

precedent operates prominently in determining what is done or not done in Japanese employment and employee relations.

However, these criticisms do not diminish the significant achievement of Ford and his team in preparing this bibliography, and in any case, any shortcomings can be taken care of when a new, up-dated bibliography is compiled in the future. Another will be needed in, say, ten years because this literature is expanding so quickly. I hope the Ford team will take on the task, for they have done superbly in producing this volume.

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**Manpower Planning and Industrial Development in Uncertain Times** edited by J.M. Bennett and G.C. Lowenthal, *Papers presented at ANZAAS Symposium, 24 March 1983, Sydney* (N.S.W. Division of ANZAAS Incorporated, Sydney, 1983) pp. viii + 141, ISBN 0 86758 1557.

This book contains thirteen papers presented at a symposium organised by the NSW Division of ANZAAS in 1983. The contributions reflect the interdisciplinary ethos of ANZAAS, coming from the private sector, assorted educational institutions, and government. Proceedings are grouped into four sections covering manpower planning objectives, questions of supply and demand, government forward planning mechanisms, and manpower forward planning in the private sector. The seminar theme grew out of concern that "in the long term the development of this country's resources was likely to be constrained by the non-availability of trained manpower" (p.iv). The organising committee hoped that the symposium would highlight the issues critical to effective human resource development in the future. The result is a kaleidoscope of issues, ranging from future needs, current mechanisms, different parameters faced by industries, enterprises and individuals, to more practical difficulties in co-ordinating contingent groups.

The book is extremely useful in terms of the empirical detail presented. Jenkins, in the opening paper on occupational/industry manpower planning, discusses the need for planning to respond to macro- and micro-economic factors within a consultative framework, with the usual trio of employers, unions and government being expanded to include professional bodies, educational institutions, immigration authorities and training bodies. Stewart, looking at development prospects in mining and manufacturing over the next decade, argues that our ability to cope with cost pressures will depend on the extent to which we face hard realities. Smith, Rumsey and Ford focus on attitudes towards training and 'skill'. Smith, looking at future training needs, argues that we have still to develop responsibilities and objectives in regard to post-school skill acquisition. Acceptance of minimum education provision has not led to similar criteria being applied to employment related skills. Rumsey discusses the role of technical education in industrial development, seeing our long-term prosperity as being dependent on "a labour force well-trained in modern technologies with inbuilt flexibility and adaptability, whose members

are in sufficient numbers to be deployed to emerging industrial developments" (p.52). The lead-time inherent in training makes early warning of new developments in industry imperative.

Ford stresses the benefits in changing our concept of 'skill' from the traditional one of manual dexterity so as to include the ability to respond to the unexpected and unpredictable. By discussing the importance placed on human resources in relation to economic development in Japan and West Germany, Ford underscores the potential gain to Australia from an expansion of efforts in this regard. This could be encouraged by the formation of an Australian Human Resource Office, under a senior committee of Federal Cabinet Ministers. Moves towards humanisation of work, and extension of our apprenticeship system to cover all work groups, are seen to be essential if we are to utilise our talent and ability to the full. That these proposals may appear ethereal to some Australian readers is an indication of how far removed our attitudes remain from those in other selected countries.

Pointer looks at occupational differences by sex, extending the discussion to include the need to cater to specific groups, especially the disadvantaged. This raises the issue of manpower planning having to counter sex-segregation within labour markets. Endersbee argues strongly that Australia's reliance on physical resources has distracted us from developing our even more important human resources. Endersbee sees our education system as being increasingly irrelevant to the needs of industry, as we place less and less emphasis on skill development linked to technical innovation. White extends the argument for extending apprenticeship training so as to widen the range and flexibility of skills included, and for reducing barriers to participation. He suggests that we should look at recurrent training to encourage people to adapt to new technologies.

Parry effectively describes the realities of planning within a Higher Education Board, showing how the issues of forecasting, personal choice, institutional autonomy, uncertainty, time-lags and funding must be integrated. The brief article by Ladsous, on training engineers, scientists and technologists in France, demonstrates the need for consultation between all parties as an essential element of any effective manpower program. In this review of our National Training System, Fisher argues that this is a concept rather than a coherent structure. In addition to the useful description of present institutions, Fisher notes that our existing planning mechanism works, albeit with imperfections, with industrial progress continuing regardless. (This begs the question as to whether we could progress further and faster if we realised our human potential to the full.) Singleton details progress on a survey of computer industry needs, commenting on the methodology suitable to an industry undergoing rapid technological change. The last article, by Lefroy, outlines moves within the Shell Company of Australia towards the development of its management resources. This is geared "towards the accumulation, by each manager, of coherent and useful knowledge which bears on his possible future jobs, and on his own personal strengths and limitations" (p.137). The prime objective is to develop management talent with the ability to manage complexity.

What then can be said about this book in the general sense? While most papers stress the need for a flexible, adaptable and innovative workforce, we are left with a variety of suggestions regarding piecemeal developments that

may be of future benefit, but without a clear framework of priorities and possible action. This reflects the 'state of the art', and should not be seen as a flaw in this book *per se*. Questions such as, "Where should we be going?", "What are realistic objectives in the short and medium term?", and "What policy options exist for achieving these objectives?" emerge from the text, and stimulate further thought and debate. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this book could be the realisation by some practitioners that symposia such as this must at some stage give way to working conferences aimed at developing practical strategies for future development.

Cynics might see this conclusion as being naive or whimsical. But having been told that we must harness our human potential in all its forms if we are successfully to meet the competitive challenge of economic realities in the years to come, then the next step must be a clearer definition within the community as to our priorities. This might go a long way towards resolving suggestions by specific groups that more action is required by *other* groups if we are to progress. Development on these lines is especially appropriate to work within ANZAAS, given its emphasis on co-operation among disciplines and sectors.

In sum, this book makes a positive contribution to the development of human resource planning in Australia, providing a range of opinions and prophecies. The reader should be warned, however, that it raises more questions than we can as yet answer. Additional issues, such as ongoing training, retraining, the skill dimension in leisure, barriers to labour market participation, and regional needs, also need to be addressed. The book is particularly welcome in light of the recent Inquiry into Labour Market Programs, and the emerging government responses. ANZAAS can be congratulated for having made the symposium proceedings so readily available.

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**Government Purchasing and Offsets Policies in Industrial Innovation Report by the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC)**  
(AGPS, Canberra, 1984) pp. vii + 63, ISBN 0 644 03574 9.

ASTEC's charter is to advise the government in respect of a diversity of matters relating to science and technology; one such matter being the fostering of scientific and technological innovation in industry. An investigation of the role of government purchasing and offsets policies in industrial innovation appropriately falls within the purview of ASTEC.

Regrettably, it was probably with some haste that the Council considered the role of offsets in light of the then foreshadowed Inglis Report of the Committee of Review on Offsets.<sup>1</sup> The opportunity was timely but nevertheless foregone, for a major contribution on offsets from an independent body of the stature of ASTEC with the breadth of resources available to it. Most regrettable is the consequent possible diminution of the product of the Inglis Committee deliberations.