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BOOK REVIEWS

Agricultural Development in India's Districts

By Dorris D. Brown. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 169 pages. 1971. \$10.

The Center for International Affairs at Harvard University sponsored this study of India's Intensive Agricultural Districts Program (IADP, Package Program). Results of the first 6 years of the program receive the major emphasis. Organization and operation of the program are described against a background of previous agricultural development efforts in India, the concurrent performance of the Community Development program which continued in the non-IADP districts, the extent to which the original IADP plan was implemented, and the ex post evidence as to the validity of the original plan.

IADP was planned in 1959-60 by an Agricultural Production Team composed of U.S. and Indian agricultural experts. The major premise of the operation was that the selection of the most promising areas for rice and wheat production, and the concentration of development efforts in those areas, would be the most effective way of increasing food production in the Third Plan period (1962-66). "In general, the [Team's] report suggested that prospects were favorable and that sufficient technology was available for an immediate and rapid increase in production if the recommended actions were taken."

As it turned out, the available technology was not as adequate as it should have been. In translating the plan into action, moreover, not all the recommendations were fully implemented. Some would have required changes in government administrative structure, particularly at the district level, that proved as resistant to change as the assumed traditionality of the peasants. Other recommendations that were watered down or ignored in execution were the use of individual "whole farm" plans, provision of price assurance and marketing agreements, and technical assistance for improved water and land utilization.

Apart from the belief in the adequacy of available technology, it was assumed that the weak link in the process of agricultural development was the cultivator. "He was considered ignorant, illiterate, unschooled and unproductive, traditional and conservative, and unprepared to change his methods of farming. Land owners,

money lenders, and traders in agricultural commodities were considered antisocial and severe exploiters of cultivators and low income consumers." It was thought that IADP would overcome these deficiencies more effectively than was possible in the Community Development program. IADP would focus more directly on food production. It would use twice as many agricultural technicians as were used in Community Development, make available increased supplies of essential inputs, principally fertilizers, and strengthen and redirect public and cooperative institutions related to agriculture. Apart from its demonstration effect, the IADP would be intrinsically important because it would serve 2.9 million cultivators operating over 20 million acres of cropland.

Brown evaluates IADP results in terms of impact on agricultural production, and impact on institutions and policies. The latter turns out to have been the more significant. Production results were generally not significantly better than in non-IADP districts. Johnson and Malone, with selected data, come to a more optimistic conclusion (this journal, April 1971), but it is difficult to brush aside Brown's comprehensive evidence. He concludes: "Only 3 of the 15 IADP districts reported significantly higher rates of change in output and yield for food grains during the IADP years when compared with their record during the previous five years. Only 2 IADP districts reported significantly higher changes in output of food grains than did bordering districts." And, again, "The IADP record was no better and no worse than the record for other districts."

"In looking back, one can see that IADP's failure to insist on the use of whole farm plans, technical assistance for irrigation and land improvement, and research to provide new technology proved to be major errors of strategy." The results in terms of impacts on institutions and policies were more favorable. "One of IADP's major contributions was the influence it was able to bring to bear on the strengthening of certain institutions and on the evolution of government policy toward agricultural development in general. As IADP work progressed, new and more comprehensive data were uncovered and subjected to analysis. The results of such analysis often brought out factors that had not been considered before or put known facts in a very different light. For example, work with cultivators identified a number of off-farm restraints that affected

the success of the technology used and altered benefit-cost relationships, the distribution of supplies, and administrative organization, procedures, and policies. Although IADP was not alone in this field, still it was able to make suggestions for change, some of which were translated into policy and which affected not only the IADP districts, but all of agricultural India."

"Because of the IADP and other Third Plan actions, India is now much better prepared and is making progress in increasing food grain output."

This reviewer accepts as an overall evaluation of Brown's book, the concluding sentence of the Foreword contributed by S. R. Sen: "Even those who may not accept all his conclusions must agree that his evaluation of the IADP is a valuable contribution to the subject of agricultural modernization, and one which should provide very useful guidelines not only to those who are interested in the Indian experiment but also to others who are seeking to initiate a process of modernization in a traditional agriculture wherever it exists."

Louis F. Herrmann

The Vanishing Peasant: Innovation and Change in French Agriculture

By Henri Mendras. The MIT Press, Cambridge. 289 pages. 1971. \$8.95.

Mendras has combined his erudition and first-hand knowledge of French farmers to produce a text with many interesting perspectives. Over 200 sources are listed in this book's appendix and bibliography. The major world problem facing the social sciences, according to Mendras, is the 2 billion peasants who will vanish into the industrial civilization. By studying the example of Western peasants who have already made this transition, insight may be gained on how to help peasants all over the world adapt themselves to industrial civilization. Although the path from the traditional to the industrial society is not always the same, the fundamental facts of the problems are the same everywhere, according to the author. The traditional theory of economic development is not presented in this book, i.e., the industrial revolution (forces from outside the peasant sector) led to the gradual disappearance of the peasant society. Rather, the view presented is that the peasant's disappearance was in large part the result of forces from within the traditional society.

While this book need not be on "every social scientist's reference shelf," it should be borrowed from

the library because of chapter 4—"An Innovation: Hybrid Corn." In this chapter, a concrete example is used to show the forces that have an impact on traditional farmers. The traditional peasant is disoriented by an innovation because he perceives that the ultimate result is a complete upheaval of his system of economic, social, and moral life. By analyzing the innovation of hybrid corn in France, Mendras attempts to show that a farmer makes the choice of whether to adopt hybrid corn in terms of individual morality or by yielding to the trends of fashion, but never by economic reasoning.

