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BOOK REVIEWS

Problems of Progress in the Agricultural Economy. By D. E. HATHAWAY.
(Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964.) Pp. 168, \$U.S.8.95.

American Farm Policy. By D. PAARLBERG. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964.) Pp. 375, \$U.S.6.95.

Agricultural economic policy has a tradition of being poorly understood and even more poorly debated in Australia. The measures which have been adopted have usually sprung from rather narrow investigations and have been largely industry rather than nationally orientated. The average Australian (if such an animal exists) is not only unaware of the economic problems which plague primary industries but also completely ignorant of how he may be affected by measures adopted by his Government to assist the agricultural sector. Agricultural policy is, therefore, a field in which "he who cries loudest" usually wins support and often at the expense of the silent members of the community. To quote an American physicist well known to television viewers "Why is it so?"

Dale E. Hathaway in the Preface of *Problems of Progress in the Agricultural Economy* attributes a similar phenomenon in America to a lack of books on agricultural policy and a lack of coverage in the national press. If this really is the reason for the lack of interest and understanding in this field in America, then no further comment is necessary on the Australian situation. In Australia books on agricultural policy are as scarce as white kangaroos and newspaper coverage is often limited to country editions. On the basis of his conclusion that there are not enough books which deal with the economic problems of agriculture, Hathaway then presents his *Problems . . .* to fill this gap at the level of the reader "who has a modest understanding of the principles of economics and who has an interest in how these principles operate to affect agriculture". *American Farm Policy* by Don Paarlberg obviously has a similar objective albeit at a higher plane. If the question of just why Australians are so happily ignorant of agricultural policy issues can be answered along the lines suggested by Hathaway for America, what value have such books as Hathaway's and Paarlberg's for Australian readers?

Depending upon one's purpose, both books have something to contribute in the field. If the reader requires a book which is relatively easy to follow, logical and lucid in the exposition of the major issues involved in agricultural development and agricultural policy in a highly developed economy, then he will find *Problems . . .* a very worthwhile book. The examples are, of course, all American and this reduces the value of the book for an Australian reader not accustomed to "thinking-up" his own local examples. For the specialist this is a very common problem given the scarceness of local literature. The specialist will not find anything really new in this little book, as Hathaway admits. Probably the best use for *Problems . . .* will be as suggested reading for students prior to their

undertaking a course in agricultural policy. The book has virtually no footnotes, very few diagrams or charts and no tables. There is an adequate index.

Paarlberg has sub-titled his book *a case study of centralized decision-making* and implies that other sectors of the American economy should heed the problems associated with centralized decision-making in the agricultural sector. This warning to take heed may well be extended to Australian agriculture, where almost every product, with the notable exception of wool, enjoys some measure of centralized control. Australian readers will, therefore, find in *American Farm Policy* a sketch of what the farm problem can become, how it has arisen in America, what policies have been adopted and what can be done. If the field of agricultural policy was a field in which Governments learnt by the mistakes of other Governments, the Paarlberg book should be issued free to every Australian politician, not because it necessarily deals with the subject all that adequately, but because Paarlberg takes a strong stand against centralized control of agriculture and points out that the lessons "learnt" from American experience in this field have a much wider application. That such a stand is taken by a man whose "inside" knowledge is based on five years in very senior positions with the United States Department of Agriculture and three years as White House Special Assistant to President Eisenhower, may make the book all the more valuable to Canberra readers. In fact, students of American politics will notice quite a similarity between the agricultural policies of the second Eisenhower administration and Paarlberg's suggestions.

The contents of *American Farm Policy* are organized into seven almost distinct parts. The first part deals historically with the seven-point creed of farming and contains a clear discussion of farm fundamentalism and how much of the so-called "creed" may reasonably be applied to modern agriculture. The second part defines the American farm problem in terms of sub-problems and alternatively as a set of opportunities. The sub-problems and opportunities are all discussed, but often far too briefly. The next two parts deal with the politics and economics of the agricultural sector in a rather superficial manner. Part V is devoted to a commodity by commodity examination of American agricultural policy. Students will applaud Part VI in which Paarlberg discusses the whole range of possible Government policies, but it is in the final section that the "meat" may be found. In these last few pages of the book Paarlberg puts forward his contribution "towards a way out".

Readers of *American Farm Policy* will find the lay-out of the book unusual in that many short sharp comments are set out under general headings and while this may enhance the readability of the book, it detracts from the argument and the book at times degenerates into a series of disjointed observations. There are no footnotes but diagrams and tables have been used to advantage. As with the much shorter book by Hathaway, *American Farm Policy* is aimed at non-professional readers, but at the same time specialists will find good teaching material in both books and, therefore, both books would be worthwhile additions to academic libraries.

Studies on Developing Countries: Vol. 1, Planning and Economic Development; Vol. 2, Agriculture, Land Reforms and Economic Development. Edited by I. SACKS. (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1964.) Pp. 259, 284, \$U.S.4 each volume.

