

Review.

Agrarian Reforms and Parity Economy by the Honourable Sri O. P. Ramaswami Reddiyar, Premier, Government of Madras and Member, Agrarian Reforms Committee of the A. I. C. C. (*published by the Economic Adviser to the Government of Madras, 1948*). In this pamphlet prepared for the Agrarian Reforms Committee, the Premier of Madras pleads for a fairer treatment of agriculturists than has been accorded to them so far. For more than a hundred years agriculture has been exploited by trade and industry. He is not for a return to peasant economy run on primitive lines. He is anxious to see that the benefits of science are so utilised as to create a more harmonious society and agriculture benefits at least to the extent that commerce or manufacture does. This he calls parity economy.

He would prefer a comprehensive co-operative organisation as the best means to achieve his ends. He would compel all agriculturists to join it and would like to have grain banks attached to them, which would serve a number of purposes and help to stabilise agricultural prices. He would entrust a number of functions to the co-operative organisation — including digging of canals, laying out roads, building schools and even joint farming. The co-operative common wealth "will usher in an epoch of prosperity and self-reliance in villages" — not all at once but by stages.

Meanwhile, he indicates certain urgent lines of reform — compulsory consolidation of holdings, prevention of sub-division of holdings below the economic limit, ensuring a fair share of agricultural income to the labourer, the tenant and the land owner supplying capital and direction. A necessary preliminary to the latter is, in his view, an assurance of minimum prices for agricultural produce on a parity with prices of manufactured goods, after a close analysis of cost accounts at all stages — which is by no means easy. He thinks that there is no need for Land Alienation Act nor for local land tribunals, except occasionally for decision of tenancy disputes.

In the place of the existing land revenue, he is for the levy of a basic tax on all lands and on the top of it a graduated tax on higher agricultural incomes. Renovation of tanks at a cost of Rs. 15 crores to 20 crores is even more urgent as protective works than the giant production works of Tungabhadra, Ramapadasagara etc., which will add greatly to the agricultural wealth of the country.

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We are glad to note that the Premier has abundant faith in the possibilities of scientific research in agriculture which, he urges, the state will have to continue "to an increasing extent for a long time to come" though the onus of financing industrial research will have to be shifted to the shoulders of industrialists as in the West — "when agricultural research will receive a fillip". The application of fruits of agricultural research to practical agriculture in an ever wider measure is a problem that needs more attention meanwhile.



HINTS TO FARMERS

Sorghum smut. Sorghum is one of the staple food-crops of our Province. This crop is very often affected by a disease called smut. It is prevalent in all districts especially in the crops raised in the colder months. Dirty grey bodies about half to three fourths of an inch in length develop in the place of grains on the affected plants. All the grains in a head may be thus transformed or a portion of the head may be involved. When crushed between the fingers, these bodies are found to be filled with a black powder, the spores of the fungus which causes the disease. The economic effect of the disease is in the reduction of the yield of grains.

The disease is seed borne. Since the spores of the smut fungus are attached to the seeds, the disease can be completely controlled by disinfecting the seed with finely powdered sulphur before sowing. The seeds are thoroughly mixed with sulphur using one ounce of the powder for every 15 pounds of seed. When the quantity of seed is small, the sulphur powder and the seed are placed in a closed tin or earthen vessel