

Research and propaganda, a plea for re-orientation*

By

K. C. NAIK

(Fruit Specialist, Madras)

In our drive towards self-sufficiency in food production, the paramount need to pass on the results of research to the ryot with effect, economy and expeditiousness has been stressed from all quarters. It will be generally conceded that our propaganda organisation in all parts of the country has been modelled more or less on a uniform pattern with taluk or district demonstrators forming the main core of the organization and with seed, manure and implement distribution as their chief functions. Intended primarily to be the mentor and guide to the ryot and overwhelmed by a lot of routine and more recently by the trading scheme duties, the advisory activities of the demonstrator have receded to an extent to the background. Even under normal times, it is doubtful if the rigid compartmentalisation of extension service and research wing is conducive for efficiency. With no direct contact with any field of research and with little or no scope to keep himself abreast with the day-to-day advance in progress of agricultural science in its varied forms, the demonstrators' advisory function cannot but reduce itself by force of circumstances to a few set maxims, which may be monotonous to the well-informed ryot and rusty or even obsolete from the modern scientific standards. This eventuality may be an extreme conception, but the very possibility of it should make us think of a plan that would perpetually maintain the keen edge of propaganda in such a manner as to influence the agricultural practice to the maximum and widest extent possible.

If we accept, as we must, that extension service should be constantly fed by the results of research, it follows that there should also be a vehicle through which this free flow of knowledge between the two lines of departmental activity is possible. It has, however, to be remembered that research is proverbially slow and uncertain of results. Our popular crop strains and most of our improved agricultural tools and practices have been evolved or chosen for advocating to the ryots after years of toil in laboratories and fields and after laborious tests. This is why most of the items of our propaganda of to-day are not far removed from those a decade or two ago. Our annual reports of agricultural stations can never claim to make substantial additions to alter the course or shape of extension service every time they are issued. They only register the milestones in our progress in research activities and do not delimit the destination point. It would be as ridiculous to expect our research stations to produce an efficient crop strain every year, as it would be to expect an improved agricultural practice to be recommended with every change of demonstrator in

* Paper presented at the 32nd College Day and Conference.

any centre. The research reports produced annually are essentially comprised of hypotheses, which are the pre-requisites of inferences. While these reports are important to scientific workers in affording the only reliable means of judging the appropriateness of approach to the problems and of the extent of advance made towards the solution of a problem during the period, they cannot be of much help to alter the lines of propaganda or enhance the benefits therefrom. It will be risky, if not positively dangerous, to model our extension work on hypotheses and surmises.

The only rational view under the circumstances is that, while the extension worker has to be always alert to imbibe the periodic progress made in the field of research, his *modus operandi* may not lend itself for frequent changes, owing to the fact that the stimulus for such changes is unpredictable in origin. This cannot be an argument for divorcing extension work from research, but for vigilance combined with inter-dependance.

From the point of view of the practical agriculturist, the departmental propaganda is of two distinct categories, one that will cater to the vast majority of what may be called as the conservative or relatively backward section of ryots, and the other that will meet the needs of the more progressive but smaller section. The value and extended use of green manures, of soil production and conservation, of compost making and exploitation of farm waste materials, roguing out in nurseries and fields, of maintaining purity of seed material, of growing only strains of proven merit, of the timely and adequate control of pests and diseases, and of a proper crop rotation—these are types of propaganda that are applicable in most years and seasons and in wide stretches of the province more or less on a standard regional basis. Every ryot needs to be impressed on the value of each of these measures; some repeatedly and some occasionally. There are no two opinions on the value of these items of propaganda and there is no special type of mental equipment or skill needed for carrying out the extension work in respect of such items. It may be unnecessary, if not useless, to employ scientifically trained agricultural graduates for this type of extension work, which has varied little with the passage of time.

