

REPORT on a SURVEY of LOCAL and PEASANT AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE
(EXCLUDING PLANTATIONS) in the NEIGHBOURHOOD of ST. AUGUSTINE.

INTRODUCTION

The area within a three miles radius of the Imperial College contains as much agricultural, economic and sociological interest as is likely to be found, in an area of similar size, anywhere else in Trinidad.

The remoter houselots are fairly accessible by walking, cycling or car so that regular visits are facilitated. On these considerations the area is judged to be well suited for a medium for the learning of pre-extension survey methods, and it is from this, rather from a factual aspect, that the report is presented.

It is appropriate to mention here the relation of the college to the surrounding peasant agriculture. Hitherto there has been no attempt at direct extension so that the local peasants have derived no especial benefit and are in no ways atypical in that respect. Now, however, four peasant holdings of an investigational nature have been established at the college with a view to providing basic facts concerning peasant land-settlement schemes. Subsequent extension services based on the College are envisaged and it is hoped that some pertinent facts may emerge from this report.

The title has been framed in order to make it clear that the true subsistence peasant, that is the man who derives his entire monetary income from crop or animal husbandry, is in the minority in this area. There are quite good opportunities for a man to "make a little garden" in his spare time or seasonally, and to supplement such income by wage earning. The desirability of an agricultural survey is not diminished on that account but rather augmented since avoidable agricultural mistakes are likely to lead to the precipitate seeking of wage earning occupations.

As originally briefed, the student was required to carry out a general survey of the whole area, and this to be followed by a more detailed investigation of particular families

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from the hill or lowland areas into which the area is divided naturally.

In the course of the general survey a number of difficulties became apparent causing the report to be altered to its present form. The local accent and unfamiliarity with all aspects of tropical agriculture prevented the best use being made of the major part of the 1948 growing season; accordingly a specific project (the methods of irrigation employed) was substituted for the detailed family inquiry.

It was found that fairly frequent visits, at least weekly, of a general browsing nature rather than sporadic questionnaire forays, gave one a better sense of "peasant atmosphere", induced "acceptance" and made conversation the more easy. Information was thus acquired slowly but surely and corroborated by various peasants. The most satisfactory fact-finding expeditions were carried out by a small group of students.