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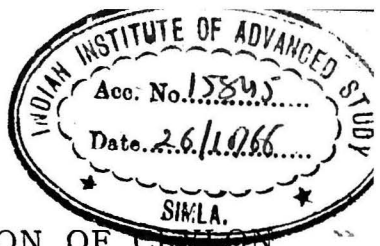
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THE CONSTITUTION OF CEYLON

BY D. B. JAYATILAKA, M.A.

[The writer of this article is a member of the Executive Committee of the Ceylon National Congress, and is now one of its delegates in London.]

THE Constitution of Ceylon is again in the melting-pot. In February last the Secretary of State for the Colonies issued a Parliamentary Paper* containing certain proposals for its revision. This step marks a welcome departure from the practice hitherto followed by the Colonial Office in regard to Constitutional reform in Ceylon. For the first time it has invited the people most concerned to express their views on the proposed reforms before their final adoption. The opportunity thus granted has been fully utilized. In Ceylon the Government proposals have been discussed and criticized in the Legislative Council, in the Press, and in various political associations, including the National Congress, while here in London the Ceylon Reform Deputation have issued a memorandum dealing very fully with the proposed scheme. This volume of criticism, as well as the Governor's report on the debate in the Legislative Council, is now before the Secretary of State, who, it is expected, will shortly—perhaps after the discussion of the whole question in the House of Commons on the Colonial Office vote—finally settle the form of the new Constitution. I welcome, therefore, the opportunity afforded me at this juncture of reviewing in these pages the present offer of the Government.

In order to appreciate the criticism to which the proposed scheme has been subjected, some knowledge of our history is indispensable. It is, however, unnecessary for our present purpose to go beyond the British period, although

* "Correspondence relating to the Further Revision of the Constitution of Ceylon." Cmd. 1809.

the earlier history of the island is by no means devoid of facts of constitutional value. It was in 1796 that the British first appeared on the scene. In that year they ousted the Dutch from their possessions in the Coast districts which they had wrested from the Portuguese in 1656. The rest of the country, however, still remained under the rule of the King of Kandy. The last occupant of the Sinhalese throne was, like his three predecessors, of Tamil origin, the Sinhalese royal line, which had held sway over the island for over twenty centuries, having become extinct about the middle of the eighteenth century. He was deposed in 1815, and by a solemn treaty, the Convention of Kandy, the whole kingdom was transferred to the King of Great Britain. In the first period of the British occupation the government of the country was purely bureaucratic, although, so early as 1809, the Chief Justice of the day, Sir Alexander Johnston, after a careful enquiry into the prevailing conditions in Ceylon, recommended the establishment of a Council with elected representatives. No change in the form of Government was, however, effected until 1833, when, upon the recommendation of a Royal Commission, which considered Ceylon best fitted in the East for the introduction of Western institutions, a Legislative Council and an Executive Council were constituted. These bodies were composed of officials with the exception of a few non-official members of the Legislative Council who were nominated by the Governor. Notwithstanding the progress which the country made in all other directions, this Constitution remained intact for more than fifty years; in fact, until 1892, when a few more unofficial seats in the Legislative Council were created. But this small increase of unofficial members scarcely affected the character of the Government; the Council continued to be purely advisory with an official majority, and, as regards its unofficial element, nomination remained as before the sole method of selection. This "reform" did, indeed, in one respect positive harm; it strengthened and extended racial

representation, which has proved to be the greatest obstacle to the political progress of the country. Two decades passed before the Constitution was again amended. The Morley-Minto reforms had already been introduced in India, and the insistent demand of Ceylon for a forward movement could not be altogether ignored. In fact, on this occasion the Colonial Office seemed inclined to take a liberal and sympathetic view of the question. But the efforts of the local Government prevented the development of that tendency, and the reform that was granted (in 1912) made no substantial change in the Constitution. In one direction, however, a small advance was then made; an elective element was added to the existing system of communal representation. Moreover, in the creation of electorates, except the Europeans and the Burghers, who had separate registers of their own, the remaining sections of the population—the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Moors, the Malays, etc.—were formed into one constituency. In view of recent developments it is an important fact to bear in mind that a decade ago these different sections were considered homogeneous enough to be placed on a common electoral roll for the purpose of choosing one member to represent them all in the Legislative Council.

