

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The history of Trinidad's Cocoa Industry up to 1932 has been outlined in detail by Shephard (1932 c, d, e, f). It will suffice, to put the present thesis into perspective, to give a brief summary of Shephard's work.

Cocoa cultivation in Trinidad is believed to have started towards the end of the seventeenth century. The small, but lucrative industry, based on the high-flavoured Criollo cocoa, flourished until wiped out by a "blast" in 1727.

Revival of the industry was brought about by the introduction, from Venezuela, of the hardier Forastero variety in 1756. Small but definite progress resulted, exports rising from 96,000 pounds in 1797 to 6,862,600 pounds in 1870.

Meanwhile, an important sugar industry had been established (Shephard 1929). In the 1870's, a sharp fall in sugar prices stimulated cocoa cultivation so that by 1890 cocoa had replaced sugar as the colony's main export. A situation of high prices, increasing production and widespread prosperity in the cocoa industry persisted until 1920, when the price fell. By 1930, the price had dropped by 50 per cent and cocoa production by 30 per cent.

The many Government-financed assistance measures (page 4) together with intense research into cocoa production (page 12) have been unsuccessful in stemming the decline that began in the early 1920's. This is shown by the figures presented in Table 1.