communist ministry's land policy (ix)

Soon after assumption of office the Communist ministry announced its decision to assign permanently to the landless and poor peasants all available government lands for cultivation so that agricultural production could be increased and as many landless families as possible could be settled. According to preliminary estimates 7.5 lac acres of cultivable waste and other fallow lands were available, excluding forest lands.

The order for the assignment of government land to the landless and indigent families in the State was issued on 14 September. It directed that land not required for government or public purposes will be assigned on registry and land likely to be required for government or public purposes in future will be leased or licensed for short periods. A minimum of 25 per cent of the land available was to be reserved in each village for future government use. Land situated within municipal areas was also exempted from the order.

It was further ordered that 25 per cent of the land available for allotment will be reserved for scheduled caste families.

The order said that the extent of land which can be reserved in favour of a single family will not exceed an acre of wet or three acres of dry land in the plains, and two acres of wet land or five acres of dry land in the hills. In case of an assignee owning any land over which he has proprietary rights or had security of tenure or was likely to get fixity of tenure under the proposed land reforms, it was directed that such land will be taken into account in

granting the registry and only the balance to make up the limit will be assigned.

The order said that land assigned under the scheme shall not be alienated by sale, mortgage, lease, gift or any other form of transfer but will be heritable. The registry was liable to be cancelled on violation of this condition. Further, no registry will be granted to any person unless he surrendered to the government excess land, if any, held by him. Land likely to be required by the government in future will be leased to the members of backward communities and indigent families up to a maximum of 3 acres for a family for a period not exceeding 2 years at a time.

Finally, to ensure democratic decision in the selection of assignees, the Communist government ordered that advisory committees will be constituted for the purpose in every taluk.

Thus is the first attempt at land distribution in India on a mass scale, in the real sense of the term.

The Kerala ministry could pursue a radical land policy because it consisted of people who had grown out of the powerful kisan sabha (Karshaka Sangham) movement of the State, which was built up and developed by the Communist Party, and which had fought many a glorious struggle for the vindication of kisan rights. Further, it was headed by EMS, reputed for his grasp of India's land problem, one of the foremost writers on the subject, and a leader of the All-India Kisan Sabha.

Soon after assuming office, the government of Kerala gave its attention to the enactment of a comprehensive land legislation. The pressure of population on land and the gross maldistribution which exists in Kerala is well-known. The Malabar tenancy committee (1938) had estimated on the basis of collected statistics that out of Rs. 7 crores worth of agricultural produce in Malabar, a little more than Rs. 3 crores went to the landlords as rent. Besides, the peasants had also to bear the burden of paying interests to the moneylenders which, calculated at the rate of 10 per cent on an average, amounted to Rs. 1.5 crores. The position continues to be the same in Malabar even today. The situation is not very different either in Travancore and Cochin parts where more than half of the value of agricultural produce goes to the landlords and moneylenders as rent and interest together.

With such an exploitive land system prevailing, an effective solution of the various aspects of the land problem had to be deeply thought out. Within about two months of the assumption of office a joint meeting of the State Committee of the Communist Party and the Communist legislature party discussed the outline of a land legislation for Kerala. The publication of reports in the press about this meeting unnerved the landlords of the State, and they, as usual, set up their organisation to oppose the proposed legislation, raised a big hue and cry about it, and the vice-president of the Kerala landlords' association, D. H. Namboodiripad, even led a delegation to Delhi and met Pandit Pant, G. L. Nanda and V. T. Krishnamachari.

Profiting from the experience of other States, where the landowners, in anticipation of the enactment of proposed land reform measures, took recourse to large-scale eviction of tenants to prevent them from getting such rights as would accrue to them because of their cultivatory possession, the Communist ministry stayed all evictions by an order on 26 August 1957. Soon after, the Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act, 1957, was enacted which provided that pending the enactment of the land reform legislation, the present occupiers and cultivators of land should be left undisturbed. It gave temporary, but sure, protection to tenants, *kudikidappukars* (hut dwellers in landlord's lands) and persons cultivating land on *varom, sambalpattom* or other such arrangements. The period of operation of this Act, which was to expire on 11 October 1957, was extended by an ordinance for six months. In March 1958, the State assembly further extended the period of the Act with certain amendments.

