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BOOK REVIEWS

"LAND POLICY, AGRICULTURAL LABOUR AND INSURANCE", National Planning Committee Series, 1948 (Vora & Co., Publishers Ltd., Bombay, Price Rs. 6): The valuable literature made available to the public under the aegis of the National Planning Committee on some of our major economic and social questions stands unique to the credit of the members and organizers of this type of research. It is hoped, that the suggestions and recommendations contained in the various reports would find a "proper place" in the economic planning as well as in shaping social and public policies of the nation under a National Government.

"Land-Policy", "Agricultural Labour" and "Agricultural Insurance" form the subject matter of the report—all the three very important but, all the same, much neglected in India, till recently. The Main Report is only about 15 pages (48-62 pages), and a large part (pages 63 to 159) is covered by appendices on "Problem of Waste Land", notes or memoranda on "Land Policy", "Rent, Revenue and Uneconomic holdings", and "Agricultural Labour" while the rest (pages 162-176) is devoted to resolutions of the Committee and epilogue. A more detailed discussion of the topics dealt with in the Report of the sub-committee and ownership and use of land, measures for Agrarian Reform, Legislation necessary to carry out new land policy, agricultural labour, rural and cottage industries and agricultural insurance, is found in the preceding seven sections (pp. 18-47). The suggestions made especially on village industries are thought-provoking. In view of the importance of the topics concerned, it would have been much more useful, if separate reports were brought out on each of the subjects instead of dubbing all the three together in one volume. The explanation may be sought apparently in the paucity of material sufficient to make a volume by itself. On account of the vast changes that have taken place in India and all the world over in the land systems, policies and even in ideologies during and after the World War II, the value of the findings and recommendations made by the members of the sub-committee jointly or individually are likely to be vitiated. But the radical measures suggested by Prof. Shah as against those reflecting the traditional way of thinking of the pre-war period as embodied in the scholastic contributions of Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee and others, may help the reader to strike a balance in arriving at conclusions. The report provides sufficient food for thought on questions related to land and agrarian labour to stimulate more fruitful research on these subjects.

V. V. Sayana

SOIL CONSERVATION AND AFFORESTATION. National Planning Committee Series, 1948, pp. 195. (Vora & Co., Publishers Ltd., Bombay. Price Rs. 6): Senseless demolition of forests leads to erosion and depletion of soils. In fact, afforestation constitutes an integral part of soil conservation policy and as such "soil erosion" and "afforestation" are closely associated with each other.

Reserve conservation is not a new concept. It has been advocated and practised in many countries, particularly in the U.S.A. during the last forty years. In India, however, this subject has received scant attention. The Report of the Sub-Committee on "Soil Conservation and Afforestation" of the N.P.C. is indeed of immense value. In view of the delicate food situation in the country, the publication has an additional importance. To quote the remarks of the Chairman of the Sub-Committee "An examination of the systems and methods of land utilisation affords very important data regarding prevalent misuses of land, and also adjustments necessary to ensure a balanced utilisation, village and farm planning, as also drainage, water supply, communications and similar matters must loom large in future in plans of rural reconstruction. Reliable information is also necessary regarding the requirements of land for each of these purposes. Information on these points must be available for units of suitable size based on physiographic features."

The volume consists of eight parts (Part A to Part H) the first four parts (pp. 38 to 100) having been devoted to Problems of Soil Conservation and the rest to those of forests (pp. 101 to 187) written by experts of high standing in the respective fields. An abstract or summary of recommendations is given before each contribution. It is high time to carry on soil surveys in different parts of India (rapid surveys of the reconnaissance type as well as detailed surveys of some selected regions) and also to assess the forest situation in the provinces for working out proper plans for a rapid regeneration of the country by, so to say, "substituting of utilisation for non-utilisation, of fuller use for partial use, misuse or waste, and of social use for selfish use by private owners." The action of the Government of the C.P. and Berar, appointing a Forest Policy Committee in the Province, may be emulated by other provinces like Assam, Madras and Bombay. This Report should prove highly useful in drawing up schemes for planned use of our soil without waste of resources, so that land—the most precious of our national assets—may be passed on from generation to generation as a proud bequeathal.

