A. Introduction.

The literature on Soil Conservation invariably begins with references to the erosion menace and its consequences, related to the development or downfall of civilizations in past history. They range from explanations for the fall of Babylon and Assyria to the dust-bowl days of the United States in 1934. Let it suffice here to state that to the subsisting peasant farmer in the Tropics, soil erosion has been another accepted portion of his life, for he has grown accustomed to muddy rivers and increasingly poor crop yields, suffering these ill effects without reason, and that soil conservation is but another new doctrine introduced belatedly in his life.

Controversy has developed on a definition for Soil Conservation. In our school it is logically considered as "good husbandry," while Tempany (1) is more specific in his definition . . . . "measures to redress the balance, and mitigate the evil effects of soil erosion."

The Soil Conservation Society of America set up a technical committee under William Van Dersal (2) to get at a unified meaning for the term. Langlic has put forward the following suggestion . . . .

"That science of soil management which has for its ultimate goal the most profitable, productive use of the soil that can be had and still maintain or improve the quality and quantity of the resource."

The tentative conclusion offered by the Committee for a definition is:

"A system of using and managing land based on the capabilities of the land itself, involving the application of the best measures or practices known, and designed to result in the greatest profitable production, without damage to the land." The fact that even after exorbitant research, only a tentative conclusion is possible, reflects on the persistence of the

controversy, leaving the meaning still moot.

The accepted definition of peasant in this project is: " a man who devotes the major part of his time to cultivating land on his own account, with the help of little or no outside labour. The area of land this requires varies in the B.W.I. from 2 - 15 acres, according to the crop that is planted." Lewis (3). This definition is considered applicable to the peasant farmer throughout the British Tropics. Such an individual is self-centred, and modestly employed in the immediate subsistence of himself and his family. This project is undertaken as a study of the peasant, his outlook and capital, and the methods of conservation that are available to him; for conservation, as a branch of science and technology must aim first at understanding and then at control.

It was found necessary to survey most of the general methods of conservation in spite of the fact that all are not available to the capital and time of the individual peasant. To use Professor Hardy's aphorism, "the soil is a bit of the landscape," and individual efforts to conserve one fragment of it could be depreciated by alien systems of husbandry in the immediate vicinity. A system of co-operation among small holders in a particular area becomes a necessity, to be possibly enforced by law. This demands some knowledge of all conservation methods so that there is a possibility of choice.