It would be necessary to say a few words about this measure of the Communist ministry. This enactment is remarkable for its sharp and clear-cut statement, which has effectively stopped evictions in Kerala. Evictions, as we know, have virtually nullified all the benefits to the peasants in the different States of India following land reform measures of the Congress governments. As G. L. Nanda, Union minister for planning, said in a note submitted to the AICC meeting, that in Bombay only 3.2 per cent of the protected tenants could purchase and become owners of the land held by them; in Hyderabad, during 1951-55, the number of protected tenants decreased by 57 per cent and

the area held by them decreased by 59 per cent; in Bombay, during 1949-53, tenants in possession of land continued to retain their possession only to the extent of 58.1 per cent of the tenanted area. And, as Nanda said, 'In the vast majority of cases, no recourse to law was made and the tenant surrendered the land because the landlord wanted it back.' (*AICC Economic Review,* 15 September 1957.)

In order to confer fixity of tenure to tenants the Communist ministry enacted an effective law to stop the spate of evictions so much witnessed in other States despite legislations. Naturally enough, the Kerala legislation did not leave loopholes in legal provisions, which could be misinterpreted or which could provide ingenious methods of circumvention. There were no 'saving clauses' and 'exemptions' to help the vested interests.

The Communist ministry's stay of eviction enactment was also far ahead of the Holdings (Stay of Execution Proceedings) Act VIII of 1950 of the Congress ministry. This Act of the old T-C State meant only stay in executions of court decrees. Outside the court, however, the landlords manipulated affairs in such a way that actual cultivators holding the land on payment of *pattom* (rent) for a number of years were all converted into mere licencees and share-croppers with agreements renewed from year to year. The Communist enactment provides no such opportunity to the landlords and even extends protection to *sambalpattom, koolipattom* and other such tenures which verge more or less on share-cropping.

K. R. Gowri, Kerala's revenue minister, told a public meeting at Kottamendu in Chittur taluk that till then more then 14,000 cases of evictions had been stayed. (*Indian Express,* 15 November 1957.)

Congress rule in Travancore and Cochin from 1948 to 1957 produced hardly anything worth the name in the field of land reforms except the ending of four freehold estates (*edavagais*). Their single achievement seems to be the report of the land revenue policy committee published in 1950. Out of its 11 members, nine were Congressmen and it did not have a single Communist. In utter disregard of land policies laid down in the report of the Congress (Kumarappa) agrarian reforms committee and other high-level Congress pronouncements, this committee thought that it was not wise to impose a ceiling on existing land-

holdings, and for future acquisitions '50 acres double crop *nilam,* 75 acres single crop *nilam,* 50 acres cocoanut garden, 75 acres dry land' must be fixed as the upper limit for a family of five with additional 10 acres for each number, subject to an unsurpassable maximum of 150 acres in all. While expressing itself against any ceiling on existing holdings, the committee said that in case it is decided to do so, the compensation should be paid according to the 'prevailing market rates.' The report was also very liberal in providing for resumption of land by landlords for 'bona fide' self-cultivation, the limitations placed on resumption were such as could be circumvented without difficulty. The committee also failed to suggest fair rent.

The PSP ministry showed a better record during its ten months of office. The land reform bill it prepared was a progressive measure fixing up a ceiling on land-holdings but not ownership, and providing for fair rent, etc. The Panampally (Congress) ministry which followed did useful work by ending the four freehold estates (*edavagais*) of Poonjar, Vanjipuzha, Kilimanoor and Edappalli. These were like the zamindaris in other parts of India (except that they did not have to pay any kind of rent or dues to the State), and held a total area of 1,04,925 acres. The Kanam Tenancy Act was another legislation enacted by this ministry.

From this brief account of land reform measures of the governments which preceded the Communist ministry, it would be clear that what had been done had not touched even the fringe of the problem and the Communist government had practically to start on a clean slate.

