

ALVARO OBREGON

THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

*Short-hand notes of the impressions
exchanged between the President elect
and a numerous group of Congressmen.*

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**Hon. Alvaro Obregon explains before a numerous group of
Congressmen how he intends to solve the
Agrarian problem.**

There is no doubt that we are entering into an open essay of parliamentarism. Yesterday morning, the President elect of the Republic, general Alvaro Obregón, and the Secretary to the Department of Agriculture and Development, Antonio I. Villarreal, with all simplicity and no flourishing attitudes, in the company of some congressmen witnessed the debates of the people's representatives.

At ten a. m. precisely, general Obregón made his appearance. He alighted from his auto, went into the hemicycle, conversed with several congressmen and waited for the informal meeting to convene.

Shortly after, Hon. Antonio I. Villarreal came in, and sitting by general Obregón, both waited until the Acting President of the meeting, Hon. Aurelio Manrique said, after the stenographical notes:

—*Hon. Manrique:* Hon. Obregón has the floor.

—*Hon. Alvaro Obregón:* Hon. Congressmen: To your kindness I owe the honour of raising my voice in this House in order to exchange impressions with you on the far-reaching problems you have under study. I am of the opinion that the future lies in the efforts to be carried out by both Houses, because the progress of our country, or else the continuance of a precarious life full of changes and fluctuations, depend upon our laws, that is why when I reach up to this consideration I eagerly hope that the Houses, getting rid of the political passion, of party interests or caucus, may fix their attention in the future of our country, making suitable laws, without fearing the applause nor the eventual curse, inasmuch as the legislation that is to be implanted will form the foundation of our future country. We must not rejoice at transitory results; enthusiastic applause should not be stimulus to us, but the assurance of a future more in accord with our national ideals. I believe that the Houses will solve our future, since as far as the Executive is concerned, it has always been my opinion that his only mission is to maintain the fulfilment of said laws, without discussing once they have been promulgated whether they are right or wrong, and should his personal views be in opposition to the good working of this Legislation, or if the person in charge of the Executive is not willing to violate his internal conscience, the only way open to him is to make a frank confession and resign his post.

Under these circumstances, I wish to invite you to exchange opinions with me on some of the Bills that are to be discussed, so that, if you find in my ideas something worthy of consideration, you may accept same, or else reject it, being absolutely sure that, whether accepted or rejected, I shall always entertain the same respect towards this Hon. Assembly, and the same personal consideration for each of its constituents. (Cheers).

Therefore, I should like Congressman Manrique, Chairman of this meeting, as we might call it, to put to debate, or rather to set under discussion, in order to exchange our views, any of the above mentioned drafts, which according to my mind are the main bases of our future. I consider as such fundamental bases: the Labor Law, the Agrarian Law, the Law instituting the *Banco Unico*, and some other Bills that have been under discussion in this House. (Cheers).

—*Hon. Manrique*: Hon. Congressmen: At this moment, as you know, the Labor Law, already passed by the XXVIII Legislature, is in the Senate; therefore, the study of such law does not depend actually upon us. On the other hand, there exists a Bill, a report already issued, on the Agrarian Law, and consequently I think this is the immediate topic to be discussed. Hon. Soto has the floor so as to express the grounds of his judgment. After which, the gentlemen willing to take the floor may do so.

—*Hon. Rivera Cabrera*: I ask for the floor.

—*Hon. Manrique*: You have the floor.

—*Hon. Rivera Cabrera*: Inasmuch as we do not know yet Congressman Soto's opinion on the Agrarian Law, I request the reading of same beforehand, and after that he can substantiate it.

—*Hon. Manzanilla*: Mr. Chairman, a motion of order.

—*Hon. Manrique*: You have the floor to make a motion of order.

—*Hon. Manzanilla*: That report about the parceling of estates was read during one of the last sessions, and it was also printed and given out, so I deem it useless to read such long writing again.

—*Hon. Manrique*: Congressman Rivera Cabrera asked for the reading of the report, and I believe he has a right to it; nevertheless I leave to your consideration if we are to begin by reading the Bill on the parceling of estates. Those Hon. members who wish to have the Bill read be pleased to say so.

—*Hon. Castrejón*: (Proceeding to read the Bill on estate parceling) . . .

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Soto has the floor.

—*Hon. Soto*: I was saying to the Hon. Chairman of this Assembly or informal meeting, that in my opinion it was fruitless for the Committee to express its views on the report, as both the Bill and the Report plead for themselves and they are nothing else but the embodiment of the national mind.

And from the legal point of view, the Bill that the Committee has now the honour to introduce about the most serious and pressing of our problems, is

nothing but a manner of applying, to say so, article 27 of the Constitution of Querétaro. Said Constitution, through its article 27, provided that it was a duty of the Federal Congress within its own jurisdiction, and of the Legislatures of the States, within their corresponding jurisdictions; that it was a duty, the most impending of all, the parceling of the big estates. In its foresight it goes even to determine minute basis and details for such parceling. Which was the duty of the Committee? To conform with the Constitutional precept is the banner of the Revolution: it is the motto of a movement that has been going on for over ten years. The basis on which it rests have been enlarged, regulated, simply developed by the Committee.

Article 27 reads: "Through the laws issued, both by the Federal Congress and the Local Legislatures, each in its case, it shall be defined; firstly: the utmost area to be considered as a big estate, the detail is given or arrived at by means of the plan of the Committee—; and then, the remnant over that utmost area shall be parceled within the term provided by the law—the term establishing that remnant is settled—; and should the proprietor fail to carry out the parceling, this shall be made by the Nation."

The Committee confines itself to comply with this duty which the Nation has contracted. Article 27 goes then to give the detail's about the form in which the owner is to be paid, that is, with bonus of a special debt; bounds the number of years, and even details the term for a manner of payment of each lot by the acquirer. The Committee confines itself to attain that point; in other words: the Bill is only a way to render article 27 feasible.

It should never enter into the mind of the Committee to offend the Assembly, much less General Obregón, by trying to prove the necessity, the urgency, the pressing urgency to solve the Agrarian problem. Even the most obdurate reactionaries avow that the Revolution has but one problem: the Agrarian problem. The Labor problem is embodied in the Agrarian problem; when the former be solved the latter will be solved by itself. We all know that the problem of the Revolution is not a political one; we all know that these ten years of bloodshed have served only to determine that the Nation, the most valuable part of the Nation, the aboriginal race, hitherto forgotten, requires and needs land; that the indian is starving for want of land, which is the aim he has been striving at since the time of Father Hidalgo; that for the same reason he rose in arms during the Reforma war, and was baffled; that later on, during Madero, he joined the Revolution, seeking for land; and as soon as Madero failed to grant lands, the people, although still faithful to Madero's cause, at least they split and caused the prodroms of Madero's downfall. Everybody knows that Carranza's lack of success was due only to his being a landowner (latifundista), as well as on account of his having barred the solution of the Agrarian problem; thus what the Committee has to do in this case is to stand by the facts and tell the Assembly:

"It is a question of carrying into practice the most solemn, the highest and most sacred promise of the Revolution. Not a word need to be added. (Cheers).

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Obregón has the floor. (Cheers).

