

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.

Various Administrative Improvements—1926—1936.

Measures relating to Agriculture.

A Regulation known as the Coffee Cess Regulation was enacted in 1926. An experimental coffee farm was established at Balehonnur, half the cost of which was borne by the coffee planters. It was placed in charge of an officer of high attainments who resided on the spot and was assisted by a scientific staff competent to deal with all aspects of the problem. Subsequently, the equipment of the farm was improved and a small advisory committee consisting of Indian and European planters was constituted in 1928 to assist the Director. Later at the request of the United Planters' Association of Southern India which came forward to co-operate with the Mysore Agricultural Department, a European scientific officer employed by the Association was placed to work under the Director of Agriculture at this experimental station. The cultivation and study of cardamoms and pepper were also included in the programme of work of the station.

In 1927 the Government sanctioned a scheme for the supply of small electrically driven pumps on hire-purchase system for pumping water from the wells. The Electrical Department undertook to supply and instal the pumping outfits complete and to put them into operation at the start. No extra assessment was levied when dry lands were irrigated by means of these pumping installations.

Agricultural education made steady progress. In addition to the residential school at Ramakrishnapur which owed its existence to the generosity of Mr. G. Venkataramaniah, a citizen of Bangalore, a school was also established at Hassan at the instance of the District Board.

Now turning to agricultural improvements, two measures sanctioned in 1929 were calculated to have far reaching effects

To remedy these shortcomings, the Mysore Land Record of Rights Regulation was enacted in April 1927 and the rules under the Regulation were also issued soon after. The scheme was for the first time introduced in 1927-28 in three selected taluks and was received with great willingness by the people and the scheme is being gradually extended to all parts of the State.

The Land Revenue system in Mysore presented certain defects which were repeatedly urged on Government as calling for remedial measures. The rules did not provide for the compulsory mutation of Khates with every change of title and for the separate recognition of all persons having interest in land as mortgagees and owners of portions of Survey Numbers or co-sharers in the Revenue Accounts. Much difficulty was also experienced by Government in the collection of land revenue as the collecting officials did not know as to who was responsible for the payment of assessment. There were also frequent complaints about the disabilities caused to the inferior holders whose rights were not safeguarded by the existing law.

Record of Rights.

The first was the conversion of the Nagenahalli farm into a paddy-breeding station where work on the improvement of this important crop was actively pursued. The second was the organisation in the Agricultural Department of a section to control the distribution of pure seed of the new varieties of crops grown on various farms maintained by the department. The Royal Commission on Agriculture laid stress in their report on the importance of providing an agency such as this and the Mysore Government was the first in India to take action on their recommendation. An interesting development was the manufacture of improved ploughs by local blacksmiths and many of them proved to be excellent copies of imported ones. Other agricultural implements the sales of which were steadily growing were cultivators and sugarcane mills and both these came to be almost entirely of local manufacture.

The salient features of this Regulation are—1. A Record of Rights is to be maintained for every village giving particulars of the names of all persons who are holders, occupants, owners or mortgagees of land, or the assignees of its rent or revenue, and the nature and extent of the interests of such persons. 2. It is made obligatory for all persons acquiring rights in land to report the fact to the authorities concerned leading to suitable modifications of the entries recorded, thereby keeping the Record of Rights up-to-date. 3. No suit or application relating to agricultural land is to be entertained in civil courts unless accompanied by certified extracts from the registers maintained under this Regulation. An entry in the Record of Rights is to be presumed to be true until the contrary is proved. 4. Every plot of land belonging to different persons in the same Survey Number is to be separately measured and mapped and particulars regarding area and assessment of each such sub-holding are to be recorded separately in the register.

The objects of the scheme are, in the words of the Government Notification, to check litigation in regard to land and to facilitate its disposal by the courts, to reduce unnecessary expenditure by the ryots in executing and registering documents and to protect them against fraud and fabrication of false claims. The Record is also intended to be of assistance to Government as well as to the ryots in the distribution of assessment among the various claimants, the grant of takavi and land improvement loans and the grant of suspension or remission of land revenue. The system incidentally facilitates the work of the Land Mortgage Banks and other forms of credit societies by presenting clearly the facts about the value and security of mortgaged lands.

Improvement of Live-Stock and Veterinary Aid.

One of the most important problems connected with agriculture in Mysore is the improvement of live-stock and Mysore cattle have a deservedly high reputation in India and large numbers are exported annually to places outside the State. The Government realising fully the existing and potential value of live-stock and the importance of its improvement appointed in 1929 a strong committee consisting of representatives from all the districts and

experts to investigate the whole question of agricultural improvement, including the control of epidemic diseases. A Serum Institute had been established in 1928 in order to save animals from epidemics. Further measures were also now taken to provide better breeding stock by establishing a large cattle-breeding station at Ajampur in the Kadur District. Almost all the taluks were also provided with veterinary dispensaries, the buildings required being donated in several instances by private persons.