For a proper assessment of the performances of different parties, it would be necessary to refer very briefly to the land system in Kerala.

In Malabar there are three main forms of holdings, namely, the *jenmom,* the *kuzhikanam* and *verumpattom. Jenmom* is absolute proprietorship of land. The owner is called *jenmi.* In Malabar, thanks to the expediencies to which the British succumbed in the course of their revenue settlements, all the land, even the forests and the hills, are supposed to belong to the *jenmies.* Under the *kuzhikanam* tenure, the tenure holder, called *kanamdar,* derives his title from the *jenmi.* His *kanam,* that is the tenurial right, is generally a lease of 12 years subject to the payment of rent.

In course of time, many *kanamdars* leased out their land to *verumpattomdars. Verumpattom* is a simple lease for a single year. The *verumpattomdar,* in reality a tenant-at-will, may hold his tenancy either from a *kanamdar* or a *jenmi* direct. In Travancore and Cochin areas also the *jenmi* system with its concomitant of *kanamdars* has been the traditional land system. Under these tenures in course of time grew up various subsidiary tenures—the *verumpattom, panayam, anubhogam,* etc.

Rent exploitation was the basis of the tenurial system, but in course of time, due to the fact that the areas of Malabar, Travancore and Cochin were under different administrations, the respective rights of the various categories of holders became different.

Malabar, under the British rulers, came to have a comparatively advanced scheme of tenant rights. Through the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929, the Madras Tenants' and Ryots' Protection Act of 1946, and a 1951 amendment of the Malabar Tenancy Act, fixity of tenure was conferred on all classes of tenants. The landlords were, however, given the right of resumption. This, and the stipulation that the *verumpattomdar* will have to deposit a year's rent in advance to get the fixity of tenure, largely nullified the good that would have otherwise accrued to the cultivators. Fair rent was fixed from two-thirds, to a half of the produce for wet lands and there was also some reduction in the fair rent of garden lands. Rent courts which were set up, however, were empowered to increase rent at the instance of landlords. Thanks to the Communist members of the Madras assembly from Malabar, this Act was further amended in favour of tenants. The landlord's right of resumption was curtailed, tenants of homesteads were prevented from being evicted and the stipulation of advance deposit was done away with.

In Cochin, by proclamations and enactments, by 1937 all *kanamdars* received fixity of tenure. And by an enactment of 1943, fixity of tenure was granted to *verumpattomdars.*

The position in Travancore was different. Here royal proclamations as old as 1829 and 1867 conferred fixity of tenure of the *kanamdars,* subject to payment of rent. In 1933, Travancore abolished the system of different kinds of dues which the *kanamdar* had to pay to the *jenmi.* The

various dues to the landlords were computed in terms of a definite sum of money. This mode of payment came to be known as *jenmikkaram*. Further, the government undertook to collect this *jenmikkaram* and pay it to the landlords. Thus, in effect, holders of *kanam* tenancies became absolute owners of land with transferable and heritable rights.

Thus, when the State of Kerala was formed in 1956, whereas the Malabar tenants had the benefit of fixity of tenure and fair rents, and Cochin tenantry was granted fixity of tenure, neither of these was to be found in Travancore. Congress rule of the State after independence brought no benefits to the tillers.

The Communist ministry's earnestness in the matter of land reforms stands out in sharp contrast to the previous Congress and PSP ministries. Apart from the Stay of Evictions Act and the order for the distribution of government land to landless people, a comprehensive agrarian reform legislation was got ready by the end of October 1957, and was referred to the Planning Commission for advice and examination. Further, on 21 November, a debt relief bill was published. It unifies the laws relating to grant of relief to indebted agriculturists in the State, envisages the scaling down of debts incurred prior to 1 January 1940, other than those due to banking companies, and also confers more benefits to agriculturists than those provided by the laws in T-C and Malabar areas. This bill was enacted by the budget session of the State assembly in March 1958.

