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PROBLEMS OF POST-WAR AGRICULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

AFTER the war is over and peace is restored, there will arise problems of social and economic repair and reconstruction. Agricultural reconstruction will have to receive prior consideration. Farming will be the first to be re-established in the areas that have suffered from war and being also the occupation of the bulk of the world population, the reconstruction of agriculture is the basis of national reconstruction. These tasks which should be considered well in advance of the need, demand expert knowledge, careful thought, clear vision and planning with foresight.

The lead given by the British Association for the Advancement of Science is, therefore, none too early. Through its Division for the Social and International Relations of Science, the Association arranged, in March this year, a Conference for the discussion of plans for the post-war reconstruction of agriculture in Europe. A large number of experts from the different countries of Europe participated in the Conference and made valuable contributions.

Although the discussions were chiefly on plans for the re-establishment of agriculture in the devastated and oppressed areas of Europe and on the alleviation of the effects of famine and disaster, it was recognised that in the general problem of reconstruction the solution of immediate problems were closely interwoven with long-term policies and that, therefore, urgent plans should be linked up with long-term plans.

India, like Europe and the rest of the world, will have her post-war problems. A merciful Providence has so far spared India the horrors and disasters which her less fortunate sister-countries are suffering from. And so, her immediate post-war problems may not be similar to those of Europe and other Eastern countries of Asia. But linked up as she is with the outside world and its affairs, she has to play an important part directly or indirectly in the re-establishment of agriculture in the devastated areas. She has also her own urgent and long-term socio-economic and socio-political problems of reconstruction, special

and peculiar to herself and in dealing with these, her plans of reconstruction have to be in consonance with world policies.

The situation arising out of current war conditions such as changes in cropping systems necessitated by loss of export markets for certain crops and by the "grow more food" campaign, and the effects of inadequate nutrition and disease will need technical examination and practical adjustments as and where necessary. Occupation and instruction in matters of agriculture, village and domestic welfare, will have to be provided for the peasant-soldier returning from war.

Since the beginning of the century, the Central and Local Governments have been paying systematic and sustained attention to agricultural and rural development. After the experience of the devastating famines of the last century followed by epidemics and loss of life, an agricultural policy was laid down. Research institutions were established for the scientific study of agricultural and livestock problems. The realisation of risks to agricultural industry through drought and erratic rainfall resulted in an irrigation policy and network of irrigation canals in various parts of the country. A Land Improvement Loans Act and an Agriculturist Loans Act were enacted as early as 1883 and 1884 to counteract agricultural indebtedness, and a further measure in this direction was the passing of the Co-operative Credit Societies Act in 1904 on the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1901. With the advent of popular Governments following the Reforms Acts of 1920 and 1935, rural development and rural reconstruction came into prominence in recent years. Not only the Central and Local Governments began to take a more active interest in the work of rural uplift but some of the social and political organisations have made it part of their programme. As the result of research, intractable waste lands have been conquered, crop yields have been increased, and good breeds of work and milch cattle have been developed.

The net result is that several government departments and non-official organisations have been actively concerning themselves with the welfare of the village and the farmer. The results achieved are imposing. If more and quicker results have not been achieved, that is due mainly to

causes which although beyond the control of individuals, are nevertheless, within the nation's power to remedy.

The present social and economic system in the country and the relation between production and distribution are ill-balanced. Village life should be enriched by suitably moulding the prevailing social and economic order including systems of land tenure and occupancy, so that work and worker are brought together and people may create wealth by their own efforts. As one member said at the Conference on European Agriculture, the basis for reconstruction is the realisation that man is more important than the soil. The restoration and maintenance of individual self-respect, self-reliance and a healthy condition of mental and spiritual health is of paramount importance.

The increase in the population and its pressure on land are vitally concerned in the problems of reconstruction. From the standpoint of food and nutrition there is no need for alarm or anxiety. Our agricultural resources, provided they are properly husbanded, can be depended upon to feed not only the present normal population and the population which has now to stay away in the country owing to the stoppage of emigration, but also the emigrant population that has returned. The country can find food for even more. In regard to the standard of living it is really the standard of the home and any rise in the standard can come principally from the standard of the village and this is closely connected with the balance in production and distribution, with the spread between agricultural and industrial prices, educational facilities and the training of the young.