The author gives an excellent account of the paradox brought on by hybrid corn. Farmers feel this corn will kill agriculture in their region when actually it would bring an increase in their income. Peasants who have maintained their fierce independence from those in power believe that hybrid corn threatens to destroy this freedom by making them more dependent on other segments of the agricultural economy. In sum, farmers feel that it is not a matter of one variety of corn replacing another, but that they must choose between dying with the traditional self-sufficient peasant economy or being destroyed by technical and economic progress required for mass production for the market. The ultimate doom of the peasant civilization is brought on by "the others," or "them," whom the peasants berate for not "leaving us alone."

Readers who have time to read the other chapters and the appendix, which discusses some of the factors involved in interviewing the traditional peasants, should do so. Readers with limited time may want to read (in addition to chapter 4) the conclusion where Mendras outlines his perspectives on the future. In his conclusion, the author's view is much broader than just French farming.

Few problems stand in the path of the young farmer of the traditional system who is moving to a system based on economic motivation, if the farmer can understand his changing situation and see how it will permit a successful future. Thus, the world, the author feels, can move away from peasantry, but what would a world without peasants be?

Reading *The Vanishing Peasant*, one gets the impression that the peasants could be compared to Marshal Blücher and his Prussians and that social scientists could be compared to the Duke of Wellington and his thin red line. For two long days, the British under Wellington at Waterloo waited anxiously for word of the Prussians under Blücher. With no radio or reconnaissance planes, Wellington could only wait and hope that Blücher had turned toward Waterloo rather than toward Berlin. Blücher eventually turned up at the right time in the right place and thus gave Wellington a niche in history.

The vanishing peasants may eventually turn up in the industrial civilization, but the latter-day Wellingtons (social scientists) may be unaware of this transition until that time.

William P. Roenigk

Economics of Consumer Protection

Edited by Loys L. Mather. Farm Foundation. Order from The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., Danville, Ill. 148 pages. 1971. \$5.50.

This is a good book. Unfortunately for the agricultural economist, the book ranges far in the field of consumerism with little mention of the farmer's problems. But it has a happy ending: It dips briefly into marketing, and so it has some bearing on the farmer after all.

The contents of the volume are based on a seminar sponsored by a North Central Regional Committee (NCR-20) in May 1970. The objectives were to stimulate interest, discussion, and research on the economics of consumer protection. The papers are formal and generally well prepared. Major topics are the consumer movement, consumer action programs, consumer research, consumer education, and policy alternatives.

Of the 19 authors, 11 are college professors and one is a research assistant, all in Departments of Agricultural Economics or Business Administration. Two are in USDA. One is a family extension economist. The remaining four are prominent in the Federal Trade Commission, President's Commission on Consumer Interests, Consumers Union of the United States, and New York Institute for Consumer Education and Development.

Papers by administrators tend to be descriptive and at the same time defensive of their consumer protection policies, practices, and programs. Some, but not all, of the papers by university writers are fairly academic. At least one paper is in the vein of that widely circulated monthly digest: It is a case study of the adventures of the fraudulent "Dr. K." Perhaps of most direct interest to agricultural economists are the two papers near the end on unit pricing of grocery items, the first concerning a market test and the second a commentary.

Robert M. Walsh

Economic and Social Development: A Process of Social Learning

By Edgar S. Dunn, Jr. Published for Resources for the Future, Inc., by The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore. 327 pages. 1971. \$10.

Judging from the title of this book, one would think that its contents could be a new addition to the current varied research on growth and development. Any new thought or technique which could more effectively resolve the complex problems associated with regional and national development would undoubtedly be welcomed by all persons involved in economics. One also would think that the author, Edgar S. Dunn, Jr., would be a likely person to offer an important contribution. His credentials are impressive. He is senior research associate with Resources for the Future, Inc., and was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economics Affairs of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

After reading the book, however, this reviewer must admit that he was somewhat disappointed. The book seemed to be a philosophic dissertation rather than a manual of instruction. The author particularly criticizes the inadequacies of positive economic techniques, which he writes off in effect as not possessing sufficiently accurate instrumentality to gage growth processes.

The major thrust of his attack is at the key attribute of the discipline's technique: The development of "law-like" statements to support predictions. The author contends that conventional predictive models over time and involving significant changes are impossible to construct. The use of carefully designated assumptions and the arbitrary exclusion of unknown or exogenous variables could make the outcome predetermined at the outset. Even despite the fact that in the model there could be extensive variation in parameters, the structure of the system remains unchanged.

The author therefore concludes that positive economics should be discarded as a practical technique. He instead advocates that there should be a move toward evolutionary experimentation, that is, there must be an introduction of learning models into the analyses of the process. Economic and social development could better be understood through social science analysis and with knowledge of human organization.

This is a striking statement to hear from an economist. It is generally agreed that the ability of the positive economic method to restrict the influence of the human variable to a minimum permits more accurate results. Therefore, it is difficult for this reviewer to understand that to permit immeasurable, complex human variables

to be the major key to an analysis enables one to predict with more exactitude where society will be in the future.

Jack Ben-Rubin

The World's Landscapes: New Zealand

By Kenneth B. Cumberland and James S. Whitelaw. Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago. 194 pages. 1970. \$5.95.

Geographers, notably economic geographers, are providing descriptive, statistical, and economic material that can be of value to economists. The present volume

should be consulted by anyone concerned with the agricultural development of New Zealand.

*The Consumer in American Society:
Personal and Family Finance*

By Arch W. Troelstrup. Fourth Edition. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 668 pages. 1970. \$9.95.

This widely used textbook on consumer education devotes two chapters to food shopping and management. The consumer viewpoint presented might well be considered by the agricultural economist concerned with marketing.