Two days later, on 23 November, a Gazette Extraordinary published a bill providing for the abolition of *jenmikkaram* in Travancore, covering about 1.5 lac acres of land and involving 5,500 landlords. The bill provides for the payment of compensation to landlords on a slab scale by the government. The government will recover from the tenants an amount equal to 8⅓ times the *jenmikkaram* payable by them. The recovery is to be made in 16 instalments with interest at 5 per cent per annum. The compensation to be paid to the landlords ranges from 12 times the *jenmikkaram* to those who get Rs. 500 and less per year, to four times to those who get Rs. 7,000 per year. It will be paid either in cash or in government bonds carrying 4 per cent interest per annum, redeemable at the end of six years from the date of issue, or partly in cash and partly in bonds. The financial memorandum attached to the bill said that the

government have to bear an initial liability of approximately Rs. 82 lacs by way of compensation and collection charges for the recovery of the same. The December 1957 session of the assembly referred the bill to a select committee. It was presented to the State assembly in the budget session in March but could not be enacted by the time the assembly adjourned.

The comprehensive Kerala agrarian relations bill was introduced in the State assembly on 21 December by K. R. Gowri, the revenue minister. The assembly decided to circulate it for eliciting public opinion. The bill was again placed for discussion on 30 March 1958, at the end of the budget session, and was referred to a select committee. On the previous day a mammoth kisan demonstration in support of the bill, organised by the Kerala Karshaka Sangham, paraded the streets of Trivandrum.

Another aspect deserves to be mentioned. The publication of the bill was followed by discussions on the proposed measures among the peasants all over Kerala. Led by the Karshaka Sangham, the peasants gathered in their villages irrespective of their party affiliations to discuss various clauses in the bill and suggest changes. This was followed by a special session of the State Karshaka Sangham which suggested certain changes in the bill. This popular participation in the discussion of the bill is something unique, a parallel to which can hardly be found in any other Indian State.

The bill closely follows the recommendations of the Land Reforms Panel of the Planning Commission and contains necessary safeguards to protect the tenants from the machinations of landlords who may seek to evade the law and defeat the purposes of the Act. The bill gives due consideration to the differences in existing laws in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The problem of small landlords, with less than 5 acres of land, who constitute an appreciable bulk of Kerala's rural population, has received special consideration in the bill.

This provision favouring the smallholders in Travancore-Cochin is not applicable to Malabar, and, in no case, is it applicable to holdings held by permanent tenants.

All tenants are to enjoy fixity of tenure and their holdings are not liable to be resumed except under certain very limited circumstances provided for in the bill. *Varamdars*

(licencees) under landlords who hold more than the ceiling area and who under the same landlord have cultivated the land continuously for ten years immediately before 11 April 1957, get fixity of tenure.

Further, any cultivator, although described as agent or servant in the document, can plead and adduce evidence and prove that he is a real cultivating tenant entitled to benefits of fixity. This provision enables a large class of cultivators, described as mere servants in documents by landlords to evade the provisions of law, to prove that they are tenants for all practical purposes paying dues to the landlords.

All cultivating tenants irrespective of the nature of the deed or document held by the landlord can lay claim on benefits of the bill relating to fixity of tenure.

No holding by a permanent tenant shall be subject to resumption. The right to resume in respect of a holding shall be exercised only once in respect of a particular lease or transaction, the resumption shall be only at the end of the period of tenancy, if any, and this right shall be exercisable only at the end of an agricultural year.

A cultivating tenant whose holding is resumed shall be entitled to be paid a solatium by the landlord, an amount equal to one year's rent in cases when the cultivating tenant is not entitled to compensation under the law relating to payment of compensation for tenant's improvements on eviction.

The landlord, who is head of a religious institution and wants part of a holding for extension of the place of religious worship, the landlord who requires the holding or part thereof for bona fide construction of a building for his own residence or for that of any member of his family, the landlord who requires the land bona fide for his own cultivation can resume part of the holding for the purposes mentioned.