Apart from this concession the reforms of 1912 were wholly disappointing. So the agitation for a truly liberal measure of reform was continued with greater vigour than ever, until it culminated in 1918 in the birth of the Ceylon National Congress, which became, as it is to-day, the most powerful political body in the island. In its first session the Congress formulated its demands for Constitutional reform in a series of resolutions. These resolutions, reaffirmed in subsequent years (with certain modifications), form the platform of the Reform party in Ceylon. That part of them which bears on the Constitution may therefore be well quoted here :

1. "That the Legislative Council should consist of about fifty members, of whom a substantial majority

should be selected according to territorial divisions upon a wide male franchise and a restricted female franchise, and the Council should elect its own Speaker.

2. "That the Legislative Council should continue to have full control over the Budget, and there should be no division of reserved and transferred subjects.

3. "That the Executive Council should consist of the Governor as President assisted by official and unofficial members of whom not less than half should be unofficials chosen from the members of the Legislative Council elected according to territorial divisions, such members to be responsible for the administration of departments placed in their charge."

These demands were submitted to the Colonial Office both by memorials and by two deputations that waited on the Secretary of State (Viscount Milner) in 1919 and 1920 respectively. In September, 1920, the Government by an Order in Council promulgated its scheme of reform. Some of its provisions, both main and incidental, were so unsatisfactory that the National Congress at a special session unanimously adopted a resolution rejecting the reforms, and called upon the country not to return members to the new Council. The matter was reaching an *impasse* when the Government, realizing that public opinion was behind the Congress, came to terms with it and a compromise was effected. At a subsequent session the Congress passed the following resolution :

"In view of the assurance of the Government contained in the memorandum of December 6, 1920, signed by the Hon. Mr. H. C. Gollan, Attorney-General, and submitted this day to the Congress by the President, this Congress recommends participation in the elections under Order in Council, unsatisfactory as it is, in order to utilize the opportunity now assured to the Congress of shaping the new Constitution and of working for the early realization of the full Congress demands on reforms."

At the same session another resolution was passed

recommending the country to return as members of the new Legislative Council only those candidates who pledged themselves to support the Congress policy in regard to reforms, and to exert themselves to secure the amendment of the Constitution in specified particulars. All the territorial members (save one, who, too, was not opposed to the Congress programme) took this pledge substantially in the terms of this resolution. The reformed Council came into being in June, 1921. Its career for the past two years bears testimony to the ability, moderation, and independent spirit with which the elected representatives of the people have discharged their duties. It has also proved that in actual practice the unofficial majority which the Government spokesmen* claimed to be a distinctive feature of the reform introduced in 1920 is more illusory than real.

To return now to the compromise arrived at in December, 1920. In pursuance of that agreement Mr. James Peiris, the member for the City of Colombo, and ex-President of the Congress, proposed in the Legislative Council in December, 1921, a series of resolutions for the amendment of the Constitution. In the course of the debate that followed it became quite clear that the Government had in the meanwhile hardened its heart against any substantial change in the Constitution created in 1920. The present proposals are the outcome of that changed attitude, so strangely at variance with the spirit, if not the letter, of the understanding with the Congress. However that may be, there can really be no meaning in undertaking to re-amend the Constitution so soon after its last revision, unless it be for the purpose of eliminating or modifying those features of it to which public opinion was at the time of its introduction strongly opposed. Now no part of the reform scheme of 1920 provoked so much criticism in Ceylon as well as in the House of Commons† as its provisions for extending racial representation. It is, therefore,

* See the statement of the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lieutenant-Colonel Amery) on July 29, 1920.

† See the Proceedings in the House of Commons on August 11, 1920.

not a little surprising to find that representation on a racial basis has become the corner-stone of the proposed edifice of reform. In fact, the main object of the present scheme seems to be the establishment of communalism on a firmer basis than before and "for an indefinite period of time." This proposal certainly reverses the policy initiated in 1912, when the elective principle was first introduced into the Constitution. Under that reform, as has already been pointed out, the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Moors, the Malays, etc.—in fact, all sections of the population except the Europeans and the Burghers—were formed into one electorate. That system lasted for nine years, till 1921, and two elections were held under it. There is not a tittle of evidence to show that this grouping together of these diverse racial elements in one electorate was detrimental to the interests of any one of them. That being so, the present proposal to hark back to communalism as the basis of representation is wantonly reactionary.

