The pressure on food increased tremendously as a result of war and the year 1942 brought the crisis with a total closing of the Burma rice market. Consequently, the Food Production Conference was called which at its meeting held on April 6, 1942, formulated a "grow more food campaign" scheme. Although it laid emphasis on both intensive and extensive cultivation by splitting up the whole work into various heads, the chief plank was the diversion of land from short-staple cotton to foodgrains. Various State and Provincial Governments promulgated certain ordinances regulating the cultivation of crops like cotton, tobacco and jute. As a result of all these efforts, the area under all foodgrain went up from 156.0 million acres in 1941-42 to 183.0 millions in 1944-45 and that under cotton fell from 20.5 to 11.4 million acres during the same period.

Encouraged by the above achievements, the campaign which was originally launched as a purely temporary measure, was extended for another 5 years in September, 1946 and placed on more or less a permanent footing after the partition. The progress was further examined by the annual Foodgrains Policy Committee, 1948, which laid down a target of additional production of 10 million tons.

1. This was because war affected the cotton trade of India with Japan. (Gf., H. L. D. B. Durwala, A Hundred Years of Indian Cotton, pp. 24, 107 & 2. The Legislations passed were:
   The Cochin Proclamation of 1942, the Bombay Growth of Food Crops act, 1944, and the Hyderabad Restriction of Cash Crops Cultivation Regulation, 1944.
The Government was pledged to achieve self-sufficiency by the end of 1951. Soon after the devaluation of pound by the United Kingdom in September, 1949, the importance of cash crops like cotton and jute was also realised. This resulted in the declaration of the Integrated Production Plan. The Eight Point Scheme put forward by Mr. K.M. Munshi, the then Food Minister, embraced increased production of foodgrains as well as of a number of commercial crops.

It became quite clear early in 1951 that the self-sufficiency pledge could not be fulfilled. A Ten Year Programme was, therefore, launched at the Coimbatore Conference in July, 1951, which was to serve as supplementary to the short-term schemes already in progress. Meanwhile the country had decided to develop her economic resources on a planned footing. Agricultural re-organisation and reform were given a position of basic importance, definite targets were laid down to increase produce of various crops and specific allocations were made for the different schemes like irrigation, reclamation, manure/fertilizers, and seed distribution.

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CAMPAIGN

The increased production, however, could not bring about a reduction in imports and, therefore, the scheme became a convenient target for attacks from all sides. The fact was that due to the then food policy being followed by the Government, procurements or imports had actually no relation with the home production and this was even acknowledged by the Government.

1. The necessity for this contingency arose because Pakistan did not devalue her currency along with India. Cotton and jute imports from that country thus became costly and India was not prepared to pay that price.


It is, however, conceded that the results obtained were not commensurate with the money and energy expended and the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee, 1952 rightly said that “the movement has failed to arouse widespread enthusiasm.” The rural life is an integrated one and no lasting results can be achieved if its each aspect is dealt with in isolation.

Unless, therefore, a burning desire to change their old time outlook can be created in the sixty million families living in villages, their enthusiasm for a higher standard of living or “a will to live better” cannot be aroused. The campaign had been conceived “in terms of work and not in terms of production” in the villages. The food problem was attacked from the angle of material investments made in the land namely, wells, seeds, fertilizers, etc., and the human beings who lived in the villages and cultivated the fields were practically ignored. This aspect is clear from the GMFE Committee Report, op. cit., p. 40.

2. This was not in any way a new finding. A reference for similar views may be made to the Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the Crops and Soils Wing of the Board of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (pp. 54-55) where it was pointed out that “The problem of increasing agricultural production could not be solved by any single formula. It was a complex and complicated problem involving different aspects of social and economic life”.

“In Denmark, Ireland, and elsewhere rural reform was tried piecemeal and proved abortive. It was not till that great co-operator and rural pioneer, the late Sir Horace Plunkett, evolved his triple plan for ‘better agriculture, better business and better living’; that the European farmer could see the dawn of a new era.” (Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan in his foreword to ‘Better Villages’ by P.L. Brayne, 1946 (Third edition). For similar findings in China, refer to the work done by James Y. C. Yen in pre-communist China. One of his first discoveries was the relative ineffectiveness of a haphazard and piecemeal approach in all problems relating to rural development. (cf., Ambassador’s Report, op. cit., p. 196).

