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West Bengal surveyed during the period of 1955-60 by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Santiniketan. It is revealing that there are only two farms in seven villages which will be affected by the land ceiling and the total land available for distribution comes to a very low figure of only 24.47 acres. Supposing this excess land is to be settled with the local residents possessing very little, or no land this land distribution will not be able to bring about any material change in the pattern of landownership. Even if there be any transfer of land after the passing of the Acts the very low number of farms in the middle size groups of farms gives a clear indication that the transfer of land is not at all considerable. Besides, the policy of the Government being to recognize the *bargadari* system, the land already under their cultivation even though it forms part of the surplus land of the landowners will not be available for distribution among the landless people. Thus, the ceiling practically becomes ineffective so far as its objective of land acquisition and distribution is concerned. To fulfil this objective the ceiling needs downward revision but in that process more harm than good will be caused to the interest of agriculture.

The main objective of land reforms legislation is to release the forces of production so as to ensure a progressive agricultural economy. The achievements so far made, however, falls much short of the desired goal. The land reforms legislation, it must be remembered, is no panacea for the rural ills but it will not be an exaggeration to say that much depends upon the faithful implementation of the Acts.

LAND REFORMS LEGISLATION IN BIHAR AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

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PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ZAMINDARY ABOLITION LEGISLATION

Acquisition of Zamindaries

Until the implementation of the Land Reforms Act 1950—beginning from May 1952 and ending on 1st January, 1956—Bihar was a *zamindary* area under the Permanent Settlement of 1793, with the exception of a few pockets of Khas Mahal Estates which were administered directly by the State Government on *ryotwari* lines.

After a prolonged legal battle, the Supreme Court verdict of May 1952 finally cleared the legal hurdle in the way of acquisition of *zamindaries* by the State Government, after which the process of acquisition which went through four

phases, was started by the State Government. The first phase of acquisition related to *zamindaries* in the State with an annual income of Rs. 50,000 or more and continued till September 1952. In the second stage the Government started acquiring all intermediary interests in four out of the 17 districts of the State, *viz.*, Gaya, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Darbhanga. In the third phase, in 1953-54, intermediary interests with gross incomes ranging between Rs. 10,000 and 50,000 in the remaining districts were taken up.

The process of acquisition used to be delayed because of the provision of the Act requiring individual notification to each estate-owner of Government's decision to acquire the particular estate. To expedite matters, the Act was amended in 1954 making it possible for estates to be acquired by area-wise notification, whereby the process of acquisition was considerably expedited. On January 26, 1955, intermediary interests in eight districts and in January 1956, in the remaining districts, were acquired by area-wise notification.

Compensation Issue

The Land Reforms Act vesting the former *zamindary* estates in the Government provided for payment of compensation to *zamindars*. There is no provision, unlike legislative provision in the U.P. or the Madhya Pradesh (old C.P.), for any rehabilitation grant to *zamindars*. The compensation is payable in non-negotiable bonds maturing in 40 years. The total burden of compensation payments is estimated at Rs. 238.98 crores of which only Rs. 6.47 crores had been paid by the end of 1960-61. This illustrates the speed at which one aspect of the Land Reforms Act is being implemented. In view of the fact that the large majority of *zamindars* and tenure-holders were middle class or petty landlords, the delay in the settlement of compensation has posed a serious economic problem for this class. Landlords who had considerable areas of land under personal cultivation (*Zirat*) are in a much better position. Those who managed to dispossess non-occupancy ryots, *e.g.*, on *Bakast* lands and increased their personal lands were better off still.

According to the State Government, the delay in the settlement of compensation claims is largely due to the non-submission by the landlords themselves of necessary papers relating to their estates. The landlords, of course, blame the inefficiency and corruption of the revenue administration that has taken over management of the estates.

Rationalization of Land Revenue

One of the arguments traditionally advanced for abolition of the Permanent Settlement was the need for rationalization of land revenue. It was well-known and widely commented upon that on account of the disproportionate growth of the cultivated area in the various estates since the original assessment of land revenue under the Permanent Settlement when knowledge of the state of cultivation including the productivity of the soil was extremely limited, the incidence of land revenue not only varied widely but bore little relation to the yield or value of the land. With the taking over of the estates by the Government, the category of receipts of the State Government in the form of revenue paid by the landlord, had ceased to exist. Land Revenue as an item in the State budget now refers to the rent collected from the ryots by the State Government in place of the former landlords. Due to the operation of the economic forces, modified partially by the operation of tenancy laws, the incidence of rent on tenants under *zamindars* bore,

