

# Madras Agricultural Journal

(ORGAN OF THE M. A. S. UNION)

Vol. XXV]

OCTOBER 1937.

[No. 10.

## Editorial.

**The Russell Report.** Readers of our journal will remember that in the cold weather of last year two eminent British scientists visited India at the request of His Excellency the Viceroy to inspect and report on the activities of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. Their reports have been submitted to the authorities and are now under their scrutiny. We have not seen the full report of Dr. Wright and would therefore confine this note to that of Sir John Russell. Although the terms of reference of this enquiry did not require them to go beyond the schemes subsidized by the Council, the experts, we find, have also scrutinised as well as their limited time permitted, the work carried on in the different sections of some of the provincial departments of Agriculture. If, as we have reason to suspect, anybody had any misgivings regarding the quality of work turned out by these provincial departments, misgivings based perhaps on the ill-informed criticisms now and then given vent to in the press and from the platforms by persons who knew not what they said, the report now placed before the public should once and for all give the quietus to all such unnecessary apprehensions. There is a general tone of optimism running through the whole report regarding the lines of work in progress in the different provinces and in the opening chapter while reviewing the activities of the department as a whole from its inception to the present day Sir John observes "*The provincial departments have already achieved valuable results and have fully justified the confidence reposed in them from the outset.*"

The report is written in two parts. The first part deals briefly with the general agricultural practices and crops in India, the methods of improving crop yields, the difficulties in the way and means of confronting them and concludes with suggestions for the reorganization of the work of the Council and the Imperial Institute on lines suited for the carrying out of the recommendations made in the report. Part II deals with the various schemes subsidized by the Council.

The ultimate object of the enquiry being the improvement of the lot of the agriculturist, the report in part I deals fairly exhaustively with the present state of the Indian villages and the lines on which improvements may be effected. In the opinion of the expert "the improvement of village life is probably the greatest need in India today." And with this end in view he recommends that the activities of the Research Council may hereafter lie more in making wider and



fuller use of existing science than in developing new science for which latter purpose the Universities, in his opinion, are in the main the places for work. He feels that "there remains a great gap to be bridged between what can on present knowledge be accomplished and what is actually being done by the cultivators". An enquiry into the present methods of propaganda is recommended the more efficient of them to be finally accepted and widely used. Among the difficulties in the speeding up of Agricultural improvements "perhaps the most serious is the lack of an agricultural aristocracy and an educated agricultural middle class. Many of the great advances in Western agriculture are due to men of this type. In Great Britain an improvement effected in the experimental stations can be at once put into practice. Some large farmer is prepared to try it at his own expense..... Unfortunately India has nothing corresponding with this educated class. It is unfortunate that the colleges have been able to do so little in this direction..... In all my journeys I met only two or three college trained farmers". The other difficulties referred to in the report are too well known to us to need repetition here.

The Imperial Institute and its activities occupy the last chapter of part I. Valuable suggestions regarding the future of this institution "the purpose of which is to carry out investigations of fundamental importance to India in the same kind of way as is done at the Rothamstead Experimental Station or the Agricultural Research Departments at Washington" are offered. Regarding the staff of the Institute it is suggested "that the Director and heads of leading sections should, if possible, be men of international repute who would be respected for their own merits by workers at other institutions. The Director should be a scientist of wide repute..... need not be an agriculturist but should be distinguished in some science basic to agriculture." Sir John is convinced that it is not necessary to go outside of India to find a suitable man. As regards the Council itself the expert is of opinion that "during the short period of its existence the Council has accomplished a remarkable amount of good work and I do not see how its results could well be bettered." To those therefore who have been labouring under the false impression that the Agricultural departments in India are a sort of "White Elephants" the report of Sir John Russell should have come as a surprise—we hope none the less agreeable—and to those who have all along been the targets of uncharitable criticism, as a source of inspiration and encouragement in their future work. To conclude in Sir John's words, "the Indian ryot compares favourably with any of the peasant population I have met in different parts of the world. The change from the ancient to the modern system took some seventy years to accomplish in the West. There is no occasion to despair of its accomplishment in India."