

# NEW WORLD NEWS

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Dr MS Pawar talking with farmers from Maharashtra and Gujarat.

## Farmers plan for development

AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY STAFF, farmers, scientists and journalists, 250 people in all, gathered at Asia Plateau, the MRA centre in India, earlier this month for a farmers' rally. They came in buses from Kolhapur, Bombay and Pune, and on foot from the surrounding villages.

The rally was part of a conference on the theme 'Agriculture for Tomorrow's World', which dealt with the questions 'Are the impediments to the blast-off of world agriculture only technical and economic?' and 'How do we infuse the politics of care into world agriculture?' Among the subjects for discussion were restructuring human relationships, evolving practical solutions and finding adequate aims and values.

Discussion centred on how to bring the change in attitude in people that is the key to effective development. 'Never was the world richer in material goods than today, and never has there been a greater poverty of the spirit, an unconcern for our neighbour,' said Dr MS Pawar, former Vice-Chancellor of Rahuri Agricultural University, in his opening remarks as chairman. 'I cannot think of any solution better than the unflinching practice of absolute love, unselfishness, integrity and purity. We will never be able to practice them unless we listen to the still, small voice of God from within. This is not a counsel of perfection, but a prescription for today's world, dominated not only by science and technology, but by greed.'

Six Maharashtra rural development projects were represented by their directors or responsible executives. These projects, sponsored by industry or by charities, have become the spearhead of advance in many parts of India. The directors told of their work of freeing men from the grip of moneylenders, helping farmers to get the fertilisers, seeds and other things they need to increase their production, and encouraging co-operative efforts in village improvement.

They also spoke of the heartbreak when cash returns, resulting from farm improve-

ments, are dissipated by alcohol, and of the importance of moral standards in family life.

One young man who works on one of these development projects told of his discovery of the 'inner voice' as a directing force in his life. 'I have 28 young men in one village who are unemployed and ask me what to do,' he said. 'I don't know what to say. If I listen to the inner voice myself, I can offer them that experience, and help them to find their own answers.'

Delegates to the conference examined the crops of wheat, maize and lucerne, and the trial areas where varieties of wheat, grasses and legumes are being tested. They also saw the pure-bred herd of Jersey cows, and the chickens, which provide the meat, milk and eggs for the conference centre. Of special interest was a hand-operated threshing machine designed by Intermediate Technology, using only readily available bicycle parts.

### Jolt people

Farmers from Britain, France, Denmark and Sweden attended the conference. Describing the development of the co-operative movement in Scandinavia, Ove Jensen from Sweden and Keld Jorgensen from Denmark described the conditions when the farmers, at that time comprising 80 per cent of the

population, were demoralised by poverty and alcoholism. In each country, men of faith had arisen whose moral conviction had inspired a new quality of living among the farmers, and had spurred on men of wealth to start schools for the ordinary people. This led to the growth of the co-operative movements which have transformed the life of farmers in Scandinavia. But materialism had crept in with affluence, they said, and a further moral and spiritual revolution was needed to jolt people out of comfort and apathy and help them play their part in ending world poverty, just as their ancestors had ended national poverty.

A British livestock farmer, Pat Evans, said: 'It has given us joy to be welcomed into the homes of Indian farmers and to understand some of the ways we can work together. Farmers can be the bridge between rich and poor nations. The ordinary man can take unexpected initiatives. This is the essence of real democracy. As we set to work to answer the problems in world agriculture, rather than waiting for someone else to set the lead, the farmers will be a demonstration of a working democracy.'

A professor from Ahmednagar commented, 'I have been to many conferences, but this one has been unique. It has not been so much a question of agriculture or tomorrow, but of myself and today.'



Farmers and university professors examine crops on an experimental plot at Asia Plateau—a project undertaken in association with the Mahatma Phule Agricultural University.

# Agriculture and tomorrow's society

What can the farmer teach today's industrialised world? Pierre Flandrin, Editor of the weekly 'La France Agricole', spoke on this during the industrial session of the MRA assembly at Caux, Switzerland, last year. We print extracts from his address.

AGRICULTURE has gone through a technical revolution. Farmers have welcomed progress. But they have been practical about it.

There have been no lack of ideologists who have advised us to follow industry in its tendency towards creation of large production units. The farmer has resisted this, above all because he was unwilling to give up his personal responsibility. He just did not want to join large collectives and leave to qualified 'experts' the decision on what he

was to carry out.

If he makes mistakes, which, of course, happens, then he has to pay for them quickly and dearly. That makes him cautious. Two hundred and fifty years ago Montesquieu said, 'I love farmers. They are not intellectual enough to think up stupid ideas.'