—*Hon. Obregón*: I ask of you a little patience, for I am going to be rather lengthy. In order to find out how the Agrarian problem came to be, I must, in my opinion, begin by making a series of considerations. The farmer

has always been the basis of natural wealth throughout countries as essentially agriculturist as ours; but the farmer, as well as the other sources of wealth which have served for the advancement of humanity, attained an admirable evolution lately, an evolution allowing in other countries, through the combination of capital and labor, to make land yield the utmost at the smallest cost, enabling the farmers to pay very high wages and to sell their cereals at very low prices; and the immediate consequence of this has been the welfare of the laborers. Unfortunately most of the landowners in our country have disregarded the evolution of agriculture; they have stuck to their old fashioned ways to such an extent that they have been unable to cope with the similar products of some other countries in the world, and are always asking for a low Tariff so as to obtain a price affording them to sell their products. It goes without saying that if agriculture can dispose in other countries of these three factors: Capital represented by property,—modern machinery and implements to simplify labor—Intelligence, which means organization and management, and Labor, wherein journeymen contribute, Capital may obtain profits enough to satisfy its needs, and the laborer can get wages enabling him to live with some ease; that is to say, the laborer can get a profit equal to the one he might have obtained through his personal effort and old fashioned methods, if not greater. And then the field-laborers began to find out that they spent their days under the yoke of labor; that the years passed by and the painful inheritance of starvation was transmitted amongst them from generation to generation, while the landowners by means of their old fashioned methods endeavored to secure the interest of their own capital, not through their own skill nor through their implements, nor in their own capital, but through the personal energy of their laborers. (Loud cheers throughout benches and lobby). Thenceforth, what in time took the name of Agrarian problem began little by little to make its appearance. Each of those men longed for a patch of land to build his hut out of agave leaves, rendering to his own profit the whole product of his personal effort, for a part thereof was claimed by his employer, the share they received not even being enough to feed their own children. Such was, in my opinion, the beginning of the Agrarian problem. Therefore, I also deem fit to study the cause of an evil in order to fight it. I think a great majority, perhaps we all here present, agree to the satisfaction of said need; we quite agree to solve it in a favorable way, and ere a new horizon appear before farmers let them at least have a tract of land wherein their personal efforts would allow them to feed their children.

We have repeated again and again that our masses need to be enlightened. The alphabetism is a heavy ballast to the State. We must not blame the people, but alphabetism must be fought against. First we must seek for the physical reconstruction of thousands of indians who are entirely unfit to assimilate the science we are trying to impart them, unless we give them before hand what they need to stand physical reconstruction. I quite agree with the agrarian principle, but we must act with great caution; we must act so carefully as to solve the problem without endangering our welfare and our economical interests. If we begin by destroying the big estates in order to create afterwards the small property, I sincerely believe we have made a blunder, because as soon as a law be issued determining the utmost surface to be allowed to each farmer, the Government will lose its right even to levy taxes or duties on the whole of the estate, unless he has prior to this created the small property.

Should we issue a law compelling the farmers to avail themselves of the primitive ways to continue tilling the land, we are doomed to arrive to this painful conclusion: A man, by adopting primitive ways, can till, at most, five or six hectares, if helped by children and wife. Should we compel the farmer to live always under the old fashioned ways, we might arrive to this sorrowful conclusion: Mexico possesses 50.000,000 hectares of tillable land; Mexico has 15 or 16.000,000 inhabitants; there may be among these 15.000,000 inhabitants 3.000,000 householders, from which we have to deduct many thousands who belong to the army; we must deduct the private and official employees, merchants, industrials, bankers, thus leaving 1.000,000 householders who might endeavour to develop agriculture; and if we condemn our agriculture to be always ruled by the primitive doctrines, we might as well say that according to the principles taught by Saint Isidor, not over six million hectares might be tilled by one million farmers. A remainder of 44.000,000 hectares would be left uncultivated, and Mexico, gentlemen, would then appear before the eyes of the world as the biggest landowner. Why? Because it would till one tenth of the tillable lands, when everybody needs the utmost production of agriculture to hush the cries of hunger which begins to be felt among the masses, especially throughout Europe. Then, we are going to solve the agrarian problem, keeping in mind that our country has more land than necessary to solve it; that we must not destroy big estates before creating the small one, as an unbalanced state might follow leading us to dearth. I am of opinion that we must act cautiously, studying these problems more thoughtfully.

We have an example that looks as an irony of Fate; the labor dealers from the neighbouring northern country come to the heart of our Republic paying two and a half dollars, that is, five mexican pesos, to each laborer, prepaid expenses to and fro, in order to employ them as field laborers; and send us back their products at such low prices that our farmers cannot compete with them, but keep on howling for low tariffs. Are the former throwing their money away? I do not think they are. Are they more advanced than we are? Does it mean that agriculture in that country has developed to its maximum? I believe that if we were nowadays to use the same implements, such as are used in that country, and pay here the five pesos that the laborers get over there, and if the products were sold at a lower price than at present, the Agrarian problem might not exist. But unfortunately it does exist, and in the face of evidence nothing is left to us but to go consciously and solve it; to solve it by satisfying the hopes of those thousands of men who are in need of a patch of land; answering to the motto of Revolution, in whose banners that principle was written.

I am of the opinion that a law should be drafted—fundamentally I am not against the law that has just been read—a law providing the right of ownership for every man who may prove his ability to till a piece of land; that the utmost area to which that man may be entitled should be determined, while exacting from the big landowner all the necessary lands as petitions be filed, in such way that upon disappearing the big estates the output could be easily replaced, the small property being already created. (Cheers). Such is, to my mind, the fundamental point; to avoid an unbalanced state in the output, to shun from an economical upsetting that might lead us to a state of famine; that would be in fact an irony of Fate for us to create a cycle of

dearth in the only country, or perhaps in one of the best fitted, to banish for ever from its surface that phantom of misery, which we are still to banish from many of the social classes.

Moreover, we must not start from wrong premises; experience has taught us, the farmers, that agriculture requires more steadiness and knowledge than it is usually believed, and it is to be supposed that the largest majority of those who are endowed with land parcels, would not be willing, at a given moment, to be farmers any longer, and most probably this would occur oftener if our farmers could initiate a speedy revolution in their methods, and were in a condition to pay high wages within a short term.

Any man who by working in accordance with capital may obtain better yearly results either in products or in cash, than the one he could get through his personal effort, would undoubtedly give up his parcel, for we all are after improvement; and that is right, we must stimulate those who act in that way. Let us establish this principle: let us give land to every one who applies for it, but let us do it gradually; let us do away with the big estates as soon as they be replaced by the small properties. In this distribution of lands we shall be against all the big landowners who are still following the old fashioned methods, because they will never be able to improve the condition of the laborer; their methods are in opposition with the times, and against every economical principle, because their crops turn to be poorer and dearer, and in such conditions they cannot afford to pay better wages to their journeymen.

Therefore, let us avail ourselves, above all, of the big estates using those methods, and give lands to everybody who needs same, to every one who may be able to keep them; let us grant an extension of time to those who are using modern methods in order to stimulate them, so as to operate a rapid evolution in our agricultural system, and be able to reach, in a near future, a maximum development; so as not to be compelled to ask for protective Tariffs against grains from abroad, but to cause other producing centers of foreign countries to become frightened by our invading their markets. (Cheers). If we succeed, as I said before, in solving the Agrarian problem in a suitable manner, we shall benefit a great number of men, helping at the same time our own agriculture. Now, I am going to let you know my views on the Agrarian problem and its reaching. I consider the Agrarian problem as short-lived, as a necessity for us to solve it in order to satiate the hunger of many thousands of field-laborers who need perceiving the whole results of their personal efforts, even if it be through old fashioned methods, in order to appease their children's hunger, and to place them in more favorable conditions to attend a school, acquiring thereby a greater power of assimilation; but if we succeed in accomplishing another ideal, which must dwell in our souls as long as the Agrarian problem, namely the enlightenment of the masses, the Agrarian problem will disappear. Supposing that we are giving to a field-laborer 4 or 5 hectares so that he may satisfy his needs, he will undoubtedly devote himself to cultivate them; he will be happy because he will reap the whole benefit of his own labor; but if we succeed in educating his children as it is our desire, a generation will elapse, and one day they will learn that their father left five hectares of land.