V. V. Sayana.

"FARMING IS STILL A GAMBLE" by F. D. Smith, D.Sc., and Barbara Wilcox. (Peoples Universities Press: London. Pp. 125. Price 6 s.). Here is an interesting book written in a "light" vein on weighty problems of British Agriculture, such as crop and animal husbandry, mechanization of agriculture, hazards created by bureaucracy and controls, dispossessions, propaganda, guaranteed prices, farming problems, black markets, etc. The authors, with their keen sense of humour, draw the reader almost unawares into the problems created by the post-war policy of the Ministry of Agriculture. The very opening paragraph is characteristic of the intelligent humour which compels one's attention upto the end of the book: "I walked round the bull several times. I could not make up my mind about him. The owner walked the bull round me several times. Whether the bull had made up his mind about me, I could not tell."

The chief merit of the book is in the presentation of the agriculturist's viewpoint with regard to land legislation. One may rightly call it a study in farmer's psychology. About the dispossession of inefficient farmers, a farmer asks: "Supposing that the man in question is not a bad farmer, but merely a good farmer grown old and past the job, should he be turned out?" About the resentment shown by farmers to certain state policies, the authors ask: "Was it because the farming community suffered a deep sense of humiliation in that, it was driven and not led, directed and not inspired? Is it even wise to humiliate a whole community in order to punish a few offenders?"

The authors make a plea for minimum state interference in agriculture. One may differ from the authors' views and yet like the book. It may be said that this method of writing on economic problems is very helpful to educate public opinion, although it is not easily imitable, as it requires a close knowledge of rural psychology. It is mainly for this reason that the book deserves the attention of writers on Indian agriculture and rural life.

B. S. M.

'AGRARIAN REFORMS AND AGRICULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION' by G. D. Agarwal. (S. Chand & Co., Fountain, Delhi. Pp. III. Price, Rs. 2-8-0). At the time when our Provinces are going ahead with their schemes for abolishing the zamindari tenure, Professor Agarwal's book is a timely eye-opener to the grave lacuna in these measures, namely, the new land system that is to place the old. Few of our Provincial Governments have given to this question the consideration it calls for. There is a great deal of loose and vague thinking in the multitude of suggestions pouring from various quarters, regarding the future land

organisation. According to the author, this problem is very complex and it cannot be considered in isolation. It requires good knowledge of Farm Management, Principles of Soil Conservation, Sociology and history of land systems in other countries, for one to arrive at the right conclusion regarding the most suitable land system for India.

The author who, happily, is free from any dogma, makes a dispassionate study of the existing conditions and considers the merits of alternative land systems that are proposed by different economists. He comes to the conclusion that neither co-operative farming, nor collective farming nor large scale joint stock or capitalist farms can be advocated immediately for the country as the only suitable pattern. At the same time, mere abolition of zamindari and conferring of rights on the ryots akin to ryotwari would hardly improve the situation. Consequently, the author formulates a comprehensive policy of land-use for the country. His plan includes: land-utilization schemes; constitution of economic individual holdings; settlement of right types of farmers on the reconstituted holdings; freedom of land transfer under social control; restrictions on subletting; provision of facilities for efficient production and marketing; and mixed diversified farming on soil conservation basis. Each of these planks in his scheme is elucidated at length. The necessary legislation to provide full incentive for efficient farming is also outlined in one of the chapters. The Appendices, particularly those on Jewish Co-operative Settlements in Palestine and on *Kolkhozes* give valuable information regarding the development of co-operative farming abroad.

On the whole, this is a thought provoking study of the existing land tenure conditions in India; the author not only examines critically the various measures of land reform being considered or executed by the Provincial Governments but also makes constructive suggestions for re-orientating our agricultural policy.

B. S. M.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF HYDERABAD, VOL. I. Rural Survey by Dr. Anwar Iqbal Quereshi (Orient Longmans. Pp. 358. Price Rs. 15/-). This volume, consisting of detailed nineteen chapters, deals particularly with the rural economy of the Hyderabad State.

The first chapter narrating the "very rich historical past" of the State, seems out of place in this book. Such an introduction tracing the history of the region under study from "pre-historic times" is apt to strike one as quite unwarranted in an economic study of this type. The conquest of the various dynasties or the conferment of favours and titles by the Crown on the Ruler have, evidently, no bearing on rural economy.

