

STATEMENT

MADE BY

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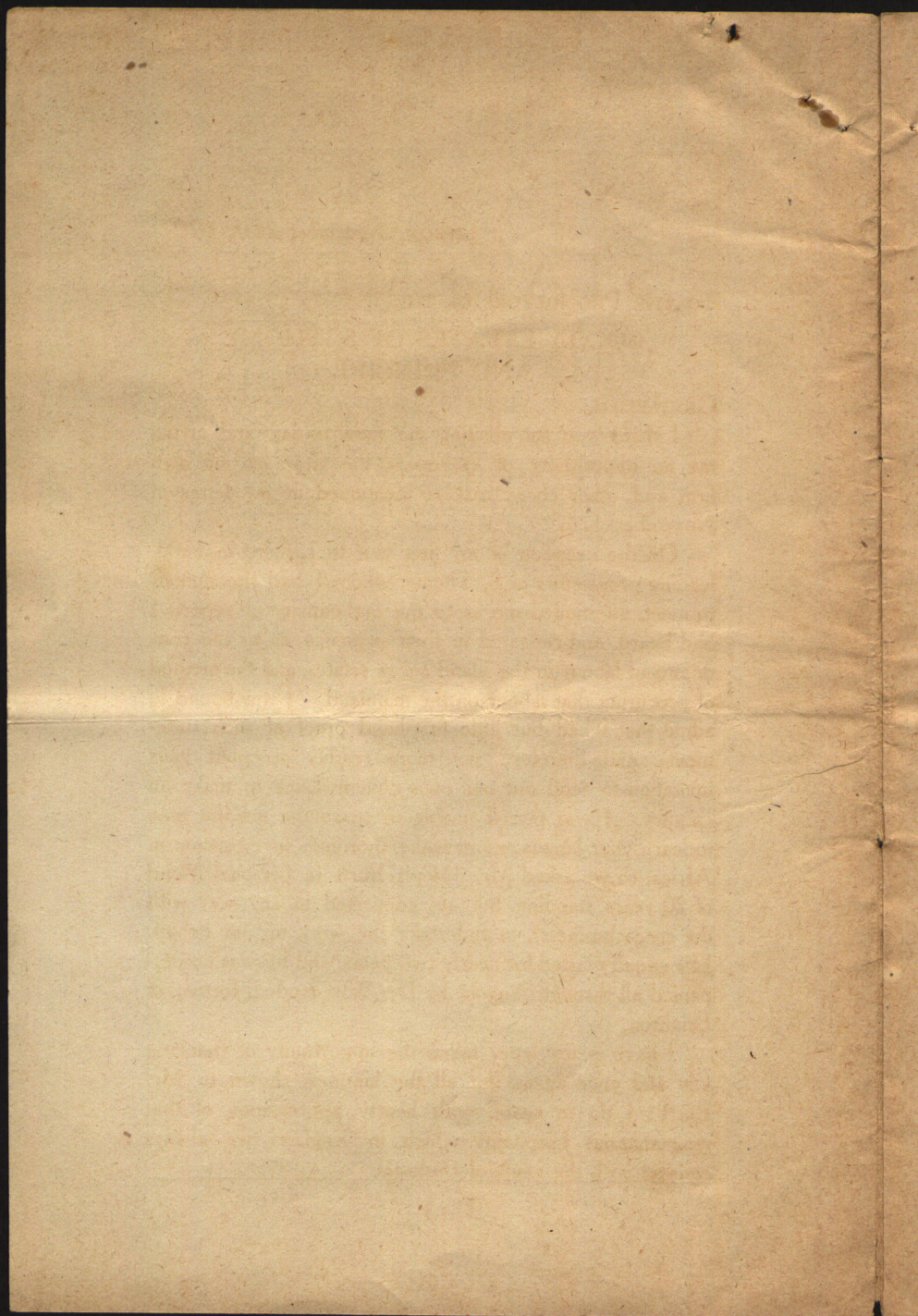
ON BEHALF OF THE ENGLISH COCOA MAKERS

TO A

COMMITTEE OF THE PROPRIETORS
OF THE COCOA ESTATES OF
S. THOMÉ AND PRINCÍPÉ.



LISBON, *November 28th, 1907.*



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TO THE PROPRIETORS OF THE
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GENTLEMEN,

I thank you for meeting me here to-day, and giving me an opportunity of expressing the views of my own firm and other cocoa makers mentioned in my letter of November 12th.

On the occasion of my first visit to Lisbon, in 1903, leading proprietors of S. Thomé, whom I had the honour to meet, questioned me as to the authenticity of reports I had heard, and repeated in their presence, as to the conditions of labour in the island cocoa estates, and the method of procuring that labour on the mainland. I was bound to admit that I had but little first-hand proof of such statements, and therefore we more readily accepted your invitation to send out our own commissioner to make an enquiry. I was myself unable to spare the needful time to learn your language and make thorough investigation in Africa, so we asked Mr. Joseph Burt (a personal friend of 20 years' standing, but not connected in any way with the cocoa business), to undertake the work on our behalf. His enquiry lasted for nearly two years, and he was accompanied all through Angola by Dr. W. Claude Horton, of Brighton.

I have in my letter taken the opportunity of thanking you and your agents for all the kindness shown to Mr. Burt; I do so again, with hearty appreciation of that magnanimous hospitality which in England we always connect with the name of Portugal.

