

## Book Reviews

turn, provides the first stage for predicting what is likely to happen next." It consists, essentially, of charts and tables. And only chart-freaks may care about the ups and downs of the more obscure among the eighty-four countries and thirty-four commodities. But for countries such as Canada there is a handy thirty-year record of trade, investment, unemployment, prices, interest rates and the gross domestic product.

Most fascinating is the attempt to track recessions and expansions on a world-wide basis. The book lists eleven recessions since 1950, not counting the major downturn of 1981-82. Canada felt six of them, two as mini-recessions. But the charts indicate that recessions are becoming more pervasive, hitting a wide range of developing countries as well as the industrial centres of Europe, North America and Japan.

Jahangir Amuzegar's study of the "oil shocks" of 1973-74 and 1979-80 (with a postscript on the reverse shock of the 1982-83 oil glut) is really a case study in world economic relations. It concludes that the high cost of chaos resulting from confrontation makes a persuasive case for global cooperation as the world moves from heavy dependence on petroleum to a multi-fuels system. Unless exporters and importers can get together, Amuzegar concludes, economic stability will be severely undermined, with ominous political consequences.

And this, of course, is the reason that it is urgent to get a better understanding of how the world economy works. In economics, no country now lives in a fireproof house.

---

*Don McGillivray is National Economics Editor for Southam newspapers in Ottawa.*

---

## Evaluating development assistance

by Clyde Sanger

*Canadian Development Assistance to Bangladesh* by Roger Ehrhardt. Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 153 pages, \$8.50.

*Canadian Development Assistance to Tanzania* by Roger Young. Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 126 pages, \$8.50.

*Six International Development Projects* edited by Ian McAllister. Halifax: Centre for Development Projects, Dalhousie University, 1983, 106 pages, \$8.00.

*For Good or Evil: Economic Theory and North-South Negotiations* edited by Gerald K. Helleiner. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982, 194 pages, \$27.50 (cloth) and \$10.00 (paper).

It may be that North Americans are so energetic and so eager to move on to the next project that they hate to pause and study what they have just done. Or eagerness may just be an excuse for avoiding awkward questions. Certainly I remember (during a brief spell I had on the presidential floor of the Canadian International Development Agency a dozen years ago) the collective shiver that

vibrated through a management training meeting when someone unwisely dropped the word "evaluation." Years later, some bolder spirits in the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) used to meet on Saturday mornings to ponder exactly how they might evaluate completed projects of scientific research. Who should do it — the Thai and Colombian project directors, or IDRC staff from Ottawa or a regional office? Should they measure achievement by the original objectives set out in the Project Summary, or can you accept that objectives change in the process of research and discovery? Difficult questions, and it is not surprising that CIDA has not gone much beyond the "operational audits" set up in Maurice Strong's day, or that IDRC's experimental efforts to get all concerned to contribute to a Completed Project Summary on every bit of research soon gave up.

So it has been left to outside institutions to do the first substantial work of assessing the Canadian performance in helping development in various countries of the South. This, anyway, was the *raison d'être* of the North-South Institute when it was established in Ottawa in 1976, and its researchers spent four years getting their feet wet on smaller projects before plunging into a four-country study with funding from the Donner Canadian Foundation and the full cooperation of CIDA officials.

### First two books

Is anyone else slightly disappointed at the choice the Institute made of four countries? (Studies of Haiti and Senegal are still to come.) The sheer size of Canada's aid was doubtless a factor: CIDA disbursed \$537 million worth to Bangladesh between 1972 and 1981, and \$208 million to Tanzania between 1961 and 1981. But 84 percent of the aid to Bangladesh has been food aid or commodities (potash, wood pulp and metals); and Tanzania is familiar territory, after all those television producers have sought out the eloquent Julius Nyerere and (to balance their story) damned the semi-automatic bakery Canada installed. A pity CIDA did not consider Nigeria, or a country with which Canada has a complex relationship (banks, tourists, immigrants and CUSO workers as well as official aid), i.e., Jamaica.

Given the choice, the reports are first-class. Roger Ehrhardt knows the innards of CIDA from earlier work on its need to increase awareness of environmental factors. He gives a clear account of the dilemma there is over food aid. Government employees and town dwellers have had the most benefit, so it has been "an inequitable way of easing the food burden of the poorest groups." Food aid can also be "a serious disincentive" to domestic food production, because it "cushions" the government so that it does not give water control and other measures (pricing policies) enough priority to help production.

Roger Young, an old East Africa hand with IDRC, gets off the well-trodden path in Tanzania (nine pages for the wheat farm and the bakery) to discuss more important infrastructure projects: the Kidatu hydro-electricity station (one of CIDA's untold successes is the work of French-Canadian technicians on the transmission lines), the water supply for Dar es Salaam and the huge (\$200 million in the end?) investment in improving the railways. What comes strongly through is the need for management training, in Tanzania and elsewhere. Yet CIDA has never shown much enthusiasm for non-governmental organizations set up