

COMMENTARY

structure, would render the task of ensuring scientific progress and accountability quite challenging and demands urgent attention – an aspect emphasized by several national expert committees of the past.

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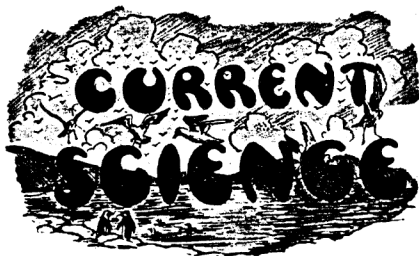
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FROM THE ARCHIVES



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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 suffer-

ing 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. . . .

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 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 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. . . .

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