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Book Reviews

Wartime Economic Planning in Agriculture. By BELA GOLD. Columbia University Press, New York, 1949. 594 pages.

THE PROBLEM of increasing the efficiency of economic planning as an instrument of governmental policy, is the author's primary concern. He believes that planning by the national government is necessary in a highly industrialized society to give the electorate an opportunity to take part in making basic economic decisions which would otherwise be made by "an increasingly centralized business group."

The author does not attempt to define planning, noting that most studies of planning are "heavily dominated by theoretical speculation," but undertakes a reexamination of current conceptions in the light of actual planning operations of a governmental agency. However, his more general discussion of planning and his evaluation of its success in agriculture seem based on a broad interpretation of the role of planning which includes arriving at broad policy decisions as well as formulating operating plans for their execution.

The bulk of the book is devoted to a critical analysis of the governmental policies and programs concerned with the management of agricultural resources during the period of the Second World War and a discussion of the factors responsible for the "shortcomings in agricultural mobilization." Agricultural policies and their results are measured against maximization of exports of essential foodstuffs during the period of hostilities and in the immediate postwar period which the author lists as an objective of agricultural mobilization, second only to the provision of sufficient food to safeguard the health of the civilian population and to meet the requirements of the armed forces. As agriculture represented only one segment of the economy to be mobilized, an additional measure of mobilization success was that of minimizing agriculture's demands on scarce productive and distributive resources. As measured by these yardsticks all sectors of agricultural mobilization policies were found to have serious shortcomings

and to have been influenced more by political expediency than by mobilization needs.

In his statistical analysis of performance in agricultural production and distribution, Dr. Gold selected 1940 as the base year "to focus as sharply as possible on distinctive consequences of wartime measures rather than on differences between wartime conditions and those which obtained during a recent prewar period of comparable length."

Based largely on a statistical analysis of performance as measured against the goals of maximizing agricultural production, increasing exports, and minimizing agriculture's use of scarce resources, he analyzes needs, plans, and performance including: (1) Agricultural production, (2) utilization of land and livestock resources, (3) agricultural manpower, (4) fertilizers, and (5) other resources, including agricultural credit. Statistical analysis, including 50 general tables, is bolstered by statements of governmental officials given in testimony before congressional committees and in interviews with the author.

The following summary statement on agricultural production and more specific comments on production goals are illustrative of the sharpness of his criticism of all sectors of agricultural mobilization: "In short, the pattern of wartime increases in agricultural production, showing gains by almost all groups with little regard for their relative essentiality or nutritional efficiency, bore fewer aspects of an orderly mobilization of scarce resources than of a pell-mell response to the removal of long-standing production restrictions combined with a general price boom."

Using wartime production-capacity studies the author estimated that agricultural production could have been expanded and altered to provide, as compared with 1940 production levels, a supply of food measured in nutrients sufficient to provide more than 150 million people with ration supplements that would raise their consumption levels

to minimum standards. Production goals were publicized by the Government as the official definition of agricultural output objectives but the basis for their determination was never clearly defined. The apparently reasonable progress made in attaining goals may have served to restrain public pressure for the intensification of mobilization. The author concludes that, in general, goals fell "within the range encompassed by 'feasible' potentials" and noted a progressive

shrinking of goal levels throughout the war.

As the issues discussed are controversial, may be expected that many readers will disagree with some of the assumptions and conclusions with respect to the role of planning and the success or failure of agricultural mobilization. In any event, the author has contributed a comprehensive and challenging analysis.

Gladys L. Baker

Surveys, Polls and Samples: Practical Procedures. By MILDRED B. PARTEN. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1950. 624 pages.

HERE IS A BOOK to be welcomed not only by all professionals engaged in survey research but also by clients of survey organizations. It can also provide a basis for evaluation to persons who may have administrative, consultative, or other contacts with projects involving survey methods.

There is a large body of literature on survey techniques but until the appearance of this book, it has been chiefly in the form of scattered papers published in a variety of journals. Dr. Parten's work brings together for the first time a comprehensive treatment of all phases of the survey process from the original delineation of objectives to the preparation of the final report. It contains a bibliographic reference list of monumental proportions comprising more than a thousand titles. This will probably be one of the most useful sections for the professional surveyor. The book will almost certainly be adopted as a text in those colleges which offer academic course work in survey research for at present there is nothing that can take its place. Nevertheless, as this is not a handbook or manual of procedure, in formal college work it will need to be supplemented by lectures and discussion seminars.

It opens with an historical account of the development of survey methods and the uses of such research. There are long, detailed chapters on the administrative organization necessary to successful survey practice, construction of questionnaires, interviewing, and sampling. These are followed by equally comprehensive treatments of the coding and tabulation process, sources of

bias, evaluation of the findings, and preparation of the report. Although the work is largely descriptive, the author occasionally ventures on a comparative evaluation of different methods. This is especially the case in her discussion of judgment or quota sampling versus probability sampling, and mail surveys contrasted with those done by personal interviews.

Naturally in a work of this scope, there are certain omissions or subjects on which the author apparently had out-dated or incomplete information. Thus at least two other survey organizations, besides the one to which most frequent reference is made, are certainly its peer in the matter of interviewing methodology; unquestionably its superior in sampling techniques. But such criticisms seem merely carping when one considers the magnitude of the job Dr. Parten has accomplished. Her book should be in the reference library of every public or private agency which utilizes survey methods. She has performed a task which badly needed to be done and has performed it well.

Dr. Parten received her degree at the University of Minnesota, was a Fellow at the London School of Economics, and was at the Yale Institute of Human Relations. Her 20 years' experience in the field of social surveys includes work for the United States Department of Labor and various institutions and communities. Both Dr. Parten and her publishers are to be congratulated on satisfying a long-standing need in the field of applied social science and economic research.

Forrest E. Clements