

INTRODUCTION

This report, submitted in part requirement for the Postgraduate Diploma of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, has been prepared not only as an exercise but to provide the writer with the necessary background and experience for his future work in Fiji.

The establishment of cocoa as a commercial crop in Fiji has been under consideration for some time past. Professor Shephard, when visiting the Pacific territories in 1944⁽¹⁾, was asked to report specifically on the possibility of developing a cocoa industry in Fiji. A visit was also made by Mr. D.H. Urquhart, former Director of Agriculture, Gold Coast, in June 1952 to advise on the same matter.

The satisfactory establishment of an additional permanent crop should materially improve the economy of Fiji. It would be of especial value to the Fijian people who are confronted with the problem of efficient and wise utilisation of their tribal lands.

Sound advice was given by Shephard⁽¹⁾ who stressed that the development of a cocoa industry must be a slow and careful process. The introduction and multiplication of planting material would take several years. Preliminary soil investigations and careful trials would have to be carried out by the Department of Agriculture before the planting of the crop was recommended to farmers.

The Trinidad cocoa industry is one of the oldest in the world and has passed through many vicissitudes since its inception. The island is also the centre of considerable research work. The economic investigations, botanical, chemical and ecological studies made in recent years have been of particular interest and value to the cocoa world. It is felt that Trinidad offers unique opportunities for anyone likely to participate in the development of cocoa in other territories to acquire the necessary background.

Part I of the report is devoted to a review of the industry from its inception to the present day. Its early history

and development, the years of prosperity and depression, the action taken by the various interested parties to assist in its rehabilitation, the present Cocoa Subsidy Scheme and its progress and future plans for the industry are carefully examined.

A word of explanation appears necessary. The first part of the report may seem unduly long as a prelude to a survey of a peasant area. The writer had no previous experience of cocoa nor with the people of this colony. It is felt that a detailed knowledge of the industry, its problems and the people associated with it was necessary before the survey of a particular area could be attempted.

Part II is devoted to a detailed study of cocoa production in the Maracas Valley under peasant conditions. Observations are made on the position of these farmers and the industry as indicated by the field survey.

This contraband trade; the governor was dismissed and the people reprimanded. Tobacco cultivation accordingly became less popular. Trinidad was subjected to frequent attacks from French, Dutch and English forces based on the neighbouring West Indian islands and the mainland of South America.

The Spanish, faced with these difficulties, gave serious attention to the cultivation of cocoa, a crop new to the neighbouring foreign settlements. In 1678 plants of Criollo type were introduced from Venezuela.

Demands for labour increased as the industry developed. The missions made Carib Indians available on the understanding that they were provided with pay, food and religious instruction. These arrangements did not provide a solution to the problem owing to the planters' failure to comply with these terms. The missions were compelled to leave the island in 1703. On their departure the Caribs fled to the mountains.

Early in the eighteenth century the planters were dependent on negro slaves for labour. A period of great prosperity followed. Cocoa, which was regarded by the trade as being of excellent quality, commanded very high prices. In 1727 the