Should they succeed in acquiring a fair education, none of them is likely to leave the centers wherein their minds and action may have found a wider field, in order to come back to the old homestead and devote themselves to

cultivate the five hectares theretofore held by their ancestors, since the former will yield to them far less than what a strenuous and intelligent life may produce in a different atmosphere to any man tolerably cultivated. (Cheers).

I shall drop the subject here, but whenever you may allow me the honor to talk I will come and express my ideas honestly; they may be right or wrong; I am not to be blamed; but any thing I may utter will be strictly in accordance with my principle, not a single phrase thereof ever troubling my conscience, for to betray my own conviction would be considered by me as the first downfall in my life. You have already heard some of my ideas, so I am going to end my intercourse; but whenever you like to exchange views with me I am entirely at your disposal. (Loud cheers).

—*The Chairman*: The Hon. Secretary of Agriculture and Development has the floor; he wants to express his ideas about the law that is being discussed.

—*Hon. Antonio Villarreal*: (Cheers.) Inasmuch as this session is informal, and I have not been called here officially, I am going to expound in private some ideas on the matter, if the Assembly allows me to do so. (Voices: of course).

—*The Chairman*: Allow me to make a remark: Hon. Antonio Villarreal has the floor, he wishes to enlighten us on the matter which is being discussed.

—*Hon. Villarreal*: Our foremost problem during the last years has undoubtedly been the Agrarian problem. We all agree upon its being the most difficult one to solve, because it contains technical subjects which cannot be dealt with lightly, nor can they be solved by our will and great desire, however enthusiastic we might be of seeing the big landownership eradicated for ever from our national life as soon as possible. But the more we devote our attention to this problem, the bigger the obstacles appear before us, and the greater becomes the desire of the earnest men to continue to study until they may arrive at a solution which may not injure the national interests, instead of benefiting them. I quite agree with General Obregón; I think we must not do away with the big land ownership until we have started to build gradually the small property; I believe likewise, that while the parceling is being accomplished we should gradually fight against the big landowners through indirect means, such as taxes, so as to compel the big landowners to find it impossible for them to hold big extensions of land and start to get rid of them as quick as possible.

The big landowner is no doubt the greatest drawback to the national development; well-intentioned revolutionaries and legislators must fight against this foe of nationality and progress, with a view to make it disappear from our fatherland.

Mexico is perhaps now the only country, or one of the few contries in the world where a single landowner may have the right to possess 3,000,000 hectares of land, such as it is the case with the big estate of Mr. Luis Terrazas.

Since the Colonial times, when our lands were distributed among the favourites of the Crown, the system of rewarding the former as well as the conquerors with the national land has been kept on, and if we were to investigate over one by one these big estates, and try to find out their origin, we

should almost always meet with the conquering sword of some lucky chieftain as founder of the fief inherited by his heirs. This problem has been studied by the Department of Agriculture and Development; and we were about to end said studies with a view to submit them to the President for his approval, in order to send them to Congress, when a report was rendered on a Bill already existing in this House. I agree as a whole with the idea aimed at by the Bill; I think we must acknowledge every peasant the right to be a landowner; I think we must give facilities to every man who may have will and ability to till the land, so as to enable him to co-operate through his efforts in the national output; I believe likewise that a limit must be marked for the landholder; that we must fix the maximum extension that a man may possess, as the Bill reads, but in my opinion this Bill must be studied by Special Committees appointed by the Executive before its being admitted into debate at Congress, so if there be any overstepping, both through the setting of the least portion of land that every man may have, and in some other cases, the same may be corrected, giving the Executive, above all the Executive that is to come, the opportunity to be in perfect accord with the Bill that is to be discussed, that Executive being the one who will implant same, as there is no human enterprise susceptible of great results without love and enthusiasm.

I deem very proper for the House of Representatives to offer the Government of Mr. de la Huerta, as well as the Government of General Obregón, an opportunity to present their ideas *in extenso*, so that the Bill may rather be the issue of the Reporting Committee of Experts appointed by that Government, thus succeeding in causing both powers to act conjointly for the solution of this great problem, which will be solved either as a blessing for the Nation, or to delay the national output, if exaggerations little thought of are arrived at. (Cheers.)

—*Hon. Zubaran*: I ask for the floor.

—*The Chairman*: Engineer Serrano has the floor; the Hon. Congressmen and Senators wishing to take a hand in the debates, may do so afterwards through previous application.

—*Hon. Zubaran*: Taking into account the kind offer of General Obregón, I should like to invite him, voicing the mind of the Assembly, to tell us something about the banking problem, which has been under discussion, also about the matter of Free Ports that is open for debate at present, if President Obregón is kind enough as to accept my petition.

—*The Chairman*: To fix the course of this debate, I take the liberty to postpone Hon. Zubaran's petition, for otherwise we might offer the scene of jumping from one subject into another without accomplishing any. Inasmuch as Engineer Serrano asked to be allowed to speak about the subject, he has the floor.

—*Hon. Zubaran*: I ask for the floor. To begin with, we have under discussion the subject of Free Ports.

—*Hon. Borrego*: I rise for a motion of order. I take the liberty to call the attention of all my colleagues about the main point of this meeting: we

were invited to hear the information rendered by Hon. Obregón on the far-reaching matters that we have been discussing, and of the ones we are to discuss within a few days; we are not here to discuss either the Agrarian problem or the Free Ports question, nor the problem of the *Banco Unico* (Cheers). In due time I shall be among the first to take the floor in order to support the thesis of my own conviction, although for the moment I beseech the Hon. Chairman to consult the Assembly whether we should confine ourselves to hear the information given us by Hon. Obregón. (Voices: of course).

—*The Chairman*: The Chair believes that in a general way Hon. Borrego is right, since we are perfectly aware of the object of calling this meeting; but it is likewise true that we cannot subject Gen. Obregón to a crossquestioning and compel him to speak during three or four hours longer. Hon. Obregón has personally stated that he is willing to lend an attentive ear to all questions we might put to him. Members taking the floor are only requested to be concise. Hon. Serrano is going to support his ideas on the subject, and to interrogate Hon. Obregón; he is perfectly right to do so; we shall then change the subject; we are not going to exhaust the subject, because it is unexhaustible; we shall devote our attention to some other matter. Hon. Serrano has the floor.

—*Hon. Soto*: I rise for a motion of order. My motion of order is as follows: What colleague Borrego supported is entirely adverse to the spirit of free discussion; it really astonished me. How could it be just that in a country of such tottering democracy as ours, a hesitating democracy where the independent spirit is still undeveloped, where so many residues of colonial oppression are left, as well as a whole century of oppression from those who called themselves republicans, an oppression so exaggerated during the time of Porfirio Díaz as to degrade the national character; how is it possible that in our country, where so few independent men can be found, an independent voice be choked, and let only the strong, the powerful, the man of the day, be heard? (Voices: no, no). The Committee is decided to make remarks to Hon. Obregón, and will certainly do so, because such is their duty; otherwise it would be as well to tie-short the debate at the beginning (hissing).

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Serrano has the floor.

—*Hon. Serrano*: Gentlemen: I understand that the invitation tendered. . .

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Valdez Ramírez and Hon. Prieto Laurens are requested to take their seats.

—*Hon. Serrano*: (proceeding) I have understood that on tendering Hon. Obregón an invitation to attend this meeting, it was not only with the object to have him expose his ideas, but as well to exchange impressions. That is the way I understand it.