3. Cf., Wilcox (op. cit., p. 60) who opined, “Time and again my informants in India insisted that the first step in breaking the inertia of centuries is somehow to inspire the peasant with a desire for a better life. But simple as that proposition sounds, it is easier said than done. A pessimism born of bitter experience, reinforced by religious precepts, ha in the rigidity of caste petrification, and infused with the belief that existence is merely a miserable round of reincarnations from which one is fortunate to escape, is not a fertile soil in which to sow a hope program of progress”.

has also been emphasised by the Royal Commission on Agriculture which pointed out as early as 1928 that the demand for a better life could be stimulated only by a deliberate and concerted effort to improve the general conditions of countryside. It was also made clear that the responsibility for initiating the steps in the direction lay with the Government.

**Village Development Schemes**

It would be wrong to assume that India had not started any village development and village improvement schemes. The pioneering work was done by Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and F.L. Brayne, but none of these schemes could make much headway. The then Government of the United Provinces also organised a pilot project in 1932. It was given a good deal of impetus after the establishment of a popular government in 1937. This finally led to the organisation of a pilot project at Mahewa in Etawah in September 1948.


2. Rabindranath Tagore founded an institution for rural reconstruction at Shantiniketan, West Bengal, in 1922. This comprised an area of about 50 villages.

The "Constructive Programme" of Mahatma Gandhi aimed at creating a non-violent army by eradicating village evils. F.L. Brayne tried a bold experiment in the Gurgan District, Punjab, "Village Uplift in India, 1937".

The American Presbyterian Mission established in 1945 the Indian Village Service, Kirka Development Project in Madras, 1946-47 and "Sarvodaya Scheme" in Bombay, October, 1949, are some of the other such programmes.

Mention in this connection may also be made of the technique for rural reconstruction evolved by Dr. Spencer at Martandam Extension Centre, Travancore State in South India (*Dr. Spencer Hatch, Towards Freedom From Want*). The underlying idea was the principle of self-help, cooperative association and common endeavour in all aspects of rural uplift. The experiment was successfully tried in Baroda State at the Asona Centre, in Hyderabad State at the Pattanchen Centre, Pudukkottai in South India and Mysore.

*Dr. Spencer Hatch, Further Upward in Rural India, OUP, 1939, pp. 154-70.*
Major objective of the project was "to see what degree of productive and social improvement, as well as of initiative, self confidence and co-operation, can be achieved in the village of a district not the beneficiary of any set of special circumstances and resources such as hydro-electric development or large scale industry or other non-typical high cost and high priority development. The problem is also to ascertain how quickly those results may be obtainable consistent with their remaining permanently part of the people's mental, spiritual and technical equipment and outlook after the special pressure is lifted. In the context of India's urgent needs we must not take too long but we cannot afford the superficial, nor, if the results are to be permanent and self-renewing, must we use 'high pressure' methods."

Etawah thus promised to fill the void by bringing the field and the laboratory in close touch with each other. The approach was direct and humane and technique simple. The field worker not only removed the villagers' age-old suspicion of the outside benefactor but often succeeded in creating enthusiasm among them for development work. His attitude was also different from the old Kipling method of eternally condemning the common man in India.

Pilot Projects in Etawah and Gorakhpur Districts (UP) were initiated in 1948 and 1950 respectively, and covered about 100 villages and 100,000 people. The results have been strikingly successful. In Etawah, for instance, the wheat yield on the entire project area of 6000 acres has increased by over 20 per cent, largely by improved seed; and the area


2. J.K. Jain, An Indian Experiment in Rural Development; the Etawah Pilot Project, International Labour Review, October/November, 1953, p.395. Mr. Jain has also given many examples of the actual way, the village was approached and tackled.
supplies seed to a further 45,000 acres. In more restricted areas better tillage in general, including especially the use of legumes as green manures, has resulted in increases of as much as 60 per cent.

