The Bombay Small Holdings Bill, 1927

A PAMPHLET

BY

F. G. H. ANDERSON, M.A., I.C.S., M.L.C.,
Commissioner of Settlements

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NOTE

THE BOMBAY SMALL HOLDINGS BILL (1927)

or, more fully

A Bill to stop the excessive subdivision of land and to promote the re-consolidation of holdings which have become excessively scattered and fragmented

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This Note is an attempt to explain the aims of the Bill and the facts and reasons on which it rests and also to reply to various criticisms by speakers and writers who do not appear in all cases to have understood these aims and reasons.

It has been prepared at the request of Government, but Government do not hold themselves responsible for its contents. The views and opinions expressed in it have no greater weight than they derive from the knowledge and experience of the writer.

F. G. H. ANDERSON, M.A., I.C.S., M.L.C.,
Commissioner of Settlements, Bombay.

MG H 658—1

There are opponents of this Bill. They oppose because they have not understood it. They have even started a campaign of articles and pamphlets against the Bill in which through want of understanding they gravely misrepresent it. The Bill in truth holds promise of great benefits to cultivators and it is urgently necessary that the misunderstandings and consequent misrepresentations should be removed. We should be slow to suggest that this campaign of opposition is born of that partisan zeal which seeks to belittle and to pervert all the intentions of Government simply because they emanate from Government: but when it has been seen what sort of perversions have been made and what risks of deceiving the reader have been run there will remain a serious doubt whether quite all the misrepresentations are the result of misunderstanding alone.

2. The Bill suffers from unsatisfactory terminology, and in the Select Committee it is hoped these defects will be cured. No doubt they have helped such misunderstanding as has genuinely arisen. It will be better to make some definitions and then carefully use correct terms in these notes.

3. Agricultural land in Bombay was originally divided into 'survey numbers,' usually the holding of one man and usually not exceeding the area that one man could cultivate with one pair of bullocks—about 30 acres of dry-crop at most. The population at that time was much smaller: but after nearly a century it has grown and many fields or survey numbers are now cut up into scores of small pieces sometimes not so much as 1/40th of one acre! Nowadays a man may hold in the aggregate as many acres of land as his great-grandfather held. But instead of 20 acres in one block it may be scattered into 20 parcels of about one acre each in all the four quarters of the village, and some even in the next villages. This is the result of frequent repartitions of land inherited from father and mother—

4. Let us now define:—

'*Parcel*' means a single plot of land entirely surrounded by other people's properties. It may measure 30 acres or only 1/100th of an acre.

'*Holding*' means all the parcels owned or possessed by *one man*, it may contain one parcel or 100 parcels, big or small.

'*Fragment*': when any parcel is so small that it *cannot be cultivated* by its owner *without loss* we call it a 'fragment:' in other words a "too-small-parcel."

'*Scattered holding*' means a holding of several parcels separated one from each other. It may be a big holding in aggregate acres, but the more a holding is 'scattered' the less profitable it becomes, even though none of the parcels be 'fragments.' But the greater the scattering the more likely it is that some of the parcels will be "fragments."

'*Neighbour*' to any parcel means any one of the persons in possession of the land immediately adjoining it; preferably that one of them whose adjoining parcel is not a 'fragment.' This neighbour's profits of cultivation will be substantially increased by getting his parcel enlarged. Therefore no man in the world is in a better position to give a fair rent or price for the land. The Bill provides ample machinery to prevent him abusing his pre-emptive right by making unfair offers.

5. Now let us try to make clear what is meant when we say "cannot be cultivated without loss." That is the vital point of the whole Bill. If there are no such fragments there is no case for the Bill. But if there are, then what can be done? Plainly one of two things only. We cannot move the land to another place. Therefore if too small to be cultivated with profit separately, it *must* be given for cultivation to the neighbour who by adding it to his existing land can cut out the losses and make it pay. Or when all the neighbours have also such small pieces that even that way is ineffective, then, if a sufficient majority desire it, let all the land be put into a fresh "vátni" or distribution: let all the boundaries and division be wiped out and then let each man who had any parcels take a fresh block *all in one piece*; or if it is not all jirayat then in one piece of each kind so that he shall have blocks which he can cultivate with profit. No one has suggested or can suggest any other way, because there is no other way. If therefore the evil exists, if the facts are as we say, then the Council dare not reject the Bill.

