

I-N-T-R-O-D-U-C-T-I-O-N.

It has been said of the tropical peasant that he is frequently unwilling to work for more than his immediate simple needs. If that is so, one might hardly regard him as the classical "economic man" who is actuated mainly by the profit motive. The increasing number of examples of prosperous peasants, however, not only manifests a change among them, but also indicates that there is something basically wrong with those remaining cases in which Peasantry is synonymous with abject poverty. In an attempt to determine the nature of the obstacles and methods for their solution, various Governments have embarked upon Peasant Investigation Schemes, while detailed investigations are being conducted at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (Trinidad) since 1947. Most of the investigations are still in progress; it will therefore be seen that the facts are still imperfectly determined. Past recommendations are based mainly on economic principles or on achievements elsewhere, but very few have really been proved experimentally to be practicable under West Indian conditions.

Reports dealing with the British West Indies generally include the British Caribbean Islands and the mainland colonies of British Guiana and British Honduras. Conditions in the last two areas are rather different from those in the islands, being mainly one of large areas of land with insufficient labour; though it might have been interesting to compare peasants under these conditions with those in the islands; these colonies have had to be excluded from this paper due to insufficient available information. The term British West Indies as used shall refer to Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Windward and Leeward Islands.