

Book Reviews.

Surplus.

The Riddle of American Agriculture.

ALAN R. BIRD.

New York, Springer 1962. 128 pp. \$3.75 U.S.

The U.S. agricultural surplus problem is commonly viewed as a fairly recent phenomenon of that country but in fact, it commenced well before the last world war. The outbreak of World War II and the Korean War delayed the appearance of the present proportions of this surplus. Despite governmental piecemeal attacks, both Republican and Democrat, the surplus has continued to grow and, with present control and elimination methods, the size will increase.

Governmental restrictions, mainly of the voluntary type, have only tended to illustrate to the U.S. and the remainder of the world, the efficiency of U.S. farmers in increasing production despite acreage restrictions and removal of land from production.

This book aims at providing a broad appreciation of the problems facing the U.S. in solving this surplus and is written in non technical terms. Each chapter heading is one of the more commonly expounded solutions to the problem and is followed by impartial analysis of the implications of each suggestion. In all cases, these common answers tend to view agriculture as a separate and distinct sector of the economy but the author is careful to show the integration of agriculture within the economy. The usual solutions advanced range from new uses for agricultural commodities, gifts of surplus food, eat more food, slowing down technical and scientific advances, marketing controls, getting more farmers off the land, taking more land away from farming etc.

The overall failure of present and past attacks on the problem shows the need for a new approach. Thus, the author calls for more direct governmental action. Despite some degree of compulsion, the size of the farm sector of the economy must be reduced in terms of area and number of farms. Such a method over a period of time would still allow the essential technical and scientific advances to continue.

From a Territory of Papua and New Guinea and perhaps a U.S. viewpoint, the publication could have included more detail of the growing tendency for the unsolved agricultural surpluses

to become a permanent feature of U.S. foreign and trade policy. Under legislation, the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 (commonly referred to as Public Law 480), U.S. surplus agricultural commodities enter world trade under particularly favourable conditions. Thus, existing trade relations between primary producing nations and their traditional markets are disrupted. Large sales of surplus U.S. wheat to India caused strong protests from Australia, the latter claiming that traditional markets were being threatened by such disposal. To date, the main effects of this policy have been to primary producing nations of the temperate regions of the world. However, surplus stocks of edible fats and oils, both vegetable and animal, have already been traded with a number of Western European countries, thus threatening normal markets for tropical edible vegetable oils such as coconut, palm, palm kernel and groundnut oils. The author also criticises the growing U.S. policy of supplying aid to underdeveloped countries in the form of surplus agricultural commodities.

Despite these comments, the book is admirably suited for the audience to which it is aimed and offers an excellent basis for discussion of the U.S. agricultural problem. No attempt is made to show any clear short cut solution to the problem as readers are left to think over the implications throughout the economy. It is also pleasing to note that commercial policy techniques are called their appropriate name e.g. the "two price" system is called what it is—dumping.

G. R. Spinks.

Committee on Work on Plantations.

Fourth Session. General Report. International Labour Office, Geneva, 1961. 143 pp. Price unknown.

Because this publication is a General Report, review is difficult but its value comes from the general information about labour in the plantation system, world trends in the plantation economy and recent developments in world markets for the principal plantation crops, coffee, tea, cocoa, cane sugar, copra, rubber, cotton and sisal. All the major aspects of the plantation system of agriculture are mentioned and there-

fore the publication is of direct interest to managers and appropriate government departments.

The first part of the Report covers a brief summary of the procedures taken by governments as a result of conclusions adopted at the previous or third session of the Committee. These are related to labour problems associated with the plantation system and include recruitment, hours of work, housing, regulation of wages, supply of food, clothing and other necessities, education and training, industrial relations, productivity etc. Although the various measures adopted by the individual countries are mentioned, the brief summaries do not permit any comparison.

The second section of the Report is concerned with the work being carried out by the International Labour Office in response to assistance sought by the Committee. Much of this is research into data required for policy implementation and is linked with further inquiries into questions raised in the previous section of the Report. However, the Committee is concerned about the need for international commodity regulation so that plantation workers also benefit from export income stabilization. It laments that despite the great deal of attention to commodity price fluctuations, little data are known of the effect of "falls in commodity prices on the level of employment and wages".

To complete the coverage of the problems of plantation agriculture, the last section of the Report discusses the latest trends in the world plantation economy. A brief summary of the recent developments in world markets, price stabilization and endeavours by countries to diversify their agriculture so that export income is not reliant on one or two commodities is included.

Perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of plantation agriculture since the end of the last war is the competing and supplementary role of the traditional plantation and the small holding. This structural change in plantation economy is discussed and is of interest to those concerned with policy matters in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. Despite governmental action in nationalizing and subdividing plantations to foster small holdings, a number of economic factors has been operating to alter the plantation system. Of these the most important is the tendency for the producing nations to consume increasing proportions of their production. The number of small

holdings producing for the export market has increased throughout the world but the trend is "not confined to a single area or continent or a few staple commodities. Some commodities lend themselves better than others to production by smallholders, but in many cases it is impossible, because of the lack of detailed statistics to make direct assessment of the relative importance of small and large holdings".

The remaining sub-sections deal with employment problems, productivity and output with some mention of the implications of mechanisation and living and working conditions.

G. R. Spinks.

World Facts and Figures.

United Nations, New York. 1962. 40 pp. 1s. 6d. stg.

This pamphlet provides a summary of the basic statistics of the world for the year 1959 and is of particular value to those who require such data in a readily available form. It is a summary of the United Nations Statistical Yearbook 1960, the twelfth of this series.

The information refers to world population, food and agriculture, industrial production, external trade, transport, national income, public finance and the standard of living. In each case, the figures cover as near as possible the decade of the 1950's thus allowing some evaluation of trends. Perhaps the most spectacular of the data relates to world population growth which in 1959 stood at 2,905 million of which the continent of Asia made up 1,624 million or about 56 per cent. The annual world rate of increase is more than 48 million, thus population will double in 35 years. The indications are that "from 6,000 million to 7,000 million people will enter the year A.D. 2000".

G. R. Spinks.

The Development of Agriculture and Forests in the Tropics.

Patterns, Problems and Promise.

JOHN PHILLIPS.

London: Faber and Faber. 1961. 212 pp. 42s. Sterling.

Professor Phillips has had wide experience in tropical agriculture: mainly in Africa but also in Central and South America and in Asia. From this he has written *The Development of Agriculture and Forestry in the Tropics*.

If the political freedom of newly independent nations is to mean anything then they must develop economically. Professor Phillips points out that although some "emphasize the industrial possibilities of these regions... very much greater opportunities and concomitant problems are presented by agriculture and... forestry".

He is particularly interested in the "biotic balance" which he defines as "the ecological relationships binding the community of plants, animals and men—the *biotic* community—with its environment, throughout the development of both". Through his discussion of this, which seems more of a system of philosophy than a scientific measure, Professor Phillips has shown his homely wisdom and particularly his understanding of the human aspects of development in the tropics.

Like anyone who knows the tropics well Professor Phillips is under no delusions as to their potential. He recognizes that whilst poor human and animal health, low standards of general education, complex traditional land tenure systems and poor cultural techniques, may in time be overcome, there is more difficulty in modifying significantly the controls of production imposed by climate, vegetation and soils.

Economic development in the tropics through agriculture will need an "agricultural revolution" affecting the outlook of each of the millions of subsistence farmers. They must be won over to improved methods by individual demonstration and instruction. Professor Phillips rightly points out that injections of American and other technical assistance do not always produce enough practical improvement in the field. That requires capable and well trained field workers. If extension is to be sound it must be backed by adequate research facilities. Here too lies another problem which is emphasized—"the difficulty of inculcating into educated nationals of tropical and sub-tropical countries a sense of the dignity of 'clean' dirt in agricultural practice. Dust, mud, blood and oil on the farm do not sully nor should they lower prestige".

Administrators of tropical countries (and especially newly independent ones) are cautioned against taking undue risks by hastening with insufficient caution the planning and implementation of agricultural and related projects. The author points out that much ill-founded optimism exists regarding the benefits that accrue through

mechanizing as many operations as possible and to emphasize his point he later mentions the East African Groundnut Scheme (naturally!) and also Le Tourneau's attempt to clear the *selva* of Peru for pasture.

People from temperate areas often find it difficult to realize that the much criticized shifting cultivation of many tropical areas, including Papua and New Guinea, is a conservation measure and not simply a method of mass destruction of forest. Let them read "'Shifting cultivation' itself is the most salutary practice that has been evolved under the prevailing circumstances of: intense radiation; heavy and uniformly distributed rainfall; rain of high intensity irregularly distributed; readily oxidized organic matter, and highly leachable as well as highly erodible soils in the *forests*; and in the *savannas*, soils that often are highly susceptible to sheet and gully erosion when deprived of their vegetative protection". There is no simple method of providing a more economical land use system in such areas, and Professor Phillips cautions that "in the nature of the task awaiting him the average technical assistance officer from abroad has much to learn before he himself can be of much practical significance locally".

