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BOOK NOTES

Farm Policy: New Directions, Geoffrey S. Shepherd. Ames, Iowa State University Press, 1964. Pp. ix, 292. \$6.95.

Reviewers of books on U.S. farm policy may soon be expected to prepare a standard format of review with the intention of avoiding the need for more than a cursory glance at each new contribution in this well worked field. One stock paragraph for this format could be taken from the publicity statement for Professor Shepherd's new book. It reads:

"In *Farm Policy: New Directions* author Shepherd first reviews the early concept of the farm problem in the United States, traces briefly the development of farm programs over the last three decades, appraises the programs, and, in the light of their revealed inadequacy to deal with the problem, outlines programs of a different kind to take their place".

But despite the familiarity of the general argument and, as it turned out, a justified preconception that there would be little that was new in the text, this is a book that should have been written. It will prove useful as a text for general reading in first courses in agricultural policy. But above all it is a text that, because it is readable and attractively presented, may influence lay thinking on the important problems that it discusses. One can imagine that far more policy makers will read and digest its messages than have read most of the other books and articles that could equally well be described by the publicity statement. Is this an important attribute in a field where so much has been written and so little notice taken of it?

The book is in four parts. Part 1 discusses the farm problem and U.S. farm policy over the last thirty years. After giving attention to the question "Is the farm problem a price problem?" Professor Shepherd appraises price support and production control programmes and then turns to a further question "Is the farm problem an income problem?" Not surprisingly he concludes that low prices and low incomes are only symptoms. The real farm problem is an agricultural adjustment problem. There is an excessive supply of farmers for existing levels of farm technology and commercial food demand.

In Part 2, Shepherd discusses proposals for returning agriculture to the open market, for mandatory production controls, for marketing quotas and marketing agreements, for multiple price programmes, and for direct payments. Prospects for increasing the domestic and foreign demand for United States farm products are also discussed. He concludes that a new approach to United States farm policy is needed. This approach should concentrate on the basic problem of an oversupply of farmers. The first farmer adjustment programme presented is Schultz's "Homesteads in Reverse" as developed by R. S. Dougan.² However, Shepherd regards

¹ T. W. Schultz, "Homesteads in Reverse". *Farm Policy Forum*, Summer 1956, pp. 12-15. Also see his "A Policy to Redistribute Losses from Economic Progress", *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 43 No. 3, (August, 1961).

² R. S. Dougan, *Resource Adjustment Through a Voluntary Transfer of Human Resources Out of Agriculture*, Agr. Extn. Serv. Mimeo, Ohio State Univ., 1961.

this programme, which would assist low income farm families to move out of agriculture, as almost prohibitively expensive. The best policy, in his view, is to prevent unnecessarily high numbers of school leavers from entering agriculture. This policy would include an education programme to acquaint farm children with alternative job opportunities, and special programmes to train farm children for off farm employment. Shepherd notes with concern the disproportionate share of vocational training funds that are still directed at agricultural pursuits in the United States.

Part 3 is devoted to some aspects of the world food problem, while Part 4 includes a discussion of the development of the values which have played a role in determining farm policy and a perspective view of the arguments. In the final chapter Shepherd discusses existing programmes which are a step towards a long-term solution of the farm problem. These include the Rural Areas Development Programme, and The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962. The important point is made that programmes of this type are not dramatic or glamorous.

Given that the book is directed at lay and freshman audiences two major criticisms appear valid. Shepherd has been too enthusiastic with his axman's job on existing policy and the policy proposals of others. We are clear on his major policy; but this is a long term policy and the policy makers must have to take some interim steps or at least maintain the *status quo* for some time into the future. What would be the other acceptable aspects of an overall policy for agriculture if Professor Shepherd had his way? Our second criticism is that chapters 16 to 19, which have a lecture note quality, appear to be thrown in for good measure. If these chapters are necessary, as Shepherd claims, to give broader perspective for interpreting United States farm policy they should appear at the beginning of the book.

Minor points of criticism include some mistakes in the proof reading and a lack of consistency in repeated facts. In the third text paragraph on p. 121 "storage problems" should read "storage programs". A quotation from George Abschier, on page 180 reads "During 1957 about 105 million of the 38.2 million children . . ." Finally on page 92, "Farm population declined . . . from a peak of 32 million persons in 1933 to 15 million in 1961". This may be compared with p. 211 ". . . of more than 32 million in 1933 to about 14.3 million in 1962", and two pages further on, a hardly necessary, "of more than 32 million in 1933 to about 15 million in 1962 . . .".

On the credit side, Professor Shepherd's book is a first rate example of the printer's art. Choice of type faces and paper is just right, and the text is illustrated with clear tables and simple figures. This excellent presentation, the straight forward prose and general theoretical soundness are our reasons for claiming that this is indeed a good text for lay readers. Some of the statistical material will also provide a convenient summary for more serious students of United States farm policy.

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Meat, A Review, Commonwealth Economic Committee London: H.M.S.O., 1964. Pp. viii, 147, 7s. 6d. (stg.)

The 1964 edition of this publication follows closely the pattern set by previous issues. It reviews world production, trade, consumption, and prices relating to beef, live cattle, mutton and lamb, live sheep, bacon and hams, pork, live pigs, canned meat, offals, and poultry meat. Particular reference is made to the part played by Commonwealth countries. This issue includes figures covering recent years up to 1962, and in some cases 1963. It should be pointed out, however, that more recent information is available in the Committee's monthly *Intelligence Bulletin*.

General comments on trends and recent developments are provided, along with tabular information. The sections on prices provide some quite useful figures. Of particular note in the beef section, for example, is the index of average fat cattle prices in certain countries. However, although such an index is useful for examining trends within each country, it is unfortunate that variance of type of stock for which the figures are collected, and of currencies used, renders the index of little value for international comparisons.

Three valuable appendices are contained in the 1964 issue. The first outlines government measures affecting meat in the United Kingdom; Australia; New Zealand; Canada; Ireland; the United States; Argentina; Denmark; Sweden and the European Economic Community and its six constituents. The second summarizes the trade of the European Economic Community countries in beef and veal, while the third outlines import duties and controls (as they affect meat) in certain countries.

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