The other difficulty which had so far stood in the way of increased production was the inability of official organisation to bring the results of research to the doors of the cultivator. Research projects in the country had not been planned with this fundamental point in view. Etawah showed the way in this direction as well.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The success attained at Etawah encouraged the Government to try the experiment on a much wider scale. The failure of the self-sufficient programme early in 1952, and the findings of the CMFE Committee Report in June, 1952, hastened the initiation of the scheme. The first set of Community Projects was thus launched on October 2, 1952. They consisted of 55 such projects spread all over the country, covering 18,4 thousand villages with a population of 16 million. The First Five-Year Plan envisaged to bring 120 thousand villages with a population of 74 millions under the purview of the Development Programme and the target for the Second Five-Year Plan is to cover the whole of the country by Community Projects of the National Extension Service.


2. V.T. Krishnamachari, Speech before the National Development Council, Indian Express, November 11, 1954.

3. The National Extension Service Organisation was started in October, 1953 to expedite rural development by reducing the programme in terms of expenditure. Extension of community projects on nation-wide scale with the existing administrative machinery and resources would have taken 35 years. The new organisation plans to complete it by 1961 (S.S. Sabnis, Rural Development in India, International Labour Review, May, 1954, p. 467.)
The contribution of Community Projects in achieving our food targets of 7.6 million tons under the First Five Year Plan was of the order of 5 lakh tons. We do not know the exact basis of this estimate. Food production during the year 1953-54, however, showed an increase of 15 million tons over the base year 1949-50, exceeding the target by 4.4 million tons. The share of Community Projects in this increase which will certainly be appreciable is, however, difficult to assess.

The projects aim at an intensive development of the entire rural life and include programmes of irrigation, stepping up the standard of agricultural practice by supplying good seeds and fertilizers, formation of multipurpose co-operative societies and cottage as well as small scale industries. They are bound to have a profound effect, although most of it indirect, on the agricultural economy of the country, as discussed in Part Two of this study, experimental and research work done in the country has been of the highest magnitude. The introduction of these improved techniques on a large scale has always been a difficult problem in underdeveloped agricultural economies. It is here, more than anywhere else, that these projects will be of maximum help to us.

A Programme Evaluation Organisation has already been set up in the Planning Commission. Evaluation Report on the working of the projects for the first year was published in May, 1954, which concluded that "a year's experience is too short to supply an adequate basis for judgement". But for a "very brief initial period of scepticism the rural people in most parts have exhibited not only a readiness but an actual eagerness to 'move with the times'."

2. ibid., p.46.
The greatest visible achievement of the projects is that of arousing enthusiasm among the people. This is evident from the fact that the people's contribution, in cash, kind or labour to the physical achievements under the development programme during the period October 1962, to September 1966, was of the value of Rs. 18.70 crores as against Government expenditure of Rs. 31.03 crores. People's contribution for 1,000 persons worked out to Rs. 2,828. Restricting ourselves only to Community Project areas, we find that the figure goes up to Rs. 4,680 per thousand persons.

It is clear that while the work in Government departments calls for a re-orientation of the whole machinery, "a stage has already been reached when, from participation, people in some parts have moved on to active prodding."

This is mostly due to Village Level Workers' personal contacts with the villagers. An enquiry made into this aspect of the problem in 16 villages revealed that "the proportion of respondents who had been personally approached varied in different villages, from 78 per cent in the Punjab to 11 per cent in Bihar. The over-all average for the 16 villages was 37 per cent and for the cultivators alone it was 44 per cent, indicating that nearly half of them had been approached for participation in some programme."

This should not make us complacent about the whole affair. "The circle can be broken", in the words of Sir Russell, "only when the village welfare movement becomes a vocation for India's young people.

1. The Indian Express, March 1, 1966.
and they realise the truth of Tagore's saying: 'In the keeping of the village lies the cradle of the race'. The task is enormous for there are some 700,000 (now 568,089) villages, and if one may judge from income tax returns, the total middle six class population of India/which the leadership must come - is only about half a million." 

For proper leadership we will, perhaps, have to learn a lesson from the U.S.A. The method employed there for extension work was to select intelligent farmers and persuade them to follow the improved practices. Those who were successful were asked to use their farms as demonstration farms for the benefit of their neighbours. During a short period of 10 years, the number of such farms went up to 70,000 in five States only.

Progress there has, in fact, been tremendous. So much so that the idea has travelled from the country to the city. In 1950 nearly 50,000 "residential farms" were reported. We in India have to make our villages equally attractive. A solution of the rural problem will then and only then be somewhere in sight.


Mahatma Gandhi also spoke practically in the same strain when he said, "If the village perishes, India would perish too. India will be no more India."