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Book Reviews

Can We Solve the Farm Problem? By Murray R. Benedict. The Twentieth Century Fund. New York. 601 pages. 1955. $3.00.

"THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM before us now is to establish a sound basis for continuing progress in dealing with the longer-term problems in agriculture. * * * If that can be done, there is reason for confidence * * * that reasonably adequate solutions will eventually be found for most of the farm problems that now concern us." (pp. 528–529.) This is the answer supplied in this 600-page volume to the question raised in its title.

The book consists of two distinct parts: (1) A scholarly, well-documented and "comprehensive study of the Government's farm programs" by Professor Benedict (with the counsel of Dr. O. C. Stine), covering the first 480 pages, and (2) the report of a committee of 12 selected by the 20th Century Fund to review Benedict's analysis and "formulate recommendations for public action."

Even though all the members signed the committee report, Harry B. Caldwell (Master of the North Carolina State Grange), and Donald R. Murphy (Editor, *Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead*), found it necessary to file a supplementary statement that is really in the nature of a dissenting opinion, and other members found it necessary to sprinkle dissenting footnotes throughout the report. The committee as a whole makes the standard criticisms about past administration of price-support programs—especially those relating to the level and method of price support. Caldwell's and Murphy's dissenting statement, while agreeing that the committee report makes some "admirable suggestions about shifts in farm policy," nevertheless asserts that "it fails to come to grips with the major issue." They hold that the committee report lacks any "realistic sense of the immediate pressure of farm surpluses. * * *"

Professor Benedict's analysis is well done. In my judgment, however, he defines "the farm problem" a bit loosely as "the whole array of grievances and aspirations that cause farmers to seek Government aid in achieving ends they consider appropriate and desirable." Nevertheless, the book should be most useful to anyone, including students of agricultural economics, in need of a comprehensive and systematic account of the major types of efforts that have been made to help the farmers. The author is to be especially commended for frankly and clearly admitting his own predilections for what he calls a "free-enterprise" economy. It would be most interesting to know what Dr. Stine's "counsel" was. Perhaps this will become apparent upon the release of a second book now being prepared by these two authors which deals in greater detail with the various commodity programs.

In 8 chapters of the present volume Professor Benedict discusses most of the activities of Government in the agricultural field, both orthodox or accepted, and unorthodox or controversial activities—from research to the Commodity Credit Corporation. In his final chapter he summarizes the weaknesses of past price-support programs in much the same way as the committee whose report his work precedes. He presents the Department of Agriculture's estimate of the total cost of all "agricultural and related" programs from 1932–53—the total being about 17 billions, only 7½ billions of which was for price and income supports. This difference between the cost of price and income supports versus all agricultural activities needs to be clearly recognized.

Two appendices complete the volume. Appendix A is a discussion of "The Parity Concept and Its Relation to the Farm Problem." The history and evolution of the legal definitions, as well as an economist's analysis of their weaknesses, is included. Appendix B contains the details of the "U. S. Department of Agriculture Computation of Cost of Farm Programs, 1932–1953."

Bushrod W. Allin

The Language of Social Research: A Reader in the Methodology of Social Research. Edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Morris Rosenberg. The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois. 590 pages. 1955. $6.75.

IF THIS BE THE LANGUAGE of social research then teach me, please, a simpler tongue. One of the more obscure passages in this reader in the methodology of the social sciences has already been the source of comment by the *New Yorker*, and even the most technically trained specialist in social science research will experience little difficulty in identifying other parts of the volume that defy comprehension.

This suggests one of three caveats that need to be brought to the attention of the unwary reader who may be deceived by the gloriously exaggerated title of the book, namely, that it is not a self-sufficient volume. It may be useful as a teaching tool, but many of the selections are meaningless and/or difficult to comprehend by virtue of having been taken out of their specific research context. Guidance, preferably by someone trained in the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research, is, in many instances, imperative.