The report of Mr. Burt and Dr. Horton has been placed in your hands, and I need not follow it in its many details. It, however, establishes to us the following facts :—

The large majority of Angola natives who are taken to S. Thomé are brought to the coast and shipped to the islands against their will, and therefore when they allow themselves to be contracted, it is under the force of circumstances and not a voluntary act. The good repatriation laws are still a dead letter, and therefore have not benefited the native, as repatriation from S. Thomé to Angola, with the exception of Cabinda has never taken place.

In addition to all evidence and vital statistics at present available, there are, and always will be until you introduce free labour, innumerable "offences against the person of the native" which it is impossible to trace, but which must be the inevitable result of the present system.

I now wish to refer to that part of Mr. Burt's report dealing with the islands. It is very agreeable to us to record the excellent treatment on many estates, and we have since read with much interest the publication entitled "The Boa Entrada Plantations," and have circulated several copies among our friends. We are particularly pleased that at this moment the British public should have an opportunity of studying so good an example of the excellent estates management in S. Thomé. But the death rate even on that ideal estate, considering that it is for adult population, is appalling, although I believe that all is being done on the spot by a kind and generous employer to lessen the mortality. I know there are many well-managed estates in S. Thomé, and should wish to consider that, for the sake of argument, every one is managed with the same kindness and forethought, but you have still in your island a system that produces a very high death rate, and a birth rate so low that every year several thousands of fresh labourers must be imported to fill the ranks of the dead.

In one of your best managed estates the doctor states that most of the mortality is from two diseases—anæmia and dysentery; complaints that are easily developed by people in a depressed mental condition. It is also admitted that the highest death rate is among the newly arrived labourers, and this is exactly what one would expect when we know that these people are forcibly taken from their homes for work across the sea, without any hope of return.

It is hardly necessary to re-state the fact that with the exception of the Cabinda natives there is no repatriation to Angola: the ships that go to the islands crowded with labourers carry none back to their homes. Until the present state of things is changed no argument will persuade the world that this is free labour.

Much will have to be altered before the conditions are perfect, and reforms cannot all be enacted at once, but the essentials of liberty ought to be immediately granted, and these are free contract and equally free repatriation.

That this is not impossible is shown by the just administration of the law in your own colony of Mozambique. Though in the mines the work is harder than on the cocoa plantation, there are plenty of labourers willing to contract for a short term of service with proper payment in the Transvaal. The British colonies in the West Indies contract with the Indian Government for the supply of coolie labour, and thousands of these men and women are shipped across two oceans, and after five years' service return with their families to their native land with large sums of money in their possession.

When the system of repatriation is established and men and women and children are actually returned to their homes, they will inspire their friends with confidence in the S. Thomé plantations, and the islands would no longer be regarded as the grave from which no man returns. The

excellent food, light labour, and good treatment of such an estate as "Boa Entrada" would be a constant topic of conversation in the villages of the interior. The returned native would be the best recruiting agent for new volunteers who would go with light heart to the islands, because they would know that at the end of their contract they would return with money to their friends. Arriving on the plantations in good heart, the number of cases of anæmia and dysentery will be greatly reduced, and the labourer will be kept in better health and spirits by the prospects of return. In any plantations where treatment may not yet be perfect, better management will be at once introduced because the proprietor will know that returning labourers will spread far and wide reports of their good or bad treatment.

We are not asking you to enforce any new standard of freedom ; many years ago Portugal and Great Britain, with other Powers, signed the Brussels Act, agreeing "to protect effectively the aboriginal populations of Africa," and abolish for ever the last remnants of slavery from their dominions. The abuses which are still taking place in your colony of Angola, are, I believe, not an indication that the Portuguese nation has relinquished this high standard of liberty, rather are they the last traces of a bad system that you all deplore, and will, I believe, remove with a strong hand, so that it shall not be possible to associate the name of slavery with that of your great nation.

We have always been buyers of S. Thomé cocoa, and in the hope of continuing for many years your business friends, we respectfully urge upon you the need for reforms, all of which will, we believe, be accomplished when throughout Angola and the islands you have established free labour and free repatriation.

Misleading statements as to our motives have appeared in the Portuguese newspapers, due, we believe, to a lack of complete information. The suggestions of commercial

jealousy are as absurd and as far from possible truth as that the English cocoa makers wish to buy your S. Thomé estates ; we need our capital in our own business. There have been many other incorrect statements as to our motives, all we are sure from simple misunderstanding, and as they appear to us irrelevant, we hope we may be forgiven if we neglect them.

Plentiful supplies of good cocoa are of the greatest benefit to the manufacturer, and we have always welcomed the good progress of the S. Thomé estates. Much as we should regret to lose the opportunity of buying your excellent cocoa, and even knowing that it would entail to us financial loss, speaking at least for my own firm, our conscience would not allow us to go on purchasing raw material for our business, unless we are assured that in the future it is to be produced by free labour.

We plead for strong and immediate action, and confidently trust that the agriculturists, who have by their courage and energy done so much in one generation to raise the island of S. Thomé to a colony of the foremost rank, will assist their able administrators to banish from their estates the remnants of a bad system, and establish in the ancient colony of Angola a standard of true freedom, worthy of the nation which first explored the shores of Africa, and is counted among the greatest colonising Powers of the earth.

On behalf of the English cocoa makers,

Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM A. CADBURY:

ALFRED KENTON DA SILVA

I received on 10th
In November 1907

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