

While economists have traditionally stressed the stagnating influence of share-cropping arrangements, Firestone treats share-rents of both the joint-farming and the co-cultivation varieties as being fairer from the point of view of the peasant since they "reflect the considerable fluctuations that take place in crop yields" (ibid.). This, in part, is the same position held by James Scott in discussing risks in tenancy systems in Southeast Asian agriculture (Scott, 1976:44-52). The crucial element in Palestine is not parity, however, (or even "claims to subsistence" as in the case of Philipino and Vietnamese peasants discussed by Scott), but the availability of surplus which the peasant can invest in cropping additional land. This is why the share-rent as a form of cropping was confined to very big landlords in Palestine who were able to make such provisions, while "joint-farming" (that is, delegated sub-farming) spread among the middle and small farmers who took croppers on to compensate for the loss of family members who flocked to work in the main cities during the high employment seasons of the 1930s and 40s.

Labour mobility and full employment also generated both labour shortages in the agrarian sector as well as a historic decline in joint (share) farming in favour of cash rents, a trend which was not reversed until the Second World War when prices of food began to soar. (cf. Firestone, 1975b: footnote 44). However, even today (1981), under conditions of intermediate and high technology in agriculture and with the availability of relatively easy credit arrangements, sharecropping compacts have not declined, and in some regions (such as Tulkarem and the northern valley) continue to spread.

The picture that emerges from Firestone's analysis is thus one that attributes to the institution of sharetenancy and the intrusion of