6. There are few officers whose views have been more respected and more quoted by our critics than those of Dr. Harold Mann. In 1918, long before this Bill was drafted, he wrote (Co-op: Quarterly, Dec. 1918, p. 124):—

> "Sub-division is at present one of the great banes of Deccan agriculture. But sub-division in practice if not in theory must stop when the areas owned are not worth owning."

He means that when a plot gets by sub-division so small that it cannot be profitably cultivated it has to be abandoned even though in theory the owners can go on still subdividing it. This Bill recognises this truth and seeks to cure the evil by turning the losses into *gains* and stopping the separate cultivation. IT DOES NOT STOP SUB-DIVISION OF PROFITS. It does not go further than saying: "Sub-divide and share the profits if you like: but you shall not destroy the profits by attempting each to cultivate separate parts."

7. Govind had a field which yielded a gross crop worth Rs. 100. It took him half an hour to get to his field whether he took his bullocks and plough, etc., or whether he went only to look round. Also half an hour to come back home. In the year he had to go 30 times at least and at the time of harvest the field had to be watched against thieves and stray cattle for at least a week; and a threshing floor made in (or near) it. All costs of cattle for ploughing, manure, seed, and rent came

to Rs. 40: thus he had for his remuneration for his work for the year Rs. 60. He hardly ever thought about the cost of going and coming and so on, because he had a fair living and was content. But in fact if he had reckoned it out he lost 30 hours (4 days' work) in going and coming and three more whole days in watching the crop. He had not any other work to do. And so he did not care for this loss. But if he had been able to get some other work or some other industry he would have found that the loss of seven days' working time meant a loss of fully Rs. 5 in cash, so that his nett final profit from his field was only Rs. 55. If the neighbour would buy or lease it, then he could give Govind Rs. 5 a year *more* than it was worth TO GOVIND because the neighbour would never lose any working time.

8. Govind died and left four sons. If they had agreed that one son should have that field and cultivate it and divide with his brothers the nett profit after meeting his own proper remuneration, the profits would be the same as when Govind was alive. But the heirs would not agree: each insisted on his own share and therefore each son had to meet the costs of going and coming and watching the crop and so on; or Rs. 5 a year out of his share. Govind did not worry about the deduction of Rs. 5 from his nett return of Rs. 60. But now the nett return to each son is Rs. 15 and the deduction of Rs. 5 is serious. But being obstinate and suspicious, they still insist on separate cultivation. They also find a new charge: to demarcate and keep separate their shares they must leave a small strip and also must put up marks, and at watching time they find more attention necessary because there are more cattle; and strangers about than before. The net deduction has risen from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6. Each man has Rs. 15 less Rs. 6, or Rs. 9 only for his remuneration. But if they had a lot of other land and other income it still might not be fatal; they could grumble at the losses and poor return and still carry on.

9. Then one son dies and his heirs divide his share into three parts. The net return on each share is Rs. 5, but if separately cultivated then the remuneration got by the cultivator is not Rs. 5 but this sum reduced by Rs. 6 (or even a little more, as the cost of boundaries and the loss of land in these strips and 'headlands' and cost and trouble of watching has increased, also the loss through constant invasion of weeds from badly kept plots in the neighbourhood). The sharers thus find that they have *nothing* left for their remuneration but instead *a loss*. Indeed it will be seen that disregarding the "remuneration" needed by the cultivator, the *gross yield* (Rs. $8\frac{1}{3}$) hardly covers the loss of time in going and coming! The land has by sub-division become unprofitable to cultivate.

10. Simple rustics cannot put these ideas into mathematical language. They feel there is a loss somewhere and they know that as the land is divided into smaller and smaller parts the losses get larger and larger. We may put it thus for them. The costs of cultivating are of two kinds, fixed and variable. The variable depend on the area

cultivated and are twice as big for two acres as for one acre. Others are fixed, and are the same for two acres as for one acre. As land is more and more divided the burden of all fixed costs rises till it becomes so great that the land can no longer be cultivated with profit. The cost of seed is exactly proportionate to the area sown : a variable charge. The cost of going to market to buy or fetch seed and of taking the seed drills to the field is fixed and just the same whether the area is one acre or 20 acres.

