

Annual Report of the Central Statistical Office for the Year 1950

Functions

In July 1945, a Statistical Bureau was created in consequence of a recommendation made by the Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances which occurred in the North of Mauritius in 1943.

The original functions assigned to this Bureau were to collect and compile accurate information as to the wages of labour ; the number and type of employment in various industries ; the level of prices and computation of cost of living indices ; the Bureau was also appointed the task of supervising and co-ordinating the statistical data collected in the various Government Departments. These functions of the Bureau were gradually extended to involve the periodical statistical survey of every branch of economic activity in the island: agricultural, industrial and commercial. The scope of its activities now is not even so limited, however, for it also keeps under review the demographic, the vital, health, educational and other social statistics of the life of the Colony. In July 1948, the original Statistical Bureau became the Central Statistical Office.

The whole mass of valuable information collected and analysed by the Central Statistical Office is presented in an annual handbook, in a form in which it can be conveniently utilised by the Government, the general public and outside institutions. The preparation of such a handbook naturally calls for general familiarity with statistical technique ; it demands a discriminating appraisal of the data obtained in order to render them, in the way of presenting the information involved, of greater use. This Year Book of Statistics for Mauritius has been published annually since 1946.

In addition, the Central Statistical Office has also to prepare a number of statistical reports for submission to the Colonial Office and to the various agencies of the United Nations Organisation. It has to reply to a large number of enquiries from abroad, in addition to those from local organisations, institutions and individuals. When time and opportunity offers, it also carries out research on the material collected by the department.

The Central Statistical Office is now in constant contact with the Colonial Office Statistical Department, a new separate organisation created towards the end of 1948.

Location

Throughout the year, the Central Statistical Office was housed in a stone and concrete building at 8, Reverend Lebrun Street, Rose Hill.

Plans have been made for a new building to be erected on a plot of land facing the Education Department on the Rose Hill—Moka main road and financial provision has been actually made in the 1950-51 Estimates for the building.

Staff

The staff of the Central Statistical Office consists of:—

- The Director of Statistics.
- A Senior Statistician.
- Two Assistant Statisticians.
- A Senior Compiler.
- Five Compilers ; and
- One Typist.

Staff Movements

The Director, Mr. Marc Herchenroder, B.Sc., F.R.A.S., A. Inst. P., F.I.S. left the Colony on the 28th of February, returned on the 27th of October and resumed duty on the 30th October. While in the United Kingdom, he attended the Conference of the Colonial Government Statisticians which was held in London at the middle of March. The Conference lasted from the 15th to the 30th of March and was followed by a series of discussions with members of the Statistical Department of the Colonial Office and with certain officials of the United Kingdom Government Departments. In particular, the Director was given the opportunity to visit the Central Statistical Office in London, the Board of Trade (Census of Production Department, the Customs' Statistics Departments), the Ministry of Labour (Statistics Department), the General Registrar Office, the Government Actuary's Department, the Bank of England, the Rothamsted Experimental Station (Statistics Department). The interviews and discussions which resulted from these visits proved to be most helpful and enlightening on many aspects of Colonial Statistics and the Director appreciates very highly the kind welcome which he met and the assistance which was offered to him by everyone.

The Director was later invited to and attended the first Conference held by the Association of Incorporated Statisticians at Christchurch, Oxford, on the 16th and 17th September.

Opportunity was also taken by the Director, while in London, to inspect the mechanical equipment offered by the British Tabulating Machine Co. Ltd. (Hollerith) and of the Powers-Samas Machine Ltd. A mass of important information regarding these machines and their use in Statistical work was thus obtained.

During the Director's absence from the Colony, Mr. Marcel Etienne, the Acting Senior Statistician, was appointed Acting Director and was in charge of the Central Statistical Office. Mr. F. Empeigne was appointed Acting Senior Statistician and Mr. T. Ramdaursingh, Acting Assistant Statistician.

During the year the Senior Statistician, Mr. L. Honoré, pursued his course for the B.Sc. degree in Economics at the London School of Economics. Mr. Honoré is expected to sit for his final examination for the degree of B. Sc. (Economics) in June, 1951. Through the courtesy of Mr. W. F. Searle, Chief Statistician of the Colonial Office and Chairman of the Conference of Colonial Government Statisticians, Mr. Honoré was invited to follow, as a visitor, the discussions taking place at the Sessions of the Conference.

One of the compilers, Miss Madeleine Mamet, whose health had been failing during the last four months of 1949, was allowed to go on overseas leave as from the 3rd of January 1950. Miss Mamet was back to duty on the 6th of October, 1950.

