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Annual Report

OF THE GOVERNOR OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

1944

POST-WAR FRONTIERS EDITION





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Annual REPORT

*of the Governor of the Virgin Islands
to the Secretary of the Interior
for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30*

1944

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United States
Department of the Interior

HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

Territory of
Virgin Islands

CHARLES HARWOOD, *Governor*

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Annual Report of the Governor of the Virgin Islands

CHARLES HARWOOD, Governor



DURING the fiscal year ended June 30, 1944, a number of important events occurred in the Virgin Islands of the United States, most of which were of a beneficial nature. The year was one of definite progress. The outstanding event was the introduction of a bill into the House of Representatives designed to assist in the internal development of the Virgin Islands by the undertaking of useful projects. This bill, when enacted, will authorize a total appropriation of upwards of \$10,000,000 for improvements to and extensions of existing facilities in the islands, as well as certain new projects, mainly hospitalization; sanitation; fire protection; sewerage; water system and supply; educational; roads, streets, and highways; recreational; telephone and radio communications; malarial control; and slaughterhouses and marketing. In its report on the bill, the Committee on Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives stressed that these projects would be of permanent and lasting benefit to the residents of the Virgin Islands.

For the first time the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 was applied to the Virgin Islands this year. As this act was not heretofore applicable to the Virgin Islands, registration of Virgin Islands' males for service in the Armed Forces of the United States was not accomplished until the President of the United States directed the registration of all male citizens of the United States, from 18 to 44 years of age, inclusive, who had not previously registered elsewhere.

The Bethlehem Sugar Factory on the Island of St. Croix was reopened by the Virgin Islands Co., after lying idle for 13 years. It processed all the sugarcane harvested on the island, and could have handled twice as much. The total cane crop was only 33,202 tons, as compared with 43,093 tons in 1943. Of this, 25,046 tons were converted into 2,687 tons of sugar, and the balance into rum.

Shipments of United States Government-inspected beef, pork, and lamb, totaling about 337,010 pounds, were made from St. Croix to Puerto Rico and to St. Thomas. The operation of the abattoir proved to be of immense help to the livestock industry. There has been an increase in the ownership of cattle by small growers.

For the first time in the history of the islands, women were admitted to serve on juries by legislation approved in St. Thomas on September 17, 1943, and in St. Croix on March 27, 1944.

The financial condition of both municipalities improved materially during the year; especially of the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John. The increased revenues in both municipalities are attributable primarily to the prosperity of the rum-manufacturing business, incident to the unusually high production and price of rum, attained as a result of the shortage of spirituous liquors in continental United States.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

As anticipated in the annual report for the preceding fiscal year, unemployment—despite the repatriation of many foreign workers who had been imported for defense construction—was the most serious consideration in the Virgin Islands during the year under review.

The withdrawal of the Works Projects Administration of the Federal Works Agency from the Virgin Islands in December 1943 left a considerable number of unfinished projects, particularly road projects, on the island of St. Thomas, and water conservation projects on the island of St. Croix. It also eliminated relief employment for approximately 1,500 persons. Projects for nursery schools, school lunches, sewing, health, and vegetable growing projects, formerly operated by the Work Projects Administration, were taken over and operated by the municipal governments from December 1943 to June 1944. With the curtailment of employment on defense construction projects in St. Thomas during the closing months of the fiscal year, unemployment conditions in this municipality were accentuated. In St. Croix there was considerable unemployment until the Virgin Islands Co. opened the cane-harvesting season late in February, which continued well into the month of May. It is estimated that there are at the present time between 1,500 and 2,000 unemployed employables in the Virgin Islands. For a small portion of these, employment will be provided on municipal projects made possible by the increase in income taxes on largely increased distilleries' profits.

FISCAL

For the third successive year the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John operated without a Federal deficit appropriation and on June 30, 1944, the Treasury of the Municipality of St. Thomas and

St. John showed a revenue surplus of \$57,716.32 over expenditures. Conversely, the municipality of St. Croix operated with a Federal deficit appropriation of \$140,000.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF ST. THOMAS AND ST. JOHN

The actual revenues of the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John were \$1,617,705.36, including \$75,497.33 transferred from surplus funds of the preceding fiscal year, and \$2,000 from the operating fund of the St. Thomas Virgin Islands Lottery. The comparable figure for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1943, was \$693,801.37. Thus, total income for the fiscal year 1944 exceeded by 133 percent the preceding year's income.