11. You may dispute the figures I give and say that the cost of this or that could not be so much. Very well ; substitute what you think are reasonable figures and you will find (as Dr. Mann wrote) that however you twist about, you must come to the first fundamental truth behind this Bill : that for every field, for every kind of land, there is SOME POINT at which sub-division will destroy all the profits and involve the holder in sheer loss. None of the critics of the Bill have denied it. They evade it ; and while they admit it they do not admit its inevitable inferences.

12. Thus for every kind of land (jirayat, rice, or garden) and for every locality (Thana, Kanara or Satara) there is a certain size of field below which it is *impossible* to cultivate without loss. Sometimes if the holder has much other land and mixes up his accounts he does not quite realise it. If it is his only plot, he realises it very quickly and either abandons it or (far better) lets it on a reasonable rent to his neighbour. Large numbers of owners have already voluntarily done both these things. When the neighbour takes it, all the loss disappears. He does not incur these expenses separately and in fact the union of the two plots reduces his own costs on his former parcel—one journey and one fence and boundary, one nightwatch and one threshing floor now does for both plots. This is very well known in rural practice.

13. Let us now consider 'scattered holdings.'—If one man held 12 acres of ordinary land he could certainly live on its profits ; but cut that land up into 12 pieces and place all those pieces one mile distant from each other, and now he has a "scattered holding." It is impossible to reside near more than one field. He has to incur for at least 11 plots the fixed losses caused by distant fields. Even if he can still live, at least he is MUCH POORER than when all the land was together in one place. He can no longer irrigate from a well. He cannot use the simplest machinery and cannot grow second crops for want of fencing or practice sound rotations. If by some magic we could collect all the pieces and join them he would be much richer and *no one else would be any poorer.* In fact by gathering the pieces together we should reduce the number of dividing boundaries, and some of the parcels of other owners before separate would come together and their holders would gain. (What would a chess board become, if you could pick out all the black squares and push them into one solid block ? the remainder would surely be a solid block of white.) When all the parcels are brought together perhaps the area is still too

small for one man or family to live on. No rayat can live on half an acre of Deccan dry-crop land however hard he works or however benevolent the Government may be. Even under Ramraj or Swaraj he would starve unless he found some other work. But if he finds other work then his field is a hindrance and a cause of loss to him. He can sublet it to his neighbour and that is far the best thing to do. Or he may sell it; if so, his neighbour can always afford a better price than anyone else. But the Bill says that (just as for single parcels there is a point below which it is not possible to cultivate a parcel separately at a profit) so too for the aggregate of any man's holding there is a size below which he cannot possibly *live on it*, and he should either sell it or let it to another cultivator-neighbour.

14. The too small holder is even now forced to do labour for wages, or to take as tenant the land of other owners and to make up his livelihood. Therefore, we get this truth that owners of holdings below the size on which a man can live *are already* labourers and tenants before this Bill comes near them. But if some holdings can be consolidated then some of them will be less labourers and less tenants than before and will to a larger extent be living on their lands. Those whose holdings are so small that, even consolidated, they cannot support them will *still* be what they are now—labourers and part-time tenants. Now a cultivating tenant or owner, must attend to his field at the right time. If he is also a labourer for other farmers or in some industry, he must leave that work when he has to go to cultivate. Is it realised that the poverty of this class of part-time-tenants part-time-labourers is greatly increased by this conflict and the losses, now of one day, now of several days, through inability to fit together the two occupations? Ramrao wants his land sown after the rain and offers Shiva four days' work; Shiva must on one of these days go to sow his own small field. He loses the job Ramrao offered and some one else gets it while Shiva sits three days idle. The evil of the small holding thus goes farther than we realised: it steals some of Shiva's food in other occupations. How many mill hands lose three months' wages in order to earn the equivalent of less than one month's wage on their too-small-holding? The Bill will help them to cut these losses; and yet it is represented that it will turn rayats into labourers and owners into tenants. This is a clever misrepresentation. It sounds alarming. Really the Bill will turn a small number of starving rayats into rayats who can live on their holdings. It will turn another set of men who are partly rayats and partly labourers into full-time cultivators with enough land to live on. And it will turn a still smaller number of men who are now starving as part-time labourers and part-time cultivators into full-time labourers with a decent living and also enjoying some profit from the land they still own and lease out to their neighbours but do not waste time and incur loss by cultivating in person.