Agriculture is a simple art, otherwise it could not be practised by millions of farmers with little intellectual education. Things are simple, but difficult to carry out. It is difficult to cultivate the earth at the right moment, to choose the correct time for sowing, to sow at the right density with the most suitable seed.

Perhaps agriculture, with the two attributes of realism and quality of execution, can show the present-day world how to have a technical revolution without giving up one's traditions.

## No obstacle

To rigidly organised industry, we are demonstrating the value of freedom. Every farmer remains free in his planning and in the shaping of his future. The work is hard, always full of risks, and the outcome can

never be foreseen. But because he carries the risks himself, he works with a devotion and perseverance such as he would never summon up if others planned for him.

The farmer is employer and head of the family at the same time. He builds up his concern as he wishes, but also with reference to his family and coming generations. He understands that crop failures and setbacks delay his plans and he must one day leave to his successor the completion of the work he has begun. Today there are less and less people ready to undertake something that does not promise quick success, or tackle a job whose fruits they will not enjoy.

Agricultural production has doubled whilst the number of those employed has halved—a production increase of 400 per cent. Not only the farmers have benefited; they have passed on a lot to the consumer, so that today only 30 per cent of a French family's budget is spent on food.

The farmer teaches us confidence in a time of seething unrest. He has revolutionised work techniques without destroying traditional structures. He has thereby proved that the latter need not be an obstacle to technical, scientific, economic and social progress.

## If that fertiliser went East

OVE JENSEN'S ESTATE in Sweden comprises 250 hectares of agricultural land and 900 hectares of forest. He grew up on a farm. 'I have never known anything else,' he says. 'When I was 18, my father died. So it went without question that, as the eldest son, I left school and took over the farm.'

In 1961 Ove Jensen came with his wife to an MRA conference at Caux, Switzerland. He had brought his skis, hoping for a few good runs—but he scarcely set foot outside the house. The two weeks brought upheavals in the lives of the Jensens.

'I met some white farmers from Kenya and was impressed by the quality of their living,' he says. 'They based their lives on absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. When I tried to find what these standards might mean for my life, I had some unexpected thoughts. They concerned tax affairs, alcohol and my way of life.'

### Read in Parliament

'I had not been paying my taxes honestly for seven years. I decided to put that right. I discovered that the obligation to pay back was retroactive only over five years. Even so, the amount I had to raise was painfully large.'

'I wrote to the Finance Minister telling him why I was doing it. I told him that it was comparatively easier for us farmers to evade taxes than it was for our workers, whose taxes were deducted from their wages, and that this was probably a cause of bitterness

among workers. Then I apologised for my dishonesty.

'Shortly afterwards there was a debate on taxes in the Swedish Parliament. James Dickson, a member of parliament, rose and declared that honesty over taxes would increase if more people went to Caux. Turning to the Finance Minister, he asked, 'Don't you think so?' The latter said that he had just received a letter from a man who had been at Caux. He pulled my letter out of his pocket and read it aloud. This incident was picked up by many of the newspapers in the country.'

### Exploited soil

'Farmers like receiving guests in the evenings. Much alcohol is then consumed. My wife and I had an agreement that I would drive to the party and she would drive home afterwards. When we decided to give up alcohol, and not to offer any, the ten labourers' families on our farm were hit by it too. Today they agree with the new arrangement and the excessive consumption of alcohol has been reduced.'

'Our third decision affected our whole way of life. Till then our aim had been to make the greatest possible profit out of the farm. We took a look at the needs of the world and, with these in view, tried to reorganise. When we sought from God what changes we ought to undertake, we thought to increase our milk production. This seemed absurd since the government was pressurising farmers to produce less milk, and the price of milk was very low. But we thought that if every farmer cut down production, in five years' time we should have too little milk. So we obeyed the thought. We built a new cowshed, considerably bigger than the existing one. In a short time the situation changed. The govern-

ment had to raise the price of milk. Today the situation has stabilised. But we are glad that we built the cowshed in 1963 when the costs were still low.'

Ove Jensen does not find it easy to visualise the needs in other parts of the world. So he wanted to get a picture on the spot. In 1966 he visited various African countries, together with other farmers—Kenya, Tanzania, Rhodesia, Nigeria and Sudan. Later he got to know conditions in India too, and was deeply disturbed by the poverty there.

'We in the West concentrate on getting more and more for ourselves and do not think that elsewhere in the world the needs are much greater than ours,' he says. 'In Europe, we use more and more fertiliser in order to raise production. You get a good return for the first hundred kilos of fertiliser used, but a much smaller one for the last hundred kilos. If we were to apply a hundred kilos of fertiliser to the poor soil of India, which has been exploited for years without being fertilised, there would be an enormous increase in production.'

