

political economists since Ricardo, not the least because it accounts for roughly a half of the gross produce of land. It is not the fertility of the soil but the pressure of population on land that creates rent. A long table provides data on rents and prices of agricultural land in different parts of the world, giving the percentage share of rent in gross output and in total factor income in the developed and the backward economies. Surprisingly, the relevant data for India are not given, though the book abounds in references to the Farm Management Studies. Except in commenting on the rising land values and high rent, the authors make no reference to tenurial policies and tenancy legislations seeking to alter man-land relations which most developing countries have enacted, successfully or otherwise.

Leisure Preference

The leisure preference of subsistence farmers is an economic dogma which has come down from William Petty in the 17th century and it naturally makes its appearance in this book also. Case studies are cited to show that when the land held by families exceeds three hectares in fertile tracts, they tend to leaseout a part of it. But it is no less true that most of the farm families do not have sufficient land to keep them fully occupied, though the size of holding that provides full employment to a family may vary widely as may the intensity of labour-use on farms, making it difficult to measure the extent of rural over-population in subsistence economies.

The high income elasticity of demand for food is an accepted feature of the consumption pattern in peasant economies. At the lower income levels, expenditure on food articles forms the predominant item in family budgets. It tends to decline with rise in income. An impressive array of family budget data is presented to corroborate even this least controversial of all the characteristics of a subsistence economy.

However, after reading the book it is difficult to make out whether the authors intended to write a handbook on subsistence agriculture or a treatise on the economics of subsistence. Since there is no preface or introduction to the book we have nowhere an authoritative statement of the purpose of the book. But the mass of empirical information on subsistence presented by the authors is very useful and their success in providing some indicators for international comparison is commendable.

What to Do with Agriculture

N S Shetty

Agricultural Planning in India by S C Jain, Metropolitan Book Company, 1964; pages 125, price Rs 6.50.

AT present agricultural planning in this country takes the line of least resistance, argues the author of this brief book with the ambitious objective of pointing the way to a "revolution" in Indian agriculture. This approach to farm planning involves introducing technological changes into farm production while its structure and organisation remain unadjusted to these changes. The frequent failures of "schemes of improvement" is proof of the validity of this criticism. Despite huge investments made in three Five-Year Plans, we are now almost at the point from where we had started. The warning follows that "time is now ripe to give serious thought as to whether to stay for some years more with the existing techniques of agricultural planning or to introduce new methodology capable of eradicating the various lacunae in our efforts to solve agricultural problems and raising farm productivity within the shortest possible period."

What Is Wrong?

That something is wrong with our agricultural planning needs no special emphasis. Jain's book falls logically into three parts. In part one he examines the existing techniques of agricultural planning. The basic causes of the slow rate of increase in agricultural production and productivity are described in part two. Part three brings together the author's proposals to bring about the "revolution" in agriculture.

The main components of agricultural planning in the Five-Year Plans are described by Jain as:

- (i) provision of material inputs which include manures and fertilisers, improved seeds, irrigation facilities and insecticides and fungicides;
- (ii) measures for improving efficiency of agriculture which involve introduction of improved cultural practices and changes in methods of production;
- (iii) provision of economic incentives through price support, subsidies; and

- (iv) institutional reforms, including land reforms, provision of institutional credit and reform of the marketing system.

The achievements of agricultural planning, according to the author, have been "spectacular" in creating pockets of increased knowledge and experience in agricultural development, in getting the Government deeply involved in the problem of agricultural development and in increasing awareness of agricultural problems among governments, politicians and the public. While there is *no* doubt that by and large "substantial progress — better progress than in any other ten or twelve year-period of India history" has been achieved, the break through to high productivity *is* far from being in sight yet.

Not Original

Jain's proposals for bringing about the agricultural 'revolution' are:

- (1) Complete mechanisation of agriculture in two districts in each State;
- (2) Seven agricultural machinery producing plants and a plant for manufacturing multi-purpose machinery capable of doing all jobs on the fields and farms;
- (3) Three insecticide, weedicide and pesticide plants along with power sprayers, dusters and aerial spraying equipment plants;
- (4) Chemical fertiliser plants;
- (5) Irrigation and electricity on all farms; and
- (6) Centralised agro-biological and agro-service stations, with a large number of laboratories equipped with modern appliances.

As a blueprint for the agricultural 'revolution' this is as grandiose as it is perhaps lacking in originality. The question is why the far more elaborate blueprints contained in the Five-Year Plans so far have failed to deliver the goods. Though Jain is highly critical of the Government's efforts, no systematic answer to the above question emerges from his book.