It would be rather presumptuous on my part to come and give my humble opinion about a matter to which Hon. Obregón and the Secretary of Agriculture and Development have already referred to; and I said presumptuous not because Hon. Obregón, President elect, is alluded to, but because he is a farmer of long experience and profound theoretical knowledge. Hon. Soto together with two more gentlemen, submitted to us a plan regarding the allotment of big estates. (Voices: a report). Granted, a report! There is at

the Agrarian National Committee of the Department of Agriculture and Development, another plan regarding the same problem in general; both plans are related, and consequently I will refer in a superficial manner to some of its points; I shall try to be as concise as possible.

Nobody, practically nobody, even the most stubborn reactionary man will ever oppose to the solution of the Agrarian problem; I am sure that the big landowners, and even those who hold property illegally, will never oppose to the solution of the Agrarian problem. (Cheers). We only differ, gentlemen, as to the form; and I am among the ones who differ as to the form in which both the Agrarian National Committee and the Committee of the House, have proposed to solve this problem.

The intention is good, highly good; but I do not like the details. We have thereon two plans under study: the one regarding the allotment aforesaid, and the one referring to the law already made known here compelling the owners of farms to open schools; compelling them to have schools maintained by their own means. Could it be possible, I dare ask, that a single school be founded within the Republic if this plan to parcel the big estates were to be carried out? I fail to see how an owner could maintain those schools; it is practically impossible.

Should this law be passed, the other one would be out of question. If the property was to be confined to the narrow limits to which both the Agrarian National Committee and the Committee of the House wish to have it limited, namely to 50, to 100 or to 150 hectares, could there be over fifty laborers so as to justify the opening of a single school? As you see, the intention of this plan holds good; the spirit of the law creating rural schools is splendid; but anyhow we must choose one. I shall not speak any further on the subject, I only wanted to suggest it and submit it to the consideration of the Assembly.

The law is deficient. I shall try to set forth its defects in a few words: said law has been issued with a view to impoverish the rich men, without succeeding, at the same time, to allow the poor growing rich. The decisive terms established for the allotment are practically impossible; there would not be enough engineers to accomplish same in case the farmers were disposed to fulfill the provisions. To my mind, said terms are not at all feasible, for the term of three or even eight months will elapse and no farmer will have proceeded to the allotment as aforesaid, and then the Nation will start to parcel the big estates; now again, gentlemen, we know already of many cases whereat the simple dividing of a big estate costs more than the real value of that same estate; I could quote some special cases; and I certainly will do so when we come to discuss that point privately. Nothing is said for instance about the cattle raising; the narrow limit established for pasture lands would prevent the development of cattle breeding, specially as this is generally developed in the bordering estates.

Why, I am told that the owner of a pasture land may associate with some others; he may thus form large extensions so as to gather enough capital to import first quality bulls, and make improvements in their estates with a view to the development of the stock of cattle. This means, then, an open invitation to trespass the law. As much may be said about the irrigated lands when three or four farmers form a group to violate the law in an underhand way. The Bill contains still another passage which is perfectly contestable: it reads

that "the legal owner will not be entitled to choose the best portion of his land".

It seems that every one of the rural properties are based on robbery and plunder. (Voices: almost all of them). Well gentlemen, that is not the case, for many of them are legally acquired, they are the result of 30 or 40 years of labor of father and children (Which are those?) We shall name them later on. Now I am simply mentioning cases without expounding them. We are under a regime of big estates; we are trying abruptly to enter into the small property, and, it is possible, gentlemen, to transform, from morning to night, the whole Nation by means of a simple decree or a law. This is impossible; with such law we are going to cause our laborers to immigrate into the United States. I affirm that if said law is so radical and brusque as to carry into practice the dividing of the big estates, instead of keeping with us the Mexican laborers, we shall compel them to migrate; neither walls nor laws, nor decrees or advices will keep them here; they will go seeking for an improvement if they cannot find it in their own country. To conclude, I sustain also this thesis: the Agrarian problem is not the only in the Republic; it is one among many.

The Mexican people did not promote a revolution with the exclusive object of solving the Agrarian problem; they did it looking for a general improvement in all spheres of action, not only to solve the Agrarian problem. (Cheers.)

—*The Hon. Chairman:* Mr. Cerda has the floor.

—*Hon. Pérez Gasca:* I rise for a motion of order. Hon. Chairman, I see that we are discussing this Bill in detail, and it is irregular as a proceeding. We have assembled to hear General Obregón and him only. The National representatives cannot be said, as I understand, to be hypnotized by General Obregón's ideals; if they are good the Congressmen will accept them, and if not, we shall enter into an ample debate when the law be discussed. The exclusive object of this meeting was to hear General Obregón, so it is useless for us to go on discussing at this moment, for as Hon. Borrego said, the object is to hear General Obregón exposing his ideas, and we must not attack them just now.

When the law come to be discussed he will depute one of his Secretaries that in his representation may explain his ideas and decisions; then the time will be for us to extend the debate; but presently all this long discussions are useless. Therefore, in the same form that Hon. Borrego has requested, I do request that the Assembly be consulted whether their opinion must be dealt with to the end or a different subject is to be broached at. I beseech your Honor to submit to the consideration of the Assembly this proposition, which is equal to that of Hon. Borrego.

—*The Chairman:* Hon. Cerda is the only one to have registered, and after him Hon. Zubaran will take the floor to interrogate General Obregón about his point of view in regard to the Banking Law (voices: no, no!)

—*Hon. Soto:* The Committee is to take the floor after this gentlemen. (Voices: no, no.)

—*Hon. Borrego:* I rise for a motion of order. The Chairman's resolution...

—*The Chairman:* The Chair insists in believing that an invitation has

been tendered to exchange impressions, for an interchange of ideas; but the Assembly is to be consulted whether the discussion is to continue, and have the Assembly settle same. (Voices: no, no! Yes, yes!)

—*Hon. Pro-Secretary Castrejón*: Those who are in favour of continuing the discussion on the Agrarian Law, please stand up.

The majority remains seated. Another subject is to be considered.

—*Hon. Soto*: Gentlemen: It has been said here that a subject should be disposed of and then another; but we have heard only the con, and the best proof that General Obregón exercises a mental control over the Assembly is that he has opposed the opportune statement of the Committee, to which they ought to make remarks, that is, they are reluctant to hear those remarks. The object is that the Committee may state, that the Committee may expose, their reasons; the object is that the impression that general Obregón has created on this Assembly may prevail. (Voices: No, no). And the least remark may be prevented. (Voices: No, no!)

That is the way they are willing to begin a new regime said to be of liberty. Or do they mean to tell General Obregón that in this country there is no other strength or energy but his own? (Voices: No, no!)

Is that the way to show the President elect that there is in this country a public mind sufficient or enough to enter with him into a quiet and frank discussion? Out of respect not only for the Assembly but for the Mexican democracy and the Revolution as well, let this debate not be interrupted, and much less when the Chairman manifested to be willing to allow the Committee to take the floor.

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Congressmen are requested to take their seats. The Chairman explains not to have been he who imposed his decisions, but on the contrary he has always submitted to the resolution of the Assembly; however, he has no objection that the Assembly be questioned if they want the Committee to expound its ideas on the subject.

—*Hon. Castrejón*: Those voting for the affirmative, please stand up. It is allowed.

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Soto has the floor.

—*Hon. Soto*: The Committee has a very slight objection to make to General Obregon's observations, ratified by Secretary Villarreal; there is evidently something good in them, but in frank opposition such as they are made with the letter and spirit of a Constitutional article.

What the Committee would like to know from General Obregón and Mr. Villarreal is this: How do they make to meet their pessimistic mind with the optimistic and revolutionary spirit of Constitutional article 27th. Or in other words, does the triumphant revolution, scarcely triumphant, step back on its revolutionary principles in the Agrarian matter?

Does the triumphant revolution, hardly triumphant, give a "coup d'Etat" against the Constitution, declaring annulled and unexisting the article 27th? This is the question which in the depths of their conscience—the Committee has also a conscience—have put to themselves on hearing Hon. Obregón and Hon. Villarreal.