probably, a closer relationship to the productivity of the land in the permanently settled areas than the incidence of land revenue. There is little doubt, however, that the rental burden on the tenants also was unequally distributed and stands in need of a thorough overhauling. Except under those provisions of tenancy laws which gave to either party the right to apply to Government for fixation of fair rent, Government under the *zamindary* system was not directly concerned in the rental relationship between the ryot and the *zamindar*. *Ad hoc* measures intended to give relief to a distressed tenantry, *e.g.*, during the depression of the thirties, or commutation of kind rents into cash, did not contribute to any uniformity or rationalization of the rental charge. The survey and settlement operations, the last of which was conducted in 1934-38 (the last regular settlement was conducted in Palamau in 1913-20) were too old to serve much useful purpose now, and Government thus had no basic scientific materials, except the rent rolls maintained by the *zamindars*, for assessment of the appropriateness of the rent paid by an individual ryot. It has, therefore, been stated by the Government that no rationalization of the rental structure is possible without fresh survey and settlement operations which will record, besides holdings, plots and land rights (tenurial) of individual tenants, the quality of the land, the crops grown and allied data.

Survey and Settlement Operations

The new series of survey and settlement operations in Bihar have started from 1951 with the district of Purnea. About three districts have by now been covered. The State Government have a plan of conducting these operations in districts in the Third Plan period and have been arguing with the Planning Commission for including the costs of these operations, which are fairly high, in the Plan budget. There is little doubt about the importance of these operations both for the long and short terms. From purely financial considerations a general upward revision of the rental burden within the shortest possible time is important for the State Government. From the longer period economic standpoint, a rationalization of the land tax is an essential part of reorganization of land relations and tenure. One has the feeling, however, that probably out of political considerations the State Government is chary of a general upward revision of land rents, particularly in the face of the ensuing elections.

Slow Pace of Survey Operations

The speed at which the survey and settlement operations are proceeding is not particularly commendable. There are real difficulties also in the form of shortage of trained survey staff, partly the result of unattractive pay scales and the temporary nature of the employment. These matters of an organizational nature should and could have received more energetic attention at the Governmental level. There is no reason, with the abolition of the Permanent Settlement, why periodic survey and settlement operations, albeit on a less elaborate scale, should not be a permanent feature of the revenue administration of Bihar as in th older temporarily settled *ryotwari* areas of India. Therefore, organizational measures to put the operations and the department conducting them on a stable permanent footing should not be delayed. With the growing volume of unemployment among the educated, there should be little difficulty in recruitment of field staff for adequate training on a large and expeditious scale.

Pending the more regular survey and settlement operations, over the past few years, since the taking over of the *zamindaries*, the State Government have been

conducting what are known as field *bujharat* operations, in the nature of a rapid survey of holdings and tenurial rights and the rentals collected by the former landlords, on the basis of the records of the erstwhile *zamindars* and the documents in the possession of the ryots, *e.g.*, old survey record, rent receipts, etc. Pending the conclusion of the settlement operations, the *bujharat* may probably constitute a rough and ready basis for a general revision and rationalization of the rental structure and for bringing to agriculture a more equitable share of the State's financial burden. While the income of the State Government from land rents has been increasing, the receipts still fall short of the estimated rental income of the old *zamindars*, largely due to administrative and organizational shortcomings. A sum of Rs. 25 crores, however, is shown as additional receipts from a revision of land revenue rates in the Third Plan period.

Position of Ryots

While abolition of intermediaries brought the State into direct contact with the ryots with recognised *ryotwari* rights, this did not bring about any immediate change in the position of this class, and still less in the rights and status of those in an inferior position. Unlike the States of U.P. and Madhya Pradesh, the Bihar enactment did not contemplate the grant of proprietory rights to the tenant comparable to that of the U.P. *bhumidar*, and the Government merely stepped into the shoes of the landlord. The Land Reforms Act had nothing to say on the rights of sub-tenants or other categories of tenants, *e.g.*, tenants-at-will, and the rights and obligations of tenants including their rental obligations are governed by the Bihar Tenancy Act, under which the following classes of tenants are recognized: (1) Occupancy right holding ryots, (2) Non-occupancy ryots, and (3) Under-ryots.

(1) The occupancy ryots are divisible into (a) Fixed Rent Ryots, and (b) Others, the rental burden on whom may be revised in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Tenancy Act. The occupancy ryot enjoyed almost absolute rights to the cultivation of land including the rights to bequeath and transfer his rights and was protected against arbitrary rental enhancement.

