

*Land Reform in Austria*

AUSTRIA, LIKE the United States, is one of the nations that needs land reform badly but has been laggard about introducing it. One of the reasons for the lag in Austria is that the dominant Austrian People's party does not understand what land reform involves. The Socialist party, under the leadership of Bauer and Adler, before the Dolfuss putsch, did understand; its program, drawing its inspiration from Henry George and the German Bodenreformers, was a practical, far-reaching one developed on sound scientific lines. It would have put to shame the Stalinist spurious land reform schemes.

Why land reform in Austria is meeting the obstacles put in its way can be seen from the statement made by Herr Figl, Chancellor of the Austrian Republic and leader of the Austrian People's party, on Nov. 11, 1948:

"Turning to the question of land reform, the Chancellor stated that it was not a question of the individual or of political slogans, but that it was an economic problem. The Austrian People's party supported the idea of a land reform, but not by way of expropriations or for the sake of party-political catch-phrases. For the Austrian People's party land reform means a change in ownership.

"We do not want to produce dwarf holdings; on the contrary, we want to enlarge and replenish individual holdings to make them viable and to enable them to produce better and more rationally for the benefit of the entire people. We need a land reform which will strengthen deliveries to the markets. Therefore we are making the strengthening of healthy peasant ownership the supreme guiding principle of the land reform.

"Agricultural laborers, too, ought to get land, but not merely 5 *Joch* (7 acres) which are not enough for independent husbandry and which would necessitate other work in addition. Parliament will have to concern itself with this question in the near future. It will promulgate the necessary laws, but will leave their execution to the various provincial governments, because we are of the opinion that all questions connected with land reform can best be solved by men with an intimate knowledge of conditions in their provinces."

This is the sort of approach that has given the landless Austrians everything but a piece of land to work.

W.L.