Now let us for a moment examine the reasons that have been put forward in order to justify this reversion to communalism pure and simple. The Governor, Sir William Manning, merely quotes some census figures* which show that the Sinhalese form the majority in their own country, and that the main sections of the population—the Sinhalese, the Tamils, and in one case the Moors—respectively occupy certain areas in larger numbers than others. These are by no means startling facts, disclosing a situation peculiar to Ceylon, and calling for exceptional treatment. These official despatches seek to make the most out of the obvious fact that the population of Ceylon is composed of several racial elements, but they are silent on the most important aspect of this problem of a mixed population—namely, the relations existing between these different communities. The vital question is this: Are the people of Ceylon still in the stage of tribalism, divided into hostile groups, holding no commerce with one another, and bound by no ties of common

* See the Parliamentary Paper referred to (Cmd. 1809), p. 5.

interests? Not even the most enthusiastic supporter of the proposed scheme would venture to answer this question in the affirmative. On the contrary, he would be forced to admit that, although in Ceylon, as in many another land, racial and religious differences do exist, they have not raised impassable barriers between the different communities, and that, as a matter of fact, a real community of interests, ever growing stronger, binds all sections of the people. Many instances may be given of this growing spirit of common citizenship which has enabled the people of Ceylon to rise superior to racial and religious differences in public matters. So far back as 1912, when for the first time the people were given the right to elect a representative, a Tamil candidate (Sir P. Ramanathan) was returned with a large majority over his Sinhalese rival (Sir H. M. Fernando), although the Sinhalese naturally commanded a larger number of votes than all the other sections. In 1917 the same member was re-elected after a contest, his opponent on this occasion also being a Sinhalese. Again in 1921, although the majority of the voters were Buddhists, yet of the nine members returned for the predominantly Sinhalese districts one only was a Buddhist; and—this is a still more remarkable fact—one electorate, almost entirely Buddhist, elected a Christian minister by a very large majority in preference to a Buddhist candidate. Similarly the elections for the Municipal Councils and the recently formed Urban Councils prove that racial and religious prejudices do not affect the choice of representatives for these popular institutions. In towns where Sinhalese and Tamils form the majority Burghers and Muhammadans have been elected as members, while Burghers have been chosen as chairmen of Urban Councils composed mainly of Sinhalese and Tamil members. It is hardly necessary to add that in matters affecting the social and moral welfare of the country there is the heartiest co-operation of all, irrespective of race or religion. All these indisputable facts point to a growing solidarity among the people and a

strong movement towards national unity. The official despatches ignore these features of our public life, and in this respect they do less than justice to Ceylon. Further, the Government proposals, instead of promoting that growth of national unity so essential to political progress, are calculated to have an exactly opposite tendency. If adopted in their present form, they will result in "the creation of political camps organized against each other," and "teach men to think as partisans and not as citizens."

Having so far discussed the principle, we proceed now to consider Sir William Manning's scheme of representation on its own merits. In one part of his despatch he assures us that he is anxious to avoid over-representation and under-representation. Let us see how he puts this excellent idea into practice. His scheme thus distributes the seats on a communal basis :

	Population.	No. of Seats.
Europeans	8,300	3
Burghers	29,100	2
Muhammadans	265,300	3
Indians { Indian Tamils	606,700*	2
{ Muhammadans	33,100	
Ceylon Tamils	514,300	8
Sinhalese	3,016,400	14

These figures need no comment. A mere glance at the list is sufficient to show that this allotment of seats has proceeded on no principle. One inevitable result of this apportionment, however, calls for special notice. It will be seen that the minority sections (excluding the immigrant labour population) total about a million. No less than 18 seats are allotted to this one million minority, while the three million (Sinhalese) majority† are assigned just 14 seats. In other words, these proposals, if adopted in their present

* Mainly a floating population of immigrant labourers, a small percentage of whom will be entitled to the franchise.

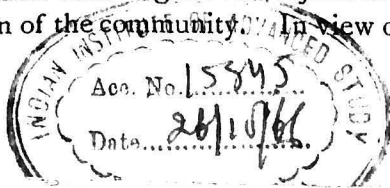
† Mr. H. J. Temple, in a letter to *The Times* (June 7), urges that the Kandyan Sinhalese should not be included in the majority population. As I pointed out in my reply (in *The Times* of June 18), the scheme itself treats the Kandyan and Low Country Sinhalese as forming the majority population.

form, will establish minority rule in Ceylon. The lack of principle to which I have adverted above becomes still more glaring when the representation of territorial divisions is considered. Twenty-one seats (made up of the 14 Sinhalese and 7 Tamil seats given above) are thus distributed territorially:

	Population.	No. of Seats.
Colombo Town	244,000	1
Western Province (exclusive of Colombo)	1,002,800	3
Central Province	717,900	2
Northern Province	374,831	5
Southern Province	671,300	2
Eastern Province	211,830	2
North-Western Province	491,800	2
Northern Central Province	96,500	1
Province of Uva	233,800	1
Province of Sabaragomuva	471,800	2

Again comment is superfluous; the scheme carries its own condemnation. No amount of argument can possibly justify the allotment of 4 seats to the Western Province, including Colombo, the Metropolis, having a population of over one and a quarter million, while 5 seats are bestowed on the Northern Province, far inferior to it in point of population and general advancement.

The interests of minorities are, of course, urged in defence of this scheme of representation, so arbitrary and unfair, whether you consider it from the communal or from the territorial point of view. It is a novel doctrine that in any country the minorities are entitled to any right other than that of adequate representation. From the first table given above it is clear that in Ceylon the minorities have been given adequate, and in some instances more than adequate, representation. Moreover, entirely on the initiative of the advocates of reform, the minorities are now to be included in the general electorate, so that the members of the minority sections, if otherwise qualified, will be entitled to a double vote—one in their communal electorate and the other in a territorial constituency. Further, the Constitution provides ample safeguards against class legislation injurious to the interests of any section of the community. In view of these



facts the plea cannot be genuine that the interests of the minorities necessitate unjust discrimination against the majority population.

Space forbids reference to other features of the proposed scheme which are open to criticism. In fairness, however, I must not omit to say that it contains several good points—such as the abolition of the residential qualification and the provision for the election of a Vice-President. But these are of minor importance, and cannot in themselves produce good results, so long as the whole scheme is based upon the reactionary principle of communal representation. I have said enough, I deem, to convince any impartial person that the present proposals require considerable modification before they can be considered just and satisfactory. If the proposed revision of the Constitution is really intended to be a further step in the direction of self-government, then advance must needs be along the line of territorial representation extended so as to include the whole population and give fair and adequate representation to each territorial division, while the special representation of the minority sections is retained as a temporary expedient.

ECONOMIC SECTION

THE FUTURE OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE

BY P. PADMANABHA PILLAI

THE triple panoply of irrigation, co-operation, and scientific cultivation with which Lord Curzon has furnished the Indian peasant, so as to enable him to maintain on a more equal footing his daily struggle on his scanty acres, has indeed stood him in good stead in many an awkward moment; but, far from making him invincible, it has only succeeded in winning for him more lenient terms from the victors. Famine has now to content itself with a far smaller number of victims than of old; evil seasons are now met with increased powers of resistance, and recovery from their effects is encouragingly rapid. In other directions, too, there have been unmistakable symptoms of progress. The linking up of India with the markets of the world and the growth of a brisk export trade have opened out a new era of rising prices, and along with this economic inducement to improve his standard of farming, scientific departments have freely placed at his disposal their expert knowledge and experience of other lands. Land values and rentals have gone up, permanent improvements on the land are steadily being made, innovations in methods and equipment are visibly increasing, and there has been an appreciable rise in his spending capacity. But, considering the almost unique opportunities the ryot has had for reorganizing his vocation on a more efficient footing, and also the length of time during which these external aids to agricultural development have been in operation, it will have to be admitted that the pace of progress "has been very slow, slower than it has been elsewhere, slower than it need be there."

The explanation is not far to seek; for, side by side with

these forces working in the peasant's favour, there have also been some unfortunate influences tending to a contrary direction. A principal defect of the Indian agricultural system is the uneconomic size and the scattered nature of the holdings. They are a direct consequence of the Hindu Law of Inheritance, under which each male member of the joint family has an equal and divisible share in the common property. Thus, on the death of a father with five sons, owning a plot of land in common, the single plot is liable to be split up into five, and if the coparcenary owned, say, five plots, the desire among the coheirs for a mathematical exactitude in division leads them to repeat this five-fold *morcellement* with each one of these plots. Five compact blocks are thus split up into twenty-five, five separate parcels being allotted to each coheir. The Muhammadan Law of Inheritance has also worked but an elaborate system of partition. This process of minute subdivision and fragmentation of holdings is fairly common all over India, and the following typical illustration will suffice to show its disruptive tendency. In the village of Kodaganallur,* in the Tinnevely District, there were :

Year.	Holdings paying Rs. 10 and less in Kist.	Holdings paying more than Rs. 100 in Kist.
1882	112	22
1887	140	19
1892	173	18
1901	204	15
1906	239	14
1911	367	11
1916	366	8

Dr. Harold Mann tells us that, in a Deccan village, the average size of holdings has diminished from 44 acres in 1771 to 7 acres in 1914, and that more than 25 per cent. of the plots are less than half an acre in extent.†

* "Some South Indian Villages," edited by Dr. Gilbert Slater, p. 221.