(2) The non-occupancy ryot was also in enjoyment of most of the rights of cultivation, similar to the occupancy ryot, including heritability, but excluding transferability. The non-occupancy ryots constitute a very small class of tenants in Bihar.

(3) More important numerically are the under-ryots, who are legally defined as those holding land under occupancy ryots. The under-ryot, like his overlord, could acquire occupancy rights, on twelve years uninterrupted possession, but no under-ryot, whether with or without occupancy rights can be ejected from his land except on grounds of (a) failure to clear arrears of rent, (b) misusing the land so as to nullify or reduce its utility for cultivation, and (c) breach of any specific term of the tenancy.

Tenants-at-will

From the above it would appear that almost all tenants as also under-tenants are equally protected against arbitrary ejectments as also arbitrary rental enhancements. In practice, however, over large parts of the State there exists a large body of tenants-at-will, paying either cash or kind rent, and holding land on a year-to-year basis. A large proportion of these is composed of the crop-shares, locally known as *bataidars*. An amendment of the Bihar Tenancy Act effected

in 1955 sought to regulate the proportion of the total output to be collected by the overlord as rent in kind from one half to seven-twentieth, and gave them a certain measure of protection against ejectment. Despite the 12-year possession rule the year-to-year lease system prevailed and ejectments or refusal to renew the lease made on suitable occasions denied accrual of occupancy rights to large numbers of under-tenants.

Like many other States, therefore, the problem of tenancy continues in Bihar and sub-letting by a tenant, occupancy or otherwise, is recognized, only ejectments or arbitrary enhancement of the rent burden on the sub-tenant being sought to be prevented. Continuance of sub-tenancy undoubtedly violates the ideal of land to the tiller which was the ultimate justification for the abolition of intermediaries and *zamindaries*.

LAND REFORMS (IMPOSITION OF CEILINGS) AMENDMENT BILL, 1959

Improvement in the Sub-Tenant's Status

It is only in the amendment of the Land Reforms Act effected by the legislature (pending assent of the Governor till the date of writing) in 1961 that the under-ryot has been sought to be given the right to purchase a *ryotwari* status in the context of the ceiling area to be retained by the overlord, the net position whereunder is that the rights of an overlord (*i.e.*, an occupancy ryot) over land in excess of ceiling are taken over by his under-ryot on payment of defined sum to the State Government, even on the overlord's land within the ceiling area in cultivating possession of the non-occupancy under-ryot if the overlord has not given notice of resumption of the land for personal cultivation. This is a positive step towards elimination of sub-letting to tenants-at-will which is now prevalent on a large scale.

Much of the efficacy of this step would depend upon the definition and interpretation of 'personal cultivation'. While conceptually, it is generally agreed that under personal cultivation the entire risks of farming have to be borne by the cultivator with only wage-paid labourers being permitted to be employed, in practice it may prove difficult to track down reality in many cases.

Status of Under-Ryots

The net position, thus, is that an under-ryot on land in excess of the ceiling area of the ryot is entitled to promotion to be a ryot on application to the Government and subject to payment of the prescribed compensation to the State Government. An under-ryot within the ceiling area of the ryot also becomes automatically a ryot with occupancy rights if the latter takes no steps to resume for personal cultivation the land in the former's possession, but shall enjoy the right of transferability only on payment of compensation as provided for in the Act. All such erstwhile under-ryots thereafter occupy the status of occupancy ryots holding land under the State Government. Under-ryots on land within the ryot's ceiling area who refuse to convert themselves to full-fledged occupancy ryots with transfer rights on the above condition may continue to hold land as occupancy ryots, without any right of transferability being, of course, subject to payment of rent. Even if the ryot seeks to resume the land for personal cultivation the under-ryot is protected from resumption ordinarily to the extent of five acres of cultivable land if his total holding is ten acres or more, besides his homestead. If however resumption from the under-ryot of land in excess of five acres held by the latter fails to

bring the total holding of the former upto the ceiling limit, the ryot may resume upto 50 per cent of all land held by the under-ryot, but in no case will the under-ryot be left with less than one acre of cultivable land, in addition to the homestead. An under-ryot who is dispossessed by the ryot on the ground of personal cultivation by the ryot shall be entitled to a compensation from him.

