

สารนิพนธ์

THESIS ABSTRACTS

The Administration of Land Improvement Cooperatives in Thailand

By Varopagdi Varalaksana

The Department of Land Cooperatives is promoting many types of land cooperative societies. This thesis concentrates on the administration of only one type of them namely, land improvement cooperatives.

Land improvement cooperatives are known in the United States as irrigation cooperatives. Their purpose is to enable farmers who own adjoining pieces of land and have a common need for water for their rice cultivation to cooperate and to obtain water on a large scale through group action. The members will mutually regulate the water-flow for their purposes and apply the modern techniques of cultivation.

A big piece of land not less than 5,000 rais (one acre equals $2\frac{1}{2}$ rais) situated along a river or canal is ideal for this type of cooperative. For a big pump can be set up in order to draw water from the river and drain it into the rice fields through the ditches that are dug for this purpose. Rice is a special crop which needs a lot of water for its cultivation. Water has to be retained in the rice fields for three or four months before it can be harvested.

The first land improvement cooperative society was established in B.E. 2481 (1938) at Bang Pa-In, Ayuthaya Province, in the Central Plains. The rice fields of the members extended along the main river, and the problem was that the level of

water in the river was usually low at the beginning of the rice growing season making it difficult to get the water. Through mutual help and self-help a big pump was then set up to draw water from the river, and members thus obtained the required water for their cultivation.

Later on, this type of cooperative was extended to the upland provinces of the Northeast where farmers need more water than in the central plain. After the rainy season most of the rivers water flows to the sea making this region quite dry; and also, at the time there were no dams. The Government, through the Department of Irrigation, tried to remedy this situation by building a few ground reservoirs to contain the water. Many groups of farmers thus obtained water for their cultivation through these reservoirs. Land improvement cooperatives were also formed around these reservoirs.

In B.E. 2506 (1963) another society was established for experiment in the North, at Chiang Rai, and the land improvement cooperatives grew in number. By the end of B.E. 2506 (1963) there were altogether 86 land improvement societies, with 10,345 member families operating the land of 267,706 rais for rice and up-land crop farming.

This thesis is designed to study how the administration was taking shape before the launching of "The National Economic Development Plan B.E. 2504—2506—2509" (1961—1963—1963) or the "VI Year Plan", and to evaluate the accomplishments of the first three years of this plan. The author found that there are many things to be improved in the administration of the land improvement cooperatives. The problems may be summed up as follows :

(1) *Problems Concerning the Operation Plan.* Some operation plans are not consistent and subject to sudden change thus causing work delays. Sometimes when

there is a change of personnel the task of follow-up work has been neglected. The author recommends that the plan-making process be considered in light of economic conditions and farmers' needs, and to evaluate the results in terms of economy and efficiency.

(2) *Problems concerning the Formation of Cooperatives.* Some cooperative societies were formed in haste without the support of adequate statistical data and lacked necessary promotion. The result was insecurity for that cooperative. For example, the land was not suitable for farming; the members did not get enough public relations and so did not quite understand the objectives of the cooperative resulting in their failure to cooperate. Some farm members went as far as suspecting that the government would take the land away from them. The author recommends that more time be allowed in the surveying process, more adequate data be obtained, and the process of disseminating the principles and methods of cooperation be enhanced.

(3) *Problems of Finance.* Inadequate budgetary support and allowances slow the process, and there are no regular follow-ups the projects. Supply of equipment should also be adequate.

(4) *Problems of Organization.* At present, the Land Cooperatives Department is not well organized. Functions are not carefully delineated. This causes overlapping and duplication of functions. The division of work is not generally clear. These call for the rearrangement of functions.

(5) *Problems of Personnel.* Lack of qualified competent personnel has been a real obstacle to the operation of work. Promotion is commonly made on the basis of seniority or length of service rather than on competence and performance. Lack of clear duty description causes officers not only to become irresponsible, but also the lose interest in their work. The Department of Land Cooperatives should make clear to each

officer the duties expected of them. The number of personnel should be increased, and training be given in order to change the attitude of the officers.

(6) *Problems of Supervision.* Some officers from Headquarters office sometimes find fault with their Field Officers while inspecting. This method should be avoided for it discourages them to use their own ideas. Supervision by stimulation or induction would be perhaps, a better policy. It seems that Field Officers spend too little time in making inspection tours of the societies and visiting the members. Poor communication and lack of vehicles constitute another problems.

(7) *Problems of Coordination.* Coordination within the Department and with other departments needs improvement. Poor coordination not only retards activities but sometimes creates arguments among officers. Therefore, the Department should take this into consideration in order to make administration more effective. There should be good coordination on every level in the Department. Fields Officers should work closely with members. The author suggests the establishment of "The Board of Coordination for the National Land Improvement Cooperatives". The functions of the board are to improve existing societies, plan new projects by coordinating with related departments, and gear the activities of the cooperatives to the National Economic Plan.

This thesis indicates that the administration of Land Improvement Cooperatives insignificant to the development of the national economy. This author concludes that the development of this type of land cooperative in the future should strictly adhere to the basic principles of self-help and mutual-help. For this reason, the Department should concentrate on the training of its staff, committee members of the society and the public. The present endeavor should not be expanded unless the people understand the principles, methods and operation of these types of cooperatives.

Finally, the author stresses that the success of this program depends only upon the members. For it is they who make the society succeed or fail. If its members are active, fully - cooperative, and appreciate the proper methods and regulations, this program will certainly achieve the desired goals. Members will become well-to-do families, and the national economic condition will be more stable in the near future.

วราภักดิ์ วราสักษณ์ ภบ.

รป.ม.

(ภาษาไทย 198 หน้า)