Unemployment and Bhadra Agricultural Colony.

At the Economic Conference held in 1929, Dr. Coleman in a speech he made laid considerable stress on the necessity of an attempt being made to place young men trained in agriculture on the land and referred to the extensive areas in the State, more especially in Amrut Mahal Kavals and date-reserves and under the new sources of irrigation where also a sound agricultural training would enable young men without occupation to earn a decent living. The Government had also appointed a committee presided over by the late C. S. Balasundaram Iyer, then Member of the State Council, to investigate the problem of middle class unemployment in Mysore. Again at the Economic Conference held in the year following, Sir Mirza Ismail gave expression to the opinion that middle class unemployment was not the whole of the problem, though it happened at the time to be a specially urgent part of it. The most disturbing phenomenon in the country as circumstances stood at the time, said Sir Mirza, was undoubtedly the attitude of mind of the young men who were bitter and disappointed on account of economic despair and the only hope lay in turning more and more of the educated young men towards a vocational career, especially industrial and agricultural pursuits. Besides the Technological College which would be opened as a memorial of the Silver Jubilee of the Maharaja which was expected to afford some solution of the problem, it was also intended to establish an agricultural colony as an experiment under the Bhadra Canal. The Dewan concluded his speech in these words: "This problem of unemployment is a really difficult problem..... We cannot allow things to drift and we must make the utmost possible effort

to discover a remedy. It will not do to let our young men remain a prey to pessimism. We must fill their hearts—they are the future hope of the country—with that spirit of buoyant optimism without which life becomes merely a drab existence.”

The Economic position of the Agriculturists during this period.

During this period there were great fluctuations in the economic position of the agriculturists. Between the years 1914-20 there was a gradual rise of prices from year to year and the pinnacle was reached in the year 1919-20 following the cessation of the Great War. Subsequent to 1920 the prices began to fall until 1923, when they rose again and kept steady until 1928. From this year they began to decline once again. The fall continued from year to year until 1932 when it was arrested and the prices showed a tendency to rise. The rise was however very temporary and the prices began to decline once again, until they reached the lowest level in June 1934. During the period of high prices following the conclusion of the war, the agriculturists found themselves able to increase their standard of life, but at the same time their debts also increased as the appreciation of land values tempted and enabled them to borrow more largely.

The Special Economic Survey officer for the Malnad appointed in 1925 having proposed legislation on the lines of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act of Bombay to afford similar relief to agricultural debtors, especially in the Malnad, a committee of officials and non-officials with Mr. K. Chandy, Member of the State Council as President, was appointed to consider the report of this special officer. The committee having recommended legislation being undertaken by Government on the lines of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act for the relief of indebted agriculturists in the State, a note on the subject was placed before the Representative Assembly at the Budget Session of 1926 and a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council in December of the same year and was finally passed into law in July 1928. This Regulation applied to agriculturists whose yearly income from agriculture did not exceed Rs. 500 and the aggregate income from all sources did not exceed Rs. 1000. Under

its provisions, immovable property which was not specifically mortgaged for debt was exempt from sale and in the case of all debts, secured as well as unsecured, courts could permit repayment in instalments extending normally up to eight years. This Regulation was at first made operative in the three Malnad taluks of Manjarabad, Sagar and Koppa and subsequently on the recommendation of the Malnad Economic Depression Enquiry Committee extended to all the Malnad taluks. Between the years 1929 and 1933 the prices of agricultural commodities fell by nearly 50 per cent and the gross money value realised by the agriculturist decreased to that extent. In this connection, it may be of interest to know what causes have, according to the "World Economic Survey, 1932-33, League of Nations," contributed to the great economic depression prevailing throughout the world. "There is general agreement that the causes of the decline of prices are many and complex. Important and far-reaching changes in the geographical and technical structure of industry and trade, equally important social developments such as a rising standard of living together with lessened flexibility of adjustment, political difficulties arising from reparation and war debt payments and tariff wars, monetary arrangements connected with the post-war currency stabilisations and the working of the new gold standard after it has been restored, international capital movements, security speculation and exchange difficulties—all entered into the background of the price fall. The exact degree to which these various factors entered into the combination of causes which precipitated the depression has been a subject of lively controversy."