The greatest and the most difficult of the problems are those arising from the laws and customs of inheritance and the division of land. The division into small holdings has gone on to such an extent that in many cases farming has ceased to pay and is carried on in the absence of something better. Because of this, the purchasing power of the farmer is reduced. Agricultural improvement is hampered, unemployment is increased and in consequence the standard of living and nutrition falls to a low level. Consolidation of holdings and collectivisation as a remedy are not without their drawbacks. The possible consequences are increase in unemployment,

loss of individuality, and despair and discontent taking the place of the sense of pride in ownership and possession. The key problem is the problem of small holdings and peasant agriculture.

Crop-planning is not likely to be helpful in counteracting the evils of small holdings. In the first place there is the tendency towards self-sufficiency in Provinces and States. In the second place there are likely to be difficulties in carrying out the planning. It will be difficult owing to the inherent inability of small farmers to adapt their production to the changing conditions in the economic situation and to secure a certain unity of control in production and marketing. In the case of industries and trades this can be achieved by the elimination of small producers. But in agriculture the majority of producers are small farmers and they cannot be eliminated.

The reorientation and the co-ordination of agricultural and industrial policies, which appear to have satisfactory results in Belgium seem entitled to careful consideration. As Mr. M. L. Borremans pointed out, Belgium which is one of the most highly industrialised countries, is rarely thought of as an agricultural country. Belgium, however, is a country of small holdings and according to the census of 1930, nearly three-fourths of the total

agricultural holdings were less than two and a half acres in size. These small holdings which are scattered all over the country and amongst which industries and factories are located, operate as part-time holdings. According to Mr. Borremans, the part-time holdings are a special feature of social conditions in rural Belgium constituting a semi-agricultural and semi-industrial unit in which agricultural and industrial life are intermixed. The real characteristic of part-time holdings is that the family in a village is split up between agriculture and industry, and not that it is working at certain times on the farm and at other times in industry.

The farmer is becoming more and more self-conscious. His thinking has undergone a new orientation. He needs more income and more buying power. The masses of people expect and demand to be fed, clothed and housed better than before. An awakened peasant population and masses cannot be expected always to think cogently and act wisely. Nor can they be expected to have the patience to wait long if not indefinitely. Small holdings and peasant agriculture are the key problems and further progress is possible in proportion as solutions are found to the key problems. They have to be thought out and planned in advance if results are to be attained peacefully and successfully.

B. VISWANATH.

SIR JNANCHANDRA GHOSH, Kt., D.Sc., F.N.I.

AMONGST the men of science in India included in the New Year Honours List *Current Science* notices with great pride and pleasure the name of Dr. Jnanchandra Ghosh, who has been knighted.

It is not easy for this Journal to give either formal or adequate expression of congratulations and good wishes to the distinguished recipient of the honour because, Sir J. C. Ghosh is an integral part of *Current Science* itself—being the President of the Current Science Association which runs this periodical. Both in this capacity and otherwise, Sir J. C. Ghosh's counsel, support and influence have nourished and sustained *Current Science* which, like any other young and growing institution in its early years, has not been without its teething troubles.

Nor is this the occasion to take stock of Sir J. C. Ghosh's scientific achievements and his service to Indian industry. Reticence which is imposed and inevitable during the war must necessarily preclude a full picture being drawn of his great contribution to the gearing of scientific research to industry during the last three years. Happily, Sir J. C. Ghosh is young enough to look forward to many more years of scientific endeavour which, all those who know him have no doubt, will be rich in achievement.

Sir J. C. Ghosh's contacts with Indian science and industry have been unusually many and varied. As a teacher of science and a mentor of schools of research, as the director of the foremost Indian institution devoted to science, as one of the earliest members of the Indian Science Congress which has honoured him by electing him to the highest offices in its gift and as a