† "The Economics of a Deccan Village," *Indian Journal of Economics*, December, 1916: further elaborated in his "Land and Labour in a Deccan Village," University of Bombay Economic Series, Vol. I. Mr. G. F.

Sir James Wilson calls our attention to the same phenomenon in the Punjab in his valuable paper on "Recent Economic Developments in the Punjab" (pp. 29-30); and Professor Stanley Jevons, of Allahabad, thought the endless multiplication of these tiny scattered holdings so detrimental to agricultural prosperity that he brought the matter before an all-India agricultural conference, and advocated a policy similar to that of the English Enclosure Acts.*

There can be no doubt that, so long as these conditions continue, a speedy advance in farming is almost out of the question. Apart altogether from the waste of time it involves and the narrow limitations it imposes on a farmer desirous of improving his land, or introducing new crops and methods, its effect on the landholders themselves is a matter that has often called forth anxious comment. The men whose holdings are too small to support them, and who spend part of their time in working for others, form a large proportion of the cultivators of India. They are, according to Mr. G. F. Keatinge, for many years Director of Agriculture in Bombay, the victims of the conditions which arise from pressure of population on the land, the Indian Law of Inheritance, and the customs arising out of it. Where a man can find employment for his spare time in his own village it is possible for him to keep his holding in a thrifty condition, but, where he has to go farther afield in search of work, this becomes a matter of greater difficulty. As a rule, this man is of less use to himself or to the community than the man who can devote his whole time to his own holding. He knows that he does not depend on his land for a living, and consequently his cultivation is usually inferior and his output less. When the crop is harvested he is in no hurry to exchange an easy life for the more strenuous one of a hired labourer. He hangs about his

Keatinge collects a number of similar illustrations in an Appendix (I.) to his recent book on "Agricultural Progress in Western India."

* See his "Consolidation of Agricultural Holdings in the United Provinces," 1918. University of Allahabad, Bulletin No. 9.

home, and reduces his standard of living until he is again driven to look for work by sheer necessity. He has little incentives to strenuous labour; his organization is bad, whether as landholder or hired labourer, and he suffers from the evils of casual and intermittent labour which, in time, reacts on his character. And so long as land continues to be held under these conditions, the path to development must remain barred.*

Some sort of reform is therefore needed to check this downward career, and the most obvious line is to secure that the size of the holding should be such as to maintain its holder. The problem is by no means a new one. Many of the leading agricultural countries of Europe had at one time to confront and overcome it, and their example ought to show us a way out. In Denmark, for instance, the family property was divisible among the coheirs until 1837, when an exception was made, by a law of that year, in the case of peasant farms, whereby the proprietor was allowed to leave the farm intact to any of his children; and a further step towards consolidation was taken by the appointment of Commissions to value and redistribute holdings. In India, legislative and executive interference of this nature is likely to provoke bitter hostility, though it seems reasonable to expect that when the economic advantages of a self-contained farm are brought home to the cultivator, the outcry against the new reform will give place to a grateful acknowledgment of its benefits. A more desirable policy would, perhaps, be to set up convenient and compact model farms, and hand them over to cultivators with strict injunctions against subdivision. Demonstration work of this character would prepare the mind of the cultivator to the proposed change and disarm opposition, while an appreciation of its advantages in the concrete may stimulate an active demand for a larger number of similar farms. It would, however, be idle to expect that laws alone could effect any magical change in the existing customs, unless

* "Agricultural Progress in Western India," pp. 59-61.