It seems that these items of propaganda can be entrusted with economy and advantage from the view-point of effectiveness to picked but practical ryots, who by virtue of their status and character, enjoy the confidence of a bulk of ryots in a village or firka. Our agricultural propaganda in the past half a century or more can be expected to have permeated sufficiently wide as to make it easy to pick out a number of ryots in each firka, who adopt some, if not all, of the departmental recommendations. The selected propagandists may hold office for a period of two or three years, during which it should be possible to expect of them to model their own farming practices strictly to conform to all what we advocate. Who can fill the role of propaganda better than the owners of

such mo
before t
done b
these v
incenti
enthusi
propag
Karnat
our wh
reason
impro
expec
person
langu
posse
sophi
been
conf
to e
firka
prop
that
To
ryo
be
don
the
to
wh

in
e
I
a
t

such model farms? A short course of training may perhaps be necessary before these men are drafted for their part-time duties, but this can be done by the trained agricultural demonstrators. The remuneration of these village propagandists may be sufficiently attractive as to provide the incentive to continue the performance of the duties with devotion and enthusiasm. This type of practical part-time and paid agricultural propagandists is by no means a novel scheme. The village officers as the Karnam and Village Munsiff are also part-time Government servants. If our whole land revenue system is worked by such a medium, there is no reason why the agricultural system cannot be made to develop and improve on a similar pattern. The agricultural improvements can be expected to be more speedy and tangible when it is vested in the hands of persons who live amidst the ryots, move daily with them, speak their language, share their thoughts, participate in their joys and sorrows and possess a tie of kinship in innumerable ways. The highly trained and sophisticated propagandist from a taluk or district headquarters has often been dubbed a misfit in our village atmosphere and can hardly inspire confidence among the villagers. The taluk demonstrators may continue to exist in order to train, guide and supervise the work of these village or firka agricultural propagandists and to enforce the conditions that every propagandist should himself set the example by practising all the precepts that he preaches. This is an acid test for the success of the scheme. To enhance the utility of the scheme, it will be desirable to select these ryot propagandists annually or every two or three years. The selection may be on a competitive basis as judged on the nature and quality of work done and on the excellence of agricultural practices achieved, and also on the propaganda ability possessed by the candidates. The system is designed to promote and foster a healthy spirit of competition among the ryots, which by itself will be a fillip for agricultural improvements.

In effect this system will lead to the establishment of model farms in every village or firka without any Government funds being directly expended on them. An outcome of the implementation of the above proposal will be that, while it will cater to the vast bulk of ryots who are amenable to this type of propaganda by persons living and mixing with them always, the progressive, educated and scientifically alert group of farmers have to be provided differently and at a higher level. This group of persons, though numerically small, is generally more well-to-do and is, therefore, readily responsive to well-informed propaganda. They are practical, intelligent and do not need the type of extension service dealing merely with elementary items of which they are already aware. They are not of a type to take any new improvement without question but no new improvements can be popularised except after convincing this group and then arranging to disseminate to the more conservative section of the ryots citing the examples from richer educated sections. Particularly in

the field of horticulture, the demand for advice is from an intelligent class of ryots who may themselves be fairly advanced in their art. This class of people can be tackled only by well-trained persons actually in contact with farming practices and research and specially trained for their duties. A district officer solely engaged in routine work and with no opportunities to take active interest in research may be adequate for guiding the propaganda intended to popularise well-known practices and strains of proven value. Subjects that require specialised knowledge, skill and careful planning, born of conviction and awareness of the value of scientific farming, can only be dealt with by a different type of propaganda personnel for which a separate organisation seems necessary.

Clubbing these two lines of propaganda under one wing has been in a large measure responsible for the ineffectiveness of our extension work in the past. It is as useless to enunciate the finer scientific principles to an uneducated and unintelligent ryot, as it would be to din the commonplace to the progressive farmer. Above all, the prevalent and erstwhile system may often serve only to lower the efficiency and standard of propaganda workers, who are not provided with any incentive to keep themselves abreast with scientific advances.