The form to make agree General Obregon's opinion—very respectable for its sincerity—with the expressed text of article 27th of the Constitution is what the Committee want to know. The expressed text of article 27th of the Constitution was written when the revolutionaries had faith in their principles, when the revolutionaries believed that the Agrarian problem could be solved; not now when we are told that nothing is more difficult than the solution of the Agrarian problem, not now when we think with a ruler's head, not now when the spirit of conservatism begins to be felt, not now when actual revolutionaries, satisfied with the triumph of the victory, forget the promises made, those promises that remain solemnly expressed in a Constitutional article.

Therefore, it is deplorable and lamentable, that within this Assembly, after the exhortation sincerely made by the Committee, so as to adjust the precept of a Constitutional article, it is not only feared to enter into a debate, but that there are persons who in a definite manner have refused to enter into it. I do not think that General Obregon's objection conflict fundamentally with the text of article 27th, whenever the project or report of the Committee, which is nothing more than the regulation of article 27, be adapted and melted into such an easy article as this one. (Voices: it may be transitory).

It may be transitory, or it may form part of the body of the law; but with which faculty the Executive of the Union is to designate successively estates that are to be subjected to parceling, if to that end he will only take into account the petitions presented? Let something similar be done, but do not let that a pen stroke declare that article 27 cannot be regulated because it is absurd, because it is an exaggeration, and utopia. ((Hisses)).

That is what alarms me... (Voices: nobody has said so!)

Since general Obregon's mind was not made clear, the duty of the Committee was to make this distinction of ideas, so that General Obregón make his mind apparent. I do not reproach directly and expressly to General Obregon wishing to go against article 27; I said that he has not completed his ideas and before the observation of the Assembly, naturally my revolutionary spirit rebels, and how should not rebel the spirit of a man who witnessed the sacrifice of the people and to whom after ten years of revolution is told that all he dreamed you take a very long time to make it reality? And it is pretended to confine the whole problem in a petition of principle, which consists in this: the object is to destroy the big estates, but the big estates cannot be destroyed without creating first the small property; the small property is not formed as yet, therefore the big estates cannot be destroyed. I do not think so.

I believe that it could have been said that all transitions are difficult, dangerous and distressing; all the human problems, social and individual, have difficulties to be accomplished; but those difficulties, however technical they may be—and here I refer to the technical difficulties which Hon. Villarreal points out as a Minister—concern only to technicians, while we apply to enthusiasm, while we try to fulfill the promises made to the people as a duty; and when we look forward to the way of satisfying it and accomplishing their economical betterment.

As I was saying, though there exist those technical difficulties, they only mean one thing: the duty of the Executive to put to a contribution all the means he disposes of, the technical personnel to accomplish that which the

revolutionary enthusiasm, that which the will of the Revolution converted into a Government wants to impose and has to be imposed. Those objections are always made unfortunately, to all reforms by men of little faith.

Socialism was impracticable on account of details, for difficulty in the proceedings; notwithstanding, Russia attained the full realization, absolute, integral, of the socialistic ideal, overcoming those difficulties. (Voices: no, no!)

It is to be regretted that there is somebody who says no, which proves that they know absolutely nothing of what is taking place in Russia. (Cheers).

In Russia the socialistic program of Karl Marx has been carried out to its utmost, totally and integrally, letter after letter, syllable after syllable, in spite of the objections of the speculatives and conservatives. All that Karl Marx pointed out in his great manifest, has come to be without lacking a dot; that is known by every body who has taken a look into the Russian problem; those who have not done so through fear, or believe in the mutilated cable messages due to the press of the Republic, do not understand it nor want to understand either the problem of their own country. (Cheers.)

That is the way it was solved in Russia, thanks to the genius of a man such as Lenin, who has been considered by an economist as the greatest economist of the world; the Agrarian problem in Mexico may be likewise solved with a little good will; it is not true that the problem contains a number of difficulties; it is lacking nothing but willingness, a revolutionary spirit and not to lose heart when stumbling against the first obstacles.

The Committee believe that both General Obregón and Hon. Villarreal are under the obligation to tell us how they manage to make agree their pessimistic objections of detail with the fundamental spirit of an article in force and to be enforced. The Committee find this way: that instead of decreeing the simultaneous parceling of all the big estates, and after fixing the basis determined in accordance to article 27; after fixing what is to be considered as remnant; after fixing the term for the proprietors; after all that, be said that the Executive, as far as the Federation is regarded, and unfortunately as to the States too—for such exception means a danger—the Federal Executive and those of the States are empowered to determine which estates are to be fractioned, having in mind that said estates have been applied for fractioning.

But an objection rises here which I would like to have answered by Messrs. Obregón and Villarreal. Our country masses, illiterate as they are in its greatest majority, are unable to understand, or better, to comprehend by the mere beginning of this debate and its printing in the press, that all the big estates of the Republic are liable to be fractioned whenever they are asked to; that mass of illiterate peasants, notwithstanding the advertisement about the parceling, is unable to understand that they have a right to apply for lands.

I believe, besides, that the people does not know which is the mind of General Obregón, the honest and sincere mind of General Obregón, and I think that they will not attain this knowledge by the publication in the papers, because they do not read the press, because they have no confidence in the press, and because they even mistrust everything that is printed, as well as because they entertain a disappointment for all the proceedings of our former revolutionaries. We, the zapatistas, know by heart that the cause of disappointment of the people in regard to revolution, or disillusion towards the

revolution, depends on the parceling of the lands not having been made at the expense of our blood of dandies, but at the expense of the indians and peasants, for all those allotments came to nothing as soon as General Pablo González in behalf of Carranza did expropriate same.

When I had the honour to defend before this Assembly, not long ago, a so-called *zapatista* against the one who had been supported by the Carrancism, I did precise the fact: that in a certain town of the District of Tenango, the Municipal authority found no better argument in order to lessen the enthusiasm of those who wanted to vote for the *Zapatismo*, than the following observation, which I beg of Mr. Obregón to kindly keep in mind, since it is practical observation, also because the interest of the people towards the Revolution and the new Administration is precisely to be judged thereby.

The remark made by the Municipal President of the town referred to, was this: "Do not pay any attention to those promises about land; the landowners are very strong, they are very powerful; as you have already seen, every thing accomplished by the Convention was annulled by Carranza, and it will continue to be so for ever."

Thus the people, under these circumstances, amidst disappointments, are overwhelmed by that pessimism due to ten years of failures, after a series of men who as soon as they reach the summit fail to fulfill the promises; it is but natural that those men on hearing the news that the Bill about parceling big estates is withdrawn from the House, just before the objections of the men in power, those men will hesitate and should swear they will make no application for land.

Under these circumstances, my objection is a double one: to conciliate the opinion of General Obregón, a well aimed one in fact, with the legal necessity of the House, not the Committee's, for your honour and duty are at stake; it is a question of honouring the protest to observe the Constitution and cause it to be observed; it is a question to fulfill a certain paragraph of article 27, that reads: "During the next Constitutional term (the period between 1917-1918 elapsed two years ago, is referred to) . . . the Federal Congress and the States Legislatures in their respective jurisdiction, shall issue laws to accomplish the parceling of big estates".

The same parceling that we see now clad in clouds and creating the impression of unfeasible, is the one the House is under the duty to carry out. To cause this duty of the House to meet with the objections of practical order, in part well-aimed, of General Obregón, and underwritten by Minister Villarreal, and then make this thought to agree with the backwardness of our masses, with the state of disappointment they are sunk in owing to the failure of so many revolutionary leaders, is what I am striving at.

