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The Tin Mission

The Straits Times, 2 November 1951, Page 6

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The Tin Mission

If Washington reports accurately represent the task which the American tin mission to Malaya has set itself, then there is greater ignorance of the industry even than was suspected. And suspicion was never exactly concealed. One reason for sending the mission, Reuter reports from Washington, is the desire to explore the possibility of persuading Indonesia to sell directly to the United States instead of, "as at present, sending tin to Malaya to be smelted." About two-thirds of all Indonesian concentrates is sent to Holland for smelting; the rest goes to the American smelter in Texas. There is not much there for the mission to explore.

It is also said that the mission will be prepared to negotiate contracts "if Far Eastern producers are amenable." Amenable to what? Amenable, it appears, to an American desire to explore the possibility of undercutting Bolivian mines by forty cents a pound. Bolivia is holding out for \$1.50 (U.S.) a pound. The Americans will not offer more than \$1.12, and are now selling tin out of the stockpile to prove they can hammer the price if they try hard enough.

The mission is coming out in a fractious state of mind which bodes no good for anyone. Washington was invited to send a mission to Malaya to disprove the charges of "gouging." The Americans have asserted that the price of tin is rigged, and the industry controlled by a cartel. But in

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Malaya there is no cartel, no control and no "gouging." Let, however, the mission come and see for itself. There is nothing to hide. Obviously it has much to learn, and indeed that is why it is coming. All that Malaya asks is an open mind.

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