

INTRODUCTION

Scope.

This report attempts to describe the system of farming of the cane farmers of Trinidad and their relationships with the sugar estate to whom they deliver their cane for processing. It is a study of agricultural production by peasants of a seasonal perennial crop for export; and examines the effectiveness of the system (i) as a means of providing an adequate standard of living and (ii) a method of producing low cost sugar cane. It is a study also of Industrial Relationship between primary and secondary producers: the growers and manufacturers of cane. It is a study in Monopoly in marketing since each processing factory has by informal agreement a defined area from which it may buy cane from farmers; finally, since the manufacturers are themselves cane growers, it is a study in Competition as regards production.

Justification.

This enquiry is undertaken to provide information about what has come to be regarded as an inefficient and disorganised, though important, section of the sugar industry, to investigate its problems and finally to make suggestions for its development in the future. The economic condition of the cane farming industry is particularly important today because it functions in a changing environment which is now subject to such forces in Trinidad as lowering of estate production costs, increasing population, and shortage of agricultural land, and in the world generally the use of increasingly intensive and scientific methods for the cultivation of sugar cane, which is the first crop since the war to be subject to overproduction, though so far only in the dollar area. The future of sterling sugar production depends not only on price (dollar sugar which goes into markets other than the U.S.A. is about four-fifths the sterling price) and the dollar earning capacity of the sterling bloc, but also on economic policies and politics at the international level.

Method.

The origin, development and present organisation of the cane farming industry are described from the literature available in the libraries of the Imperial College, the Department of Agriculture and the records of the Sugar Manufacturers Association of Trinidad. No historical or economic study of cane farmers exists and a classified Bibliography and brief review are given as a guide. (Appendix A)

Cane farming methods of cultivation and relationships with the estates were examined at Orange Grove Estate which, with its proximity and its cooperation with the College in the past, provided an excellent field for study. The decision to limit the area of the survey has proved correct, for whilst all the information discovered will not itself necessarily be true to the same, or to any degree, of every cane farming area in Trinidad, the method has revealed in detail the sort of problems which exist and has tested the sort of techniques which are appropriate in an enquiry for the whole island, whilst many fundamental problems of the industry will be the same.

For the study of cane farmers at Orange Grove Estate four main methods were used:

- (A) Peasant survey by personal questionnaire using a stratified sample with variable sampling fractions.
- (B) Examination of Estate records.
- (C) Analysis of harvesting and transport.
- (D) Analysis of land utilisation.