The ryot may, however, dispossess only the non-occupancy under-ryot for personal cultivation, but the Government may dispossess him from land outside the ryot's ceiling on the latter not applying to Government. Occupancy under-ryots, thus, it would appear, get automatically elevated to the position of occupancy ryots only within but not outside the ceiling area of the overlord for which they have to apply to the Government besides agreeing to payment of prescribed compensation. It is, incidentally, noteworthy that a ryot's land in possession of an occupancy under-ryot will be included in calculation of the ceiling area.

An under-ryot with or without occupancy rights holding land outside the ceiling area of a ryot may, if he does not apply to the State Government and does not pay compensation to the State Government, continue in occupation of the land only at the discretion of the State Government. Thus the occupancy rights of the occupancy under-ryot have been equated to the position of the non-occupancy under-ryot in relation to the State Government.

Restrictions on Subletting and Rent Payable by the Sublessee

The 1961 Act, logically, proceeds further to impose restrictions on future subletting except for minors, widows or persons suffering from any mental or physical disability, and for public servants with an income not exceeding Rs. 250 per month. A sublessor is not, however, to be permitted to charge more than 50 per cent of the cash rent payable by him for the land so sublet, where the rent is payable in cash. For kind rents, not more than one-fourth of the produce can be taken by the lessor, which is an improvement over the ratio of 7|20 prescribed by the *Bataidari* Amendment of 1955 to the Bihar Tenancy Act. The land sublet may be resumed by the lessor on the expiry of the lease period, and even earlier for non-payment of the rent or for use in a manner contrary to the terms of the tenancy.

The Ceiling

Proposals for imposition of land ceilings in Bihar were first mooted officially in 1955 in the form of the Bihar Land Ceilings and Management Bill, even before the Planning Commission, in the Second Plan, had clearly stated the policy of ceilings and land redistribution. The 1955 Bill was referred to a Joint Select Committee of the two Houses of the legislature, but due to various pressures from vested interests, the Bill was not taken up, and was allowed to lapse with the dissolution of the Assembly. It was in 1959 that the present Bill in its earlier form was introduced, differing in certain material respects from the 1955 Bill. After going through a Joint Select Committee, which considered it for more than a year, the Bill has, only at the last Autumn Session, emerged from both the Houses of the legislature and is awaiting the Governor's assent. The original 1959 Bill underwent substantial alterations in the Joint Select Committee and then, on the reported intervention of the Planning Commission, some further changes were effected in the Assembly in the ceiling limits proposed for various classes of land. It is important to note that whereas the 1955 Bill sought to regulate management of land together

with imposition of ceilings, the present Bill is confined to prescription of ceiling limits only. A novel feature of the present Bill, however, is the land levy, under which the State Government may acquire, without compensation, from one-sixth to one-twentieth of the area held by a person if he holds more than one acre of land, in pursuance of the land gift movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

The Bihar Bill, as approved by both the Houses of legislature, classifies the lands in the State into five categories with differing ceiling limits as follows: (i) Land capable of being irrigated by flow irrigation work, constructed, improved, maintained or controlled by a public body to have a ceiling of twenty acres; (ii) Land fit to be irrigated by lift irrigation works or tube wells constructed or maintained by a public body to have a limit of 30 acres; (iii) Horticultural land to have a limit of 40 acres; (iv) *Diara* land to have a limit of 50 acres; and (v) Hilly, sandy or surplus homstead land incapable of growing paddy, *rabi* or cash crops to have a limit of 60 acres. These limits, reported to have been finalised on the intervention of the Planning Commission, are generally much lower than the original proposals of the Bill or even the recommendations of the Select Committee. The limits as proposed in the Bill originally were 30, 45, 60, 75 and 90 acres respectively for classes I, II, III, IV and V lands. The limits as finally adopted, thus, are considerably more radical than original, and would leave a larger amount for redistribution. According to statements made in the legislature by the Revenue Minister, the ceilings prescribed would give about 10 lakh surplus acres and 5 lakh acres would be had from the land levy. These together with 5 lakh acres of reclaimed and *Khasmahal* waste lands would be available for distribution among 17 lakh landless agricultural labourers in the State, so that a minimum of 1 acre should be available for every family.

It would appear that the limits for various classes of land have been arrived at in an entirely *ad hoc* manner. Whereas the first two Plans spoke of the ceiling as a multiple of the family holding, and of the 'family holding' being a multiple of the 'basic holding'—the latter being the minimum area that is to be left over with a tenant after resumption by the owner for personal cultivation—the Bihar Bill, along with legislation in several other States, has not bothered about these concepts. The basis for the ceiling is the individual, but if the number of dependents of a landholder exceeds four, an allowance of one-fourth of the ceiling area for every additional member is to be given, upto a maximum of twice the permissible normal ceiling. A landholder, however, is permitted to retain, in addition to the ceiling area, his homstead not exceeding ten acres including the permanent structures thereon, besides orchards, pasturage, bamboo grooves, etc., not exceeding fifteen acres in all.

