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## BOOK NOTES.

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**Lessons of the British War Economy**, Edited by D. N. Chester, Cambridge University Press, 1951. Pp. xii, 260. 22s. 6d. (stg.).

Published under the auspices of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, this book comprises thirteen essays by leading economists and statisticians, mainly from British universities, who held high administrative posts in the civil services of the United Kingdom during World War II.

An introductory note by Sir Richard Hopkins, Permanent Secretary of the Treasury, sets the essays and their general theme in historical perspective. The Economic Advisory Council which, in 1930, replaced the Committee of Civil Research was "the first body at the centre of government consisting preponderantly of economists and concerned exclusively with economic advice." The Council continued to function until the beginning of the war and many readers will be aware of the valuable work done by one of the committees of the Advisory Council. This body was the Committee of Economic Information which was designed to supervise the preparation of periodical reports on the economic situation and to advise as to the continuous study of economic development.

Wartime expansion of these specialized functions calling for professional economists from the academic world and in particular the inception and subsequent development of the Economic Section of the War Cabinet and the Central Statistical Office is outlined in the essays.

"The Central Machinery for Economic Policy" is described by D. N. Chester, who includes in his contribution a discussion of the role of the economist in the political and administrative spheres. Professor E. A. G. Robinson has written on "The Overall Allocation of Resources" and Richard Stone has contributed an essay on "The Use and Development of National Income and Expenditure Estimates." Other essays deal with Anglo-American Supply Relationships, Co-ordination in Aircraft Production, Control of Building, Allocation of Timber, Rationing and Wartime Control of Food and Agricultural Prices.

Of the thirteen contributors to this interesting volume all but one hold university posts. It is regrettable that most of the authors were content to interpret the task assigned to them as describing and perhaps assessing the machinery of wartime government as seen through the eyes of an 'expert' and 'outsider.' They could have given more attention to the impact their recruitment to the civil service had on government administration and also, perhaps more importantly, the manner in which these wartime experiences influenced economic thought and the attitude of these temporary civil servants to economic problems when they returned to the more meditative atmosphere of academic life.

**Farming Machinery**, A. B. Lees, London, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1951. Pp. 220. 21s. od. (stg.).

This book was obviously written mainly for farmers—British farmers. The author has had practical experience of farm machines over a long period and writes from the viewpoint of the farmer and engineer, rather than the economist. Nevertheless, the book should prove of value to most of these who are interested in the economics of agriculture, and particularly in the economics of farm mechanization, whether they be farmers or economists.

The agriculture of the United Kingdom is more highly mechanized than that of any other country, despite the fact that about 80 per cent. of its farms are less than eighty acres in area. Three and four tractors on a farm is not unusual but, because areas are small, relatively low-powered tractors predominate.

Mr. Lees discusses the complete range of farm machines currently available to the British farmer, their uses and limitations. Topics dealt with range from a discussion of the suitability of various types of potato diggers to the relative merits of kerosene, petrol or diesel power for tractors.

In view of Mr. Lees' marked preference for a small tractor of about twenty horse-power, it is perhaps not surprising that he prefers petrol engines and condemns diesel power. His arguments on this particular point are interesting, if not altogether convincing. The book is lucidly written and particularly well illustrated.

#### **PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS.**

(United Nations publications may be obtained in Australia from Messrs. H. A. Goddard Pty. Ltd., 255A George Street, Sydney.)

**Problems of Unemployment and Inflation 1950 and 1951**, United Nations Department of Economic Affairs, New York: November, 1951. Pp. 173. 11s. 3d. (Aust.).

This report was prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs of the United Nations. It is based on replies received from twenty-one governments to a questionnaire prepared by the Secretary-General at the request of the Economic & Social Council. The questionnaire was concerned with full employment standards and policies, price and production trends and anti-inflation policies. Australia was not one of the twenty-one nations supplying information.

The major part of the publication (Part II) is taken up by the replies of eight of the more important countries concerned. Part I is comprised of a brief analysis of the replies of the different governments. The questionnaire seems to have been framed with reference particularly to the economically developed private-enterprise economies, as unemployment problems are of relatively little significance in predominantly agricultural countries, such as India or Viet Nam. Again the centrally-planned economies of eastern Europe such as the Soviet Union and Poland, have no similar problems.

Australian readers will perhaps be most interested in the comparisons of the anti-inflationary policies of the economically-developed private-enterprise economies. Of eight countries listed, six had increased

indirect taxation and interest rates and had also controlled prices and wages during the period under review. Only three (the United Kingdom, the United States and Denmark) had resorted to increased income tax; five had increased profit taxes but only one country (Canada) had appreciated its exchange rate.