I do not wish that General Obregón may start his life as President—for indeed since now he starts as such—with something that wrests from his prestige, prestige that the whole Nation agrees to; and the Nation is unwilling to believe that General Obregón will result as so many men whose promises died on their lips while the strife was going on, promises to be forgotten at the apothosis.

I do not believe it, because if I did I would tell him so, because I have firmness enough; but I do believe that General Obregón prompted by his practical way of being, eminently practical, does not possess any longer the enthusiasm that we the theoretical and amateurs are in possession of; I do believe

that it is our duty to combine the following factors: the factor enthusiasm, the factor faith, the factor optimism, with the factor practical spirit, with the factor aptness for ruling, and let us call it so, with the factor skepticism, and the factor detail, so the detail may crown the principle and the principle must not remain incomplete for lack of detail. (Cheers.)

—*The Chairman*: General Obregón has the floor.

—*General Obregón*: Not long ago I said that under no pretext and by no means I would go astray from law; therefore I would not come to propose to break that same law; on expounding my ideas I may possibly deviate from legal routine, since I am short-sighted in law matters; but an idea, if it be good, may be framed into a legal form by a fit Committee conversant with law, its duty being to see how this idea can be developed into legal form.

It is absolutely indispensable that every one of the parties composing the actual and future administration feel in their innermost our responsibilities, and the only way to avoid, that is, to get rid of responsibilities, is to act in absolute accord with our criterium, which is our conscience itself. Nobody is under the duty of being an intellectual, nobody is obliged to be a great legislator, but all men are under the strict duty to respect morality, as it is the basis of any community having a desire to become great. (Cheers.)

I did not wish to enter into details about this law, because on reading it I met with an obstacle, a lack of practical sense. I extol Hon. Soto y Gama's good intentions; I believe them to be sincere, something I did not believe at the Aguascalientes Convention, for I had not seen him wondering across the mountains, suffering many a time hunger and cold. I am bound, therefore, to believe that he who has followed this hazardous life for so long time, nurses inside an ideal that encourages him in the struggles and is perfectly justified in seeking the means to accomplish it. (Cheers.)

I am going to allude to one of the articles alone, because if I were to discuss the whole law I would tire you out. I request any of the Hon. Congressmen to hold a pencil. Article second reads: "In villages with 1,000 or 500 inhabitants" Be please to write down 1,000 . . . (Voices: which article?) It is article second, fraction B: "The zone will be formed by a square 16 kilometers on each side. . . ." Please multiply 16 by 16. . . . (Voices: it is 256) Please add 20 to it. It is 27,600 hectares, which divided among 1,000 make 27 hectares and a fraction per inhabitant. Supposing that children, women and old people were to cultivate the land, they could till but 5 hectares each person. Among 1,000 inhabitants we must suppose there are 200 householders, 200 men unable for agricultural work, as we must allow that there would be a druggist, a priest, a telegraph operator, a school teacher, some policemen, a barber. . . (laughing!) . . . and some public services; there would remain then about one hundred men able to till the land and we should be obliged to leave without tilling 19,600 hectares. . . (Voices: 27,600 hectares of land).

I want you to answer me only about this fraction, whether this is common sense, practical sense or enthusiasm (uproarious cheers).

After I get an answer in regard to this fraction, I shall willingly go on discussing this law. I have proved that those who drafted this Bill were overfilled, if I am allowed to say so, with the noblest enthusiasm, but

totally destitute of a practical sense and agricultural knowledge (Cheers).

Before ending I am going to make an avowal in regard to commons; I am entirely in accord that any discussion on the subject be omitted; this must be granted to towns and villages.

No village is able even to live, if they have not a place where they can cut wood or get a little water. In the State of Jalisco, one of its most important cities finds itself in the most critical conditions on account of lack of water; in political tours I was enthusiastically welcomed on arriving to that city, and while walking through one of its parks I took notice of a group of women, with the head down, performing an action which we could discover only after reaching them: they were wrangling at the bottom of a small jet of stinking water, unfit for drinking. While lamenting such difficult situation in one of the most flourishing cities of Jalisco, I was the recipient of an invitation to visit a farm (hacienda) 8 kilometers distant; this farm runs a mill set in motion by hydraulic power, the water being afforded by a natural spring, 8 kilometers from the city; but it is a private property and the inhabitants of the aforesaid city are entitled to drink water twice a day, but to take a bath. . . . only when it rains (laughs!)

After the preceding statement, I postpone the discussion by the time they may convince me that this fraction is not in opposition to common sense. (Cheers.)

—*Hon. Soto*: I ask for the floor.

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Díaz Soto y Gama has the floor.

—*Hon. Soto*: I am going to have the pleasure to answer Mr. Obregón.

—*The Chairman*: (Interrupting) Be pleased to stand at the tribune.

—*Hon. Soto*: In order to answer to General Obregón graphically I beseech all Congressmen willing to do it, be pleased to simply multiply 16,000 by 16,000, ascertain how many square meters there are. 16,000 on one side, that is, 16 kilometers multiplied by 16,000 meters on the other side, that is, 16 kilometers. how many millions of square meters do they make? I find it is 256,000,000 square meters. I ask the Assembly to rectify (Voices: that is right). 256,000,000 square meters, is it not? (Voices: yes, yes.) Each hectare has 10,000 square meters, is it not? Four ciphers are taken from 256,000,000 being left 25,600 hectares; 25,600 hectares to be distributed among 5,000, among 3,000 or among 1,000.

If they are distributed among 5,000, the ratio is of five hectares; 25,600 hectares among 5,000 inhabitants correspond to five hectares each. Is it not so? If they be distributed among 1,000, the allotment would be then of 25 hectares each; a distinction has to be made on the subject. Not all those 25 hectares are tillable land, but there is wooded land, unploughed land, pasture land, township and common lands.

All this being deducted, I am sure there will be many instances in which the 25 hectares be reduced to 10 available hectares, some others to 5, perhaps some others to 2, for there may be many instances in which the largest extent be wooded land; but admitting as impossible, from the 25,600 hectares to be divided among 1,000, accepting the worst of the cases, that those 25,600

hectares were tillable land—which cannot reasonably happen—that there be no pasture lands, which cannot happen, nor should happen, because there must be some cattle,—even in that case those 25,600 hectares are to be divided into two classes: small lots, such as those varying from 5 to 20 hectares, in accord with the regions, and middle sized lots, comprised from 20 to 80 hectares, seems to me: 20 of dry land, 20 of irrigated land in some cases, 40 of irrigated in some others, 60 in some others, even three times as much of dry land.

I mean by this that the General Obregon's objection was based on a wrong factor: on making his multiplication he made a mistake in absolute good faith. The Committee could by no means bring before the Assembly such absurd; it would have been disrespectful for the Assembly and for themselves.

In this regard, the Committee did but literally transcribe the precept of a law which has already been carried into practice: the precept of the Agrarian Law of Zacatecas, an Agrarian Law not only the result of study, but the fruit of experience. The primitive Agrarian Law was more ample, more radical; the new law giving these data transcribed or literally copied by the Committee, which I have the honour to voice, the new law has already reduced the prescriptions to something possible, to something feasible.

So this is not our work; it is the work of agriculturists who took a hand in the making of this law. I do not consider it absurd to fix this limit of 25,600 hectares for every 1,000 inhabitants.

I repeat again that in those 25,600 hectares there is much unavailable land, much unploughed land and much pasture land. This is the reason why we must answer General Obregón, among other things, this: we are discussing in general the Committee's report. General Obregón attacks the Bill, or the report, in its details; his objection would be to the point if we were in that case. I would request that, as it is a very serious matter, General Obregón, as well as Mr. Villarreal, would tell us whether they believe the regulation of article 27th must be postponed indefinitely or said regulation is not in opposition with the practical objections they present.