But such resumptions are not allowed if it has the effect of reducing the land in the possession of the tenant to less than one acre of double-crop land or its equivalent. And for building purposes, the landlord can resume only 20 cents, if tenant's possession is below one acre. In any case, at least 20 cents must be left undisturbed in the hands of the tenant. Religious institutions are not allowed the right of resumption for building purpose or cultivating purpose.

In cases where landlords fail to use the resumed land

for purposes stated, the tenants can sue for restoration of possession within a fixed period of limitation laid down.

If the question of resumption of land for personal cultivation of landlords has given rise to much abuse of law in other States of India where there are legislations granting fixity of tenure, in Kerala the problem of fixity and fair rent for tenants under small holders has been tackled without giving room for unrest and disturbances.

It has been provided that in the Travancore-Cochin part of Kerala, in the case of small holders, land tribunals will sit in conciliation proceedings to make an award on the question of resumption and purchase.

The tribunal shall consider the relative economic position of parties, the absence or otherwise of other means of livelihood of the parties to the dispute, the labour or money expended by each party for the improvement of the land and all other matters for a just and equitable settlement. When the tenant of a smallholder has as owner or as tenant more land than the smallholder, the land tribunal may order that the entire holding may be resumed by the smallholder.

Fair rent in respect of any land shall not exceed the maximum, nor shall it be less than the minimum given in a schedule attached to the bill, and the government is empowered to fix the rates of fair rent applicable to lands in local area subject to the maxima and minima. The government will, of course, consider the local conditions regarding tenure and the law prevailing in the area immediately before the commencement of this Act.

In the case of dry land converted into wet land by tenant's labour, the range varies between one-sixth of the gross paddy produce and one-twelfth. For wet lands it varies between one-fourth and one-sixth. Similarly, fair rent has been fixed for cocoanut and other gardens.

A land tribunal having jurisdiction in defined areas is to fix the fair rent. If the rent under the contract of tenancy is below the schedule rate, whichever is less is to prevail.

The bill also details provisions enabling the tenants to get receipts from landlords, to deposit rent in court, to get the commutation rates fixed, and there is also a provision to effect the apportionment of rent between landlords and intermediaries above the tenant.

It is also provided that the government can assume on

the application of the landlord the collection of rent payable by the tenant. Cases where tenants can get remission of rent due to failure of crop are also stated. Arrears of rent due to the landlord can be made a charge on the interest of the tenant in the holding, and it is given a priority claim also. The rights of tenants are heritable and alienable.

All arrears of rent, due on 11 April 1957, by a tenant to his landlord, whether the same be payable under a decree or order of court or under any law or contract, shall be deemed to be fully discharged on payment of one year's rent in the case of tenants holding less than five acres, three years' rent in the case of tenants holding between five and 15 acres, and six years' rent in the case of above 15 acres. But this benefit is not applicable to a tenant who holds either as owner or tenant land more in extent than the ceiling area. Also the decree of eviction shall be annulled on the tenant depositing the rent due as provided here.

The bill seeks the abolition of landlordism on payment of compensation and accordingly the government will notify a day as 'Peasants' Day' on which all permanent tenants shall be deemed to have purchased from the landlords, free of all encumbrances subsisting thereon that day, the land held by them as permanent tenants. Tenants have this purchase right only up to the ceiling area fixed. The land tribunal appointed by the government will go into the question of this purchase rights by the tenants.

The purchase price shall be the aggregate of 16 times the rent on the land fixed as maximum under rules relating to fair rent and also the value of any structures, wells and embankments constructed or laid by the landlord or by any other person interested in the land.

The purchase price shall be payable in 16 equal annual instalments. If the tenant is prepared to pay the entire purchase price in a lump sum, he need pay only 12 times the rate fixed.

Any person aggrieved by the determination of purchase price by the land tribunal may appeal to the land board and the order of the land board is final. The tenants can deposit the purchase price with the land tribunal to the credit of the land board either in lump sum or in instalments provided for. On the deposit of the purchase price in lump sum or of the last instalment, the land board will issue a certificate of purchase to the tenant. Default to deposit the purchase price as agreed will make the purchase ineffective in certain cases.