**Flood Damage and Flood Control Activities in Asia and the Far East,** Flood Control Series, No. 1, Bangkok: United Nations Bureau of Flood Control, Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, 1950. Pp. v, 81. 13s. 7d. (Aust.).

This report provides a comprehensive technical analysis of the problems of recurrent flooding in the major river basins of Asia and the Far East. The region covered by the report is principally an agricultural area with a population (1947) of 1,142,332,000 persons, or about half the total population of the world. Varying from area to area, from 60 to 90 per cent. of these people are agriculturalists.

The areas of Asia and the Far East which support the greatest intensity of agricultural land use, and thus the densest settlements of peoples, are the alluvial flood plains of the major river valleys. These same areas are subject to recurrent floodings, which despite their role in rejuvenating soil fertility by silt deposition, cause immense losses of life and property. The scale of such losses makes the question of flood mitigation vital to many millions of Asiatics.

The report presents a detailed case study of flood damage and flood control activities in nineteen of the major river basins of the Asiatic continent from the Indus River Basin in the west of India to the Hai River Basin in the north of China. Much of the material is presented in the form of maps.

Because of its technical nature, the report will be of most interest to students of hydrography and flood control and to those interested in the geography of the Asiatic mainland.

**Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East 1950,** United Nations Department of Economic Affairs, New York: 1951. Pp. xxiv, 541. 34s. 5d. (Aust.).

This is the fourth annual review of economic changes and developments in the ECAFE region to be prepared by the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. The countries included in the area covered by the report are: Associated States of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam), British Borneo Territories (North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak), Burma, Ceylon, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, the Federation of Malaya and Singapore, Nepal, Pakistan, the Phillipine, Thailand and Japan.

The *Survey* outlines some of the major problems of land utilization in the area, such as the difficulties associated with the introduction of machinery. Changes, during 1950, in agricultural and industrial production, transport, international trade and payments, money and finance are also discussed.

As a result of wartime disruption, the level of productivity in early post-war years fell considerably below the pre-war level and, in many countries, the rate of its subsequent recovery has been slow. Population pressure is still strong and the supply of skilled and technical personnel small. The authors point out that the solution to the employment problem continues to lie in the creation of employment opportunities through development.

**Economic Bulletin for Europe**, Second Quarter, 1951 (Vol. 3, No. 2), Research and Planning Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva: October, 1951. Pp. 94. 4s. 9d. (Aust.).

Every year the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe publishes a survey of European economic conditions. The *Economic Bulletin for Europe* is the quarterly complement of this annual survey.

Part I of the *Bulletin* describes the European economic situation in the second quarter of 1951, one of the main features of which was a slackening off in the general trend of price rises. This is explained partly as a reaction to the political situation (*e.g.*, the reduction of stock-piling for war) and partly as a result of governmental anti-inflation policy.

Increasing industrial production also commenced to taper off in many European countries in the second quarter of the year. In the heavy industries shortages of vital raw materials caused bottlenecks, whilst the consumer-goods industries experienced a slackening of demand, which reacted on production.

The second part of the *Bulletin* is of outstanding interest, consisting of a special article on "Long-term Trends in European Agriculture." The data used must have been extremely difficult to compile, if only because of the sweeping changes in boundaries which have occurred over the past forty years.

It is revealed that in western Europe the emphasis has been on animal husbandry, whilst in eastern Europe and the Soviet, cereal production has been predominant. Furthermore, yields per acre for cereal crops in western Europe have been almost double the yields in eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. These contrasts have tended to sharpen over the past forty years.

The rise in European agricultural production over the past four decades is very moderate when compared with the 20 per cent. increase in population over the same period. In western Europe dietary standards have improved, in so far as there has been an increased consumption of meat and dairy produce at the expense of cereals and potatoes. In the Soviet Union the reverse trend has occurred.

Another special article on "Recent Developments in Trade between Eastern and Western Europe" is included in Part II. In recent years exports from eastern Europe to the west, consisting mainly of food-stuffs and raw materials, have been at one-third of their pre-war volume. Exports from western Europe to eastern Europe, the bulk of which are manufactured goods, have fluctuated around two-thirds of their pre-war volume. This decline in east-west trade contrasts vividly with the rise in the total trade of both western and eastern European countries. The prevailing political atmosphere is undoubtedly a major factor in the trend away from the former inter-dependence of East and West.

Part III consists of a wide selection of detailed economic statistics, by countries, for recent years.