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BOOK REVIEWS

The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry 1863-1910, Ross Duncan. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967. Pp. xv, 190. \$6.50.

Ross Duncan, Professor of History at Wollongong University College, describes in this book the history of the development, and attempted development, of the Northern Territory from 1863 to 1910. These 48 years cover the period during which the Territory was a dependency of South Australia.

In chapter 1 the annexure of the Territory to South Australia is described and the reasons for that colony's wishing to assume responsibility are analysed. South Australia's action is described as a "fundamental blunder" and "uncalculating rashness". "Rash" and "stupid" are used to describe many of that State's activities on behalf of its dependency, and also many of the activities undertaken by investors. South Australia's initial action may be condoned to a large extent since it acted, perhaps not altogether wisely, on the glowing reports of the explorer Stuart. However, it is not to its credit that these misconceptions were stubbornly clung to throughout the whole period of its control.

Chapter 2 describes how, after early experience of the environment and difficulties associated with overlanding stock, caution was exercised in taking up holdings. The stagnancy of the 1860's and early 1870's ended in 1877 with a largely speculative boom. Why this speculative phase took place cannot be fully explained. One suggestion has been the possibility of markets for beef being developed in Java, Manila, and Singapore. However, the author discounts this suggestion and the blame is put again, in part, on reports by exploring parties.

Chapter 4 provides an account of the tribulations experienced during the terrible 1890's. Basic to all the troubles of the pastoral activities in the Northern Territory is its extreme marginality. At times of stress this shows up in sharper relief. In particular, the author describes the despair due to water shortage, disease, high freight costs, and lack of markets. Chapter 5 describes the attempts made by the Government and by individuals to overcome some of these shortcomings. But the history of South Australia's efforts in regard to water supplies, disease, and transport is a sorry one. To be fair, its efforts to encourage a meat trade with Asian countries were creditable, but failed nonetheless.

In chapter 6 the revival of the cattle industry in the Territory during the first decade of the twentieth century is described. In this period, as in earlier periods, the expansion of activity in the Territory is linked to the level of economic activity in the rest of Australia, particularly Queensland. This relationship is in essence Duncan's thesis on the development of the Territory. It is disappointing that he does not develop

the theme further. One's main impression after reading the book is that the Territory should never have been a separate entity. It is at most marginal country, suitable only for cattle breeding. If the Territory had been instead the extremities of the States of Queensland, South Australia, and perhaps Western Australia, nothing like the same amount of feeling would have been generated. It is a pity that Professor Duncan did not develop his analysis in this perspective. He does indirectly pose the question when he speculates on the possible outcome of an 1863 suggestion to annex that area north of the Tropic of Capricorn to Queensland and the remainder to South Australia.

On thinking about the fate of today's ventures in the Territory one is not greatly heartened on reading this history. So many things have been tried so often before; sheep, tropical agriculture, buffaloes, Asian markets, cotton, and mining. Still, failure has never dampened the Territory's pioneering spirit, active now for over 100 years. Perhaps the Territory provides for the marginal not only in industry but also in people. As Professor Duncan says: "The Territory was only too likely to attract the odd, the defiant nonconformist, the drunk, and the criminal. Or perhaps it made the normal odd. A few people enjoy this sort of life; the great majority seem to avoid it." (p. 69.)

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Farm Bookkeeping, J. E. H. and C. Pym Cook. Croydon: Longmans of Australia Pty Limited, 1967. Pp. viii, 108. \$2.50.

At first reading this book seems to offer the alkahest for resolving the differences between double-entry bookkeeping and the accounting needs of farm management decision-making. The first six chapters provide an excellent example of how to apply the principles of double-entry bookkeeping to the financial records of a property. The use of journals, cash books, and ledgers is described in integration with a "diary" for recording the physical details of transactions. Also procedures for preparing statements of assets and liabilities, analysing cash and credit transactions, taking out trial balances, and preparing Trading Accounts, Profit and Loss Accounts, and Balance Sheets are explained simply yet adequately with the help of several very appropriate and realistic examples. Chapters 7-12 enlarge upon the classification of transactions and the preparation of the annual accounts, and give some attention to the collection of physical information. Two further chapters discuss the preparation of income tax returns, interpretation of balance sheets, elements of enterprise costing, and rudiments of farm budgeting. The final chapter contains a short listing of commercial terms and abbreviations, and two revision exercises.

In conspectus it would appear that farmers prepared to devote time to bookkeeping could find the system of considerable benefit for budgetary control work. The diary, for example, collects much of the detail

normally disregarded in double-entry bookkeeping, and the method of preparing the annual accounts produces much of the detail required for forward budgeting of receipts and payments. Chapter 13, which deals with income tax, would be useful also to those farmers who feel sufficiently *au fait* with the subject to use the accounts as the basis for filing an income tax return.

But closer study of the system reveals several flaws. In the first place, the system requires an inordinate repetition of entries. It is unreasonable to expect farmers to have to write out the details of sale or purchase on the cheque butt or deposit slip, repeat the details in the diary, write into a cashbook the amount received or paid, cross-cast the entry to an analysis column, post the entry to a ledger, and then extract all the ledger balances in a Trial Balance—the more so when they will read in chapter 9 that the system is not foolproof and that the Trial Balance does not necessarily pick up all the errors which they might have made in the process. Another deficiency, in the book as well as the system, is the inadequate attention given to the collection of physical records such as stocking rates, quantities of inputs used, and production data. In the introduction the remark is made: “Farm Records showing value of assets, stocks of conserved fodder, crop yields, lambing percentages, wool clip, and produce sold are important aids to good management.” (p. vii.) Yet in the body of the text, discussion on these Farm Records is restricted to a passing reference to diary entries which are “a matter of record only”.

Although well written and liberally sprinkled with examples and exercises that are neat and to the point, the book as a potential contributor to the development of farm management accounting procedures cannot be judged as much more than a primer. Serious students and teachers will need to look elsewhere to obtain a thorough grounding in the subject.

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Factors Affecting Calf Crop, Ed. by T. J. Cunha, A. C. Warnick, and M. Koger. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967. Pp. vii, 376. \$US12.50.

This book brings together the reports presented by speakers to the Beef Cattle Short Course on Factors Affecting the Calf Crop which was held at the University of Florida, 6th to 8th May, 1965. Many of the 29 contributors are of international repute. It is claimed that the book is a summary of the state of knowledge in the fields of nutrition, disease control, genetics, environment, and herd management as they affect breeding performance in beef cattle herds.

To one who believes that in general the level of animal husbandry and management throughout Australia is low, this book contains the type of information which should be exercising the minds of those engaged

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in livestock breeding. Though the contents in the main relate to the southern states of the U.S. (such as Florida, Maryland, and Oklahoma), the climate of these areas is very similar to parts of the east coast of Australia. Furthermore, the nature of the beef cattle enterprises conducted in these parts of the U.S. is similar to that in Australia.

From the beef breeder's viewpoint, to whom the book is mainly directed, it is unfortunate that throughout it is assumed that the producer's goal should be 100 per cent calving, regardless of cost. An economist's moderating influence, an unhappy but necessary function, would have improved the value of the book for extension.

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