Re-settlement of Surplus Lands

The Bill makes provision for settlement of the surplus land with (i) co-operative farming societies of landless labourers, or where that is not feasible, (ii) among individual landless workers of the village or neighbouring villages, or (iii) persons displaced as a result of operation of the Act, with less than five acres of Class I or proportionate areas of other categories of lands, or (iv) holders with less than one acre of Class I or equivalent other land, and (v) other adjoining holders—in the above order of preference. The settlees, except the co-operative farming societies, will function as ryots under the State Government subject to the supervision of the *Gram Panchayat*, on payment of settlement fees and rental charges laid down in the Act. The *Gram Panchayats* shall ordinarily be responsible for management and settlement of the land, subject to the satis-

faction of the district collector. A co-operative society shall not acquire any occupancy right or rights of transfer, though subject to the permission of the collector, it may mortgage the land for raising a loan.

Exemptions

The only category of farms that is exempted from the operation of the proposed law is tea plantations. Lands in possession of Central and State Governments and local authorities like *Gram Panchayats* or a statutory authority like the Indian Lac Cess Committee besides those held by charitable, religious (subject to Government notification) and educational institutions or lands under management of law courts pending litigation are exempted from ceilings. Sugarcane farms owned and operated by sugar factories may be exempted by the State Government by notification for specified periods which may be extended from time to time. The Bill, thus, has not accepted the recommendations of the Second Plan with regard to exempting (i) orchards, (ii) specialized farms engaged in cattle breeding, dairying, etc., and (iii) efficiently managed farms consisting of compact blocks on which heavy investments and structural improvements have been made, and it has accepted only on a temporary basis the recommendations with regard to sugarcane farms run by sugarcane factories and has left them at the discretion of the State Government. It may be noted that in the first draft of the 1959 Bill sugarcane farms were sought to be exempted on a permanent footing but the Select Committee made the change as noted above.

Compensation

The Bill provides for the rates of compensation to be paid for different categories of lands to (i) ryots for land surplus over the ceiling on which there are no under-ryots as also for land on which there are under-ryots, (ii) to under-ryots by the State Government in case the Government displace them when the former do not desire ryoti status, (iii) to non-occupancy under-ryots by ryots when the latter resume land for personal cultivation from the former, and (iv) to Government by under-ryots for attaining ryoti status. Separate rates of compensation are laid down for standing trees.

The rates provided for in the original draft were substantially lowered by the Select Committee and incorporated as such in the Bill, but even then the present rates are considerably higher than what were laid down in the 1955 Bill. No compensation, of course, is provided for land to be surrendered under the levy clause.

Transfers effected after the 22nd October, 1959—the day the Bill was introduced into the legislature—are proposed to be disregarded in calculating the landholding of an individual.

Co-operative Farming

As has been mentioned already, the Bill seeks to encourage co-operative farming by giving the first priority in the settlement of the surplus land to co-operative farming societies of landless labourers. Co-operative farming has been an accepted goal of agrarian re-organization in India since the First Plan period, the preference being clearly reiterated in the Second Plan. Progress of co-operative farming in Bihar, together with progress in the co-operative movement in general, has, however, been very poor. In the Third Plan, Bihar has a

programme of setting up 250 co-operative farming societies. About 300 such societies were targeted and reported to have been nearly reached by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan. It is indeed more likely, thus, that the lands declared surplus will have to be settled with individuals in the majority of cases.

Emerging Agrarian Pattern

The structure of tenurial relations visualized in Bihar, thus, is in broad conformity with the outlines elaborated in the Five-Year Plans, *viz.*, a structure of small tenancy units (which may be equated with ownership units elsewhere) on the peasant proprietor model (though technically the tenant is not the owner) of the *ryotwari* pattern, under which subletting would be permissible only in a limited number of cases.

