

INTRODUCTION

1. The importance of Agricultural and Social Surveys can not be over-stressed. They must be, in all countries, the basis for any improvements in the agriculture and social life of the indigenous peoples, and it is only upon efficient surveys of all relevant factors that policies of extension, research, education, the provision of facilities and all other improvements can be based.

Their importance and the need for them as a preliminary to all other work is particularly apparent in a colony where, to quote "The Economist", "..... very large numbers of people are living in conditions falling far short of what can be regarded as a tolerable minimum in any country".

2. The problems confronting the Agricultural Department in Trinidad have acquired a peculiar urgency as an increase in Agricultural production is essential for the wellbeing of the colony. A short description of the basic economic facts in Trinidad seems necessary.

The export of oil accounts for more than three-quarters of the total exports of the colony, and it is this which makes the import of many basic necessities possible, and provides a large and increasing share of the public revenues. Now, however, the total yield of oil is decreasing and its cost of production, as less productive deposits are tapped, is increasing.

The cocoa producers are experiencing a revival, but the future of this crop is very speculative. The sugar industry is now again standing on its own feet, but the possibilities of expansion are slight, its costs of production are relatively high and there is a possibility that future international restriction schemes may hit it. Citrus and Coconuts are doing well, but in importance these crops are mere pygmies in comparison with Oil or Sugar, and, as will be shown in the survey, peasant husbandry remains backward.

The population trend is likely also to have a great effect on agricultural development. Thus, the natural increase in the population over the last five years has been:--

1.7% : 2.2% : 2.4% : 2.5% : 2.4%

An annual increase of 2.5% means doubling the present population in twenty-eight years; and that, in an island already over-populated. Again, to quote "The Economist" "There is no prospect of deliberate birth control on any scale, nor at present is there much hope of emigration outlets. The plans to settle 100,000 West Indians in British Guiana and Honduras are on too small a scale. In ten years the increase in population of Trinidad alone will probably be well over 100,000". "There is grave reason to believe that without large subventions (of which there is no sign) Trinidad will be unable in future to maintain even its present shockingly low standards."