

Book Reviews

plenty; productivity and plunder; economic growth and social upheaval; food security and burdensome surpluses; stabilization and subsidies; strategic planning, debt and balance of payments; trade expansion and self-sufficiency; trade, aid and development.

As a food exporter of significant proportions in a world context, and of major proportions in relation to our domestic agricultural production (40-50 percent of the whole), Canada's interests are bound up in the global issues and situations and are always at risk (as current problems make clear), both in the short and long term. Canadian policies must reflect this fact, as well as more purely domestic considerations, thus adding to the complexity of regional, federal-provincial, marketing, regulatory, conservation and expenditure policy.

Read the book. All these elements are touched on and more. There are high policy challenges here, domestic and global, that, though of a nature that do not at all lend themselves to sweeping or simple solutions, and are awash in controversy, cannot be ignored.

David Kirk is former Executive Secretary of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, now retired in Ottawa.

Agricultural problems in Africa

by Kate B. Showers

Africa's Agrarian Crisis: The Roots of Famine edited by Stephen K. Commins, Michael F. Lofchie and Rhys Payne. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986, 237 pages, US\$23.00.

This uneven collection of essays is the proceedings of a seminar series held at the University of California at Los Angeles in the spring of 1983. Scholars and administrators from various American universities and the US Department of Agriculture were asked to treat general topics such as the regulation of rural

markets and rural development and economic stabilization or to present case studies of specific nations: Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Liberia and Morocco.

The best of the essays evaluate information about conditions at the farm level which influence production decision-making, and relate these to national policies or programs. Robert H. Bates's discussion of "The Regulation of Rural Markets in Africa," Biswapriya Sanyal's examination of "Rural Development and Economic Stabilization, Can They Be Attained Simultaneously?," Stephen K. Commins's analysis of "Peasants and Rural Development in Liberia," and Rhys Payne's essay on "Food Deficits and Political Legitimacy: The Case of Morocco" are examples of this kind of scholarship. Although Michael F. Lofchie's introductory "Africa's Agricultural Crisis: an Overview" has an extremely pessimistic tone, his review of the factors affecting African national economies is useful, particularly his discussion of the often overlooked variable, "Donor Impact."

Unfortunately, these informative presentations are offset by five extremely weak essays in which gross aggregate statistics are analyzed in support of existing Western policies and thinly veiled political opinions. Crop production depends upon farmers, and farmers respond to ecological and social as well as economic and political factors. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect to make an accurate analysis of production, or producer response to policy, using aggregate continental, regional or even national data. The weakest of the essays in this collection are Raymond F. Hopkin's "Food Aid: Solution, Palliative, or Danger for Africa's Food Crisis," in which annual totals of food imports for all sub-Saharan nations are analyzed as a unit with conclusions drawn as to the net positive effect of food aid throughout the African continent, and John Shao's invective against the state of Tanzania. It is difficult to understand why such essays should be included in a volume which otherwise represents acceptable levels of scholarship, unless they are meant to serve as examples of how policy analysis ought not to be done.

The good essays in this volume should be read and discussed, for important concepts and issues are raised.

It is a pity that the volume includes such poor samples of scholarship.

Kate Showers is an Ottawa agronomist who worked for many years in Africa.

Small, southerly and warm

by Tom Sloan

Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society, being the Report of a Commonwealth Consultative Group. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986, 126 pages, £5.00.

"Small is beautiful. . . but. . . small is also weak and fragile and vulnerable and relatively powerless." With these words, Commonwealth Secretary Shridath Ramphal in 1984 launched the work of a 14-member group, headed by Chief Justice P.T. Georges of the Bahamas. It culminated in the present report, dealing with the status of the Commonwealth's most fragile members. The two Canadian signers were political scientist Elisabeth Mann Borgese of Dalhousie University and Geoffrey Pearson, Director of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security.

The objects of sympathetic scrutiny are thirty-one nation states, ranging in population from 7000 (Tuvalu, in the South Pacific) to 2.3 million (Jamaica), with all but two well under the one million mark.

While they are spread all over the globe, the countries have at least three things in common: they are all recently independent former British colonies; they are all poor; and they are all heavily dependent on foreign trade. For the most part they depend on one or a very few export items, subject to the wild fluctuations of the world commodity market.

The report starts from two premises: that, regardless of its size and location, every independent state has the right to demand respect for its sovereignty from others; and that, because these states are small — in most cases