Income-tax collections at \$1,295,380.50 was an increase of 178.3 percent over the amount of \$465,447.76 collected in the preceding fiscal year. In 1942 income-tax collections were \$316,067.67, and in 1936 the revenue from this source was only \$18,237.08. Real property taxes yielded \$56,825.28, compared with \$54,462.23 in the preceding year. Gasoline taxes and automobile license fees were \$17,823.24, compared with \$14,398.68 in 1943, an increase of 23.7 percent. Customs revenues yielded \$39,800 compared with \$28,200 in 1943, an increase of 41.1 percent. Pilotage fees decreased 131 percent, from \$10,597.52 in 1943 to \$4,587.57 in 1944. Although there was a large reduction in the collection of pilotage fees, thus emphasizing the changed economy of the island of St. Thomas incident to the war, and the reduction of shipping, it will be noted that other revenues, particularly those from income taxes, more than equalized the position.

The budget for the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John carried total appropriations of \$1,559,989.04. Major departmental appropriations were: Public works and fire, \$379,000; education, \$135,000; municipal hospital, \$134,000; police and prison, \$57,000; the legislature, \$33,000; sanitation service, \$24,000; public welfare, \$56,000; and harbor, \$26,000.

MUNICIPALITY OF ST. CROIX

The revenues of the municipality of St. Croix amounted to \$262,684.89; compared with \$194,440.63 in the preceding years, an increase of 35.1 percent. Income-tax collections were \$114,836.45, as compared with \$46,977.22 in 1943, an increase of 144.45 percent. Real property taxes yielded \$48,358.86, and in 1943, \$59,558.34, a decrease of \$11,199.48. The budget for the municipality of St. Croix embodied total appropriations of \$412,515, of which local revenues were estimated to supply \$272,515, and a Federal appropriation, \$140,000.

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Major departmental appropriations were: Education, \$58,000; public works, \$65,000; police and prison, \$31,000; Christiansted Hospital, \$33,000; Frederiksted Hospital, \$29,000; Kingshill Home, \$23,000; the legislature, \$9,000; and sanitation, \$9,000.

THE FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

The Federal appropriation for the government of the Virgin Islands, fiscal year 1944, were:

Central Administration-----	\$168, 820. 00
Agricultural Experiment Station-----	37, 640. 00
Deficit, municipality of St. Croix-----	140, 000. 00
	346, 460. 00

The following supplemental appropriations for overtime and territorial service differential were added to the above:

Central Administration-----	\$ 18, 000. 00
Agricultural Experiment Station-----	9, 175. 00
Total supplemental appropriation-----	27, 175. 00

Comparable 1943 appropriations were:

Central Administration-----	\$167, 230. 00
Agricultural Experiment Station-----	40, 140. 00
Deficit, municipality of St. Croix-----	159, 800. 00
	367, 170. 00

WAR SAVINGS BONDS

The municipality of St. Thomas and St. John invested \$299,951 in War Savings bonds with total maturity value of \$386,050. Of its surplus revenues, this municipality created a hospital building fund with a deposit of \$200,000; a high-school building fund of \$50,000; a sewer-system fund of \$150,000; a reserve fund of \$100,000; and a scholarship fund of \$10,000. The major portions of these funds were invested in War Savings bonds. The municipality of St. Croix invested \$56,300 in War Savings bonds.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Due to the war emergency, the Public Works Department encountered many difficulties in procuring critical materials from continental United States. Consequently, many projects had to be postponed for an indefinite period of time. However, assignments were carried out with materials available here and in Puerto Rico, wherever possible.

The Federal Works Agency water-supply project with total storage capacity of 1,700,000 gallons, was more than 60 percent completed. Five catchment areas and five cisterns were completed, a sixth was 90 percent built, and a seventh, 50 percent. Lack of wire fencing and galvanized iron sheets held up the final completion of this work. In an effort to improve the water-supply facilities in the eastern end of St. Thomas, development work was started by the construction of a well, and excavation of a small run-off catchment basin. The results were excellent, and plans are now being made to extend this type of work. This seems to be the first large-scale effort to impound fresh water in St. Thomas.

The dirt highways on St. Thomas have all been machine-graded, and are in a better condition today than ever before. The city streets have been improved, new bridges built, a series of masonry steps completed, some open gutters covered with concrete tops, and a number of dirt streets widened and hard-surfaced with asphalt.

In St. John, the department constructed a pier at the Juvenile School. Extensions were also completed to the Cruz Bay pier, and to the Coral Bay pier.

The scope of the Public Works Department's activities in St. Croix included the maintenance and repair of public buildings, streets, water supply systems, and public parks. Due to limited allotments, most of the year's work was restricted to routine upkeep and maintenance. Only a minimum of actual construction was possible.

