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BOOK NOTES.

Year Book of Agricultural Co-operation, 1955. Horace Plunkett Foundation, Oxford, 1955. Pp. v, 389. 25s. od. (Stg.).

The 1955 issue of this annual publication contains 57 articles covering agricultural co-operation in 42 countries together with an annual supplement to the Horace Plunkett Foundation's Bibliography of Co-operation. The articles discuss the major developments planned in agricultural co-operation for 1955.

Perhaps the most interesting article for Australian readers is that dealing with the development of new co-operative services in the Union of South Africa. One of the most recent developments has been the inauguration of a co-operative drought insurance scheme. To become a member, the stock owner must take out shares to the value of £50 for every 1,000 sheep, or the equivalent number of cattle for which fodder would be required in the event of drought. These payments are designed to finance the reserves necessary for the scheme. In addition the members pay an annual premium of approximately £7 10s. per 1,000 sheep. During a time of drought, the farmer will be entitled to buy fodder from the national reserves for the stock insured. The co-operative fodder bank will erect stores in the fodder producing areas and renew all the unused reserve at the end of each season. The annual premium will cover storage, administrative costs and depreciation.

Evidence from drought records in the Union show that only very rarely is more than one-third of the stock-raising areas affected by drought in any one year. Therefore, reserves need not be greater than is necessary to cover one-third of the policies in force. Such a scheme should arouse considerable interest in the Australian pastoral industry and its development in South Africa should be closely watched.

The same article contains a short description of a co-operative hail insurance scheme employing an unusual method of fixing premiums. The premiums for the various areas were fixed more or less arbitrarily for the first year with the known incidence of hail as a guide. However, as premiums are advanced a half per cent. for the season following a claim and reduced by the same percentage when there was no claim in the previous season, each farmer has his own premium rate established. The minimum premium is fixed at 3 per cent. This scheme has the advantage that farmers, in those areas where the incidence of hail is not heavy, are encouraged to join.

An article on the development of co-operatives within the territories of the South Pacific Commission and the co-operative activities of the Commission itself is of direct interest to Australians. The brief account of the rapid development of co-operatives in the territories of Papua and New Guinea is topical, since the Australian administration of these areas has recently been the subject of criticism.

In view of the general decline of the proportion of dairy produce handled by co-operatives in New South Wales, an article describing the growth of dairy co-operatives in Sweden since the 1930's must be mentioned.

The need for good training in the management of agricultural co-operatives is well illustrated in an article on the education and training of co-operative managers in France. It has been realised that, if the co-

operative movement is to compete effectively with other commercial institutions, its personnel must be highly trained in the latest managerial techniques. The report discusses methods achieving these improvements.

The longest article is a survey of the latest developments of co-operation in the non-self-governing territories administered by the United Kingdom. Fairly detailed reports from 19 territories are presented, and it is revealed that co-operation is the strongest in Malaya and the African colonies, particularly Nigeria and Uganda.

According to the index to Year Books of Agricultural Co-operation, 1927-54, the last article dealing with agricultural co-operation in New South Wales appeared in 1942. It is unfortunate that a movement which has done so much for local agriculture should have displayed no noteworthy developments over the last 13 years.

The standard of year books on agricultural co-operation has been maintained in the 1955 volume and anyone with an active interest in the co-operative movement will find the 1955 publication as valuable as previous issues.

Rural Industries in the Australian Economy. Ian Shannon, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1955. Pp. 150. 22s. 6d.

This book consists of two main parts. In the first half the author provides a rather selective description of the wool, wheat, meat and dairying industries in Australia and of their development in recent years. This is followed by the major section of the book in which the effects of various government policies on rural production are discussed. Exchange devaluation, tariffs, import restrictions, imperial preference and home consumption price schemes are some of the policies dealt with. The author's main argument is that governmental policies—especially protection and import restrictions—have adversely affected the profitability of Australian rural production, and that this has been responsible for the relative stagnation of agricultural output since 1939.

One would expect that any one advancing such a thesis would examine other explanations which have been produced to account for this slow rate of growth. The views of J. G. Crawford and K. O. Campbell—to mention but two economists who have discussed this problem—might perhaps be regarded as worthy of examination before an alternative theory is advanced. One might also expect to find some attempt made to measure the effect of the tariff (and import restrictions?) on costs in agriculture. This would be especially advisable as the only estimates available (L. G. Melville, "The Effects of the Tariff," ANZAAS, 1946) suggest that the percentage increase in prices of protected and sheltered goods as a result of the tariff fell slightly between 1926-27 and 1938-39. There seems little reason to assume that there has been a sudden reversal of this trend in the last 15 years. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Mr. Shannon is not as familiar with the literature in this whole field as would seem desirable. This is also suggested by the introductory section where the major rural industries are described with little reference to post-war studies of any of the industries concerned—although at least the wheat and dairying industries have been the subject of frequent surveys and descriptions in the last ten years.

The book contains an interesting and, as far as this reviewer is aware, novel analysis of the effects of protection on the different rural industries. According to the argument presented here, the increases in cost resulting from tariffs affect the profitability of more intensive forms of land use such as fruitgrowing and dairying more adversely than those of wool and meat production. Development costs per unit of output are regarded as greater for orchards, vineyards and dairy farms; hence, equal percentage cost increases will affect the profitability of these pursuits more adversely than woolgrowing. However, one should perhaps balance against this the lower proportion of cash costs (plus depreciation) to total costs in dried fruits and dairying as compared with wool. A full examination of these factors is beyond the scope of this review, but the point made seems worthy of more detailed examination.

On the whole, this book does not do justice to the important issues which are discussed. In many places the terminology used is obscure and the argument difficult to follow.

Vegetable Production and Marketing. (Second Edition) Paul Work and John Carew. John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, 1955. Pp. ix, 537. \$4.72.

In this comprehensive text book on vegetable growing there is a marked emphasis on the economic factors involved in the enterprise. The organization of the subject matter has obviously been arranged to suit the requirements of college students, but this does not detract from its usefulness to the intelligent layman.

A good deal of space is devoted to reference lists of publications and bulletins issued by the United States Department of Agriculture and by Agricultural Experiment Stations and Universities in various American States. With the aid of such references the American reader would be able to follow up any particular topic of interest and learn the results of recent experiments by research workers.

About half the book is devoted to the discussion of various aspects of the vegetable growing enterprise as a whole, i.e., farm management, marketing, roadside selling, equipment, soils, insects and diseases, planting, irrigation and storage. In the remaining chapters each of the major vegetable crops grown in the United States including potatoes, sweet corn, tomatoes, root crops, peas and beans are discussed in detail with emphasis being given to high quality production to satisfy discriminating markets.

According to the authors—"A good marketing programme has four objectives: (1) to carry the produce through to the consumer with quality unimpaired; (2) to present it in attractive and readily salable form; (3) to keep the costs of the various steps to a minimum; (4) to get a good price."

The emphasis so placed on quality products and the need for care in harvesting, sorting, washing and generally preparing the products for sale, impresses upon the Australian reader the inadequacy of the methods which prevail in the local vegetable industry.