Professor Phillips does not offer any panacea for the problems of the development of tropical areas. He knows that they are intricately intertwined and that little is known about many of them. He does, however, stress the need to understand the importance of the human factors in any development and the absolute importance of careful, *in situ*, well planned and ably conducted pilot projects to test the viability of all propositions for agricultural and other development before they are implemented on a large scale.

The style of the book is not always pleasing—it is often repetitive and sometimes note-like. The author has devised a classification of bioclimatic regions which he often abbreviates to capital letters. It is doubtful whether these abbreviations need have been used in the text. Professor Phillips uses italics too frequently and particularly irritating is his habit of employing them whenever the words of the sub-title "Patterns, problems and promise" are used. But these are quibbles! The book should be read by all who are interested in the economic development of tropical areas.

W. R. Stent.

*Why Labour Leaves the Land.**A Comparative Study of the Movement of Labour out of Agriculture.*

Studies and Reports—New Series, No. 59.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE.

Geneva 1960. 229 pp. Price unknown.

Recent interest in the theory of economic growth has been largely responsible for changing the attitude of politicians and sociologists towards the movement of labour out of agriculture. The emotional appeals to stop the drift from the land have dwindled considerably as the reasons and results of this migration have become better understood in relationship to economic development.

For many years, the International Labour Organization has been actively engaged in studying the consequences of this migration and this Report is a "review and record of recent movement". The ground covered is not new. However, the approach of the study to this migration is broader than most as it is principally concerned with the occupational changes within the economy and places emphasis on the social and economic factors which cause migration together with the effects of this movement, particularly on farm labour force and farm efficiency.

The proportion of labour actively engaged in agriculture is a measure of economic growth. In 1950, for example, the percentage of the total labour force in agriculture in the United Kingdom was 5 per cent. while the corresponding figure for Thailand was 85 per cent. Both the U.S.A. and Australia in the same period had 13 per cent. of their total labour forces engaged in rural industries.

The movement of labour out of agriculture is fairly well understood in the advanced countries although the factors causing it vary. The Report is pertinent to the underdeveloped nations many of which are actively encouraging the movement of labour out of agriculture without any consideration of the longer term economic and social effects. Labour if it is displaced must be utilized efficiently in the other occupations and to illustrate this problem underdeveloped nations have been divided into two, those with a large farm population surplus and those in the process of rapid development. In many cases the displacement has not been accompanied by more efficient labour usage and in most instances labour productivity in agriculture has declined.

Unfortunately, data from the underdeveloped countries are limited to a few countries but the study challenges the assumption so often stated that the present situation in the less developed nations is a reflection of an earlier stage through which the advanced countries passed. The query is raised "whether their development is taking place in conditions so dissimilar from those of the advanced countries that it is unlikely, if present conditions continue, that the movement of labour can bring about this desirable evolution"; that is, ease of occupational change and greater labour efficiency in agriculture.

This publication should be read by those concerned with policy decisions so that some of the main problems associated with rural migration can be examined before policy implementation. Many problems associated with the movement of rural population into urban areas are of interest in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

G. R. Spinks.

 Port Moresby: V. P. Bloink, Government Printer.—8130/10.62.

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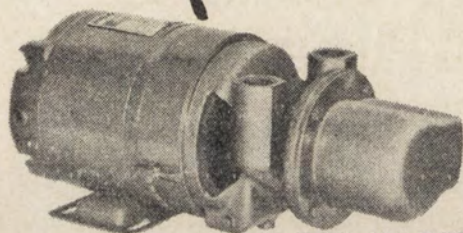
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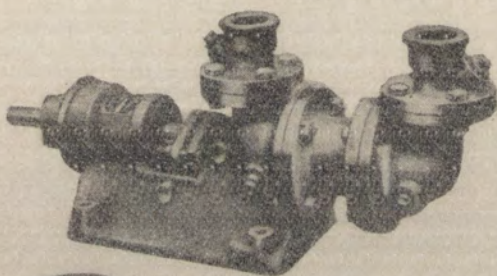
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