

INTRODUCTION.

As a starting point is taken that section of the Report of the Agricultural Policy Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, 1943, which asks for, 'clear-cut decisions and guiding principles in regard to the wise provision of credit facilities in the future.'

It is proposed here to examine the part which co-operative societies can play in the provision of credit to small farmers. In the belief that Co-operation should be embarked upon in no introspective spirit and that sound business policy should be the primary aim, the bulk of the thesis is limited to a consideration of the purely business aspects of co-operative credit. Very important practical benefits of a non-financial nature may attach themselves to a system of co-operative societies, but consideration of this aspect of co-operative credit will here be limited to the information contained in appendix III.

Already in 1906, there were at least 5,761 publications on Co-operation, 1,100 of them dealing particularly with co-operative credit (1), and new work on the subject has been published in great quantity since then. But this literature is concerned largely with temperate countries and with India, is often of a very general nature and gives very little information as to the way in which recommended principles have operated in practice. It is held that in modelling a West Indian system of peasant credit it may be more important to make a detailed study of the operation of any available local examples of credit societies than to read about the theory and general organisation of the credit movements of different and distant lands.

In 1943 there were 25 limited liability banks working in British Guiana, 21 unlimited liability credit societies operating in the South of Trinidad under the supervision of the Usine Ste. Madeleine Sugar Company and 62 unlimited liability societies in Trinidad and Tobago were financed and controlled by Government.