The remaining Chapters, however, do bear evidence to earnest efforts at compiling valuable facts and figures relating to the rural economy of the State. The region covered by the study is fairly large, in as much as the State of Hyderabad is 82,700 sq. miles in extent, that is five times larger than Switzerland or as large as England and Ireland put together. It is fairly well drained by two rivers and many subsidiary streams. Forests cover 12 per cent of the total area of the State, as against 20% in British India. It has considerable deposits of gold, diamonds, iron, copper, coal and building stones and possesses good possibilities of development of natural water-power.

The comparative study relating to demographic pressure in the state and in British India is interesting. Between 1881 and 1941, the population of the State increased by 55.8 per cent as against an increase of 48 per cent in British India. The density of population in 1941, however, was only 198 per sq. mile in the State as against 246 in British India.

The study of population trends is followed by chapters relating to agriculture which give detailed account of the systems of cropping, land-tenure, land-revenue, tenancy, livestock-situation, irrigational facilities, agricultural indebtedness, agricultural price trends, effects of the great depression, and the progress of co-operative movement in the State. It is interesting to note that the author who, at one time, doubted the efficacy of compulsion in scaling down rural debts (see his *The farmer and his Debts*) now "firmly believes in compulsory debt adjustment" (Page 175). The author's suggestions for provision of credit to agriculture and improvement of marketing of agricultural produce in Hyderabad are equally applicable to the country as a whole. In the last chapter, the author makes a daring attempt at calculating the food deficit of the State. He is of the view that while the quantitative aspect of food consumption depends on the "Grow More Food" drive, the quality of food consumed depends largely on the national income and its distribution.

Here is a good regional study of our rural economy. It is needless to emphasise the importance of such intensive studies for understanding the complicated and varied economic problems of a vast country such as India.

B. S. M.

FOOD PROBLEMS IN INDIA IN GENERAL AND IN KOLHAPUR STATE IN PARTICULAR by Rao Bahadur Dr. P. C. Patil, (Published by R. B. Dr. P. C. Patil, Tarabai Park, Kolhapur. Pp. 125. Price Rs. 4/8). Since the Bengal famine of 1943, the food situation in the country has been receiving increasing attention from our economists. And although

considerable literature has been published on this important subject, many of the studies have proved of little practical use owing to their too ambitious an attempt to cover the whole country. Dr. Patil has wisely avoided falling into this error of basing his study on inadequate and misleading statistics. His aim is modest—to survey the food situation in the State which is a little over 3000 sq. miles in area and accommodates 12 lakh souls. It is this regional approach to the study that has contributed to the author's success in his attempt to analyse the food problem and clarify the food situation in the State.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the problem and the food situation and dietary conditions in relation to different classes of population in the country. The inadequacy of the present local supply, the deficit at present and in 1971 are discussed in this part. The second part deals with the food-production of Kolhapur State, with reference to the past, present (1947) and the future (1971). In the third part, comments are offered on the ways and means of increasing food supply and suggestions are made to step up production. In the fourth part are given appendices bearing on the text and on the tables appearing therein. Instead of burdening the text with details and subsidiary tables, they are given as appendices in a separate part (i.e. Part IV).

Taking a long range view, the author comes to the conclusion that, at 24 oz. grain-ration, the State would require, by 1971, an increase of 275 per cent in its food production. The author, however, considers this increase "not impossible". This optimistic note is indeed re-assuring, coming as it does from one who was sometime Deputy Director of Agriculture in Bombay Province.

Drawing upon his experience as an officer in the Indian Agricultural Service, the author has struck some new notes in his treatment. For example, he has pointed out the confusion in Indian Agricultural Statistics and explained its causes. He has also explained how the term "Farm" in India has a connotation different from what it implies in the West. He has enumerated the main difficulties in estimating total crop production of the country.

The treatment of the subject as a whole is quite comprehensive. The book deserves the attention of all who are interested in this topical problem of feeding India's millions.

