

R. V. LAKSHMI RATAN (SENIOR)
316. THAMBU CHETTY STREET
POST BOX NO. 20.
MADRAS.

DEAR SIR,

Unemployment—A Modest Solution

I would esteem it a favour if you would kindly go through this booklet re: above, and offer your valued criticisms and suggestions after a careful study of the same.

Your reply with suggestions will be greatly appreciated and considered in the preparation of the final draft, if it is sent in about three weeks from the date of the receipt of this booklet.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours truly,

R. V. LAKSHMI RATAN (Sr.)

For private circulation only.

Unemployment.—A Modest Solution.

One of the hardest problems challenging solution in modern civilised times is that of unemployment and the consequent waste of human energy in despair and destitution. The writer has, however, come forward offering a solution as a businessman.

The scheme is based on a careful study of the present situation of India and her needs and on a recognition of the fact that it is her ancient civilisation that should form the bed-rock of her revival and advancement.

It is intended to meet the problem of unemployment in two of its phases :

- (1) the unemployment in rural areas where the villager is constantly meeting with immense and often insuperable difficulties in life and has largely lost his zeal for work, because he is oppressed by poverty, disease, malnutrition and semi-starvation, or because he does not have the means to do his work in a profitable manner, or because he is emmeshed in the intricate tangle of indebtedness and helplessness created by modern circumstances, and
- (2) the unemployment in urban areas where the middle classes, educated and half educated,

find time hanging heavily upon them, because they are unable to find a source of livelihood in the competition for appointments; and because they are unfitted for manual work by reason of the very process of education that they have gone through.

It is proposed to start an organisation under the name of LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED which will work as a joint-stock concern, with a capital made up equally of Capital Preference Shares and Resident Members' Shares. The LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED is an attempt to provide healthy and dependable occupation for the unemployed, calculated at the same time to increase the wealth of the country by productive work and to remove the friction now existing between capital and labour.

The LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED will acquire a large area of land in one or more healthy localities with adequate facilities in all directions; and those who desire to earn a livelihood and are willing to put in hard work will be given every facility to do so, in an altogether different atmosphere and under entirely new environments, breaking away from the vicious circle of this present helpless existence and making life hopeful and progressive. They can become gardeners, planters, orchardists, horticulturists, farmers, cultivators, and can also practise any other of the occupations mentioned in the accompanying Memorandum of Association, and thus maintain themselves in independence and comfort by self-help and co-operation.

Those who have previous experience and those who have had training in agriculture or in such other lines of work as may be taken up by the Company, can join the LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED as "Resident Employees."

Those who want to learn the great lesson of self-help can become apprentices in the LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED and learn work, but it means work, ennobling though hard. They must also be prepared to pay the way. The training they will receive will give them a realistic attitude to life, as a serious attempt will be made to avoid the woeful spectacle of an "educated mind without trained hands."

The provision for apprenticeship will indeed serve as a *safety-valve* and will be of great value both to the *would-be* resident and the company itself. One will have much to unlearn and very much more to learn before adopting the vocation of a hardy farmer. For, the purely literary education that is imparted results only in unfitting the labourer's son for the vocation of his father and in inculcating a love of ease and indulgence. During the period of apprenticeship those who are by birth or upbringing 'soft-handed' can try for themselves whether they can join the great army of the 'hard-handed' sons of the soil, and see how far they can 'ring out the old and ring in the new' and replace their old habits and outlook by new habits and outlook. Should the apprentice find his task too hard for him, the atmosphere uncongenial and the people and place not to his liking, he can without much difficulty discontinue his period of

training. As the Company however must not incur any expenditure for the experiments of those who want to learn new work, it will be laid down that the apprentice during his period of probation and trial should pay his own expenses which may not amount to much in a village.

The Resident (Employee, Nominee, or Member) will be put on such work as could be done by him in a fairly satisfactory manner and will be supplied with such equipment as would be found suitable to the locality of the Company's operations. He will be paid such bonus as may be fixed by the Company from time to time, besides the wages of his labour.

He can engage in a number of subsidiary occupations with the co-operation of the members of his family and other Residents, and can augment his income.

He can, if he has funds at his disposal, purchase Capital Preference Shares.

It is also hoped that the innumerable benefits of group life and group activity can be secured in the atmosphere of mutual helpfulness and good-will that would, and should, prevail in the locality of the Company's operations. Opportunities for love and service to one another, for the wise use of leisure, and for the manifold activities tending to promote the harmonious development of the individual, all these can be provided, and the gateway of a free, healthy and simple life based on material well-being and mental, moral, and spiritual enlightenment can be successfully opened with the Golden Key of Co-operation.

So, all can help in this great experiment of the salvage

of much excellent human material that is suffering from disintegration and decline under the stress of modern economic conditions and is drifting and rotting as mere flotsam and jetsam.

Those who like to get 'back to the village' can come in to try for themselves whether they can seek the wealth that Mother Earth promises to earnest endeavour.

Those who realise the worth and the glory of labour can choose the life of an enlightened farmer, by becoming Resident Members and settling on the estate for life and rid themselves of the anxiety of securing a vocation for their sons, who can be trained in the same career of production of wealth consistently with dignity, health and comfort.

All those who have money can help this great movement by becoming Capital Preference Shareholders and participate in the control and management of the organisation. As they are entitled to a fixed percentage of non-cumulative dividends, and a share in the surplus profit, in case of profits, and in case of winding up, to the return of their capital in priority to the holders of Resident Members' Shares, they can, with a feeling of some security with regard to their investments, become pioneers in a movement of reclamation.

The writer is fully aware that much of the farming in India is unprofitable on account of several causes, but he is equally convinced that:

1. by striking out a new departure on a large scale, and by adapting the methods of cultivation to the needs of the times and by a study and

examination of methods obtaining in other countries,

2. by paying more attention to the propagation, on plantation scale, of a few of such perennials, as those that yield nut, fruit, flower etc.,
3. by specialising in the cultivation of vegetables,
4. by limiting the cultivation of such annuals as cereals, pulses etc.,
5. by turning out some raw produce (perishables and non-perishables) into partly or wholly finished products,
6. by minimising the number of lessees, middlemen and dealers now obtained in the process of distribution from the producer to the actual consumer, and
7. by providing such subsidiary occupations as may be done with profit by the Residents (Employees, Nominees, or Members),

there is every prospect of the LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED becoming a conspicuous success and a memorable example in beneficial co-operative enterprise.

"Nothing succeeds like success." The LAKSHMI FARM AND HOME LIMITED will, it is hoped, serve as an eye-opener and object lesson regarding many of the vital questions that confront Modern India. It is not controversy, but actual demonstration, that solves human problems and the attempt will be made with courage and faith in the basic soundness of the scheme, in the latent potentiality of the individual and in the abiding genius of the race.