

Reviews

numerous challenges for Melanesians and Sillitoe relates the often creative means that the people use to meet these challenges. The book is a wonderful resource for instructors wishing to give beginning students of Melanesia insights into the complex issues that permeate this region.

References Cited:

Finney, Benjamin.

1973. *Big Men and Business*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Rostow, Walter W.

1960. *The Process of Economic Growth*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State, Adam D. Sheingate. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (2001), xii, 279 pp.

Reviewed by Andrew D. McNitt, Department of Political Science; Eastern Illinois University

As strange as it may seem, agricultural policy has long been a topic of concern to students of interest group politics. Adam Sheingate's book, *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State*, is one of the latest and most complete efforts in this area. Professor Sheingate examines the development of agricultural policy in the United States, Japan and France (the Common Market's leading agricultural producer). He focuses on the development of government programs designed to support farm income through a combination of restrictions on production, marketing agreements and subsidies, which he calls the "agricultural welfare state."

Sheingate argues that differences in the political and governmental systems of these countries influenced the extent to which the agricultural welfare state has become a permanent feature of public policy. Specifically, in Japan and France a single dominant agricultural interest group was able to monopolize the relationship between farmers and their respective agricultural ministries.

In Japan, the *Nokyo*, an association of agricultural cooperatives that not only processes and markets food, but also provides credit and carries out a number of government funded development projects, is the dominant organization. In France the FNSEA (Federation National des syndicats d'Exploitants de Agriculteurs) is in a similar, but weaker position. In both countries these agricultural interest groups proved critically important in domestic politics because of the over representation of rural areas in the national parliaments and the more closed nature of policy making in a parliamentary (as opposed to a presidential) system. In both Japan and the France the close relationship between the dominant agricultural interest group and the agricultural ministry lead to the emergence of a neo-corporatist policymaking subsystem as government functions were turned over to the respective interest groups. In the United States, on the other hand, the Farm Bureau tried, but failed to establish itself as the dominant agricultural interest group. Conflicts over agricultural policy in the 1950s between the Republican party and the Farm Bureau on one side and the Democratic party and the National Farmers Union on the other lead to a rupture of the ties between the agricultural extension service and the Farm Bureau. This combined with the greater permeability of the American political system and the lack of policy agreement between the president and Congress over agricultural policy promoted a more pluralistic policy making subsystem. In the 1960s, a system where large number of separate commodity groups replaced the general farm organizations as the principal representatives of agricultural interests, and in the 1970s, consumer and environmental interests intervened.

The consequences of these national differences in the agricultural policymaking, according to Sheingate, was that when it became economically beneficial for the larger community to cut agricultural subsidies in these three countries in the 1990s, that it was the US which was the most successful in reducing the size of the agricultural welfare state. The US was more successful because the very permeability of the policymaking system, which had earlier allowed agricultural interests to successfully petition for subsidies, also allowed urban, environmental and

Reviews

consumer interests to involve themselves in agricultural policy making to a greater extent than was possible in either Japan or France.

Sheingate's interpretation of agricultural policy stands in sharp contrast to that of earlier authors (e.g., McConnell 1966, and Lowi 1979), who viewed agricultural politics as a prime example of private interests colonizing a public agency and dominating policymaking. This difference, however, may be more apparent than real. Scholarly generalizations are all effected by the sample of reality upon which they are based. Those scholars who saw agricultural policy as colonized by private interests in general were looking at an earlier point of time, while Sheingate had the advantage of writing after the passage of the 1996 Farm Bill, which implemented a number of program reductions. The 1996 Farm Bill, however, has not been a success. Agricultural prices declined at just the point subsidies were supposed to fade out and Congress responded with "emergency aid." While Sheingate is aware of this problem, its continuation leaves the extent to which the US is able to reduce agricultural subsidies open to question. The lack of a deficit and the unusually close partisan divisions in both houses of Congress raise important questions about the extent to which urban interests will be either able or willing to resist calls for a return to the agricultural welfare state.

The *Decline of the Agricultural Welfare State* is an excellent book for students of agricultural policy. It is valuable because it covers an unusually long period of time, from the nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century. In addition, the comparative perspective is extremely useful for those who are trying to understand policy making in a field where international trade so extremely important. Nonetheless, there are some limitations.

First, the author focuses upon the relationship between agricultural producers and the government, when the interests of processors, traders and suppliers are increasingly important. While Sheingate is aware of this change, he along with most of the other students of this area, have not examined the political influence of this now numerically larger segment of the food system. The problem is one of perspective, students of political parties and interest groups usually do not examine the political activities of corporations when the corporations act independently. While an understandable form of academic specialization, this perspective limits our understanding of the entire political process. More attention needs to be paid to the role of actors such as Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland and Monsanto.

The author also does not consider the impact of American trade embargoes upon the agricultural policy making. The Nixon and Carter embargoes, although imposed for different reasons, had important implications. At the domestic level, they provide very clear examples of the willingness of the American government to intervene in the free market in a manner that reduced farm income. As such they are examples of the ability of urban interests to triumph over agricultural interests in ways that supports Sheingate's thesis, but are inconsistent with the moral implications that are included in the notion of an agricultural welfare state.

References Cited:

McConnell, Grant.

1966. *Private Power and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf.

Lowi, Theodore J.

1979. *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States*. 2d ed. New York: Norton.

Saqqaq: An Inuit Hunting Community in the Modern World. by Jens Dahl. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2000), viii, 277 pp.

Reviewed by Gísli Pálsson, University of Iceland.

Inuit studies have flourished in recent years. There are annual conferences on Inuit issues, interdisciplinary and social scientific, and, moreover, there are regular anthropological workshops on hunter-gatherers, including Inuit. As a result, an extensive ethnography has been emerging which documents Inuit society in the current age,