seconded vigorously by the weight of social opinion. "It is possible," wrote the Government of India in one of its despatches,* "for the Government to declare that it will not recognize or record any subdivision below a certain minimum area, but it does not appear to us that such a course would have any material effect in checking subdivision. If a man who owns only the minimum area dies, leaving three sons, the fact that Government will only record the eldest son as the possessor will not prevent the others from remaining on the land as his co-sharers, and will not drive them forth to seek employment elsewhere. As a matter of fact, what Mr. Caird suggests [*i.e.*, checking subdivision by this means] is now the actual practice in Bombay; and the result is that a great class of unrecorded partners and subtenants is growing up in that Presidency to an extent which threatens to be a serious evil in the future. . . . Nothing, we fear, will effect the desired result, except the pressure of a dense population on itself, driving out the superfluous members of society to find room in more thinly-peopled tracts." Another reason why so many cling on to the land, even when they have no legal rights over it, is to be sought for in the peculiar structure of Indian society, where the breadwinner is often surrounded by an exaggerated joint family of relatives and relatives' relatives; and economic reformers will find that a healthy movement of social reform by which the individual is extricated from all his tangled connections with joint family, caste and village, and set on his own independent footing, is one of the first conditions of material progress in India.

Extra small holdings and an extra large number of people depending on them for livelihood lead us to another characteristic of Indian husbandry—the chronic under-employment of the majority of the cultivators. Visitors to India are often struck with the inertness of the masses and "their infinite capacity for taking naps." "There is always

* Despatch No. 38, June 8, 1880, "Revenue and Agriculture."

someone resting," says Mr. E. V. Lucas.* "In no country that I know of are so many people to be seen stalking idly about during the hours of labour as in India," writes Sir James Caird.† This lassitude is the natural outcome of very little to do and plenty of time to do it. In the West Indies, we are told, a labourer gets thrice the wages of his Deccan *confrère*, but, being more than thrice as efficient, it is cheaper to get a ton of sugarcane cut and stripped there than in India; and in cotton-picking an Indian woman does only one-half as much as the Egyptian woman, and one-third as much as a woman in the United States. It would, perhaps, be unfair to argue from this that the Indian labourer is relatively inefficient and is incapable of a higher standard of effort. He likes a long "spreadover," because with him time is not of the essence of the contract. "The numbers who have no other employment than agriculture are greatly in excess of those required for the thorough cultivation of the land, and, so far as this is the case, the result must be that the part of the population which is in excess of the requirements of agriculture eats up the profits that would otherwise spring from the industry of the community." This was the verdict of the Famine Commissioners of 1880,‡ and a comparison of recent figures shows that it holds good to-day. The Census returns of 1911 show that India employs one person to every 2·6 acres of cultivated land (excluding fallows), while the corresponding pre-war figures for Germany and Great Britain are one to 5·4 and one to 17·3 acres (inclusive of fallow-land); and both these latter countries are amongst the foremost agricultural countries of the world. To prevent social waste, therefore, it is essential that the numbers supported by the land shall not exceed the numbers required for its efficient cultivation.

* "Roving East and Roving West," p. 4. Methuen; see also M. Chailley's "Administrative Problems of British India" (translated by Sir William Meyer, 1910), p. 137.

† See his Report on the Condition of India, Vol. II., Famine Commission Report, 1880.

‡ Vol. I., p. 34.

This will mean that many who now cling on desperately to their half-acre apiece will have to give it up; and with an extension of the use of machinery such as is contemplated in the Report of the Industrial Commission* still larger numbers will have to swell the exodus from the land. We have heard mutterings against the introduction of machinery in Indian agriculture on the ground that it will disorganize "the entire rural economy of the country."† But what exactly is this rural economy which its admirers wish to maintain inviolate?—a system of national deterioration, where low standards of work, of earnings, and of efficiency go round in a vicious circle which prevents the peasant's escape into a freer and more vigorous atmosphere.

An imperative condition of an efficiently re-organized agricultural system, then, is the exclusion from the soil‡ of the vast army of the under-employed and the under-paid, and the substitution in its place of a much smaller number of men prepared to put in a fair day's work for a fair day's wage. A small fraction of those thus thrown out of "work" could be absorbed in semi-agricultural pursuits, such as preparing the various agricultural products for the market, but the vast majority of them will have to turn to other occupations for a livelihood; for *Industries Agricoles* are primarily intended for those directly engaged on the soil, but who, on account of the intermittent character of their work (depending as it does on the monsoons and the seasons) would otherwise be compelled to sit idle during certain parts of the year. Continuous employment for the farmer can be secured only by dovetailing into the agricultural seasons those of various subsidiary industries more or less connected with his own occupation. In Germany the employment of part-time agricultural labourers is much less precarious than elsewhere on account of the organized de-

* See Chapter V.; Cmd. 51 of 1919.

