

cultivators and when available was certainly on small patches of land, what is not clear is the extent of that reduction, its distribution and variation among different districts, villages, and peasants; nor is it clear as to the extent of reduced dependence of the peasants on moneylenders.

An inquiry with bankers on the extent of indebtedness of peasants to moneylenders resulted in Jewish bankers maintaining that it was “negligible,” while Arab bankers saying it was “considerable.” At any rate, a decrease in the “number” of indebted peasants may simply reflect the well-known situation where peasants sold their land to pay off debts and became landless or nearly landless.

Another inquiry in 88 villages from among the 135 villages that had cooperative credit societies found that most loans were taken from those societies. Based on this, the situation is generalized to the whole country in asserting “that the practice of borrowing from moneylenders is no longer followed by a majority.”⁵⁶ However, these villages are not representative of the whole country. The very existence of such villages (i.e., having had cooperative societies that offered loans on much easier terms than did moneylenders) naturally resulted in peasants turning away from moneylenders. For the 963⁵⁷ remaining villages that did not have cooperative societies, it is not clear as to the extent, if any, of reduction in dependence on moneylenders, given that for a peasant to borrow from

⁵⁶Ibid., 367.

⁵⁷*Abstract 1944/45*, 273; for a list of villages see Sami Hadawi, *Village Statistics 1945; A Classification of Land and Area Ownership in Palestine* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1970), 40-70.