This is truly, in my humble opinion, what is under discussion: the way to make agree the altruistic precepts, the revolutionary precepts, the precept of impulse prescribed in article 27th of the Constitution of 1917, with the objection of obstacles, of obstruction, of hindrance, if we may say so, that they are presented in the name of agrarian technicians and exigencies of a practical order. I think there is no incompatibility in that, and Hon. Obregón and Villarreal may rest assured that, besides the duty to respect them in all senses, I esteem them so deeply so as not to try to compel them to conquer the unconquerable.

I think this is attainable. I wish they would enlighten the Committee to know whether it would be enough to empower the Executive in the form I said, that is, that he may determine which are the big estates to be parceled, owing to the existing applications for lots.

I wish it, I say again, because otherwise the Committee is helpless, confronted by this dilemma: either shun the fulfillment of a Constitutional article—something that cannot be—or to fulfill said article, being the House unfavourably disposed through the undoubtedly very serious and prudent objections of a practical order, offered by such two powerful personalities, so evidently insinuating as the future President of Mexico and Mr. Villarreal,

suggesting in every sense, we must avow it frankly, suggesting, to begin with, through their revolutionary prestige and moral endowment that render them highly attractive, and then on account of their being the dispensers of gifts and favours in the future. A mere trifle. (Laughs and cheers.)

—*The Chairman:* Hon. Obregón has the floor.

—*Hon. Obregón:* I must begin by stating that there was no mistake in the ciphers; the only thing is that I call agriculturists the men who know how to cultivate lands, and in order to cultivate lands one must be in fit conditions. I believe that not all the inhabitants of a village are fitted to be agriculturists, for there may be still many in the cradle, others at school, and many ladies whose callings are far from being those of an agriculturist.

A village numbering 1,000 inhabitants can yield no more than one hundred men able for farming pursuits; and if 100 men are given the task to till 25,000 hectares they are liable to fall short. This is just the fundamental part, or better, it is the essential defect of the Bill. It is intended to grant more land than it is possible to till; and those lands in the possession of persons unable to make them yield will become idle lands. And if holding big estates is an evil, much more so in our country, where farming proceedings are routinarian, causing the land not to yield its due, small holdings will be equally as bad, if a man is allowed eight times as much land as he can cultivate; with the difference that big landowners have greater facilities if being compelled to make their lands give a better output; and above all, to make them pay all kind of taxes, local federal or municipal.

I am not here to plead in favour of big estates holdings; I come to contend against the way they are trying to destroy them. It is natural that such as it is presented by Hon. Soto y Gama we cannot destroy them without giving away the lands, and we cannot give away the lands without destroying them.

No, I want a gradual process to be adopted; that the Government be in a position so as to attend all the petitions for lands, and ask all the lands needed to be up to the petitions, from the biggest estates, in the place where problem presents itself. In such manner, the destruction of big estates can be accomplished.

How long will it take? We do not know; but when it be destroyed, the small property shall be in existence, and the production advantageously substituted. These are my ideas; if in some way they are in opposition with any legal precept, methinks this can be easily harmonized with the logical one.

We must have some confidence in mathematics; our enthusiasm must not carry us so far away as to forget what we learned at school, those who were or attended school . . . what they learned or listened; we must have a more moral sense and secure the Agrarian problem, least we make the blunder of destroying the big property without having reared the small one.

If a law be issued setting forth that nobody is allowed to possess over fifty hectares of land, property is, therefore, automatically destroyed. The destruction of property brings along with it the destruction of land credit. If a farmer actually possessing 5,000 hectares of land appears at a bank and says: "I need one hundred thousand pesos." The bank will answer: "There is a law allowing you to possess not over fifty hectares, and your credit is good only

up to one third of the value of such fifty hectares allowed by the law." Having destroyed the property and land credit, we shall make foreign capital flee of which we are more sorrowfully in need than ever; we shall have caused an economical unbalancing, as there will be nobody to collect taxes from, since there is a law forbidding anybody from possessing over fifty hectares of land.

All of a sudden, the Government will be confronted with the fact of having such idle land, not fiding whom to give same. Let us suppose that such law is adopted all over the Republic.

Wich should the result be?

I have said before now that, owing to our primitive methods, we are able to cultivate but 6,000,000 hectares of land, taking into account every farming fitted man in the country, remaining, consequently, 44,000,000 hectares out of cultivation, unable to be developed and tilled by big concerns, causing to fall on the 6,000,000 hectares all the taxes sufficient to keep up an Administration.

The economical unbalancing would prove disastrous for the Administration, and the unbalancing in the production, should be painfully felt all over the country. I wish we become more sedate, that we consult practical men, for very often practice teaches us better than theory; it may happen one thing to be good in theory, but put into practice may result in a failure.

Perhaps during three quarters of my life I have devoted myself to land pursuits, and it has been my lot to live in regions where colonies have been settled, and lands have been allotted. About half a million hectares of land have been parceled throughout the regions of the Yaqui and Mayo rivers, within a period of 25 years. I was myself one of the grantees; I received one hectare and a half which was the tract I could personally cultivate. Therefore, I have some experience.

I am not here to plead for anybody's interest; I come to plead in behalf of the Nation, the interests of the collective bodies, which are those that have been entrusted to me. Had it been my intention to be disloyal to my principles, I could have bartered with them since a long time ago, for there is no more profitable commerce than this: to trade with principles. (Voices: very well. Loud cheers.)

—*The Chairman*: There is a person sitting down by the first stand who has kept his hat on; please take same off or else leave the room. Hon. Villarreal has the floor.

—*Hon. Villarreal*: I wished only to rectify some of the statements of Congressman Soto. He said that after what we had set forth it was understood that we were against article 27th, and as for myself I must declare that if it were not for article 27th and 123rd, I should certainly feel very sorry for the promulgation of the Constitution of 1917.—(Cheers).—There is no doubt but that all revolutionaries agree with article 27th; we will contest for its adoption as soon as possible.

It is untrue that we are not anxious to have it regulated; on the contrary, we are looking for it eagerly; and the only thing we ask is not to go and accomplish said regulation with any detriment to the national interests; but to study it thoughtfully so as to make same render fruitful results for the peasants. We have pointed out the danger of a hastily-made parceling,

which could do away with the national output; an argument which is hardly to be rebutted by those who are guided by mere enthusiasm or the eagerness to settle untimely a law which ought to be consciously studied, on which the experts, the specialists, the agriculturists, as well as the men who have devoted themselves to the agrarian practice, should be consulted, so as to have it yield the desired results.

In fact, the only thing I have asked for is this: to grant the Government of Mr. de la Huerta, also General Obregón, who will be a member of the Government within a month, to name special Committees that may discuss, together with the Reporting Committee, the Bill to be discussed in the Assembly. Congressman Soto attained the same conclusion through his speech, after having stated that we were not disposed to have article 27th regulated.

We want it regulated, but in accordance with both powers, and after the information furnished by the experts and specialists on the matter.

I did not want to stop and refute the articles of the Bill presented, because I do not think it advisable; but the slightest observation should suffice to make us acknowledge its heavy defaults, to see that it contains oversteppings that in no way should ever be contained in so important and far reaching a law as the one which is being discussed.

Nothing is said in a satisfactory manner in regard to the agricultural credit, whether the partnership system is to be adopted or we must take up the great agriculture and develop it by means of co-operatives; a large number of economical and technical points are forgotten which might lead us to a national misfortune regarding agricultural output. (Cheers.)

—*Hon. Soto*: For the last time I ask for the floor.

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Díaz Soto y Gama has the floor.

—*Hon. Soto*: I want to begin by stating. . . .

—*The Chairman*: Please step into the stand.