† J. Mackenna: "Agriculture in India," p. 29. Calcutta Government Press, 1915. Also M. M. Malaviya in his Note of Dissent, p. 268, Industrial Commission Report.

‡ Note, however, Dr. G. Slater's warning at p. 10, Vol. I., *Journal of the Indian Economic Society*.

velopment of rural industries; and India affords an almost unlimited scope for similar employment. Whether it be in sugar-making or oil-seed crushing, in cotton-growing and pressing, or hemp and jute baling, in rice-hulling, or dairy farming, the cultivator stands to gain enormously by an extension of his business so as to include some of the processes for preparing his produce for the market. The benefits resulting from such a stimulation of agricultural activity are obvious. One of these is the economy in freight effected by reducing a bulky article of little value to smaller dimensions of greater value. Take oil-seed, for instance. In 1920-21 it formed 7 per cent. of the total export trade of India, while the average for the quinquennium ended 1914 was 11 per cent. If only it had been crushed in India, the industry would have afforded employment to many, the country might have retained the oil-cakes, which make excellent manure and cattle food, and an appreciable saving in freight could have been made. The rehabilitation, on the lines suggested by the Indian Sugar Committee, of the Indian sugar industry, which was started on its downward path by the unfair competition of foreign sugar, first from the West Indies, and later, from Central Europe, will open up another such avenue of profitable employment. The fostering of farm industries such as these will lead, not only to better quality and higher prices, but also to another advantage—the use of machinery. In the sugar industry, particularly, the demand for power-driven mills appears to be a growing one. A short extract from the Report of the Agricultural Engineer in the United Provinces for 1919-20 explains the position: “ I erected a crushing-mill and oil-engine for a small Zemindar in Gorakhpur District last season. The mill crushes twenty-seven maunds (a ton) per hour. The man, after one season’s working, has now come to me for a mill three times the size for next season’s work. He dealt last season with at least one lakh of rupees’ worth of produce with the plant I erected, and his profits must be in the neighbourhood of Rs. 30,000 for the season’s work.

The total cost of the plant, engine, and mill, including erecting charges, was only Rs. 5,000." Such harmonious interaction between the agricultural and industrial processes is now possible only on the larger estates, but the spread of co-operation will enable unions of small farmers to achieve the same ends by concerted effort.

The programme of agricultural development has thus to be worked out step by step. The formation of holdings of a reasonably fair size, the crowding-out of those who cannot find *full* employment on the land, and the fostering of industries akin to agriculture to provide work for the *bona-fide* cultivator in his slack season—this is the threefold line of advance I have here ventured to suggest. But will these external conditions alone secure agricultural prosperity, if they do not receive a powerful backing from human energy, the ultimate source of all progress? We have seen how the low vitality of the Indian worker is connected with a low standard of living, and how the recent period of high prices and high wages has been taken advantage of by him, not so much to work more and earn more as to work less and to rest more. "If each economic advantage gained," exclaims Mr. Keatinge with justifiable impatience, "is to be the signal for a relaxation of effort, if improved methods of farming are to serve not only to increase the crop, but also to swell the ranks of non-workers, is any marked progress possible?"* The failure of the peasant to rise to the occasion and meet the increasing needs of the country has led to a further analysis of the situation; and the present low standard of production has been ascribed to two factors—first, the cultivator being his own *entrepreneur*, and, secondly, his personal qualities of sustained idleness. As an alternative to the first may be considered the suggestion for the "capitalization" of agriculture with mammoth farms such as would please Sir Daniel Hall's heart worked by an army of labourers under careful supervision. Under a scheme of this kind, worked under favourable conditions, the labourer would get regular work and decent wages, while the hope of commercial profit