B. S. M.

REPORT OF THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE, GOVERNMENT OF COCHIN STATE, 1949 (Printed by the Superintendent, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, Pp. 423). The

Government of Cochin appointed the Committee in 1947 under the Chairmanship of Shri K. G. Shivaswamy to examine, among others, the question of (a) the role of Government aid and co-operation in economic development of agriculture; (b) the problem of rack-renting, fair rent and revision of tenancy laws; (c) fragmentation of holdings and restriction of land alienation to non-cultivators.

The Committee collected valuable data on these issues mostly through evidence and investigation under expert academic guidance. The study of the agrarian problems and the recommendations based on this first hand information are illuminating. On the basis of their findings the Committee recommended a scaling down of rents as an interim measure.

The final proposals cover a very wide range. For the land problem, the Committee recommends a policy which is already in operation in many parts of India. Some of its recommendations, however, appear inconsistent with the general trend of the findings. State and collective farming and mechanisation by stages, for instance, are accepted by the committee as desirable reforms while the question of formation of economic holdings has temporarily been abandoned for "integration of holdings", due to the existing population pressure. It would appear that little headway could be made with the former recommendations, as they too actually aggravate pressure of population on soil, unless measures are simultaneously taken to divert the surplus population on land into non-agricultural occupations.

Another surprising proposal is for the levy of sales-tax on agricultural products after making a liberal allowance for personal cash needs of the cultivator—and levy on exports of agricultural products. The purpose of these two levies is laudable; the proceeds would be utilised to finance agricultural improvement and Social Insurance for peasants. But the proposal ignores some simple facts of rural life; hardly any records of production or vouchers for sale are maintained by the village cultivator. The tax on 'export' of agricultural products also seems to ignore practical difficulties and the effects of such a levy on agricultural economy.

However, the Report has to be commended for the wide range of problems it has covered; it is a very valuable addition to regional investigations into Indian agricultural conditions. The Committee's reference to the measures adopted elsewhere and its recommendations for the organisation of the co-operative movement, the fixation of fair rent, and the sociological aspects of economic rehabilitation bear ample testimony to the vision with which the Committee has tried to tackle agricultural problems of Cochin.

B. M. G.

"ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE FOOD STAMP PLAN": by Norman Leo Gold, A C. Hoffman, Frederick V. Waugh, U. S. Department of Agriculture; (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Pp. 98. Price 20 Cents). This is the explanation of the working of the U. S. Government's Food Stamp Plan which was meant for raising farm-incomes by increasing the total national outlay on food, and improving diets of low-income consumers.

The Food Stamp Plan was evolved to meet the problem of maintaining farm incomes when demand for farm-products was sinking and when curtailment of output was to be avoided. The only remedy was to increase or cause to increase Demand for and Expenditure on farm products. "The Stamp Plan seeks to achieve its objective by means of a Federal Subsidy paid to low-income consumers in the form of Blue Stamps. These Stamps can be used for the purchase of specified surplus food in any retail food outlet. For receiving the Blue Stamps, consumers are usually required to buy minimum quantities of orange-coloured stamps which can be used for the purchase of any food product." The latter provision is intended to assure that the surplus products bought with the free blue stamps will represent a net addition to their food consumption. Thus a net expansion in demand is created by diverting it to the low-income consumers whose response to a small subsidy for food products is greater than that of others. As a rule, the plan covers the recipients of State or Federally-sponsored relief only; about 40% of the participants had to be exempted from buying the orange-coloured stamps, their incomes being too low. Only a major part of the Blue Stamp subsidy—75% in the present case—constitutes a net addition to the aggregate food-bill. The authors have discussed how to prevent this substitution of normal food expenditure by a part of the blue stamp subsidy. The technique of constituting the surplus list of commodities for which the Blue Stamps can be used, the cost of operations of the plan and its effects on the marketing channels are also adequately explained. The last chapter on "National Potentialities of the Food Stamp Plan" is particularly interesting when read in the light of the limitations of the plan. The authors expect to have an increase of 4 to 7% in farm-income from food crops if the plan covers all public-assistance cases. One wonders how far this estimate could be considered reliable when the authors themselves are keenly conscious of several highly unstable factors that make such forecasts very difficult. The elasticities of substitution and the varieties of Relief Schemes in operation will together determine the success of the plan in increasing the "Total National Outlay" on farm products.

