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BOOK REVIEW.

"Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Agricultural Economists," Jeffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1948, 25s. stg.

This volume contains nineteen addresses by well-known authorities followed, in some cases, by summaries of discussion. As is inevitable in a collection of papers of this kind, a very wide variety of subjects is covered, which makes it impossible to summarise the main arguments presented in a short review such as this.

The major topics covered include:—

Farm Population Movements.

Problems of Land Tenure and Credit Systems.

Problems of Land and Credit Systems.

Free Markets versus State Control in Production and Trade in Agricultural Products.

Human Satisfaction of Rural Work and Rural Living.

The paper on Farm Population Movements, by S. P. Maxton, discusses the various types of movements (e.g., country; country, rural; urban, from bad land to better land) and deals with the various principles controlling such movements. It is perhaps unfortunate that Mr. Maxton tried to deal with all kinds of population movements, which proved an exhaustive task and prevented him from examining the sources of the more important movements in greater detail. This discussion produced a good deal of descriptive material regarding population changes in various countries, the contributions of Sir Manilal Nanavati (India), Messrs. R. K. Aquiaga (Spain), S. C. Lee (China), G. Medici (Italy) and Professor A. W. Ashby, of the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, Oxford, being the most important. Professor Ashby's contribution seems especially valuable, as he attempted to formulate principles governing migration rather than rest content with a descriptive summary of population changes in Great Britain.

Dr. R. R. Renne's (Montana State College) paper on problems of Land Tenure and Credit Systems deals mainly with such problems as security of tenure, landlord-tenant relationships, compensation for improvements, capital valuation, flexible credit supplies, etc., which have been the subject of considerable discussion in Britain, the Continent and Australia for many years. Of interest to Australian economists are his remarks about the crop insurance system in the United States of America, which is apparently still facing considerable difficulties. One of these is that farmers tend to participate less after a succession

of good years, which renders it well-nigh impossible to administer and maintain a sound self-sustaining insurance programme with reasonable rates. The contributions of Professors Murray and Earl Heady, both of Iowa State College, are of considerable interest.

A subject, dealt with at length in two papers, which called forth considerable discussion was the role of governmental activity in the marketing of primary products. One paper by Professor L. J. Norton dealt mainly with the internal aspects of farm prices, whilst a paper read by A. C. Gilpin discussed international commodity transactions in relation to I.T.O. The two papers can well be taken together, for they are essentially two aspects of the same question, namely: is the market mechanism by itself an efficient instrument for adjusting production and consumption respectively? Professor L. J. Norton and most of the other United States delegates came out fairly strongly on the side of the free market system, but even they acknowledge that, in certain cases (e.g., some commodities like fluid milk, or in some emergency circumstances such as war, etc.), a large amount of government interference may be necessary. Among the British economists, most were critical of the blunders made by the planners, but there was also considerable dissatisfaction with the workings of a completely free market with its violent price fluctuations. Apart from the two main papers, the contributions of Professors Heady, Ashby and Nash are most noteworthy.

A number of papers dealt with the problems confronting agriculture in the various countries represented. Sir Manilal Nanavati's discussion of Indian agriculture, and papers on United States agriculture by Sherman E. Johnson, on British agriculture by J. A. Scott-Watson, and on agriculture in the British West Indies by C. Y. Shephard, should be mentioned.

Rural Sociologists will be interested in a paper by Professor A. W. Ashby on "The Human Satisfaction of Rural Work and Rural Living." Another address of interest to the sociologist is C. R. Sayre's paper on "Urbanisation of Low-standard Rural Families," dealing with conditions arising out of the urbanisation of the United States cotton belt.

Two papers on work simplification and scientific management (in agriculture), respectively, give an outline of the work accomplished in these related fields in the United States of America and the Continent. Work simplification is a subject which has not been studied systematically in Australia, at least not as applied to farming. Some of the claims made for work simplification regarding increases in efficiency seem to suggest that we should study these techniques without delay.

Another paper by J. Coke discusses Canadian measures for increasing the stability of agricultural production, prices and incomes. Canada's problems in this respect are similar to those of this country and the solutions proposed for reducing the unnecessarily large price and income fluctuations in the farm sector of the economy are somewhat similar to those envisaged in Australia. Coke's paper presents the relevant Canadian information in a summary form, which should prove useful and convenient for Australian agricultural administrators.

—F. H. GRUEN.