the fact that as far as export crops are concerned, sugar cane has a primary position, a fact which Castro readily recognised, and a lesson we may well learn. The peasants operating outside the plantation communities can satisfy the needs of the domestic market. Even those peasants operating within the 'sphere of influence' of the plantations can utilise some of their resources, as they do in fact, for domestic production. The fact is that because of the instability of the domestic market and its state of disorganisation, the market fails to induce peasants (or both sections) to allocate their resources in a more efficient manner.

Two major prerequisites seem to be essential and necessary to remove many of the present problems in agriculture. In the case of plantation agriculture where a disproportionate amount of the profits leave the country and resources are underutilised, government control is imperative and in this respect the plantation is no different from the non-agricultural activities such as the Bauxite industry. Secondly, the domestic market must be so organised as to provide adequate long-term incentives to peasants and to encourage optimum utilisation of their resources.

Such a rationalisation of agricultural activities and control of the land resource, most assuredly, would involve radical political and economic reforms, which evidently the government is presently incapable of bringing about. Nevertheless, it is necessary to develop a thorough understanding of the historical evolution and present dualism between the plantation 'advanced' sector and the peasant 'backward' sector. It is only through such an examination that a realistic long-term policy can be formulated.

Discussion Report

The question of the emergence of the West Indian peasantry came under close scrutiny. Indeed, the view was expressed that the plantation owners were forced into a situation which they later found to be unsatisfactory. It was suggested that production by cane farmers was encouraged because of (a) the shortage of labour in the post-emancipation period; (b) the desire of the estates and governments to increase sugar output and satisfy their quotas; (c) the reduction of credit given to the plantations by the merchant banks; and (d) growing competition from beet sugar and the resultant need to look closely at plantation costs.

It was pointed out by Mr. Buckmire that in the case of Jamaica, plantation owners not only purchased cane from the farmers but went as far as to provide them with credit. On the other hand the fact that a core of cane farmers was emerging in the individual territories meant that the supply of labour was further restricted at the time when it was most needed i.e. at the time of harvesting. For this reason the Royal Commission of 1929 disagreed with the policy of encouragement of production by cane-farmers. Indeed plantation owners were conscious of this problem and seemed to restrict the acreage provided to cane-farmers in order that their labour would not be completely lost at harvest time.

It was suggested by Dr. Marshall that the development of the West Indian peasantry must be examined in the light of the difference in the structure of the plantation industry towards the end of the 19th century. By this time there was a new form of management and organization; more emphasis was placed on cost accounting; there was an increasing application of machinery; and in general the activities of the large estates were being reduced to that of processing as against the early plantation system of production-cum-processing. In the case of Jamaica, for example, it was pointed out by Dr. Johnson that the acreage under cultivation by cane-farmers subsequently exceeded that under cultivation by the estates.

The question of the choice, by the peasantry between the production of sugarcane vis-a-vis other crops was also raised. It was suggested that the distinction between those farmers operating within the plantation system and those outside of this system was not the important one. The key factor was one of marketing. To the extent that there was a ready market for sugar cane while an organised market did not exist for other crops (with the exception of few, such as bananas) peasant farmers' choice was highly circumscribed if not non-existent.

It was noted, however, that in Guyana the development of sugar cane production by farmers was not nearly as significant as this trend in Trinidad or Jamaica. Indeed peasant farmers in Guyana were more preoccupied with the cultivation of rice. In this connection it was suggested that two main factors were operative. Firstly the problem of water control for sugar cane was beyond the means of the small farmers. Secondly, the small farmers in Guyana were encouraged to produce rice because a ready market existed in the region for this product.

It was suggested by Dr. Maharaj and Mr. Girwar that insufficient emphasis is generally placed on the problems faced by cane farmers today. They outlined the main problems as being inadequate transport facilities, access roads, and

an unsatisfactory cane-price formula. Dr. Johnson pointed out that the problem of transport was so severe in Jamaica that Government has sought to assist farmers in distant areas in shifting out of sugar cane production. Mr. Girwar suggested that the Jamaican experience differs somewhat from that of Trinidad because of the lack of outside purchasing scales in Jamaica. Indeed, at one time both territories were served by outside purchasing scales but Jamaica chose to discontinue this practice and in the process compounded the problems of these small-scale farmers.

Participants were generally of the view that the points raised in these papers were particularly important to the region and that time did not allow the fullest treatment of the broad subject of small-scale farmers in the Caribbean.