POLICE AND PRISON DEPARTMENT

The relations between the military and the civilian population continued to be highly satisfactory; a fine spirit of cooperation, of which we are proud, exists between the military authorities and the local police. The director of police of St. Thomas reports that a total of 1,182 persons were arrested during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1944, as against 1,148 arrests in the preceding year. The major portion of the cases were for disorderly conduct, violation of the automobile ordinances, and other minor offenses. The director of police of St. Croix reported that there were 237 cases filed, with 212 convictions; as against 250 cases filed, and 226 convictions, during the previous year.

HEALTH AND SANITATION

The commissioner of health in St. Thomas reported that for the first time in 12 years seven cases of typhoid fever were diagnosed. A mass immunization against this fever was started promptly and the public response was most satisfactory. The incidence of venereal disease has been high in the past few years, but has shown distinct

signs of dwindling due, no doubt, to measures of control and hospitalization maintained through the assistance of the United States Public Health Service and the Federal Works Agency. The municipal slaughterhouse, nightsoil removal dump, and harbor pollution continue to be serious health hazards.

The work of the municipal physicians continued to be carried out under various hardships, among which are dilapidated and ancient hospital buildings and facilities, and outmoded equipment. However, extensive repairs are now under way at St. Thomas and, when completed, will generally improve the physical appearance of the structures. The general health standard in St. Croix was good. Clinics were conducted in infant welfare and prenatal care. Infant mortality was undoubtedly reduced by the free distribution of milk at the various infant-welfare clinics. The Kingshill Home for indigents averaged 130 inmates. This institution is in good condition, and although many of its items of equipment are in good shape, new furnishings should be obtained as soon as war-time restrictions are lifted. There were no admissions to the Leper Colony during the fiscal year 1944. There were 2 deaths, which decreased the total to 54 lepers now hospitalized.

SELECTIVE SERVICE

The Selective Service Act was made applicable to the Virgin Islands by the proclamation signed by President Roosevelt on October 26, 1943. Registration began on November 16, 1943. The Selective Service System was organized in January 1944, with the Governor as State Director, and with the superintendents of education in St. Thomas and St. Croix as administrative assistants. Local board operations were started in April. At the end of the fiscal year, 2,185 men were registered by the St. Thomas Local Board, and 1,475 by the St. Croix Local Board. The total number of inductees supplied in the first call for the Virgin Islands, from both local boards, was 211, all of whom were volunteers for immediate induction.

THE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS

There was a continued improvement in the food supply of both St. Croix and St. Thomas despite a severe drought. The St. Croix station made comparative tests in planting sugarcane and found a new variety to be far superior to the common types formerly used. Several thousand cuttings were distributed to the sugar growers. The agricultural fair held on the island of St. Croix on February 22, 1944, which featured assorted types of agricultural exhibits, handcraft, and school group-work displays, was an outstanding success. Federal Works Agency's funds enabled a dam to be completed at the St. Croix sta-

tion with a capacity of approximately 4,000,000 gallons of water. Approximately 346,000 slips of all kinds were distributed for planting. Studies and experiments were continued with the view to improving and increasing swine production on the smaller farms. The St. Thomas station distributed 160,000 vegetable slips.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

During the year, certain trends and undertakings which should have a far-reaching effect on the work of the social welfare department, and its contribution to the islands' life, have been noted, among which being the enactment of the Social Welfare Act of 1943. This act was adopted by the legislative assembly of the Virgin Islands, setting up standards and a legal framework for social services in the Virgin Islands, and providing a basis for cooperation and coordination of activities in the separate municipalities of St. Thomas-St. John, and St. Croix.

The Federal Social Security Board has recommended to Congress that several portions of the act, specifically, old-age assistance, aid to dependent children, aid to the blind, maternal and child welfare, and public health work, be extended to these islands. It is hoped that this legislation will become law within the next year.

Another important event was the opening of the Queen Louise Home for the Aged in St. Thomas. This institution fills a long-felt need for local facilities to care for the destitute poor of St. Thomas.

Cash aid to the poor in St. Thomas and St. John increased nearly one-third this year to the total of \$23,583.15, as compared with \$17,977.63 last year. In St. Croix pensions and other aid to the poor, exclusive of Kings Hill Home totaled \$11,420. The operating costs of Kings Hill Home were \$23,850.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Adult and juvenile attendance have increased considerably in the public libraries of both municipalities. In St. Thomas the juvenile department was especially active during the summer months, and the story hour period was continued. Some new equipment was obtained and many new books added to the two public libraries in St. Croix.

