

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

1. Trinidad, the southernmost and largest of the Windward group of Islands lies approximately 10° North of the Equator (Between Lats. 10.30 & 10.50 N and 60.55 and 61.56 W) off the Orinoco delta. Having an area of 1862 square miles it forms a rough rectangle 50 miles from north to South and 30 miles from east to west. Originally the island was part of the South-American mainland but is now separated from the coast of Venezuela by the shallow Gulf of Paria which at its widest part is six miles. There are two main mountain ranges separated by a central plain. One, the Northern Range, is a continuation of the Venezuelan System and runs from East to West. The other, the Central Range is, as its name suggests, in the centre of the Island. The Lowland and Hill land areas (to be dealt with in this Report) are respectively situated in the Central Plain and Northern Range.

2. For the purpose of administration, the Island is divided into six Electoral Wards - the Lowland and Hill land areas being in the Ward of St. George.

3. From 1938 to 1946 the population of the Island increased from 440,000⁽¹⁾ to just over 540,000 (Trinidad and Tobago 568,619⁽²⁾). Assuming a proportionate increase from 1946, the population at the present time should be in the neighbourhood of 570,000 - an average slightly exceeding 300 to the square mile. This is an extraordinarily high density for a small island and almost astronomic for a

tropical dependency. Such a rate of increase would result in the population doubling itself in about thirty years. The people of the Island are broadly divided - as to one-third, East Indians, nearly one half, Negroes and the remainder of Chinese, Spanish, French and English origin. "Oil" is largely responsible for this large population, the oilfields absorbing a great number of workers (mostly Negroes) who are able to earn such good wages that the wage standard for the Island is set by those paid in the Oilfields.

4. The wealth of Trinidad is largely derived from oil and reference to Table 11 shews that in 1946 about 75% of all exports totalling 57.6 million dollars per annum is attributable to oil and its by-products.⁽³⁾ The remainder consists of agricultural products. It is suggested by a number of authorities that Trinidad oil production has already passed its peak. Be that as it may, the Oil Companies are undoubtedly intensifying their search for additional sources of supply - a natural and prudent measure in any case in view of the vital importance of the industry to the financial stability of the Island.

5. Table 1 discloses that since 1940 Trinidad has an adverse Balance of Imports over Exports and in 1946 this balance amounted to 20 million dollars. If oil production should fall, this gap must become wider and economic and social disaster must result unless remedial measures are resolutely applied and

timed to become effective co-extensively with any decline and fully operative upon any emergency.

6. Important, however, as oil is thus seen to be, the industry upon which more than one half the population is dependent for its livelihood is Agriculture⁽¹⁾ and it is estimated that 80,000 persons (mostly East Indians) are actively engaged in that industry⁽¹⁾. 343,000 acres (or just under 30% of the total area of the Island) are under cultivation and this acreage embraces nearly all the readily available land. That which is left (other than a large tract of land in the centre of the Island given over to the U.S.A. for Army purposes) is forest reserve, swamp, and oil concessions. From Table IV it will be seen that of the available acreage, sugar and cacao account for 180,000 and 82,000 acres respectively and coconuts for 40,000 acres (citrus, coffee, Tonka beans, and bananas occupying very much smaller acreage). As only some 20,000 acres are taken up by food crops of a directly consumable nature and rice is cultivated on 10,000 of these (with Maize occupying a further 2,000 acres) it is clear that the agricultural industry is an export industry which is operated on plantation or estate lines.