15. There was a peon in a Poona office who earned Rs. 18 per mensem His family cost for food and everything a minimum of Rs. 14 per mensem, so that while on duty he had a profit or saving of Rs. 4 available for little

extras and to save up for ceremonies. But he had a parcel of land in a distant taluka of which the gross yield was Rs. 50 a year. The cost of all cultivation (seed, manure, cattle on hire, etc.) was only Rs. 16 so the profit was Rs. 34. His neighbour would have gladly paid him Rs. 10 rent. But he preferred to go and cultivate it himself even though the journey there and back (sometimes he took his family) cost Rs. 8. Consider his year's budget :—

	Rs.
Wages earned in 9 months	162
Profit from the cultivation (after deducting journey Rs. 8)	26
Total ..	188
Cost of living for a year at Rs. 14 per mensem ..	188

So as a part-time-peon and a part-time-cultivator he got a very bare living and never saved an anna. But if he had remained on duty for 11 months in the year and taken one month's holiday (even without pay) his income would have been Rs. 198 and he could have got Rs. 10 rent : and so saved Rs. 20 a year, or (if he had given up the month's holiday) Rs. 38. To have applied this Bill to stop him cultivating that parcel and to have handed it to his neighbour on rent would have turned him from a starving or miserably poor man—unable properly to attend to his field or improve it—into a fairly prosperous landlord and peon. And the neighbour would have made a good deal more profit out of the land in the way of second crops and grazing after the harvest and much else for which the peon could not give the requisite time.

16. This being the unassailable truth of the situation what does this much maligned Bill provide ? It is possible to condense its 76 clauses into one paragraph thus :—

Part I

The limit below which a parcel becomes a fragment is fixed for each locality after full consultation of expert agriculturists. If there now is a " fragment," then its holder may go on cultivating it till he WANTS to sell or let it. Then he must give his neighbour first offer (or of several willing neighbours, then that neighbour who will be most benefitted). If hereafter any holders try to make a " new fragment " out of their land, then they may not cut it up but must lease it for cultivation (so as to combine with a neighbour's land and make a parcel larger than a " fragment "). They remain its owners, and enjoy its rent.

Part II

In any village or part of a village where holdings are badly scattered then, if two-thirds of the holders (who between them own more than half the land) agree, a consolidation scheme shall be prepared in which all the land will be rearranged so that each holder will have

(1) about the same area and kind and quality (especially in regard to rights to irrigation water) of land of each kind (dry rice or garden) as before ;

(2) in much the same position as before; (taking his biggest parcel as a sort of pivot for consolidating his block);

(3) if there are trifling differences of quality, then those who get an advantage shall pay those who lose and Government will lend the cash; (for this purpose every yard of land is carefully valued in its original state);

(4) if there is any holder with so little land that when all is put together it is still incapable of being cultivated with profit (this limit being fixed by consultation and by sound agricultural advice) then he cannot go on cultivating it but must sell or lease it for inclusion in some other holding;

(5) any debt secured on any land shall be paid or go with it;

(6) all the new holdings shall be so laid out that roads and boundaries and everything else shall be made as convenient as possible and no charge will be made for stamps or registration or fresh survey of the land, but a clear sanad will be given to each holder and the assessment will not be changed;

(7) half the assessment on the consolidated area shall be remitted for 3 years—this is to help Pay for the new "bandhs" and fences and roads and such improvements.

Such in brief are the provisions of the Bill. In the next chapter we will deal with misplaced criticisms which have been published.

Chapter II

The critics of the Small Holdings Bill

17. Let us first turn to some of the misapprehensions. People say: you are going to fix such a large area as the "minimum" fragment that many cultivators will be forced to give up their occupation. But this is not true. The area adjudged a "fragment" is to be fixed not by Government arbitrarily or foolishly, but by a Committee of practical agriculturists for each locality. We do not know what minimum they will fix, but roughly it may be assumed that at first they would fix them rather low. After some years perhaps when rayats are convinced that good has been done they may raise the limit. Now the minimum will differ for districts and kinds of land. If the people are now cultivating smaller plots than the minima to be fixed, there is to be no interference. But when such a holder WANTS to let or sell or mortgage his plot then only the Bill interferes and says "you must let your neighbour have the first offer: he must have it if he is willing to pay you the same rent or price as you have been genuinely offered by another person; or if there is no such offer then the Collector will decide if the rent or price offered by your neighbour is fair. If it is not fair then you can give it to any other person." But if after this Bill is passed rayats want to make any *new fragment*, then the owner of this new fragment may not separately cultivate it. He MUST sublet it to the neighbour (or sell it). If two brothers divide a plot so that it would make 2 plots of less than the required size, then neither may separately cultivate them, BUT either one may take the whole and the "rental value" or "profit" of half to pay his brother; or both may let the whole and divide the rent.