The other two warnings are: (1) This is not a "how-to" book. At one point the editors draw a sharp distinction between the methodologist and the technician, and insist that they are not providing guidance on *how* to do research. Thus, one canot use this reader as a manual on research methods. (2) It is not representative of the current status of social science methodology but reflects the personal interests of the editors and their collaborators. For example, only the barest minimum of attention is given to studies in economics. The narrowness of perspective becomes evident when one compares the contents of this reader with those of the excellent case-book on methods in social research edited by Stuart Rice almost a quarter century ago.

Despite these limitations, the editors perform a useful function in assembling for teacher, student, and practitioner many valuable source materials that would not otherwise be readily available. In addition, they provide a systematic codification of selected areas of social science methodology. The 64 selections, drawn from research reports, articles, essays, and unpublished sources, are organized into six sections dealing with (1) concepts and indices; (2) multivariate analysis; (3) analysis of change through time; (4) formal aspects of research on human groups; (5) the empirical analysis of action; and (6) selected problems in the philosophy of the social sciences. Each section includes a brief introductory essay. These introductions supply some coherence to the individual selections, explain their inclusion in the volume, and offer suggestions to teachers.

The absence of an index considerably reduces the effectiveness of this reader as a reference work.

In view of the pressing demands for better interpretation of the results of social research, the editors are to be congratulated for their persistent attention to problems and procedures of *analysis* of social data. But, their belief that such analysis can proceed on the assumption that the data have been "properly collected" (p. 5) is naive and begs a significant question.

Harry Alpert

The Agricultural Economy of the Danubian Countries, 1935–45. By S. D. Zagoroff, Jeno Vegh, and Alexander D. Bilimovich. Food Research Institute of Stanford University. Stanford University Press. 479 pages. 1955. $7.50.

AT THE OUTSET Dr. Zagoroff writes that insufficient wartime and post-war information for some of the areas made impossible a fully integrated generalization of the studies devoted to Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria—the four countries whose economies are examined in this volume. Nonetheless, his introductory "General Survey of the Agricultural Economy of the Danubian Countries, 1935–45" is a careful and lucid presentation of far-reaching changes, in a

complex area, during the chaotic period of transition from independence to satellite status via Axis war economy. And for Western students, this study, together with the four papers by area specialists, will be an indispensable starting point for understanding the nature and extent of changes brought about by communism in the agricultural part of Eastern Europe.

Zagoroff's survey begins with physical conditions, and explores, in turn, position and organization of agriculture, and food balance. The four countries of Danubia have a total area slightly larger than Texas, with a population of some 50,000,000. This is a population density comparable to that of Illinois or Ohio. Only in Hungary was the net product of manufacturing and construction larger than the net product of agriculture, and the labor force employed in non-agricultural pursuits greater than that in agriculture.

The labor force in agriculture in Danubia in pre-World War II was nearly double that of the United States, but net value of U. S. agricultural output was about 4.5 times greater.

Organization of agriculture, in all four countries, reflected, in varying degree, the progress of land reforms having for their aim the century-old ideal of the Danubian peasant—the direct exploitation of land. This vigorous process, heralding a happier rural society in one of the most underprivileged areas of Europe, was reversed as a result of the Communist takeover.

Because of the lack of statistical data for the war years, food balance of Danubia is approached by Zagoroff on new lines. He overcomes the handicap by relating the food balance to crop production.

Each of the four regional papers that form the body of the book differs widely in emphasis and comprehensiveness, and each is limited by the availability of published statistical data for the respective countries.

In the case of Hungary, Jeno Vegh stops at the threshold of the post-war period. He devotes much attention to evaluating the land reform measures here, and concludes that they did not go far enough in relieving the pressure of population on land. In his view, Hungary's agriculture, because of its natural position and possibilities, will continue to play an important role in the Hungarian economic life in spite of any trend toward a forced industrialization.