On the 1st of November, Mr. G. Musthan who had been typist in the Central Statistical Office since 1st July, 1947 resigned his appointment and was replaced by Miss E. Guillemin of the Accountant General's Department.

A second post of Assistant Statistician was placed on the Estimates of the Central Statistical Office as from the 1st of July and Mr. F. Empeigne, one of the Compilers, was appointed to it in November.

Work of the Central Statistical Office during the year

Cost of Living, Budgetary Surveys. Early in the year, about one thousand forms suitable for an analysis of family expenditure were circulated to members of different occupational and social groups in the island. These groups included labourers, dockers, artisans, clerical workers and higher administrative officials and professionals.

In spite of an appeal having been made to the secretaries of the various trade unions and industrial organisations for their support towards obtaining information concerning the budgetary expenditure of manual workers, the response to the enquiry was, on the whole, very disappointing. The sample obtained, however, was sufficiently representative to enable fresh "weighing diagrams" to be computed with an acceptable degree of accuracy. The last survey, in this respect, dates back to mid-1947 and it had been quite clear for some time that a fresh survey was needed.

Price Level Indices

The current retail prices of a large number of articles of common consumption were surveyed monthly during the year. Retail price indices were computed for 70 articles of food and beverages, 40 articles of clothing and textiles, 40 articles of household necessity including fuel items.

Agricultural and Livestock Census

Before the Director left for overseas, complete arrangements had been made with the Agricultural Department for the taking of an Agricultural and Livestock Census, as desired by the United Nations Organisation and its agencies. The last census of this kind had been carried out in 1940 and its results had since been vitiated by the disturbing conditions of the war. In particular, the depletion of the livestock of the Colony had been rather severe during the years of war and the necessity for a census had become imperative.

The Census itself was carried out under the supervision of the Senior Staff of the Agricultural Department, but the compilation was undertaken at the Central Statistical Office under the supervision of the Acting Director, Mr. Etienne.

The Year Book of Statistics

The Year Book of Statistics for 1949 was prepared as usual and was almost complete in manuscript by the time the Director was back to duty in November. As in previous years, the requisite number of copies were produced on a duplicating machine in the Central Statistical Office during the month of December. The labour involved in producing 300 copies of a publication of 165 pages on a small duplicator is however proving to be too much for the small statistical staff who have considerably to do in other directions.

Statistical Returns for the Colonial Office

A largely increased number of statistical returns are now being furnished periodically to the new Statistical Department which was created in the Colonial Office towards the end of 1948. These various periodical returns, now numbering about 25, comprise certain ones which were originally furnished by other departments.

Statistics for the United Nations Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisations and other agencies

Extensive questionnaires from the United Nations Organisation and its agencies, dealing with demographic and vital statistics, cultivation, production, livestock, foodstuffs, external trade, etc., for Mauritius and its Dependencies were replied to. Other extensive questionnaires from the Economic Reporting Service of the State Department, Washington, dealing with sea port facilities and connected matters in Mauritius were also dealt with. Statistical information on various subjects were supplied to the British Consul in Madagascar.

Statistics of the Sugar Industry

As in previous years, the Central Statistical Office undertook the compilation of complete data relating to cultivation, production and manufacture in the Sugar Industry. The tabulated data on the crop results were circulated to the Director of Agriculture, the Chamber of Agriculture and the Agricultural Bank. In addition, with the kind assistance of the Registrar of the Co-Operative Societies, a satisfactorily large sample of small plantation results was analysed and published.

Bi-annual statements of employment and wages for artisans and skilled personnel in the Sugar Industry were collected, compiled and analysed.

Trade Statistics

The year went by before the new classification based on Board of Trade practice proposed for the Customs Tariff List in March 1949, was adopted. In view of the request from the United Nations Organisation for the adoption of the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification, the matter is now awaiting further consideration from the Colonial Office.

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Visits

In April 1950, the Central Statistical Office was honoured by a visit from His Excellency the Governor, Sir Hilary Blood, K.C.M.G., K.St.J., L.L.D. In September, Mr. D. R. Hinton, Consul of the United States of America for East Africa, also visited the Department.

Miscellaneous other Activities

The Office had during the year to reply to a large number of enquiries of a private nature from individuals and institutions both local and abroad, in addition to enquiries of an official character.

Office Equipment and Library

Some valuable books and publications were added to the Library during the year. A much needed small portable calculating machine was received in November.

Acknowledgment

I have much pleasure in recording here my appreciation of the efforts made by the small staff to carry on, under strain, the duties of the Central Statistical Office during the greater part of the year while I was on leave. My appreciation goes in particular to Mr. Etienne for his devotion to duty as Acting Director.

31st January, 1951.

M. HERCHENRODER,
Director of Statistics.



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