Fascist Italy was concerned with its dependence on imports of essential materials and with meeting as many of its needs as possible from domestic supplies. There was little that could be done in some spheres (coal and iron, for example), but the régime did seek to increase agricultural production in order to improve both the balance of payments and rural conditions. In June, 1925, Mussolini launched a "battle of grain," and this was followed in 1928 by a comprehensive land-reclamation scheme. The results of the program are rather difficult to assess because success varied considerably from one project to another, and work on many sites was not completed before the war. However, millions of acres were involved in the scheme in one way or another, and the projects provided work for thousands during the period of the Depression. At the same time, both the area under cultivation and grain production were increased slightly. The selection that follows is a report on land reclamation written in 1931 by the director of the program, Arrigo Serpieri.

I. Integral Land Reclamation. The integral reclamation of the land is one of the fundamental enterprises of the Régime. It is the outcome of the conditions of Italian economics and of the will of Fascism.

A dense population confined within a circumscribed territory, poor in natural resources; a Nation desirous of growing in power and of spreading Italian ideals throughout the world, must of necessity create new centres of intensified rural life, in order to increase the revenues of the Nation and fortify the healthy and prosperous family life of the country against the destructive forces of the towns.

It is this that the reclamation of the land aims at. Hence the necessity of providing the land with a permanent equipment without which it cannot be made ready to receive, together with a better use of the land and the water supplies, intensive systems of

land production, and offer a living to a denser population, firmly attached to the land.

Works of all kinds are necessary for the achievement of the ends in view, both in cases of joint ownership and of single ownership: engineering works and technical forest and agricultural works, for the recovery of the land, for hygienic protection, for the formation of centres of rural population and buildings, for the upkeep of the roads, for the protection of the water supply and the utilization of water-energy, for reforestation and other work, for agricultural settlement and the improvement of the land.

But it matters not what combinations it has been necessary to have recourse to for these works on the land, which are all characterized by the investment of capital at long term; they are only a means towards the attainment of the purpose mentioned above.

Land reclamation becomes integral reclamation when the whole of the enterprises necessary for the new order of land production demanded by the economic, moral and political aims of the Nation, have been carried out. . . .

III. The Importance of the Mussolini Act. The most important contribution to the development of the rural policy of the Régime was the Act of December 24, 1928, relating to the integral reclamation of the land, which law represents the greatest effort of the State towards the full development of the land and the greater efficiency of rural life.

The peculiar merit of this law, which is called after the Duce, is that it sums up previous legislation and makes of it a more efficacious instrument for favouring the resettlement of the country: the basis of the moral and economic renewal of the Nation.

It crowns the legislative program by tackling the problems connected with the supply of drinking water, the building of roads for farming purposes, rural constructions and hamlets, all of which had been greatly neglected by former legislation, which inclined towards the towns.

In order to encourage the rational distribution of population, not neglecting those regions generally shunned by the farmers owing to the lack of comforts indispensable to civilized life, the law assures a contribution of 75% of the total cost of works for conveying drinking water to isolated rural buildings or to groups of rural buildings, even if they are outside the districts subject to