The study of Rumanian agriculture, by an anonymous contributor, is severely handicapped by the paucity of statistical information in a country which, since the Balkan war of 1913, has been subjected to large-scale devastations, military occupation, and extensive boundary changes. Despite these serious difficulties, Rumania succeeded in developing a prosperous agricultural economy based on peasant ownership of land. When, in 1949, the National Assembly of Rumanian Peoples Republic ratified a decree giving the state the right to expropriate land for state farms, and, in the same year, initiated collectivization, a new, sad era for the Rumanian peasantry began.

Before the war, Yugoslavia, most rural of all Danubian countries, was plagued by rural overpopulation and extreme splitting-up of peasant property. In World War II, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis powers with unprecedented devastation. The vast job of reconstruction, with the help of UNRRA, is described by Prof. A. D. Bilimovich in considerable detail, in a separate chapter.

Making excellent use of ample documentation available to him in form of the agricultural census of 1926, 1934, and 1946, Zagoroff digs deeply within a narrowly delimited scope. Bulgaria's problem during World War II was feeding the cities and maintaining a decent price structure. A land with no "agrarian problem"—and virtually no landless peasants—Bulgaria, on the eve of World War II, was successful in intensifying its agriculture. Its two great difficulties have been lag of livestock production behind population growth, and rapid fragmentation of farm holdings. The livestock problem, greatly augmented by phenomena accompanying forced collectivization, is still bedeviling the Red regime. And to the Bulgarian peasant, collectivization is most emphatically the least acceptable solution of the problem of fragmentation.

Eugene V. Prostov

Industrial and Commercial Geography. Fourth Edition. By J. Russell Smith, M. Ogden Phillips, and Thomas R. Smith. Henry Holt and Co., New York. 689 pages. 1955. $6.95.

Regional Geography of the World. By Jesse H. Wheeler, Jr., J. Trenton Kostbade, and Richard S. Thoman. Henry Holt and Co., New York. 628 pages. 1955. $6.50.

World Economic Geography. By Earl B. Shaw. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York. 582 pages. 1955. $6.50.

STUDIES made by economic geographers overlap the research carried on by agricultural economists. Workers in these two fields use the same basic information but ordinarily they use different approaches in presentation and analysis. Three recent books that deal with economic and regional geography are therefore of interest to economists. Although these books are intended primarily for college students, the geographical evaluation of world economic conditions will be of interest to more advanced researchers.

The fourth edition of *Industrial and Commercial Geography* is a thorough reorganization and revision of a book that has been popular in the field of economic geography since the appearance of the first edition in 1913. The commodity approach is used in the discussion of world agricultural resources. Countries are discussed in terms of two worlds—the world of highly developed countries and the world of underdeveloped countries. In the organization of the book, 4 background chapters are followed by 9 chapters which deal with agricultural commodities, 1 chapter on fishing, 16 on manufacturing and mining, and 7 on trade and transportation. The last chapter, "Retrospect and Prospect," gives a stimulating summary of what the authors call the "Scientific Revolution" in sanitation, industry, and communications.

Footnotes are used extensively to give the sources of information. There is no bibliography. Illustrations, maps, and charts are well chosen and numerous. With few exceptions, each tells a story or raises a question. The graphic and photographic presentation closely supports the text and the journalistic style of the book makes it an absorbing example of economic geography.

Regional Geography of the World gives a good general survey of the "basic ideas and supporting facts about contemporary world geography which a person with a college education might reasonably be expected to know." Eight world regions comprise the framework for discussion. These are: Europe, the Soviet Union, the Middle East, the Orient, the Pacific World, Africa, Latin America, and Anglo America.

The first part of the book, which presents some introductory concepts in geography, will help the reader to appreciate the unique characteristic of geography as a subject which centers attention on the "study and interpretation of particular areas in the world."

The graphic presentation and illustrations add much to the value of the book in the hands of a reader who has little or no previous geographical training.