EDUCATION

The educational system in St. Thomas has developed greatly during the past year. Notable examples are that the pay rates for teachers have been raised, and the Superintendent's staff now includes administrative and supervisory assistants in the fields of physical education, art, music, attendance, adult education through the evening school,

vocational training, pre-school child development, and teacher training. The nursery schools are now an important branch of the educational system. The teachers' institute conducts courses for teachers in service and training each spring and summer. A scholarship fund is also maintained to assist deserving graduates by means of loans for college expenses to the United States. Many scholarship grants were also made for students and teachers in the fields of education, public health, and nursing. While new school buildings and equipment, which are sadly needed throughout the islands, are virtually unobtainable at present, positive measures have been taken to assure action on a comprehensive building program as soon as war-time restrictions have been lifted.

In St. Croix, problems of teacher replacement, securing new equipment, and maintaining equipment already on hand, unfortunately, were so great as to force curriculum revision and supervision to second place. Nevertheless, there was definite progress along certain lines. A vegetable production course taught by the extension agent of the agricultural station was highly successful. Courses in nutrition were given, a summer school was conducted, and adult education programs were improved and expanded.

THE HARBOR DEPARTMENT

The harbormaster reported that shipping was poor due to the fact that war regulations prevented neutral ships from calling here. Eighty-six United States Government-owned ships, and 156 merchant vessels, or a total of 242 vessels with gross tonnage of 259,577, entered St. Thomas, as compared with 1,220 vessels with a total tonnage of 3,943,124 which called here during 1941.

ST. JOHN

The administrator for St. John, who is also the municipal physician of that island, has presented a picture of the excellent health conditions on the island of St. John. Regular monthly check-ups were given at the clinics located at the Cruz Bay and Coral Bay districts. Although there were no cases of typhoid, 326 inoculations were given. The administrator's office was very active during the year in a series of island-wide projects, including a Young Men's Athletic Club, a Boy Scout Troop, War Bond drives, Community Chest collection activities, drives for Red Cross funds, and various patriotic programs.

THE POLICE COURTS

The police judge of the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John reported that 1,122 persons were tried for criminal offenses during the

year, the greater number of which were for violations of the automobile ordinance. Eleven persons were tried in St. John. In St. Croix 363 criminal cases were tried, representing a small increase over last year's figure; but there was a marked decrease in juvenile court cases.

CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE UNIT

During the year, units of civilian public service were organized in the Virgin Islands with the approval of the United States Selective Service System. Workers in the fields of psychiatry, vocational education, child welfare and group recreation, were brought to the islands under local municipal sponsorship and they have undertaken many worthwhile public projects.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITIES

The most important piece of legislation enacted during the session of the Virgin Islands Legislative Assembly last December was the Social Welfare Act of 1943. This act provides standards for improving social welfare services, the immediate purpose of which is to make the islands eligible for Social Security grants as soon as certain titles of the Social Security Act are extended by Congress.

It is unhappily and unfortunately evident that, in the past, these sessions of the legislative assembly have failed to produce a history of useful results commensurate with the time and expense involved in holding them. An explanation can only be found in the divergent economies and interests of the two municipalities which have encouraged the short-sighted policy of considering individual problems first at the expense of the broader needs of the collective group.

During the year the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John passed such important legislation as scholarship loans and grants, the legalizing of women jurors, and the appropriation of surplus funds into reserves earmarked for post-war construction projects. These funds are invested in War Savings bonds.

Among the important measures passed by the municipality of St. Croix are the legalizing of women jurors, and a pension bill which provides for the retirement of municipal employees at the age of 65 or before if a total disability is sustained. This bill also makes certain provisions for the dependents of deceased employees.

CONCLUSION

The abnormal increase in municipal revenues in the Virgin Islands which permitted the extension and expansion of essential Government functions during the year under review, and which will undoubtedly continue during the coming fiscal year, resulting, as it did, from in-

creased distilleries' profits, cannot be counted upon as a stable source of revenue for the future. Price and profits will undoubtedly drop close to normal when the distillation of beverage spirits is again resumed by continental producers.

As reported last year, all medical institutions are in dire need of rehabilitation and modernization, the primitive and unsanitary system of night-soil disposal, and the open drains and gutters in all towns, are a menace to the health of the people.

If and when Congress enacts the pending bill to provide large-scale appropriations for public works facilities of the islands, it will provide most of the physical improvements which have been long needed.