### Untenable situation

'We in the West are quite ready to give up our surplus food to the developing countries. But that creates an untenable situation, for they cannot build up effective distribution organisations if they only receive when we have a good harvest. If we seriously wish to help, we must plan for five or ten years. We must commit ourselves to a continuous delivery and organise our production to that end. No one likes to tie himself down, but we must be ready to make sacrifices.'

Reprinted from 'Caux Information'.

# Inter-continental Community

by Chris Evans

BRITAIN BECAME A FULL MEMBER of the European Economic Community's (EEC) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) this year after five years' transition. It is a policy which, by close integration of farming and marketing, aims to give adequate returns to all the farmers of the Community, and to distribute the food effectively. The need to do these two things has made agriculture the most closely integrated industry in the EEC. As such it is a test case for the whole Community.

The closer the co-ordination, the more problems there are to be overcome. The CAP could become a competition between national industries for the vast European market. For instance, French and British farmers could become adversaries rather than partners.

This would not only hit the farmers and consumers within the EEC. It would set back the work the EEC is doing to speed the development of the Third World—such as the Lome convention, which regulates trade between the EEC and a number of developing countries, and is far more advantageous to the developing countries than the previous arrangements.



Danish farmers address the agricultural conference at Tirley Garth.

The CAP depends on our attitudes to each other within the community, and our concern to end poverty across the world. But rarely do farmers from different countries meet. Some farmers in several EEC countries have set out to create the links.

## World stockpile

Fifty farmers and their wives from the two countries travelled, at their own expense, to Tirley Garth, the MRA centre in Cheshire, last year. They were joined by others from Sweden, Denmark and Norway. In a joint message to Mr Gundelach, the EEC Commissioner for Agriculture, they said, 'It is our commitment to work for a European policy that is linked to a long-term strategy for feeding the world.'

From that meeting French and British together went as observers to conferences dealing with the implementation of the Lome convention. Arab and African delegates told them how grateful they were to meet Euro-

pean farmers who cared about the problems they were faced with, and asked their help in building the human and spiritual ties between the continents. Since then farmers have gone to Asia and Africa, and a group plans to visit North America later this year.

Just as agriculture can help divide or unite Europe, so it can Europe and the USA, traditionally a major supplier of feed grains for animals, and hard wheat for bread-making.

At the World Food Conference in Rome in 1974—a year of bad harvests—it was agreed to set up a 60-million-ton world grain reserve as an insurance against future shortages. Much money has been raised, but there is disagreement over who should administer a world stockpile. A time of good harvests, such as now, should be a chance to build up these reserves. Yet wheat growers in America are being paid to plant less acreage.

Could Europe and America together take this chance to create a world famine insurance policy in 1978?

## Turn-about

by Jim Rayner



I AM A FARM WORKER, and for many years I have been a member of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.

A few years ago I decided to have done with bitterness in my own life, and to take responsibility that decisions are made on the basis of *what* is right, instead of trying to prove who is right.

The official policy of my union for some years was to oppose Britain's membership of the EEC.

I had the conviction that my branch of the union should submit a resolution to the Biennial Conference reversing the decision.

I put this to my branch, and they agreed. When it was put to the Conference it was passed by an almost unanimous vote.

## Trustees of the land



Edward Evans

WHITBOURNE HALL, set in rich Herefordshire agricultural land, is the home of Edward and Erica Evans.

Edward's great-grandfather, Edward Bickerton Evans, built it in 1860. He had made his fortune in brewing vinegar and invested his profits in the land. The family still owns 1,200 acres of the original estate.

In 1973 the family decided to sell three of the farms on the estate, totalling 450 acres.

'I put the sale in the hands of a trusted local agent,' explained Edward Evans. 'The price per acre talked about was £600-£700. As I left the office, we exchanged words on the doorstep and agreed that, nice though it would be to sell the farms to the tenant farmers, they would not be able to afford it.'

On breaking the news to the three tenants, they each made offers—but around £200 per acre less than the asking price. Evans continued to seek the highest price from an outside bidder. However, when no firm offer had been made by the asking date, he consulted his agent again.

'We agreed that, because I wanted to sell to the tenants, we should accept their offer, which we did. I would never have let this land go at £400-plus an acre,' continued Evans, 'if my policy had been to get the most possible for it. I think we could have persevered and got £600. But we have had a definite policy for the estate of making what is right for both the people and the land key factors in determining the right price. In fact, by selling to the tenant farmers we resisted inflation to the tune of £200 an acre.'

'It seemed to me that it was personally and socially right that those tenant farmers should move forward to owning their farms, rather than continue as tenants of some industrial landlord, however enlightened.' DPMS

We regret that, due to a change in the exchange rate, the Australian and South African subscription rates have had to be increased. New rates are as printed on the back page.