World Economic Geography emphasizes principles. The commodity, regional, activity, and principles approaches are illustrated. Major emphasis is on agricultural phases of economic geography. World agricultural production is discussed by eight major climatic regions.

Because of the stress placed on the study of principles, the author found it necessary to sacrifice a comprehensive survey of the agriculture of the different regions. Comparatively little attention is given to the industrial and commercial aspects of economic geography. More striking illustrations and graphics would improve the usefulness of the book.

James R. Anderson

The Analysis of Family Budgets. [With an Application to Two British Surveys Conducted in 1937–9 and Their Detailed Results.] By S. J. Prais and H. S. Houthakker. University of Cambridge Department of Applied Economics. Monograph 4. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1955. 372 pages. $9.00.

OCCASIONALLY in a murder mystery, the reader may prefer to start with the first corpse, finish the book, and then go back to the beginning to pick up some preliminary details. A similar approach to this book is recommended. Most readers will find Part II, entitled "The Analysis," of much greater interest than Part I, "The Material and the Tools." Moreover, many of the tools used directly in the application are described in Part II, whereas some of those described in Part I appear too nebulous to have much practical value. Part III consists chiefly of 187 pages of detailed tables of small interest to most readers.

Although the number of workers who are willing to part with $9 to obtain the 92 pages contained in Part II may be limited, it is to be hoped that wide use will be made of available copies in libraries and other institutions, plus those sent to reviewers. This part should be carefully studied by all research workers who have an active interest in the analysis of family budget data. It is by far the most comprehensive and detailed recent discussion of methodology in this area with which I am familiar. Moreover, the methods developed are applied in each instance directly to the two surveys analyzed. Thus, the reader not only can follow the exact reasoning used in developing the methods, but also can see and appraise the results. Nineteen exceedingly helpful graphs are included.

The studies discussed are based exclusively on cross-section data. The justification for so thorough an analysis of data relating to the late 1930's is that the classifications and cross-classifications that could be made from these two surveys are unusually complete, so that many facets of consumer behavior could be investigated. The primary purpose of the study was to explore alternative methods of analysis and to develop new approaches, but the conclusions reached with respect to consumer behavior have considerable value. Mathematical notations of a rather advanced type are used in many places, but in general the rationale and conclusions are presented in nonmathematical terms, frequently with helpful graphic illustrations.

A sort of iterative approach is described in Part II, although iterations are not carried much beyond first approximations. In dealing with the measurement of Engel curves, the assumption is made that differences in household size can be allowed for approximately by converting data on expenditures for individual commodity groups and total expenditures to a per capita basis. Sound arguments are presented for using expenditures for individual items rather than quantities as the dependent variable, and for using total expenditures instead of total income as the independent variable. In the empirical fitting process, several types of curves are tested before choosing a standard type.

In measurement of quality variations in consumption among income groups, where variations in quality are measured by variations in price paid per unit, the authors define quality elasticity with respect to income in terms of expenditure elasticity equalling the sum of the quantity and quality elasticities. Consideration is given to the question of whether, as income increases, consumers not only use better qualities of each kind but also purchase more expensive types.

The authors next consider development of unit-consumer scales that can be used to allow for the multiplicity of combinations of adults and children that make up an individual household. They give careful discussion of the theory of scales of equivalences and of alternative approaches to the problem. In this section, the authors rely rather heavily on mathematics to illustrate various relationships, and I found their discussion more difficult to follow than in earlier chapters. They conclude that a valid analysis of the effects of household composition can be carried out only if the effect of both income and household composition are studied simultaneously. As some of the relations are curvilinear, an iterative procedure for doing this was developed, but this procedure is practical only when one has access to an electronic computer.

A discussion of economies of scale in consumption is rather difficult to follow. The basic conclusion reached is "that of two households with

the same level of income per person, the larger household will, as a result of economies of scale, enjoy a standard of living which is higher by 13 percent of the ratio of their sizes; the standard of living is here measured in terms of the quality of food bought."