In April 1928 the Government sanctioned the opening of a Central Land Mortgage Bank at Bangalore, its operations being confined to the Malnad taluks of Sagar, Koppa and Manjarabad and the Maidan taluk of Tumkur and first entrusted the general supervision and control over the operations of the Bank to the Director of Industries and Commerce. In view, however, of the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, as also in response to the general desire expressed by the members of the Legislative Council and the Representative Assembly, the Govern-

ment decided to bring the proposed Land Mortgage institution within the purview of the Co-operative Societies Regulation and the latter was suitably amended in 1929 to effect this purpose. The Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank commenced work in December 1929. Government sanctioned certain concessions to the Bank by way of guaranteeing the principal and interest of the debentures to be floated and of reimbursing the cost of its establishment for the first two years.

At the session of the Representative Assembly held in October 1933 a representation was made that the Agriculturists' Relief Act might be extended to all the taluks of the State. Government accordingly by a notification dated 30th December 1933 directed the extension of the Regulation to all parts of the State with effect from 1st January 1934. This extension of the Regulation proved in practice, however, as one not quite of unmixed good. Representations to this effect were made at the session of the Representative Assembly held in June 1934. It was said that the wholesale extension of the Regulation had adversely affected the honest money-lender and that it had also resulted in considerable shrinkage of agricultural credit. The question also formed the subject of discussion at the session of the Legislative Council which soon after followed.

The Government appointed a committee in July 1934 presided over by Mr. N. Madhava Rao to make a rapid enquiry into the extent to which the fall in the price of agricultural produce had affected the resources, debt obligations and credit facilities of the land-owning and cultivating classes in different parts of the State and to report upon the nature and extent of the assistance that might be given to relieve them from the difficulties caused by the depression. The committee after investigation arrived at certain conclusions and of the main conclusions, the first related to the effect of the depression on the different classes of ryots concerned with agriculture as their occupation. The fall in prices which began in 1931 did not, the committee said, affect all classes of ryots equally. The field labourers who constituted about a fifth of the agricultural

population were little worse off than before. Their wages in grain remained unchanged. Money wages too kept steady during the earlier years of the depression and where they showed a decline, the fall had been less in proportion than the fall in prices, so that the real wages of agricultural labour appeared scarcely to suffer. The tenant cultivators had no obligation to pay taxes. Their rents were generally paid in kind and even where money rents were in vogue, they were, except in the Malnad, generally in a position to dictate their own terms to their land-lords. The peasant proprietors formed the bulk of the agricultural population. They generally grew all the grain they required for their household and such small amounts as they required for payment of services, taxes or to meet other miscellaneous items were obtained by selling non-food crops or from the profits of subsidiary occupations. There were various occupations available in the vicinity of towns and cities such as selling milk, curds and vegetables, hiring of carts which formed an important source of income to the suburban ryot. But the peasant owners in the interior parts had no such advantages. The cultivation of non-food crops, the rearing of cattle, goats, sheep and silkworms and suchlike occupations on which they depended had ceased to be remunerative. It was believed that this class of agriculturist was more heavily in debt than either the tenant cultivator or the labourer who enjoyed comparatively little credit. The classes which were most hard hit by the depression were the land-holders who did not directly cultivate their lands or cultivated only a small portion of their holdings. The fall of prices did not affect also the growers of all the crops to the same extent. In the cultivation of some of the crops like ragi, jola, cotton and groundnut, the margin of net profit left to the cultivator was comparatively low.

The second main conclusion related to the increase of agricultural indebtedness. According to the calculations made by the Banking Enquiry Committees of Bombay and Madras, the average debt of the agriculturist in these provinces was Rs. 50 and Rs. 49 respectively per head. As the conditions in Mysore were not very different, the average debt of the agriculturist in Mysore at Rs. 50 per head was considered a fair assumption. On this

basis the agricultural debt in the State, taking the prevailing depressed prices, was calculated to amount to about Rs. 35 crores representing nearly 30 times the land revenue assessment of the agricultural lands. At this time, out of a total area of 87,85,173 acres of arable land, 81,48,898 acres or 92.8 per cent were under occupancy.

The principal recommendations made by this committee to reduce this appalling magnitude of debt were the expansion of Land Mortgage Banks in order to enable the agriculturists to convert their debts to long term loans which might be repaid out of current income and conciliation between debtors and creditors. The Government agreeing generally with these recommendations have started action in the directions required.

The Government also appointed in September 1934 another committee presided over by Rajasabhabhushana Mr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, retired Member of Council, to examine how far the extension of the Agriculturists' Relief Regulation to the whole State had affected the credit of the agriculturists and to report in what respects, if any, the Regulation required to be amended and to submit also a draft Bill embodying the recommendations of the committee for any legislation that might be required.