# Cut your stock by a third

On our front page a prominent Indian agriculturalist speaks of the importance of listening to the 'still, small voice of God from within'.

Here Peter Hannon tells what happened when Roly Kingwill, who farms in the harsh, semi-desert Karoo in South Africa, decided to take time each morning to seek God's direction for the day:

SOIL EROSION was beginning to worry people. Kingwill at first thought of big national conservation schemes. 'But,' he says, 'I felt that God was telling me to start on my own farm.' He had bought the farm on the basis of running one sheep to four acres. He had a full bond on the assumption that 3,000 sheep would bring in 30,000lbs of wool a year. 'But I felt quite clearly that the heart was being eaten out of my land and that I should cut down my stock by one third,' he says. 'I had only been thinking of what I could make for myself.'

Such a cut seemed a crazy idea. It would mean an immediate loss of income and real hardship. But he reduced his flock from 3,500 to 2,400. He introduced rotational grazing schemes and began to build dams to conserve water. Slowly results appeared. First the grass and veld cover began to increase. Then he noticed that the sheep were growing more wool per animal and the percentage of lambing was going up. Within five years it was clear that it had been a right step from every angle.

## Uppity

Others noticed the difference. He was asked to be in the lead of the anti-soil erosion campaign which was launched nationally. Later, government-sponsored experiments proved that his new stocking rate was scientifically right for the area. During the drought crisis of the nineteen sixties the government subsidised farmers who followed the example which Kingwill had made, sacrificially, on his own initiative.

He was also a pioneer of other technical advances in veld management. With his sons he was able to double the number of cattle they ran. Many mistakes were made, but steadily the graph rose. Good grass covered the once bare ground and the soil was anchored in position.

Then Kingwill began to think about his black workers. 'We had alternated between appeasement and terrific rows,' he says. 'One morning, in a time of quiet, I thought, "Apologise to the staff for your outbursts of temper and tell them you are starting on a new basis."'

He thought this was suicidal. Imagine how people would laugh if they heard of a white



Roly and Moira Kingwill

man acting like this with his black servants. He hesitated for some days. Then, early one morning, he called them together. To his surprise none of them took advantage or treated him with disrespect. A new understanding and trust began to grow.

Other things followed. He improved wages and provided healthier nourishment. He built them better houses with glass windows. The neighbours did make fun of this, but now all the workers' houses in the neighbourhood have glass windows.

An even more unusual step was to build a school on the farm. This roused more mockery. Fear of people getting 'uppity', as the Americans would say, went the rounds. But Kingwill appointed a teacher and went ahead. 'Today,' he says, 'our workers can keep the books and take much more responsibility. Their interest in the job has increased. They join us when we make plans for the farm and this is a further step in their education. Now it is national policy to have such farm schools, and the government pays the teachers' salaries.

In all these developments his wife, Moira, was an equal partner and often the clear interpreter of what was right on the farm and in the home.

## Twenty years ahead

Kingwill knows that everyone needs a feeling of security. One day he told the workers they could regard the farm as their home as long as they were prepared to take responsibility for it. He would not send them away or fire them when times were hard. Since then the workers have steadily improved their own standard of living.

Kingwill's experience of change in his own life is something he is ready to pass on to anyone at any time. It is on this base that all else is built. It has meant care replacing fear. And, as time has passed, he has discovered that much more is needed than just seeing what he could do for the black man. He got

to know Africans such as Philip Vundla, the outspoken leader of the people of Soweto, and found that he had much to learn from such men.

'In fact,' he says, 'it is essential for a white South African to get to know such men and discover what they really feel and what they think needs to happen. We need to learn more about ourselves through looking through their eyes.'

Recently, the farmers' paper *Landbou Weekblad* made the story of Kingwill's farm its main feature. The correspondent said to Roly Kingwill, 'Your thinking has been 20 years ahead of others.' Kingwill replied, 'It is because I got direction from God.'

From 'Southern Africa—What Kind of Change?' by Peter Hannon. Available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ. Price £1.50 p&p 25p.

Conventional economists keep telling us that we must use more machinery and employ fewer people.

But the question I ask myself is, 'Is doing with less labour our highest service to the community?' If machines are to do the work of men and the men cannot earn wages with which to buy the food we are producing—what has been gained? Is this policy one of the reasons for the vast squatter problem around the cities and towns? Does this not fuel the inflation we fight?

We must accept responsibility for people as people, not merely weighing up the profit and loss. This is not a plea for charity on the farm—but a plea for the acceptance of our true calling. It is a plea for economics with a human face—without which we merely contribute to the materialist onslaught on our civilisation.

from a speech made by Roly Kingwill in February to a symposium of farmers in South Africa.

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