18. Thus here and there some persons will be obliged to stop cultivating at a loss. Their loss will be turned into gain. But there is no fear that some who have no other living than agriculture will lose their living. There will not be any LESS LAND in the village so that on the whole no rayat can have less opportunity of cultivating. It is only a few men here and there who already have not enough to live on and who must be following some other occupation for their living who will have to work for a longer time at that occupation (and it must be remembered this process will be very gradual) while an equal number of real cultivators who now hardly manage to live will get rather more land and have more cultivation.

19. Again it is agreed that by consolidation of scattered holdings much good can be done: whenever a chance occurs rayats who can afford it and have good sense buy or exchange lands for that very purpose. But very often they fail because one obstinate or unintelligent person refuses to play his part in the bargain. The Bill enables the majority of holders to overcome these recalcitrant minorities. But it is said that when all the lands are distributed afresh there will be many persons whose holdings will be judged "too small" and they will lose their lands and have no living. "All the holdings will be made large, and only a few persons will take all the land." This is quite incorrect. The size of holding will be fixed in the same sort of way as the size of fragments. Cultivators will have a voice in the decision. It will not be foolish or arbitrary. Let us suppose it is decided that no cultivator and family can live on less than 2½ acres of jirayat or 1 acre rice, or ½ acre bagayat (or combinations of these); then there will in each replotted area be a few men who have less. Suppose Khandu and Genu have each only 1½ acres jirayat. Then it is argued that if the Bill is passed Government will turn *both* out. Not so. Genu will take Khandu's land and so only one man will go. But he already has not nearly enough land to live on. Then he must be getting his living by something else and not by agriculture entirely. Is it then a loss to him to be obliged to reduce his cultivation and work more at breeding sheep? It is indeed also clear that Genu before he got Khandu's land had not enough to live on, and very likely he was breeding sheep. Now he has more cultivation and can give up sheep altogether. Khandu takes them over. Instead of two men, half-cultivators and half-sheepbreeders, we now have one man entirely occupied at each trade. Their losses are eliminated and both are better off.

20. The Bill has had many critics, some so ignorant that any rayat would see at once they were misleading him. But others are more subtle. With Mr. Pashabhai of Baroda, who wrote in the *Times of India*, I have adequately dealt. The critic who has sought most publicity is Mr. Vinayak Ganesh Tikhe of Alandi (near Poona). The latter has attacked the Bill in a printed Marathi pamphlet which has had wide circulation. It is published under the auspices of the Maharashtra Co-operative Institute, Poona (though in his preface the author confesses it was published before any of them had seen it—a wise precaution). This pamphlet sums up all the misunderstandings and misrepresentations

which it seems possible to make against the Bill and in answering Mr. Tikhe I answer all other critics.

21. This treatise on its cover says " if you want to keep the existence of our rayats unchanged, then this Bill must be rejected." This is very true. But what an extraordinary ground for opposing it! The patriots of India are ever lamenting the awful poverty, the miserable condition into which rayats have fallen under this Satanic rule, and I always dreamed they desired to change it. Now we know better: these good friends of the rayat are ready to go to the extreme length of issuing an 8 anna pamphlet to prevent any change. But we, who support the Bill, and the Honourable Sir Chunilal Mehta desire a change. Is he or they the true friend? Now who are these staunch friends of the rayat, these good kunbis who know all there is to be known about agriculture. Here are all the names:

S. R. Bhagwat, L.C.E.,
D. V. Gokhale,
S. D. Nagpurkar, M.Ag.,
S. P. Dikshit, Vakil,
M. R. Tarkunde, Vakil,
D. D. Chitale and
B. R. Joshi.

All good and sound Kunbis, expert in agriculture. Now we know who desire to keep the economic conditions of our rayats unchanged.