The account of the methods used for gauging the effects of the operation of the plan should be very useful for the organisation of similar

surveys in any country where the problem of agricultural surpluses and sub-marginal income groups is acute. As for the Food Stamp Plan proper, it may provoke little interest in India where the problem of farm-income and nutrition standards has a background diametrically opposed to that in U.S.A. viz. one of absolute deficits.

B. M. G.

"OUR FARMER" by B. S. Mavinkurve, with a Foreword by Sir Manilal B. Nanavati. (Vora & Co. Ltd., Bombay. Pp. 89. Price Rs. 1|8). This is an unsophisticated and lucid presentation of the agricultural problem of India in the perspective of the rural social framework. This rather unconventional presentation of the vast and complex problem of agrarian rehabilitation maintains a high standard of scientific accuracy. The entire problem has been viewed from the human angle; graphic descriptions and suitable illustrations and sketches of the various aspects of an average farmer's life introduce us to the simpler problems in rural life. The same clarity and lucidity have been maintained when the author leads us upto a discussion of agrarian policy and legislation and rural reconstruction. The neat presentation of simple facts of the farmer's life succeeds to create a genuine interest in his problems in the readers' minds; and the clear-headed reasoning on policy follows smoothly without causing in the least any difficulty. The author has been modest enough to suggest the book for "beginners". Our feeling is that it deserves a close attention of the experts too for the admirable presentation of the agrarian problem as an organic whole. It may well serve as an antidote to the sectional outlook often displayed by our experts.

The importance of Mr. Mavinkurve's book is manifold; firstly, it tells us, the laymen, what exactly constitutes the maze of hardships in which the Indian Farmer is working; secondly, it tells the farmers themselves what they should do by way of self-help; thirdly, it points out the steps for helping the farmer that any Government with common-sense has to take.

The book, if translated into regional languages, is bound to be extremely popular, both for general reading and as a text book in secondary schools and Rural Development Training Centres where it could be very useful to our youngsters and trainees for rural welfare work.

B. M. G.

"THE AGRARIAN PROBLEMS OF MADRAS PROVINCE" by Dr. V. V. Sayana. (Published by the Business Week Press, 173, Lloyd Road, Madras-14. Pages 332 Price Rs. 12|8). It is more than two years since

India secured control over her own destiny. In trying to clear away the cobwebs created by a century and a half of foreign domination, the people of India are likely to be led astray for want of an unbiased study of the various problems facing the country. It is, therefore, gratifying to come across an impartial and scholarly study of the agrarian problems of, at least, Madras Province.

The main problem tackled in this book is that of the organisation of agriculture, or the land system in Madras. Tenure is the relationship between the landlord and the state while tenancy is the relationship between the landlord and the tenant. These two sets of relationship affect not only the distribution but also the production of agricultural produce. They are, therefore, at the bottom of all agricultural progress. Dr. Sayana makes a deep study of the zamindari system prevalent in some parts of Madras and brings out the economic effects of that system. The results of this research should show to the various governments the need for an early abolition of this inequitable system. Dr. Sayana has also made a study of the landlord-tenant relations and of the system of land revenue assessment.

But an interesting part of the problem of tenancy and tenure is the study of land transfers in ryotwari areas. The transfer of land from cultivators to non-cultivators is a problem that is causing a headache to many an administrator. Dr. Sayana has done well in bringing out the way in which such transfers take place and how they complicate the problem of tenancy. He makes a reference to the relation between fragmentation of holdings and land transfers (ps. 125-26). One would have liked Dr. Sayana to have given more information on the part played by land transfers in the fragmentation of holdings. We may possibly expect this in his next book, 'Land Sales, land values and land transfers'.

Besides the main problem of land system, Dr. Sayana ably discusses the problems of agricultural labour, organisation of rural credit and demographic condition. Lastly he discusses the line on which agrarian reforms are taking place in India and abroad, and recommends different types of farming, co-operative, collective and joint, to suit the special characteristics of the areas concerned.

The important thing to note about the book is that part of it is based on a personal investigation carried out by the author on scientific lines in some districts of Madras Province. His conclusions, therefore, carry more weight than those of persons who base their study merely on secondary data. The lucid way in which Dr. Sayana has explained some of the intricate parts in the discussions deserves special mention. The book, thus, admirably suits the needs of experts, laymen and students.

R. G. GUPTE,