Summing up the present position, it would appear that a re-orientation of our extension service is urgently called for. In this the balancing of research and propaganda activities must occupy the premier place. The free flow of information for efficiency in propaganda must be ensured by firstly, extending and intensifying research and secondly, by providing for a more intimate link between research and extension work. The compartmentalisation of research and propaganda only serves to antagonise these two wings of the department to the detriment of both, and more important still to prejudice the farmers. To cut across the existing anomaly, it may involve a thorough overhaul of the departmental organisation. In considering this subject one of the most common errors which, we are apt to fall into, is to stress the so-called analogy from other lands chiefly from Europe and America. The efficiency of any publicity or propaganda campaign must depend to a very great extent on the mental calibre of the persons for whom such a campaign is meant and to even greater extent on their psychology, their training, language, environment, economic condition, character, national, regional or communal habits and social set-up. Those who suggest a specific type of propaganda for a province or a country on the analogy of American or European model are only oversimplifying the problem, which is not the same thing as solving it.

Organisational efficiency combined with a high educational standard and high standard of life may all demand a type of publicity or propaganda campaign quite different from that to benefit an economically backward country like India. The Californian Orange Growers Exchange

is reported to
of four years
with such eff
favourite foc
can well ima
campaign ha
as the educ
masses will
advertiseme

If o
and foreign
that we ca
note of all
make-up-
on the su
fact that
two main
the secur
impervio
with no
apprecia
In a lan
benefits
land hi
agricul
marked
favour
machin
richer
casual
of imp
and c
back
provi
the r
rami
imp
no r
ryo

am
ap
res
cu

is reported to have spent over £1,25,000 in Great Britain alone in a period of four years for advertising the value of grapefruits as a breakfast food, and with such effect that to-day the grapefruit has become an almost universally favourite food to start the day with, in innumerable British homes. We can well imagine the tremendous loss to the Exchange if such a publicity campaign had been conducted in India. Our food habits and tastes as well as the educational backwardness and low economic conditions of our masses will all have provided an arid barren ground on which all the advertisement talent and money would have been wasted.

If our existing propaganda is a misfit, or not sufficiently effective, and foreign methods cannot be easily adopted in our country, what is it that we can suggest as a solution? An answer to this should have to take note of all the peculiarities of our Indian ways of life, and of our mental make-up. One of the foremost points that merits attention in any discussion on the suitable type of propaganda for agricultural improvement is the fact that unlike in most countries, our agricultural farming is composed of two main classes of persons, one, consisting of a majority of tenant farms and the second of a minority of rich landlords. The former are generally impervious to our propaganda, steeped as they are in poverty and with no educational or cultural attainments that can enable them to appreciate closely reasoned advice, in whichever manner it reaches them. In a land of peasant proprietors, owning the land they till, and where the benefits of every improvement adopted is to be reaped by the owner of the land himself, the urge to search for every means of improving the agricultural practice is perpetual. The higher standard of life and the markedly higher economic condition of the agriculturists are other favourable conditions for the successful working of the propaganda machine. On the other hand, in this country it often happens that the richer class consists of either absentee landlords or those having only a casual interest in certain types of agricultural improvements, such as that of improvement of irrigation facilities due to which the results are speedy and ocular and the returns appreciable to the landlord. Against this background of India's agricultural set-up, it is idle to expect that the provision of a propaganda officer such as an Agricultural Demonstrator at the rate of one per taluk solely for propaganda and without any other ramifications of direct extension service, can result in any appreciable improvement in our agricultural prosperity, especially as such officers have no means to effect any change in the numerous handicaps that the common ryot is suffering from.

Regarding the methods of propaganda also, it is common to hear among the suggestions for improvement some quite attractive and apparently efficacious ones, but which are totally divorced from the realities of the situation. If films have shaped the habits, dress and culture of people in foreign countries and even in some of our urban areas,

we should not expect equally tangible or spectacular results through this medium for agricultural improvement. It is doubtful if even a small section of actual agriculturists attend the cinema; and among these that do so occasionally, whether even a fraction of the people are convinced of the utility of a recommendation. For many years to come, films will remain a pastime; and their educational or cultural value is yet to be proved on a mass or country-wide scale as in India. At best the film may just ruffle the still pools of thought and afford a comparative idea for discussion. But the age-long agricultural practices of our forefathers are not likely to get a material shake-up by a few film shows. Man's mind is not pliable, nor our country so small, nor our agricultural practices so few and so standardised, nor our film publicity for agricultural propaganda so perfect, as to work a miracle in our agricultural farming.