22. Now the author of course did not desire to misrepresent the Bill. But if he HAD so desired what would he have done? First he would have represented that a fragment was the same as an "unprofitable or too-small holding;" secondly he would have said that the Bill takes away from owners their fragments (whereas in fact it does not), and thirdly he would have taken a very high limit for a profitable holding so that he could make out that the number of persons whose land was to be taken away was very large. Then fourthly he would have frightened all persons who have lent money on land by representing that when their security was declared a "fragment" they would lose that security (*e.g.*, the penultimate paragraph on page 109); and fifthly he would have represented that neighbours would get land for less than its proper value (p. 105) ignoring the excellent machinery that prevents this. Then having shown that large numbers of persons would become landless labourers and the few who remained would be big "zamindars" cultivating large tracts by machinery and employing no farm hands, he would end up with the pleasant suggestion that Sir Chunilal had for his object the promotion of the sale of foreign machinery and foreign manures in India, even at the cost of the ruin of Indian agriculturists. It is very odd that though Mr. Tikhe's object (we know it from his preface) is to make the meaning of the Bill clear, yet every one of the errors or mistakes above listed occur on almost every page of his pamphlet. He and his assistants begin by assuming that the minimum size below which a parcel will be classed as a fragment is 10 acres. Mr. Tikhe is very ignorant of agricultural matters. Government have never referred to the "Economic Holdings" conception urged by Mr. Keatings (p. 2 of his "Rural Economy in the Deccan") which Mr. Tikhe blazons on p. 72. That holding was an ideal, a best possible holding for the peasant

proprietor. But this Bill deals with the least profitable size for a holding. There is no connexion between the least and the ideal. The confusion has however helped critics to go astray.

23. His views are best summed up by examining the great "*pièce de resistance*" of the booklet, the table on page 107. From this table we can leave out the superfluous columns for gunthas and for assessment which is not in issue. We may also omit the distribution of column 3 into dry-crop and garden; for Mr. Tikhe makes no use of this, but "for simplicity" assumes they are of the same value and quality. We then get this as presented by Mr. Tikhe :—

SAVE THE RAYATS OF THIS VILLAGE FROM A NEEDLESS BURDEN OF ONE LAKH OF DEBT THROUGH CONSOLIDATION

Out of 270 Khatedars 208 liable to lose their land.

General state of holdings in a village in September 1927

Already in addition to the famine, a thirteenth month of interest.

Khatedars holding land. (Should be "grades of holdings)	Number of holders	Total, area	Total number of parcels exceeding the limit of 10 acres.	Area in acres	Total number of parcels short of 10 acres	Area in acres	Area to change hands	Debit on that account at Rs. 50 per acre.	Number of holders who will totally lose their land in the consolidation.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Acres									
within 5 ..	114	230	..	..	291	230	230	11,500	114
5 to 10 ..	60	351	..	..	196	351	351	17,550	60
10-20 ..	43	611	17	219	162	392	392	19,600	26
20-30 ..	25	668	23	374	117	294	294	14,700	7
30-40 ..	9	296	11	183	41	112	112	5,600	1
40-50 ..	5	232	7	124	30	108	108	5,400	..
over 50 ..	14	1,137	32	669	167	468	468	23,400	..
Total ..	270	3,528	90	1,571	1,004	1,957	1,957	97,850	208

To this table he adds some very illuminating remarks. He says it shows how many khatedars there are and out of them how many hold land. Well, we can easily tell him that. Every khatedar holds land: so that's that! Then he says, "it is possible that out of the separate parcels some may be contiguous one to another and this will affect the result; but not much." On p. 106 he further gives himself away on the same point: in the same survey number he makes Maruti have three separate hissas and all adjoining. He does this in order to argue that though Maruti has more in the aggregate than 10 acres still he will be dispossessed and become a "landless labourer" because his separate parcels are each less than 10 acres. Thus he makes it very clear that he does not know that shares can never be made separate in this fashion. The first thing the Land Records Department would do in such a case

is to strike out the dividing lines between Maruti's three shares and treat them as one. Any kunbi would know that. Mr. Tikhe does not. He betrays the same ignorance about a dozen times in his other examples (*e.g.*, page 105, hissas 1 and 5) and further by giving us numerous examples of survey numbers exceeding 30 acres in extent. He ought to know that no cultivable land is made into survey numbers exceeding that limit.

