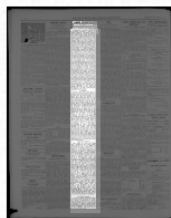




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## LABOUR RECRUITING.

### SOME UNTAPPED AREAS.


*(By an Occasional Correspondent.)*

We often hear a grumble emanate from one district or another in regard to the paucity of labour. One planter will, perhaps, complain that he has run short of his Indian supply, another will be worried over the sudden departure of a large Singkeh gang and so forth, and yet may it not be asked if, in many instances, the grumbler has no one else to blame but himself? And I shall try to explain why I have taken this somewhat—at any rate as it appears at first sight—uncharitable view. There are, as we know, many estates which do not possess a full complement of labour, so that when it is further depleted by bolting Tamils or Singkehs the situation is far from pleasant, and causes considerable inconvenience—is, in fact, a danger. But this surely might have been avoided if more care and foresight had been exercised in respect to recruiting, or if more interest had been taken by the manager personally and less reliance placed in the Kangauny as is sometimes done. To my mind, and I think most planters who have had any experience of labour will agree with me, the best and the surest way to recruit is for the manager of an estate to go over the recruiting ground himself. He would at once establish a personal connection which would go ever so much further than other methods now in vogue. A confidence is begotten by the method which I have suggested which would, I venture to assert, be attended with the happiest results, for I am sure it would be the most effectual way to induce the coming over of that family labour, which we all so desire to see established in this country in order to preserve that continuity of labour from father to son,




and from mother to daughter, which has been attended with such beneficial results to all concerned in the island of Ceylon, and which, if we only went the right way to work, could easily be established in this country.

#### **In a Groove.**





There is another point again which has been more or less lost sight of, and that is the fact that we have recruited in a groove as it were. The Chinese, as a matter of fact, have come to us in a way more than we have gone to them. The tin mines had been here from time immemorial, and as the Chinaman came to find a rubber estate a better proposition than a tin mine, as far as wages went, estates in the vicinity of tin mines found their labour easy procurable. In India we have consistently gone on recruiting from South India on old familiar ground, much to the discomfiture, of late, of the South Indian planter who is finding it hard, though being on the spot, to fill his vacancies. But why, I ask, should we not enlarge our labour horizon? Why should we rest content with the limp Tamil of South India and the heathen Chinese? Have planters here, I wonder, heard of the Canarese of Mysore? In the course of conversation, Mr. W. R. Mac Andrew, the Manager of Bukit Jalil Estate, Selangor, who has had a good planting experience in Ceylon, told me the Canarese, both men and women, could not be equalled for road and drain work, and that he would give anything to procure this class of labour. They were hardy, healthy coolies, would stand Malaria well, were cheap, and if properly managed, would be found to be very tractable. I was almost prompted to ask Mr. Mac Andrew why he did not go over to India and get some of these coolies himself.

#### **What of the Uriyas?**



Then again we have the Uriyas who, according to that most experienced planter, Mr. A. B. Milne, are proving the salvation of Burma as far as labour goes in the land of the ruby. If Burma can recruit the Uriya what is there to prevent us doing so? The Uriyas inhabit the province of Orissa, situated to the south of Bengal, and there are thousands of these docile people who would be ready to emigrate to the Straits and F. M. S. if somebody would only ask them. In the Uriyas we have abundant material for our estates, and it is surprising that such a golden opportunity has not





been availed of, especially by the many grumblers in our midst. I was surprised to learn in this connection that the Telugus, who are admittedly a hardier race than the South Indian Tamil, and who have been coming over in larger numbers of late have not created a favourable impression, but I think this is due to the fact that there is not a single planter in these parts who is acquainted with their dialect. In time I believe the prejudice against Telugu will disappear. As I have pointed out there is no necessity why we should have to rely altogether on Indian and Chinese labour, and that only a little effort is needed for us to be able to possess a varied labour force in view of the attractions we are able to offer. The material is ready to hand if we will only avail ourselves of it. There is another aspect. The more varied our labour is the more chance there is of reducing the Labour Bill for them. Ramaswamy and John will not be able to say, "we are the only pebbles on the beach."

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Mr. Cecil L. Budd, of Vivian Younger and Bond, metal merchants, of London, and chairman of directors of the London Metal Exchange, says the *Ironmonger*, was interviewed in Penang recently, whither he has gone to inspect the property of the Eastern Smelting Co. (Lim.), of which he is also a director. The *Pinang Gazette* gives the interview in full.