Under-ryots would either be dispossessed or raised to the status of ryots on payment of specified sums to the State Government. Landless labourers would be provided with land, albeit small pieces, preferably organized into co-operative farming societies. When fully implemented, the reforms as visualized in the Bihar Land Reforms (fixation of ceiling on land) Bill 1959, would indeed go a long way in bringing to a logical end the process of reforms starting with the abolition of *zamindaries*, nay much earlier, with the entire process of tenancy legislation starting from the Bengal Rent Act of 1859, with, of course, two important differences. Whereas the earlier tenancy laws aimed at provision of what used to be called the 'Three F's', *viz.*, fixity of tenure, fair rents and free transfers, the last objective is now being modified so as to prevent subletting. Secondly, the ideal of peasant proprietorship did not conflict with the growth of capitalistic farming. The ceiling idea is a direct negation of individualistic large scale farming. In the new order of things, whereas family farming may be tolerated, joint or co-operative farming is to be positively encouraged.

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The above, however, is a long period pattern that will take time to emerge. The immediate problem in every State, including Bihar, will be of implementing the ceilings legislation. No further steps beyond the Governor's assent is likely to be taken in Bihar before a new Government takes over after the 1962 elections. The administrative and technical problems of determination of the category of land of each one of the millions of landholders, preceded by submission of returns by them and followed by issue of notice to them, exercise of their choice of plots within the ceiling area, demarcation of the plots within the ceiling area, demarcation of the plots rendered surplus and their valuation, the process of resumption of land by ryots for personal cultivation from non-occupancy under-ryots and the numerous disputes likely to crop up therefrom, raising of under-ryots to the status of occupancy ryots and failing that, their likely displacement and finally the knotty problem of settlement of the surplus land among the various groups in the prescribed order of preference—all these and possibly many more unpredicted developments will create acute problems in comparison with which the process of abolition of intermediaries will appear to have been plain sailing. This is quite apart from the numerous problems connected with formation of a large number of co-operative farming societies. Except for the few isolated *Gramdan* villages in the State, Bihar has hardly had any spontaneous non-official growth of co-operative or joint farming. The resources and experience of the State Government too are quite inadequate. Unless, therefore, the Government

proceed cautiously to ensure a smooth transfer of surplus land from persons holding them to new settlees, the entire process of implementation of the current land reform measure may result in throwing much land, albeit temporarily, out of cultivation. The existing standards of administrative competence of *Gram Panchayats* either hardly ensure confidence in their ability to tackle the problem.

Problem of Fragmentation

The existence of fragmentation presents serious difficulties in both the demarcation of the surplus lands of individual holders as also in their re-settlement. Bihar started very late in the field of consolidation of holdings and has made poor progress so far. While a certain amount of compulsion may be effective in promoting co-operative farming among erstwhile landless labourers in the re-settlement of surplus lands, the fragmented nature of the surplus plots will prevent any technical advantages of compact cultivation from being derived, the more so as lands within ceiling areas of individuals cannot be brought, except voluntarily, within the purview of co-operative farms. It would, thus, appear that consolidation of holdings will have to be an essential condition of success in the implementation of the projected reforms.

The Prospect Ahead

It would appear, therefore, that while the legislative base for the building up of an equitable pattern of land relationship has largely been made ready, the task of getting the superstructure completed will require considerable time and hard and patient work. A measure like land ceilings will surely not be welcomed by the large numbers of ryots who will be adversely affected by it. They being the vocal and dominant section of the rural community in control of local politics and institutions including *Gram Panchayats*, Government is unlikely to get local co-operation in most places. The beneficiaries of land redistribution, being mostly economically insecure, illiterate and unorganized, would hardly be in a position to assist the Government. An important task connected with implementation of land reforms, therefore, would be organization of the prospective beneficiaries into well-knit units that may help in the implementation work. The co-operation of non-official agencies, including political parties, should be welcome, provided the latter do not attempt to make political capital out of it.

The above appear to be the main problems connected with the agrarian re-organization of rural Bihar on the basis of the reform measures in the final state of enactment. Apart from the egalitarian aspects of the issue, the economic criterion of their justifiability will be the impact that the reforms make on production. Apart from the issue of large *versus* small farms whose relative merits may still be debated at the academic level, Government's decision to go ahead with land ceilings and break up the few large farms that exist is not likely, by itself, to make much of a difference to the total output on grounds of economies of scale. From the long period standpoint, however, the unsuitability of the fragmented small holdings for agricultural progress is beyond any doubt. It is from that standpoint, besides having a potential for capital formation in agriculture and mobilization of rural surpluses that the co-operative organization appears inevitable. The issue of co-operativization will thus have to be seriously tackled after the immediate problems of land transfers, consequent on ceilings imposition, are got over successfully.