24. In this table on page 107 Mr. Tikhe has shown that out of 270 landholders no less than 208 will be utterly dispossessed of all their land. These are his own exact words. It is of course enough to frighten any village. But why did Mr. Tikhe not pause and ask himself, "if this is the result, then how could Sir Chunilal Mehta and all the other officers of Government who prepared the Bill have intended such a result?" Since that is plainly impossible, why did he rush into print and broadcast his crude and entirely erroneous misinterpretations with the avowed object of "helping agriculturists to understand the Bill?" Mr. Tikhe has given the names of 7 stout and thorough kunbis whom he consulted in order to make sure that he was really getting the true view. But who was the officer, however humble, of Government whom he asked to help him understand the Bill and who could at once have saved him from the worst and most glaring of his errors? Or did he prefer to fall into the pit without a guide? Well, he has fallen.

25. Let us now study the table. Mr. Tikhe has made it yield such terrible results by inadmissible means—

He pitches the limit below which no holder will be allowed to continue cultivating at the absurd figure of 10 acres:

In fact it has not been settled what should be the "minimum holding." That is to be settled by consultation with agriculturists differently for each scheme [sec. 32 (*b*)]. Assuredly it will at first be a low minimum and might even be as low as 2 acres. But let us see what will really happen if it is fixed at the *high* figure of 4 acres.

26. First we have all the holders of more than five acres: not one of these will be touched, but they will all benefit by having their scattered parcels all brought together. So too out of the 114 holders of land not in the aggregate exceeding 5 acres, some will have more than 4. They hold 230 acres altogether, an average of hardly 2 acres. Therefore at least 57 must hold less than 2 acres, and some much less. Let us suppose that 40 of the smallest holders have 10 acres between them, 1/4th acre for an average.

27. Now these men already are necessarily labourers or tenants of others or work at other trades. It is false to represent that by stopping them from cultivating and giving them the rent of their 1/4th acre instead, we are turning them into labourers and so on. Let us not also forget that of the other holders there are always some who will be glad and very willing to give up (either to sell or rent) the whole or a part of their existing holdings and that all such land can be put into the pool and will help to make up the average of the rest. Mr. Tikhe has put 1/3rd of his whole village in the hands of 14 men holding over 61 acres each of which is far more than one man, or family can

possibly cultivate and far above the Presidency standard. I will suppose that at least 66 acres will be thus voluntarily surrendered (on lease). Then we have 230 acres in the lowest class and 66 acres surrendered (much more than this is habitually leased out by larger holders). Out of this we can constitute 74 holdings over 4 acres and then only 40 men already holding far less than enough to employ them as cultivators will be pushed out into whole-time work at the occupation they already mainly follow. This is my result with Mr. Tikhe's figures, and the high limit of 4 acres for a holding (even of garden land). In my opinion there would in such a village as this be no dispossessions except of men who wanted to go and were not cultivators at all— Instead of the portentous figure of one lakh for land purchase there will be needed a few thousands at most (at his values Rs. 3,850); this will be provided by Tagavi and so will make no difficulty.

He shows us 25 holders with a minimum of 20 acres each. Yet he puts down that 7 of them will be evicted, as not having the minimum of 10 acres. How is it possible ? He assumes that in a consolidation scheme if any man holds a fragment that will *first* be taken away before consolidation begins. But there is no justification for the idea : it is certainly not in the Bill; certainly not in the mind of Government. Consolidation means putting firstly all the fragments together and when that has been done not one of these 25 men could possibly be disturbed; all would have well over 20 acres. But by this error he makes the 62 khatedars whom he retains out of 270 have not the minimum of 10 acres but nearly 60 acres each.

To lend colour to his interpretations Mr. Tikhe wants his readers to think that the limit fixed for a fragment and that fixed for a too-small-holding [sec. 32 (*b*)] is to be the same. At a glance and obviously, no such thing could ever be meant, and there is no word in the Bill to sustain it. So Mr. Tikhe puts words into the "Notes on the clauses of the Bill" which are not there and then establishes this absurdity. The "standard unit" (secs. 3 and 8) and the "minimum size of holding" [secs. 32 (*c*) and 31(2)] are not the same and are kept apart by careful language in the Bill. But on page 52 of his pamphlet Mr. Tikhe has this :—

"Section 3 : in this section the expression 'local area' is used. This means any district or part of a district to which the Commissioner *applies a consolidation scheme.*" But turn to section 3 of the Bill and we find that "local area" means any locality for which standard units have been determined under section 8. Section 8 has no concern with the consolidation chapter of the Bill.