—*Hon. Soto*: Hon. Congressmen: I want to begin by answering the last charges made by General Villarreal. He says that nothing is said in our law about the agrarian credit nor about other aspects or by-questions of the agrarian problem. The Committee owes an explanation to the Assembly about this. The Committee, being aware of the consequences aroused in other countries whenever the nonsense, (the mistake already made by the last Legislature) is intended of wishing to give out a complete code upon matters so large as those on Labor and Agriculture; aware of that, and not willing to be responsible for that mistake, the Committee adopted the method of presenting the Agrarian Laws by sections, pieces or chapters, as we might call it—since the Committee were engaged as well as the House of Representatives, before the public opinion, to draft at once the Agrarian plans which must serve simply as a basis for work, as a basis for discussion to the House; the Committee has a duty before their own conscience, to draft as soon as possible, the first and most fundamental of those plans: the one relative to the parceling, as a fact, of the big estates.

Following that, as already stated by special article, the special law on the agrarian credit will come; the special law on cooperative companies and co-

operative agricultural colonies will come afterwards; then a decree, or a series of decrees, on irrigation; the special law on partnership, wages, etc., etc. Every thing which is now wanted by Mr. Villarreal will come then.

What the Committee has intended, as they are rather proud to have achieved their purpose, is that the Nation might see how those plans which had been forgotten on the files of the Committee during the whole of Carranza's Administration; those plans which had been systematically, guiltily objected to by that abominable Administration, were being immediately reported upon by the Committee, in spite of their short intellectual resources and their scant knowledge on the matter. If the Executive is now to be blamed for the delay, the nation must know it; the Committee of the House will have accomplished this noble task: to compel the Executive to do away with the technical drawbacks and carry out an enterprise that must be carried out.

Movement is proved by walking; the Agrarian problem will be proven by solving it, and it is the duty of the Executive to act in that way. The Committee is highly repaid by having pushed onward the idle Executive, the indolent Executive. (Hisses.) I am not alluding the present Executive; I am alluding the Executive of every country. Nay, to the everlastingly conservative Executive. Such is the pride of the Committee. Technical knowledge? They do not pretend to have any. Intellectual aptness? The Committee does not boast to possess it. Practical knowledge on agriculture? Neither. Deficiencies through the law? There are by the thousand; but we were under the duty to submit a labor plan.

If the Executive now, faithful to the tradition of all the Executives, by means of Executive Committees, wants to instill into us all its technicalities, it is admitted, let those Committees come. Happily, in spite of the conservative tendency that those technical Committees may be imbued with, we members of the Agrarian Committee pledge ourselves to counteract those technicalities; and if our radical and overstepping proclivities are curtailed, we shall cause those technical Committees to render feasible what the national conscience, what the people's will, want to have achieved, namely: the apportionment of lands and the doing away with the big estates, those monsters which are the worst calamity in the country, which are the cause that democracy cannot exist among us, the calamity from which all our revolutions issue, that something which is a shame to our progress, something which is being uprooted in Australia and New Zealand, and Ireland and Scotland; that is being uprooted in Buenos Aires, and which would be a shame not to be able to uproot after a ten year's struggle here. The Committee declares to have still faith in the solution of the Agrarian problem, and they will compel the Technical Committees from the Executive to work in the radical sense. (Cheers.)

—*The Chairman*: If Hon. Obregón is willing to make his mind known about any other subject, please state so. (Voices: Free Ports.)

—*Hon. Obregón*: Just one word more.

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Obregón has the floor.

—*Hon. Castrejón*: You will allow me to address you a few more words on the Agrarian problem, if you are kind enough. (Voices: Yes, yes.)

There is only one difference between Hon. Soto's proposal and what

we propose. It is not a matter of more or less radicalism; we entirely agree to proceed with absolute radicalism in dealing with the Agrarian Problem; but we do not want, we do not believe, that the Agrarian problem could be advanced by a law which is in opposition to logics, as well as to experience and mathematics. If I were not under the fixed idea of being a faithful observant of the law on reaching power, I would not mind at present this discussion, because I might say: "Anyhow, I shall do as I please". But no, gentlemen; having stepping into the ring, having allowed to appear my name in this contest. I have brought with me, as my only objective, to serve my country; and I believe that no man, no ruler, can be useful to his country if his actions are not strictly in accordance with law. (Cheers and voices: that is right!) But there is no law, no philosophical precept, no technical, practical, or common sense principle, telling me that one farmer can accomplish just as much as twenty five farmers; that a man in a practical way convince us to be able to cultivate 250 hectares as the result of his revolutionary enthusiasm, when formerly he could till but five. I am one of those who have set forth from this stand that the greatest majority of our peasants are hungry; their hunger is not a recent one, it has been transmitted to them through generations; however, if anybody presents a Bill to compel those men to eat 25 loaves of bread in an hour, I will oppose it. (Laugh and cheers) because that will not make him happy; we are not supplying his want; we shall have exhausted the flour in the country, murdering at the same time the field-laborers.

Gentlemen, that is the truth; every one coming here must speak out his mind; let him not come to talk about revolutionary enthusiasm; I have, and also have had said enthusiasm. . . . otherwise, I would not have thrown myself into the Revolution (Cheers).—Without a practical sense, without a logical legislation, fitting practice and means, we shall arrive nowhere. Many countries are spoken of, and one of the greatest mistakes of our legislators is, in my opinion, to have imported laws without studying the medium (Loud cheers). I am going to put an end, as the discussion has lengthened. I have voiced my ideas, without being sure whether they are right or wrong: they are mine and sincere. (Cheers.)

—*The Chairman*: Thinking to interpret the feelings that actually rule, providing it is not exhausting to General Obregón, he would oblige us very much by letting us hear a few words about the problem of Free Ports, otherwise we shall convene for some other day.

—*Hon. Obregón*: I never get tired when trying to solve such transcendental affairs. (Cheers.) I wish we would not leave this place without having solved them before; we would have served the country, deserving to be accorded an honorable mention.

In regard to Free Ports, I would not like to abstain from emitting my opinion, and I am going to emit it, but I would like to be allowed not to mention at present a project that I am about to give the finishing touch, referring to international commerce, which is ampler than that of Free Ports; much more extensive, as it comprises the whole Republic; much wider, as it will cause a revolution in our internal commerce and in our industry. The discussing or approving of Free Ports does not hinder in the least the project I am about to

introduce; at that time it is possible that my project be objected to by those who are to come out favored by the former, since mine is of a far wider scope and embraces the whole country. (Cheers.) If you are willing to have my opinion on some other topics, I am at your disposal.

—*Hon. Rivera Cabrera*: Will your Honor allow me to ask you a question?

—*The Chairman*: Hon. Rivera Cabrera has the floor.

—*Hon. Rivera Cabrera*: Mr. General, according to the reasons expounded by your Honor, (Voices: nothing is heard) you have stated to the Assembly to allow you not to amplify your opinion in regard to Free Ports, because your Honor has a project superior by far to that of Free Ports; but inasmuch as it has been difused here that Free Ports find a foe in you . . . (Voices: we cannot hear) and as several persons have said so... (Voices: it is not true). Yes, gentlemen, it is true; they are availing themselves of this to promote their private interests; I should like, therefore, you to make a conclusive statement on this subject.

—*Hon. Obregón*: When I have said that my project has a wider scope, I mean not only to approve Free Ports, but want their benefits to extend all over the country. (Cheers). And should this project be postponed for some days, I might then present mine, in accordance already with the legal aspect with which all such projects are due to reach this Honorable Precint. (Cheers).

—*The Chairman*: The Chair, in representation of Hon. attending Senators and Representatives, heartly thanks Hon. Obregón for this token of respect and kindness towards the National Representation, and of interest in National problems. (Voices: also Villarreal!) Equally thankful to Hon. Villarreal.