

EXPLANATION AND SCOPE OF PROBLEM.

In the early days of the Sugar Industry in Trinidad, the labour was supplied by negro slaves from West Africa. The slaves were emancipated in 1834, and this caused the plantations to suffer severely from shortage of labour. A remedy was found in 1845, when indentured labour was brought into the Colony from India. Many of these labourers returned to India when their period of indenture had expired, and others were brought out in their places. This system ceased in 1917, when the Indian Government put a stop to further indenture.

At the present day labour is supplied, partly, by the descendants of the emancipated negro slaves, and partly, by the East Indians who have remained after their period of indenture was over. Even now, numbers of these return to India at intervals - a boat load of 900 left in March 1929. The net result has been to cause a shortage of labour in the island.

The purpose of the present investigation, which is part of a general scheme for investigating Labour in the colony, is to examine this shortage and attempt to discover, how far, and in what ways, it may be lessened by the use of machinery instead of hand labour. The two principal crops of the island are Sugar and Cocoa, the labour requirements for other crops being comparatively small. Owing to the hilly nature of the land, and the conditions under which it is grown, cocoa cultivation is unsuited for mechanical treatment, so the investigation has been confined to the sugar industry.

The investigation was also designed to show the number of labourers employed on each operation, fortnightly throughout the year, but as a new form was in process of introduction, this item was seldom entered.

From a sheet (Table 1) obtained from the Usine Ste.