28. Now Mr. Tikhe, why do you make this big error ? Because it is only by mixing up the "standard unit" fixed to stop fragmentation of fields with the "minimum holding" fixed under another part of the Bill for consolidation schemes that you can arrive at the marvellous result worked out on page 107.

29. On this background of confusions and misunderstandings Mr. Tikhe has constructed a picture that would genuinely frighten us, if we did not know it was all untrue, just a fake like a Cinema horror.

What advice has Mr. Tikhe for the cultivators? He *admits* the fact that fragmentation is a real and great evil. He puts in his picture on the frontispiece "fragments" at the top of the load carried by the poor rayat. But he says "let the people do voluntarily what the Bill seeks to do by force." But have you not, my friend, at great pains shown that what the Bill seeks to do (whether by force or not) is evil and will "destroy the very existence" of the cultivators? On page 6 in very large type he has given us a list of awful consequences of the Bill. Then why on page 7 does he advise the rayat to do it voluntarily? Can it mean that his whole theme really is just this: "Fragmentation is very bad and must be remedied. Government have hit on a splendid notion and have produced a very fine Bill in all its main ideas. But if they carry it through the glory will be theirs: we do not want that. If it could be done by Co-operative Societies or by voluntary efforts then we could get a bit of the credit." Mr. Tikhe knows full well that it never could or would be done by Co-operative Societies or by voluntary effort. So he launches into this elaborate attempt in 110 pages to give the bill a bad name and miscall it as much as possible; but by the sheer force of his own perception of the truth and his knowledge that all the people cannot be fooled all the time he is compelled to admit that if this poison could be administered by any other hand than that of Government, *then* it would be a life saving medicine. It is.

30. The most childish argument that has been seen in cold print for a long time is the main argument with which Mr. Tikhe opens.—In substance he says:—

> "The rayat carries many grievous loads, of which fragmentation is only one. Government have not tried" (this by the way is notoriously false) "to lighten any of these burdens by one kawri. Then no effort to lift the fragmentation load can properly be made till the other loads have been first lifted." (And he might then, when it suits him also, argue that no attempt should be made to lift the other loads till first fragmentation had been removed). By this cycle of argument he arrives at his object which is "to preserve *unchanged* the state of existence of our rayats."

THAT however is not the aim of Government. Their aim is to improve and advance the state of the rayats out of all recognition. Mr. Tikhe who though not an agriculturist owns land at Alandi ought to give Government his best help in this revised aim, and we hope that now his mistakes have been exposed to him, he will do so together with his Co-operative societies.

31. Out of this Bill Government get not an anna of revenue—nothing but plenty of work.—On the contrary they surrender half the revenue for three years in all consolidation schemes. Then why introduce it? Because even a child knows that it is really to the interest of Government as of every other person that the cultivator should prosper and that agriculture should flourish.

32. What means this agitation against foreign manures? Did we not once hear that the export of Indian fertilisers was sterilising the soil

of India and making a once fertile land barren ? But if we bring foreign fertilisers to India that now seems to be equally wicked ! But why indeed should any such be brought in ? We feed the cow and her offspring : the virtue of India's soil goes into her and then patriots export her bones and will not use them to restore fertility to the soil that fed her. Let the Indian agriculturist demand manure and let his holdings be so consolidated and improved that he can *afford* it, and all the manure India needs from bones, atmospheric nitrogen, and many other sources is here *in India* waiting to be made and used in India. So too agricultural machinery : are not our Kirloskars and Tatas and many other famous names ready to supply every machine India wants if only the ryat had more means to buy them ? The manufacture grows but it would advance in a great flood of demand if only the ryat had the means. It is Indian manure and Indian machines that the Bill seeks to promote ; and the growth of a greater abundance of food for the masses of Indian population. There is an interest above that of landlord and tenant ; of cultivator and official ; it is the interest of the general consumer of the whole country, of the land itself. Every honest thinker can see that if land is rescued from fragmentation and from scattered holdings it must yield more food and better food than it now yields with less aggregate labour. Fencing manuring, rotation of crops, better tools, more concentrated attention—can these things be evil ? Unless there is a party determined to ruin every shred of its own reputation for zeal in the interests of ryat, for the good of India, then no party dare range itself in opposition to this Bill and admit the fact before their constituents : but on the contrary they must give their co-operation in placing it on the Statute Book in polished and perfected form.

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