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By ALBION ROSSSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
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VAST LAND REFORM PLANNED IN EGYPT

New Committee Seeks to Turn Country Into One Consisting of 5-Acre Holdings

By ALBION ROSS
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CAIRO, Feb. 4—A committee of fourteen is being formed here to work toward the transformation of Egypt into a country of small peasants with about five acres of land each as the basis for economic and social regeneration.

The committee is under the leadership of Mohamed Abdel Wahab Ezzat, director of agriculture and reclamation in the Administration of State Domains. Mr. Ezzat represented Egypt at the international conference on land tenure problems at the University of Wisconsin in October.

The immediate program of the new committee is to see that the increase in acreage, equal to one-half of Egypt's present total cultivated area, that is expected to result from large irrigation projects now getting under way will be distributed in small holdings of approximately five acres each.

The present cultivated area of Egypt is approximately 8,000,000 acres, and the irrigation developments are expected to add 4,000,000 acres.

Started on Limited Scale

The principle that new irrigated acreage should be distributed in small plots has already been put into practice on a limited scale by the Government. King Farouk, on the occasion of the birth of his heir to the throne, Emir es Said Ahmed Fouad, in January, distributed land as small holdings.

The State Domains Administration's pilot project was established three years ago, with five-acre plots, and a model village consisting of two-room houses, utilities, a school, a mosque and a small hospital.

The major purpose of the new committee is to win a national decision that all land added to the cultivated area will be distributed on this basis. Land in the pilot project is leased by the state for ten years, after which the lessee receives title to the plot and is expected to pay for it in small installments over a period of forty years.

It is felt, however, that the long-term land distribution program is too slow, and the new group is aiming at a five-year program to get a major land reform going.

King Farouk has shown marked interest in the distribution of state lands to peasants. He is understood to have intervened some months ago to prevent certain state lands scheduled for distribution to landowners from falling into the hands of a group employing dummy buyers.

Cites Low Wage Rates

Mr. Ezzat presented figures showing that the average value of an acre of land in the United States represented the equivalent of ten days' wages of an average farm worker, while in Egypt the value of an acre of land was equal to about twenty years of the average Egyptian worker's wages.

The State Domains Administration's figures show that the population dependent on agriculture stands at around 1,210 persons a square mile, probably the densest population directly dependent on agriculture anywhere in the world.

The five-acre plot has been chosen as a result of studies by Egyptian experts showing that it gives maximum productivity. The studies, made in 1947, showed that the typical Egyptian small farm of about one and a half acres produced at the rate of about £35 Egyptian an acre, or roughly $100, that large land holdings produced only a little more, and medium-sized holding of five to ten acres produced at the rate of £41½ Egyptian an acre, or roughly $120.

Large-scale agriculture has little meaning in Egypt. Big holdings are not cultivated on a large-scale basis, but by small tenant farmers.

A break-up of large estates, Mr. Ezzat has explained, would result in an increase in Egyptian productivity.

One argument of the new group is that Egyptian industry can be built up only if a sizable and prosperous peasantry is created to provide an essential home market.

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