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Why Labour Leaves the Land—A Comparative Study of the Movement of Labour out of Agriculture, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1960. Pp. viii+229. \$ 2.25.

Migration of farm population to towns and cities and into non-farm occupations is a common experience of all countries—developed as well as developing. The phenomenon is, in fact, a concomitant of economic growth which causes, among other things, more and more people to be employed in the production of those goods and services which are usually associated with higher material welfare. The agricultural sector of any country is not in a position to absorb within itself all the additions that accrue to its labour force owing to a declining income elasticity of demand for food and rising labour productivity, both of which go together with economic growth. However, the basic conditions of the movement in the advanced and the less developed countries differ because of the differences in the nature of their agricultural economies, the degree of industrialisation, the overall economic development, etc. Any attempt at seeking guidance from the experience of the advanced countries, therefore, should follow a close study of the differential aspects of the movement in the two types of economies. The book under review surveys a number of countries, now in the different stages of development, with a view to studying the factors causing the movement of labour out of agriculture, the problems arising therefrom, some of its effects and the policies adopted by the respective governments to deal with these problems. The term “labour” has been used in the book in a broad sense and includes “all those whose efforts contribute to agricultural production.”

The book has been divided into eight chapters. Broadly, the chapter scheme is as follows : The first chapter makes a general survey of the movement in the different countries during the past twenty years in order to provide an international comparison of rates of movement out of agriculture in recent years as a background to the country analyses. The classification of countries emerging from this general survey forms the basis of the subsequent chapters. Thus, the three groups of countries, namely, the economically advanced countries, countries with a large farm population surplus and countries in the process of rapid development have been dealt with in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively. Chapter 7 sums up the observations of the preceding chapters, on the basis of which a few comments on the general relationship between economic growth and occupational balance are offered. The summary and conclusions are provided in Chapter 8.

The study has brought out certain similarities and contrasts within as well as between the groups of countries classified. In the economically advanced countries, all of which, except Italy, had a lower percentage of industrial unemployment in 1960's than in 1930's, the pull of expanding employment outside agriculture had been the decisive factor in encouraging the movement of farm people. As is to be expected, the reduction of agricultural labour force had been accompanied by rapid increases in labour productivity, although no definite correlation between the long-term or short-term decline in agricultural labour force and the present level of labour productivity in agriculture could be established. Similarly, it could not be demonstrated from the experience of these countries—

with the exception of Denmark which could achieve income parity between agriculture and other occupations even in the absence of farm support policies—that a reduction in the agricultural labour force would necessarily raise the level of farm incomes and wages. With the advent of part-time farming and its combination with other occupations, a new form of rural-urban relationship has come into being in many of these countries. The occupational shift no longer necessarily involves a geographical shift although it still does occur, particularly in the case of hired labourers. Increasing motor transport, industrial decentralisation and farm mechanisation have facilitated this change.

From among the large number of countries which fall in the second group, *i.e.*, countries with a large surplus population in agriculture, the authors could pick up only three countries—India, Pakistan and Japan—for which data on the distribution of the labour force over long periods are available. Although a high proportion of the labour force in these countries is engaged in agriculture, they are all food importers; prevalence of urban unemployment as well as unemployment and underemployment in agriculture are their other common features. The rate of movement out of agriculture in these countries is too low both from the standpoint of overall occupational balance as well as from the standpoint of productivity of agricultural labour. Further, whatever little migration that is taking place is due primarily to the push factor of agricultural distress, the pull factor of expanding employment in other sectors being weak. This is a fundamental difference from the conditions obtaining in the first group of countries. In Pakistan, though the pull factor of expanding employment is comparatively strong and the rate of migration high enough to hold the growth of agricultural labour force in check, farm production shows no increase, because investment in agriculture is low. This is a pointer to those who believe that the problem of relieving the pressure of surplus population in congested areas can be solved merely by accelerating the movement out of agriculture.

Within the third group of countries, a further distinction is made between those countries which present the case of a one-way movement from agriculture and those with alternating movements. Some of the Latin American countries, *viz.*, Brazil and Venezuela, and Iraq belong to the former sub-group while Africa (South of the Sahara), Turkey and Yugoslavia are included in the second. A characteristic feature of these countries is the lop-sided development with dominance of a single industry, especially mining or oil extraction industry, which provides the pivot for growth while agricultural development is not commensurate with the available natural resources. In contrast with some of the countries included in the second group, there is no dearth of capital here for industrial expansion. The one-way migration from agriculture under these conditions, though it does not add to the number of the urban unemployed, tends to depress urban wages and labour productivity in industry. However, it is the alternating movement—an irregular periodic shift between industrial and agricultural occupations, not determined by the seasonality of agricultural labour requirements, but by the need for industrial employment as a main source of income—which is the more harmful of the two, in that it results in a wastage of man-power and, hence, is an obstacle to social and economic development.

There is, however, a basic difference between the developed and the under-developed economies in regard to movement of labour outside agriculture, which

has been very vividly brought out by the authors. Lower income level in agriculture is no doubt the universal cause of the movement. But, the causes operating to reduce income level in agriculture are different in the advanced and the less developed countries. In the advanced countries, income level in agriculture is lower in comparison with other sectors because on account of the growing efficiency in agriculture, food production is increasing at a rate higher than the demand for it. In the less developed countries, it is primarily the growth of farm population at a rate higher than the rate of increase in food production that causes incomes in agriculture to be low.

A social aspect of the problem common to both the advanced and the less developed countries is the existence and continuance of the low income group within the farm population. It is precisely this section of the population which needs to be moved into higher productivity occupations; but, ironically, it shows relative immobility because, being unskilled, insecure and underemployed, it finds it difficult to get job information as also to acquire the requisite qualifications needed for seeking employment outside agriculture. "This is the crux of the problem of movement out of agriculture, and the reason why the proof of its relationship to economic growth is not a proof of its social benefits" (p. 211).

An apparently neat formulation of the problem of labour movement in terms of influences of pull and push factors becomes unsustainable when analysed little more closely. At this stage we may ask the question : Can the influences responsible for labour movement be classified into two distinct and exclusive categories ? For the question arises : how exactly can we attribute movement of farm population to any one of these factors? Are they not merely two sides of the same phenomenon in that one cannot operate in the total absence of the other except in extreme cases, *e.g.*, a pure push influence caused by famine ? Where exactly can we draw the demarcating line between the two influences ? A migration may appear as having been caused by "push" factors when looked at from the standpoint of the situation in which the migrants were living prior to their leaving their villages. However, when we look at their employment status in the towns, at least some of them may give the impression of having been "pulled" to urban employment. Thus, whether it is the "push" or the "pull" factor which caused the migration appears to be determined by the angle through which one views the situation and therefore a sharp distinction between them does not appear to be very useful for purposes of economic analysis.

Notwithstanding the above shortcoming, the book is a useful addition to existing literature on the subject. It is also a pioneering attempt at bringing together available data regarding the different countries on the subject of farm migration which has assumed considerable importance in the developing economies in recent years. If it has not attempted a more detailed study of the problem as it concerns these countries, the fault lies not with the authors of the book but with the scanty information that is available in these countries in this respect.

A. P. SHENOY