

INTRODUCTION

Trinidad, in common with other parts of the world, suffered severe economic upheaval during the war years. The cost of living, and especially that of food stuffs, has risen hand in hand with the cost of labour to unprecedented heights.

Prices, such as are ruling in this Island at present, combined with a world shortage of food stuffs, reflects with great severity upon the peasant population which is by far the greater percentage of the total.

In Trinidad and the West Indies generally, however, the position is considerably worse than in our other Tropical Dependencies, in that the peasant population is not indigenous. Our peasants have been imported either as indentured labourers from India which has brought little agricultural tradition with it, or as slave labour from Africa, whose agricultural and national traditions were depressed during their captivity, and whom since their emancipation have shown little desire for agricultural labour since it is so closely associated with their lowest social epoch. It is not surprising therefore that where peasants are forced to farm small tracts stand for substance that this is carried out in a most unprovident manner.

It is obvious therefore that an effort must be made, firstly to encourage those people who are at present engaged upon the land, to improve their condition of life, their methods of working and the quality and quantity of the produce they turn out, and secondly to establish an interest and attachment for the land amongst those who have at present no association ^{with} for it. It is with these considerations in mind that the survey reported here in has been made of an area in the St. Augustine district.

In the limited time at our disposal, a complete and detailed economic survey of the area would have been beyond ^{our} one powers. This would have required the co-operation of all departments of the College which were otherwise engaged when the survey was

undertaken. Thus our work has been more of an investigation made by general observation and conversation with the peasants themselves in their way of life. In the main we have endeavoured to find what crops they grow, why^{re} they are grown and the purpose for which they grew them. Attention has also been paid to the manner in which they cultivate their land, its condition of fertility, and tenure, together with a study of marketing and transport facilities and the various social amenities, if any, available to them.

Much of this information has been difficult to obtain. Each party has found difficulty in understanding the other. The peasants in some cases misunderstanding our questions and we, on the other hand have misinterpreted their answers. Again in other cases there has been a vagueness about the answers we have received which leaves conclusion a matter of surmise. However despite such difficulties we have contrived to obtain a picture of the average conditions in the area, with this at our disposal, it is intended to devote the last section of the report to suggestions as to the way in which the lot of the peasant and hence the agricultural out put of the area could be improved.