The landlords are entitled to compensation for the extinguishment of their rights on the holding. The rate of compensation is fixed at 16 times the fair rent in the case of the first five acres, 14 times in the case of the next five acres, 12 times in the case of the next five acres, ten times in the case of the next five acres, eight in the case of the next 30 acres, six times in the case of the next 50 acres and altogether five times for above 100 acres. The compensation or the value of encumbrances will be paid either in cash or in non-negotiable bonds carrying interest at three per cent per annum.

The provision relating to purchase rights does not, however, apply to lands leased or given under any other transaction to a tenant by public religious or charitable institution or trust provided that the entire income from such lands is appropriated for the purposes of such institutions or trust.

Intermediaries under landlords will have to sell their rights to the cultivating tenants.

'Ceiling area' of land is fixed as 15 acres for double crop land or its equivalent, i.e., 22½ acres of single crop or 15 acres of garden land or 30 acres of dry land. Any land in excess of ceiling area shall be surrendered to the land board. Persons so surrendering land are entitled to compensation, similar to that fixed in the case of purchase by tenants.

In the case of a family consisting of more than five persons, ceiling limit is fixed as 15 acres of double-crop land or its equivalent, increased by one acre of double-crop land or its equivalent for each member in excess of five. However, the total extent of land will not exceed 25 acres of double-crop land or its equivalent.

Further, ceiling is not made applicable to lands owned by the government, lands belonging to public religious or charitable institutions and also to lands included in mills, factories or workshops. However, the government reserves the right of exemption from ceiling to a particular class of land, if it feels the necessity for the same.

Any person who has no land or has land less in extent than the ceiling area can apply to the land board for assignment of land. The land board will assign the rights over

lands assigned to them in an order of priority for such assignment : (*i*) a tenant whose land has been resumed; (*ii*) a landlord who has lost his rights over land by the operation of the Act, and who does not have land in his actual possession of more than three acres of double-crop land or its equivalent; (*iii*) cooperative societies whose members are agricultural labourers who have no land; (*iv*) agricultural labourers; and (*v*) adjoining cultivators. The existing rules under the Land Assignment Act apply to the assignment under this provision. The land board is empowered to manage surrendered land before assignment.

The bill further contains provisions giving absolute protection to dwellers in huts who cannot be evicted except by providing them house sites and funds to raise huts in the same village.

As a precautionary measure against attempts at defeating the provisions of this law, it has been provided that all voluntary transfers by way of sale or gift effected by persons having more land than the ceiling area after 18 December 1957, shall be rendered null and void. Similarly, all voluntary transfers otherwise than for valuable consideration by persons having more land than the ceiling area on or after 11 April 1957, are also to be declared null and void. The *status quo* on the day of commencement of the Stay of Evictions Act in April last is to be maintained.

In the assembly debate on the bill, PSP members spoke with different voices. While Chandrasekhar (PSP) saw nothing 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' in it, and even felt that it was even more reactionary than the Malabar Tenancy Act, P. R. Kurup and C. G. Janardanan, (both PSP) welcomed it. As for the Congress, none of its leading members took part in the debate and their leader, P. T. Chacko, was absent.

Indeed, indecision and prevarication have marked Kerala Congress attitude to the bill, thus indicating that caught between conflicting approaches largely influenced by vested interests, it is a house divided. Long after the bill was published, no authoritative Congress opinion was expressed upon it. The papers reported that a committee, of which the ex-chief minister Panampally is the convenor, was set up to report within a week on the bill. Nothing was later heard about it. However, in the memorandum finally submitted on the bill, the Congress accepted the general principles,

which are based entirely on the recommendations of the Land Reforms Panel of the Planning Commission and seek to put into practice nothing more than what are proclaimed as Congress land policies in the post-independence years.

The Congress memorandum, however, seeks to suggest certain modifications which, in effect, will wipe out whatever benefits may otherwise accrue to the cultivators. For example, it is suggested that those who are affected by the ceiling should be given one year's time to dispose of the surplus land as they choose. Further, the Congress demands compensation at market rates. The Congress does not define what it means by a smallholder, but at the same time demands that they (the smallholders) be permitted to resume half the land in possession of the tenant, and in some cases even up to the ceiling area.