Lectures and radio talks as well as the exhibitions on shandy days or along with reputed local events and celebrations, cut no more ice than film propaganda. Here the means of propaganda is primarily personal in nature and its merits or demerits are liable to be altered, depending on the lecturer or showman and his capacity for the task. Who does not know the wearisome boredom that most in a rural audience experience after hearing some long speeches of extension staff? To believe solely on this type of propaganda to do the trick, is to continue the game of self-delusion. Almost on the same part are the departmental publications. Most of these are beyond the reach of the average ryot; the few who read them take only a casual interest in such media of propaganda, and only a small section of the ryots are actually benefited by it appreciably.

This leaves out one type of propaganda which, in my opinion, has not had a real trial so far in India. I refer to the establishment of a network of Model State Farms at the rate of one per taluk. All these state farms should be laid out and run in an up-to-date scientific manner, where only the best strains of crops are grown under ideal conditions and where bumper crops are gathered, and where precise cost of production and of revenue are worked out for any who care to study them. Each of these farms should be in the charge of men, who have had not less than 5 years of farming experience and preferably 10 years. With a minimum staff responsible to the Chief Farm Manager, and for assisting him, this farm should demonstrate what is possible through scientific agriculture. The staff should all have good and decent quarters and all possible amenities, so that the farm should be the ideal in every way to the ryot, showing him what comforts and conveniences one can enjoy and yet secure higher margins or profit from agriculture than by the present methods. The farm may meet the demand for pure seeds, for tools, manures and insecticides and fungicides and other agricultural requirements, for all of which there may be an assistant under the supervision of

Crop pla

the chief Farm
headquarters ma
control of the R

In concl
well fed by res
so, the method
suit the calibre
securing utmo
be integrated
each district
or groups of
themselves b
action. The
apparently
scientificall
vegetables,
which the
by person
dealing wi
reliable o
farms wit
meeting
lacking t
maintain
practica
same tir
scientific

Cro

for
the
dis
pro
no
th
ag

the chief Farm Manager or the District Agricultural Officer, whose headquarters may also be at the same place; and both to be under the control of the Regional Deputy Director.

In conclusion, it is well to bear in mind that propaganda when not well fed by results of research can be just a flop, if not a tragedy. Even so, the methods of extension work can cut no ice if they are not shaped to suit the calibre, prejudices and socio-economic habits of our people. For securing utmost efficiency with economy, the extension work shall have to be integrated with research, and it is suggested that Model State Farms in each district and taluk with propaganda personnel drawn from every village or groups of villages from amidst practical agriculturists and who should themselves be maintaining model forms, offers the only feasible plan of action. The demonstrator of to-day and the common ryot are two apparently incompatible entities, and so are the former and the scientifically / progressive specialised producer of crops like fruits, vegetables, spices, plantation crops, etc. It is time we evolve a plan in which the results of research are transplanted to different classes of ryots by persons of different calibre and training. State Model Taluk Farms dealing with all crops of importance to the taluk will provide just that reliable ocular demonstration which all can accept without question. Such farms with their skilled and practically experienced staff can find just that meeting ground with the progressive section of our ryots, which is sorely lacking to-day. To the rest of the ryots, the unofficial model farm maintained by the part-time village propagandist who are themselves practical farmers, will afford a perpetual object lesson, providing at the same time a most economic and efficient medium for the spread of all scientific agricultural improvements.

*Crop planning for the Thungabhadra Project ayacut**

By

Dr. S. KASINATHAN, B. A., PH. D.

(Deputy Director of Agriculture, Thungabhadra Project, Bellary)

The Thungabhadra Project, as now finally proposed, is intended for the benefit of the stretch of country along the course of the river of the same name and lying in a 10 or 20 mile depth southwards in the districts of Bellary and Kurnool. Started at first almost wholly as a protective scheme for the famine stricken areas of the two districts, it is now being planned as a developmental programme aiming at increasing the general standards of living of the people of the area through improved agriculture and industrial ventures of assured profits.

*Paper presented at the 32nd College Day and Conference.