

Book Review.

AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT IN PEASANT ECONOMICS.

ERIC CLAYTON, Pergamon Press, 1964. 154 pp. \$Aust. 4.28.

Dr. Clayton's short book of 147 pages on agrarian development as a general concept draws heavily upon case studies of developments that have occurred in Kenya. In fact the first four chapters focus upon changes in Kenya involving migrations of people and the consequent closer settling and more intensive farming of the land. Naturally these new pressures brought about difficulties: new levels of productivity were needed to increase cropping output, and soil erosion severely threatened the existing cultivated lands.

Mainly in response to these particular difficulties the Kenyan agricultural authorities implemented a number of schemes intended to increase production and counter soil destruction. These measures included the encouragement of multi-enterprise farms, the provision of incentives to encourage production, group farming schemes, in particular to consolidate fragmented holdings and enclosed holdings. These measures were backed by farm planning and ecological studies. This brings Clayton to the main point of his book:

"The purpose . . . is really to emphasize the need for a systematic and logical approach to the problems of raising agricultural productivity. Such an approach requires that due weight be given to the economic variables involved. It should be clear that technical knowledge alone, vital though this is, can only go so far in dealing with these problems".

This quote is included in a chapter entitled *The Economics of Peasant Agriculture* which does little more than state that economics applies to developing countries and on peasant farms in the matter of the allocation of resources, as well as it does to other situations.

The remaining two chapters of the book seem rather out of place when compared with the theme of the earlier chapters, although they do fit into the broad subject suggested by the title of the book. The first is the problem of whether smallholder development should be fostered by the government or private elements. The second bears on the subject of land ownership and

financing of rural development. These themes would seem to be quite inadequately dealt with and best left to volumes which specifically cover these subjects.

Of course what is of interest in the book is the relevance of the Kenyan experience to Papua and New Guinea. There are two major differences which are noted when the Papua and New Guinea situation is compared with that of Kenya, as exemplified by the objectives of Kenyan agricultural policy. One is the establishment of a stable peasant agriculture, which we already have in Papua and New Guinea, and the other is the need for farm planning to prevent soil erosion and consolidate scattered holdings. However, many of their efforts at rationalization of Agrarian systems have some bearing upon the organization of Papua and New Guinea's land settlement schemes. The policy for agriculture embarked on in the early 1950's "was based on land consolidation, farm planning and the rapid introduction of peasant-grown cash crops . . . these reforms are leading to a commercialized agriculture which derives its impetus from private enterprise and initiative. This contrasts strongly with the many development schemes seen in post-war Africa which have been tightly controlled, leaving the cultivator with little freedom of action. Few of these schemes have, in consequence, been successful."

In conclusion Clayton qualifies his plea for the use of economic studies in peasant agriculture by stating that they should be related to:—

- (1) Prevailing standards of husbandry;
- (2) Attitude of the peasant to economic incentives; and
- (3) Effectiveness of extension services.

The book does well to point out the role of economic planning and economic investigation in developing countries and to place on record the achievements of Kenya in agrarian development amongst smallholders. But, apart from drawing those two facts to our attention, the book does little to bring to our notice new facts, solutions, or even stimulate the imagination to thinking on a new tack.

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