The clarity and unambiguity of the Communist ministry's approach to the land problem deserves comparison with the performances of Congress governments in other States of India since independence. Indeed, again and again prime minister Nehru and the Congress Working Committee have deprecated the delay in the implementation of land reform measures by Congress governments. On 30 August 1957, the Congress Working Committee, 'with conspicuous candour,' 'noted that the progress of land reforms since independence had been slow and that administrative weaknesses had led to widespread eviction of tenants.' (*Statesman*, New Delhi, 31 August 1957.) And at Pragjyotishpur (Gauhati) Congress, Congress president Dhebar once more emphasised that land reforms should be given 'top priority,' and was rather unhappy about the delays.

Despite all this, a progress review of land reforms by the Planning Commission, reported as late as April 1958, gave a sorry picture. According to the report, (*Indian Express*, 23 April 1958.), only the abolition of intermediaries may be said to have been generally carried out, nearly Rs. 82 crores having been till then paid as compensation and rehabilitation grants out of a total estimated amount of Rs. 614 crores. As regards fixation of fair rents, only Bombay and Rajasthan have reduced the level of rent to one-sixth. It should be recalled that the Planning Commission had recommended that rents should be brought down to the level of one-fourth or one-fifth of the produce. Rents in other States continue to be high; for example, in West

Bengal the rate is as high as ninety per cent in some cases.

As regards security of tenure, only Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have given full protection to tenants and sub-tenants. In Andhra, Madras, Orissa, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, &c., only some interim legislation for offering protection to tenants has been adopted. Madras and Mysore have given the right of resumption. The worst situation, however, exists on the issue of ceiling on landholdings. Hardly any State has adopted legislation fixing ceiling on existing holdings. Ceilings have been imposed only on future acquisitions in Assam, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi.

No wonder, therefore, that the Madras revenue minister, M. A. Manickavelu, told the State assembly on 1 April 1958, that 'land ceiling is still a long way off.' (*Indian Express*, 2 April 1958.) It is also not surprising that Andhra chief minister, N. Sanjiva Reddi, took pains to point out to pressmen that the proposed land legislation in the State was 'quite moderate,' and that 'it would not affect anybody seriously.' (*Times of India*, 3 May 1958.)

There is no limit to reports in the daily press about Congressmen openly denouncing any proposals for ceiling on landholding. Thus, for example, when the report of the tenancy and agricultural land laws committee (Jatti committee) came up for discussion in the Mysore State assembly, one after another the Congressmen got up to denounce the proposal for fixing a ceiling upon landholdings. Nagaratnamma thought that the slogan 'land to the tiller' was impractical and meaningless. G. Shivappa, Dr K. Nagappa Alva and many others, all Congress MLAs, denounced the proposal to fix a ceiling upon landholdings in no uncertain terms. (*Hindu*, 27 and 28 March 1958.) The press also reported that Congressmen on the land reforms committee of the government of Orissa failed to agree upon ceilings and considered it wise to keep mum on the subject. (*Indian Express*, 20 April 1958.) According to a report from Jaipur, 'Congress legislators were today split in their views on the fixation of ceilings upon landholdings in Rajasthan. Diametrically opposite stands were taken by members of the ruling party when the house resumed discussion on the ceiling committee report.' (*Times of India*, 26 April 1958.)

As against this tragic and long-winded tale of procrastination and indecision, we would present to the reader the

refreshing approach of chief minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad. Intervening in the Kerala assembly debate on the agrarian relations bill in December last, he said : 'This bill ought not to be viewed with a motive to find whether it is revolutionary or progressive. The question is that we must face the problem in a practical way, taking into consideration the existing objective conditions in the country.' Emphasising that it would be wrong to think that the last word can be said on land reforms today, EMS added : 'In the agrarian relations of our country, social and economic forces are in motion, producing impacts everywhere, and new developments are taking place.' Hence, the bill that was introduced was not, and could not be, the last word on the subject.