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THE AUTHORS of this book set out a difficult task for themselves. But it has been done well. They have written a book which (1) gives the reader a broad picture of the major developments in American agriculture in recent decades, (2) points up the problems that face the industry, (3) indicates and analyzes causes for such problems, (4) appraises attempts to cope with these problems, and (5) indicates the nature of the economic principles or analytical tools that are applicable to problems of American agriculture. At the same time, even the elementary reader should find nearly all of the text easy to comprehend.

The six parts of the book cover the entire field of agriculture. The parts are: Developing efficiency in the production of farm products; Problems in acquiring and managing land; Marketing farm products in an interdependent economy; Toward an understanding of farm prices; Farmers in the national and world economy; and What Government aids do farmers need?

The first part is one of the best from the viewpoint of indicating the nature of developments in agriculture and interpreting the significance of various economic principles as they apply to agriculture. However, it tends to indicate the answers to a large number of production questions without the benefit of full analysis. For the beginning student it may tend to create the illusion that answers are easy to find, while being of insufficient help in developing a method of approaching problematic situations. But in most cases, later chapters give a fuller treatment of the analytical tools applicable to problems discussed in these early chapters.

The second part, which covers problems of acquiring and managing land, is heavily descriptive. But, woven in among the discussions of tenancy, size of farm, taxation, land valuation, etc., are pointed analyses of the manner in which prevailing practices affect farm output and farm people. The nature of these discussions should make a lasting impression on even the beginning student.

The chapters on marketing point out the nature of the marketing problem as conceived by market-

ing analysts, very clearly. Any criticism that one may have of these discussions in no way reflects on the book itself. The book reflects the obsession of the present-day marketing analyst with the pictorial presentation of marketing channels and the arithmetical calculation of marketing margins.

Perhaps the best chapters as a group are those dealing with farm prices. They not only spell out the role which prices play in American agriculture but also present a relatively simple and straightforward explanation of how prices are determined. The beginning student who is without a knowledge of the principles of economics may find these chapters somewhat difficult to master.

The discussion of the nature and significance of the relation of the American farmer to both the nonagricultural sectors of the American economy and the world markets is well handled. Any person whose study of agricultural economics is based solely on this book will be well exposed to the major problems facing agriculture when he reads these chapters. At the same time, the student who intends to continue his study of agricultural economics will find stimulation here.

Although entitled *What Government Aids do Farmers Need?*, the last three chapters are devoted mainly to relating and analyzing various Government programs that have been in operation during the last two decades. As should be true in a book of this sort, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions about the kind of program that is needed.

The authors draw heavily on BAE statistical material. Wherever possible, the descriptive portions include the available facts. This heavy dependence on statistical information plus the discussions of current policy problems may date the book so that its usefulness will extend over a relatively few years. But it is the kind of book that has been needed for some time; it should be widely read and used by students of agricultural economics; and it will probably become one of the most widely known books of its kind.

*Howard L. Parsons*