

Dixon (for example, Dixon and Schuerell, 1987) the comparative element has been much more pronounced and the information presented, therefore, that much more useful.

There are also a number of smaller items of format that need attention and were distracting to this reviewer. In particular a map of Africa showing the geographical location, and perhaps other graphic information, of the countries presented was missed. The length of the presentations varied quite considerably, and with little relation to the size or (dare I say it) importance of the country — for example, Mauritius and Ghana use well over 40 pages each while Nigeria and Ethiopia barely 20 pages each. The appendices too are presented in a rather strange manner, without any explanation or real reference to them, and using whole and half pages without any explanation for this. Happily, however, the volume is indexed quite thoroughly.

In brief then, this volume of writings on the social welfare systems of a selection of African countries is useful and valuable in the wealth of information it presents. However, there are serious limitations to its being presented as being of a comparative nature and a more explicit drawing out of some themes, trends, conclusions, etc in an introductory and concluding chapter (at the very least) would have made the publication, in my opinion, a more useful text.

Reviewed by Brigid Willmore, *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, Harare.

### References

- Dixon J and Schuerell R (1987) "Social Security in Australia and the United States: A Comparison of Value Premises and Practices" in *The Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare*, Vol III, 1 and 2, Spring and Fall, 1987.

*Plantations and Plantation Workers*, J P Sajhan and J Von Muralt, ILO, Geneva, 1987 (207pp, Sfrs 27,50).

This book has been written by two senior members of ILO and published by that organisation. It follows the previous approach of ILO reports on plantations and is basically descriptive, depending on questionnaires sent to countries combined with case studies. The book reviews the origins and concepts of plantations but skirts around controversy.

The trends in production, consumption and the price of plantation crops are well described. The general pattern of increasing production combined with static or declining consumption leading to declining prices is documented. The export dependency of countries on primary commodity plantation crops is described, but the vulnerability these countries face due to the vagaries of international prices is neglected. The efforts to stabilise prices through International Agreements are described, though the outlook

for most primary products is gloomy. The great diversity of structures within plantations and plantation economies is commented upon. Three themes are identified:

- (1) The shift of multinational corporations out of primary agricultural production into processing of primary products.
- (2) The shift in the pattern of ownership either to local control or to state ownership.
- (3) The development of joint ventures.

Developments in technology in relation to production (genetic improvements, disease control and mechanisation) are described. Contrary to experiences in other industries these innovations may increase the demand for labour due to increased yields.

The effects of government policy in relation to plantations are considered in relation to a number of countries. Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Cuba are cited for their nationalisation of estates. Ghana, Jamaica and Kenya are used as examples of countries which have attempted to support small holder production. Mauritius and the Dominican Republic are described as economies dependent on a plantation crop. The efforts to diversify crops in the Philippines are mentioned. The Malaysian example of how Malaysian business and government capital were used to buy out multinational corporations to establish national control is described. All of these country studies are long on description and short on analysis. Why did productivity fall in Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Jamaica? In Sri Lanka persistent undercapitalisation for the period 1960-1974 occurred. In Tanzania the international price of sisal fell while oil based products quadrupled in price. In Jamaica, while there was an attempt to redistribute land, the control of processing and thus the price paid remained in the control of multinational corporations.

The patterns of labour availability, employment and conditions are described. In some countries, eg Malaysia and Kenya, shortages occur. However, the reasons for these shortages (low wages relative to other sections and bad working and living conditions) are not mentioned. The unemployment and underemployment of workers in Sri Lanka are documented. The fact that such Tamil workers are not safe to seek work elsewhere and are thus captive within the sector is ignored. The shift from permanent to temporary, from male to female and child employment, and from wage employment to piece work payment is described in many countries.

The setting of wages through tripartite agreements occurs in many countries often with governments setting minimum wages. The section on wage comparisons is most disappointing as the wages are given in nominal terms. In real terms the wages actually fell. The section on living conditions and occupational safety and health is disappointing. The origin of the

provision of housing in slave labour is mentioned. The recognition that productivity is related to housing is accepted. The legal provisions for housing in many countries is described, but the uneven implementation of these acts is skirted over. Innovative housing schemes, as occur in Malaysia, are mentioned as is the Plantation Labour Act of India with the attendant grant and loan schemes.

The poor standards of health, child care, primary education and occupational safety are all mentioned. Innovative schemes, such as the Comprehensive Labour Welfare schemes in South India, are described. The weakness of unions in the plantation sector is highlighted as a problem for effective mobilisation to improve conditions. The conclusion of the book relates to the respective roles of government, employers and unions in relation to plantations.

This book is essential reading for anybody interested in studying plantations. It should be read in conjunction with other ILO publications (eg Kurian, 1982; ILO, 1984) and the bibliography by Kirk (1987). The publication "People in plantations — Means or Ends" (IDS, 1987) covers similar ground to this book but is more analytical and critical.

The ILO, by its tripartite structure, has to balance on an unsteady path. This book reflects the problems this causes. The book is strong on description, weak on analysis and neglects controversy. Plantations are changing but where are they going? In many of the countries which have consented to remain primary producers for Western consumers, the outlook is grim.

Alternatives exist, but these have been neglected. This book may be seen as the first word but definitely not the last word on plantations.

Reviewed by Richard Laing, Ministry of Health, Harare, Zimbabwe.

## References

- IDS (1987) *People in Plantations — Means or Ends*, IDS Bulletin Vol 18 No 2, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.
- ILO (1984) *Management in Tea Plantations*, Geneva.
- Kurian R (1982) "Women workers in the Sri Lanka Plantation Sector" in *Women Work and Development*, ILO, Geneva.
- Kirk C (1987) *People in Plantations*, Annotated Bibliography, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.