These two volumes are the first of a series of studies on developing countries to be published, largely in English, by Polish Scientific Publishers, Warsaw. Both contain a preface by Oskar Lange and each is presented as a symposium by correspondence. There are contributions on India, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Tunisia, Bolivia and Morocco, from authors of equally varied origins, with two-thirds of Volume 2 in French, with brief summaries in English. Covering as they do such a variety of cases and reflecting the differing national problems and the prejudices of their authors, the contributions vary greatly in quality and in presentation. R. Pankhurst contributes a slight history of Ethiopia, and the case of Mexico is analyzed to bring out the semi-capitalist nature of its revolution, and a recommendation that popular forces should be organized to complete it, although what is then to be done is left unclear. But on the development problems of India and Brazil, and on the role of agriculture in a developing economy, the series has much to say that should be valuable to the student of economic development, although one could expect that professional developers should have already incorporated the lessons to be learned into the marrow of their thought.

In these case studies development appears as the complex problem it is—particularly, as they emphasize, when the objective for most underdeveloped countries is not mere quantitative growth but development *plus* a more equitable distribution and the establishment of a more just social order. Furthermore there are so many economic, administrative and political slips between intention and practice that quantitative growth is often partially achieved at the expense of the other objectives, and at the cost of allowing the agricultural sector to stagnate or to grow much less rapidly than the industrial. When this happens the underdeveloped rural sector becomes an obstacle to further growth, e.g. in Brazil, such that all the backward linkages and automatic market and non-market responses in the world cannot, and will, not produce self-sustained growth. Then, of course, development gets held up by political obstacles, as in Indonesia, and leads to the development of the *focos* rural guerilla movement endemic in much of South America, or starvation.

One of the good things about this series is that its contributors, some of whom are Marxists and others experienced politicians, are—for the most part—concerned with economic problems as seen in their social and political setting, and present solutions which are also clearly seen as determining the future pattern of whole societies. The student of economic development should find much in these case studies to provide a useful complement to the more theoretical aspects of his work.

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Forestry in Communist China. By S. D. RICHARDSON. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966.) Pp. 237, \$U.S.6.95.

Dr. Richardson is one of the first "western" foresters to visit Communist China in recent times. His well-documented description of the country's forestry conditions and developments is undoubtedly the most detailed and comprehensive account in the English language. Despite the book's specific nature and objectives, there are numerous personal observations and translations of official pronouncements. Thus Richardson's work gives sufficient basic material to act as a case study in both the application of a political philosophy and in the role of a natural resource in a nation's economic development. In this context the book makes easy and useful reading for a wide audience.

The overall economic background is introduced in the first chapter. Of the other twelve chapters and appendices, six describe the natural vegetation and forestry practices, one describes requirements and availability of forest products, and the remaining five consider general subjects of policy and management. There is an unfortunate dearth of maps; this makes many of the details difficult to assimilate.

The theme of the book is that forestry is of greater importance in the economic development of present-day China than in any other nation. Although this generality is as hard to define as to prove, it provides a good thesis for the range and wealth of subject matter. It is based on three features of China's economy. First, agriculture is the nation's mainstay and productivity is dependent on water conservation and hence on maintenance of forest cover. In addition to feeding the population, agricultural products provide a wide variety of industrial raw materials such as timber and oils. As well, until recently, agriculture provided some 40 per cent (by value) of exports.

The second feature of the economy is the need for the rapid development of railways as a means of communication and transport. The main industrial area of China is in the north and north-west while the southern portion has the highest agricultural yields. This is causing massive shifts of population and materials via the railways. Richardson argues that the availability of timber for sleepers limits railway extension and maintenance. His evidence certainly supports this view.

There is an acute shortage of suitable timber in "reasonably" accessible forests: this is Richardson's third argument. The Chinese are forced to use bamboo and straw in building construction and paper manufacture where other countries use timber. Jointed transmission poles are found throughout the country (straight poles of sufficient length are not available), and firewood is so scarce that newly planted trees are stolen before they can even take root. Indeed immediate prospects for efficient timber production are such that it may prove cheaper (commercially if not politically) to import material from the west coast of North America.

Forestry in Communist China is of necessity a series of facts and observations on a specific topic. But students of various disciplines can develop many ideas of China by relating these facts to their own fields. For example, a forester readily appreciates that his Chinese colleagues are in fact considered as much managers of land and people as managers of trees—a point that could well be noted in Australia. The student of economic philosophy receives the impression that China's managers are

highly varied in quality. While the pulp and paper industry is sufficiently sophisticated to export its technology, Richardson noted that a furniture plant which he visited was unable to organize a simple production line: items were accumulating at intermediate points in a most irregular fashion. Another paradox in the nation's overall policy is the distribution of skilled and experienced men between the essential and the esoteric. While China's foresters are desperately in need of simple guidance (by Australian standards) on practical techniques, there is an unusually large quantity of research into rather abstruse fundamental problems e.g. the identification of poplar plants by chlorophyll absorption phenomena.

The industrial aspects of timber processing receive but passing attention; this is unfortunate, and surprising. Nevertheless the book is an excellent account and is a rewarding study to all students of land use. It is hoped that Richardson will find time to return in about ten years to give another very welcome report on forestry in China.

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