

A Program for Land Reform in India

THE AGRARIAN REFORMS COMMITTEE of the Indian Congress, headed by J. C. Kumarappa, recommended an 8-point program of land reform at the conclusion of a ten-day session in New Delhi on May 24, 1949. The program envisaged a composite pattern of agrarian economy, ranging from controlled individual farming to collective co-operatives and State farming.

The program consisted of the following: 1. The land tenure system should be rationalized and the minimum holding and maximum permissible size prescribed. 2. The rights of individual farmers and village communities should be protected. 3. New machinery of land management for development of agriculture should be set up consisting of representatives of village communities and regional authorities. Provincial and all-India land commissions should form part of this machinery. 4. Agricultural indebtedness should be scaled down. Side by side there should be a unified system of institutional credit to afford cheap and prompt credit to agriculturists. 5. A minimum wage for agricultural labor should be prescribed. 6. A new scheme of land assessment on a sliding scale linked with price levels of commodities should be introduced. 7. Remunerative prices for agricultural products should be fixed. 8. There should be a planned organization of 'agro-industries' to absorb surplus population in agriculture, and a rural welfare service based on social security principles.

This committee was appointed at the request of the conference of provincial revenue ministers of December, 1947. Its program is open to criticism on a number of grounds. It dodges the problem of the socialization of rent, which should be its basis. The land assessment scheme it proposes takes no account of modern developments in valuation for assessment; hence it will be difficult to improve the system later on. The whole program smacks of Marxist bias; despite its pious statement about the protection of the rights of individual farmers and village communities, it can only lead to the development of a directed, cartelized agriculture of the bankrupt Soviet type. Several features are useful, however, notably for the provision of adequate credit and the organization of rural industry.

This program, one regrets to note, will not lead to a rationalized land tenure system in India.

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