because we are unable to make sufficient out of our plantations to meet these obligations that we have prepared this report of our position for you, and we sincerely trust you will appreciate our difficulties and assist us in finding a solution. The fact that when the Crown Estates controlled their cacao estates they were unable to farm them profitably should not be lost sight of. If the Board of Control had to pay reasonable rents for their coconut properties it is problematical whether they would show a profit on the year's working. If nothing is done to relieve the position the Government may have these estates back on their hands again, and it hardly seems possible that they would succeed where we had failed.