The effect of social class, occupation of wage earners, and geographical location, on patterns of consumption is discussed, and the entire study is briefly summarized, with suggestions of some implications for further research. These chiefly involve the use of results from each segment of the study to refine the results from other segments.

Going back to Part I, we find a brief and highly mathematical discussion of the theory of consumers' demand, a rather elementary discussion of problems involved in collecting budget data and their limitations, a highly mathematical consideration of some special problems involved in the estimation of statistical relationships, and a discussion of computational methods, with emphasis on the alternative roles of desk calculators, punched-card equipment, and electronic computors.

Richard J. Foote

Selected Recent Research Publications in Agricultural Economics Issued by the United States Department of Agriculture and Cooperatively by the State Colleges [1]

BAILL, I. M. THE FARMER AND OLD-AGE SECURITY. A SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF FOUR STUDIES, 1951–54. U. S. Dept. Agr., Agr. Inform. Bull. 151, 43 pp., illus. December 1955.

Most farm operators had not accumulated sufficient capital assets to provide for their economic security in old age. In 3 of the 5 farming areas surveyed, more than half of the farmers had less than $10,000 estimated net worth. Regular farm workers were less prepared than farm operators to provide for their own living in old age. More than half of the regular farm workers interviewed had no assets other than an automobile or truck.

BELL, HUGH P. PREFERENCES FOR CANNED GRAPEFRUIT JUICES. U. S. Dept. Agr. Mktg. Res. Rept. 108, 31 pp., illus. December 1955. (RMA)

One of the most important characteristics of canned grapefruit juice, and believed most likely to influence consumer reactions, is the tart-sweet characteristic. To determine the tart-sweet level most preferred, researchers tested both natural favored and sweetened juices in four degrees of varying sweetness. The respondents preferred the sweetened juices to the unsweetened ones.

BRANSON, ROBERT E., JACOBS, MILTON, AND HALL, RICHARD. FROZEN GRAPEFRUIT SECTIONS: EVALUATING A NEW PRODUCT BY RETAIL SALES AUDIT AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEY. U. S. Dept. Agr. Mktg. Res. Rept. 110, 63 pp., illus. December 1955.

Frozen grapefruit sections, when offered in retail stores, appeared to add to the total demand for grapefruit. During the 11-week test period, almost 1,300 cases of 24 10-ounce cans were sold. Two-thirds of the sales were made during the 4-week promotional period. During the test period, sales of frozen grapefruit sections were second only to frozen strawberries, when compared with other frozen fruits.

DOTY HARRY O., JR. DISTRIBUTION OF LAMB AND MUTTON FOR CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES. U. S. Dept. Agr., Agr. Mktg. Serv., AMS–93, 12 pp., illus. February 1956. (RMA)

In 1954, domestically produced lamb and mutton were shipped (or were otherwise available) for consumption primarily to the Middle Atlantic and Pacific regions. Together, these 2 regions took 59 percent of the total. California took 91 percent of the lamb going to the Pacific Region. The major portion distributed to New England and West South Central regions went to Massachusetts and Texas, respectively.

FRENCH, B. C., SAMMET, L. L., AND BRESSLER, R. G. ECONOMIES OF SCALE IN PEAR PACKING. The Tenth Report in a Series on Efficiency in Fruit Marketing. Calif. Agr. Expt. Sta., Giannini Foundation of Agr. Econ. Mimeog. Rept. 181, 33 pp., illus. October 1955.

Plants packing fresh pears vary widely in methods and size of operation. In planning future operations, plant managers face the problem of determining which combinations of methods and what scale of operations will be most efficient. This report is one of a series aimed at supplying this type of information. Previous reports dealt with small segments of the packing operation; this report is concerned with the entire in-plant process.

[1] Processed reports are indicated as such. All others are printed. State publications may be obtained from the issuing agencies of the respective States.