would stimulate greater output. The answer is that the scheme exacts a prohibitive price for agricultural efficiency. Is it worth while to sacrifice economic independence and submit oneself to exploitation, be it by individuals or by corporations, for the sake of making an industry pay? On the other hand, the exclusive dependence on competitive wages for home and livelihood, the abandonment of all interest in the land, the "unending vista of a gradual process of physical exhaustion in another's service, and the feeling that though he is indispensable, yet it is only as wheels in another's money-making machine"*—would not these undesirable concomitants of commercialism tend still further to depress the labourer and fling him into deeper degradation? Another suggestion is that of Professor Stanley Jevons, who ably argues that "the agricultural organization most appropriate to the stage of social development in India is the landlord and tenant system with fairly large estates, and a certain number of large farms worked by gentlemen farmers."† He would, in short, transplant on Indian soil the rural system that is falling more or less into discredit in his own land, and which, more than any other, has been responsible for a great shrinkage in the arable area of England during the last half-century. And that, with this additional difference that, while the English landlord has played a prominent part in the improvement of farming and stock-breeding, his Indian colleague has all along been apt to remain a mere rent-receiver. In the Zemindari tracts of Bengal, which approximate nearest to English conditions, a competent authority declares‡ that "there is nothing in the contemporary accounts, nor in the subsequent history of management, to show that the extension of cultivation was in any way due to the efforts of the proprietors." Professor Jevons is also inclined to think that the land laws of the last half-century have not always been beneficial in their operation, in that they afford protection

* Lord Ernle's words.

† See his "The Economics of Tenancy Law and Estate Management," 1921. Bulletin of the Allahabad University.

‡ Mr. F. D. Ascoli, "The Early Revised History of Bengal," p. 80.

to the lazy and to the inefficient, and would enlarge the landlord's powers of ejection. As for this point, it suffices to say that, while admitting that there are theoretical objections to giving the tenants the benefits of the three F's, the practical result of such a policy has always been beneficial. In answering an enquiry whether the fixity of tenure of the ryotwari system made the holders thereunder unwilling to expend labour and money on permanent improvements, the Famine Commissioners of 1880 wrote that all the evidence they had gathered tended to show that where the occupants hold of Government, there is no such inclination, "but in Zemindari estates, where the occupants have not the protection of this tenure, they are represented as being unwilling to sink their money in these investments.*" And even here in England the Board of Agriculture, in reporting on the Small Holdings Act of 1909, stated definitely that "the establishment of small holdings involves the application of more capital and more labour to the land." There is thus reason to fear that Professor Jevons has not fully considered the evidence bearing on this issue, which everywhere seems to point to the conclusion that "wherever agriculture has reached its highest stage of development, the system of tenure is based upon occupying ownership."†

It is not, then, in the promotion of agricultural syndicates, or in the bolstering up of a new squirearchy, that the future of Indian agriculture lies. The fact of the matter is that we have been misled by a false diagnosis and have treated the wrong disease. The real bar to advance is not only defective organization, but also the inherent lethargy of the peasant. It is this peculiar mentality that has frustrated the numerous aids to self-improvement which have converged upon him from various directions; this depth of moral apathy which makes him so impermeable to new ideas. This regrettable attitude is due to historical causes, and is traceable to the days of Muslim rule when the demands of the tax-gatherer deprived him of all incentives

* Report, Vol. I., p. 112, c. 2591 of 1880.

† Sir Henry Rew, "The Story of the Agricultural Club," 1922.

to increased creative effort. Conditions have changed since then: to-day the land revenue is theoretically only 50 per cent. of the nett assets, and in reality even less; and it is more lenient in its incidence than at any previous stage of Indian history. But not all the security of life and property the British Government offers to-day, not all the forces of upliftment which it controls and directs, have served to bring home to the peasant's mind the altered conditions. The oppressive days of old had left their impress too deep to become so easily effaced. In addition, then, to an intensified policy of development, there must be sought some means of a more direct appeal which would stimulate and vitalize him to renewed vigour. Great economic reforms have been wrought elsewhere by other than economic causes. Thirty years ago, when Germany nerved herself for a career of expansion, she realized the military importance of growing her own food, and, to the impetus of her national slogan, "Germany must keep under the protection of her guns the ground upon which her corn grows and her cattle graze," is due her subsequent agricultural development, which has been so rapid and so remarkable. Even earlier, in 1864, Denmark, crushed by Germany, and deprived of her fairest provinces, made a stern resolve to "make good by cultivating her garden"; and, spurred on by the nation's loss, she started on a policy of conservation and development which has proved so singularly successful. Forces more or less similar are working in India to-day; the advancing waves of Nationalism are producing responsive ripples, even in the land-locked villages, and the great political experiment that the British democracy is trying in India, under which the villager obtains new weight and status, is calculated to stir him from his pathetic contentment, and give him loftier ideals and ambitions; and if one may attempt an estimate of the various influences making for progress, it may well be that the dynamic impulse for national self-expression ignited by the Mont-ford scheme may outweigh all the purely economic forces working in the same direction.

