

THE COMMUNES TODAY Camden

prepares

We print below a condensation of a working paper by Prof Joan Robinson, Deputy-Chairman of SACU, presented at Phase 1 of the China Conference held at the University of Chicago 8 to 12 Feb, 1966. One hundred and forty specialists and laymen attended the meeting. Among those present from Britain were Audrey Donnithorne and Professor Jack Grey. After Phase 1 some of the specialists went on to Phase 2 which consisted of a series of public discussions held in various mid-western cities.

THE MOST urgent economic problem for the Republic in 1949 was to raise agricultural output so as to improve the standard of life of the rural population and to increase the surplus available for the cities to permit a growth of industry. With the example of the USSR before their eyes the authorities were determined to find a means of extracting the surplus without alienating the peasants.

The Land Reform

The first step was a comprehensive land reform. The different classes were categorised into: landlords who lived from rent and other exactions; rich peasants who worked but who also hired labour; middle peasants who neither hired labour nor rented land; and the poor peasants and landless families who were obliged to work for others. The land was then redistributed according to a plan approved by general consent. The result of this redistribution was an upsurge in production. Land was still in the hands of individuals but thrifty peasants were saving out of their increased incomes and buying fertilizer to further boost production.

Investment without Inflation

Meanwhile large irrigation schemes had begun. Most of the work was done manually by large groups. The central problem was how to prevent inflation where peasants who had formerly been engaged on producing food were now engaged on public works. The solution which was arrived at was that the supply cooperative of each village was to provide for its own contingent of workers. The motive of seeing 'their boys' were as well supplied as any others was brought into play, and so mobilised the potential saving without inflation.

Cooperatives to Communes

Weighing and analysing experience the authorities realised that contrary to Soviet doctrine, collectivisation was not a means to mechanisation but a substitute for it. There accordingly developed in 1956 the drive towards the higher cooperative which by 1958 had changed into the commune movement. The change from the cooperatives of 1956 to the communes of 1958 was connected with the problems of

scale of arrangement. The cooperatives proved to be too large from one point of view and too small from another. When a thousand or more workers are sharing their joint proceeds the relationship between individual effort and individual earnings is too much diluted to make a strong incentive for conscientious work. The personal and technical problems of control and accounting were a strain on available managerial capacity especially where the cooperatives comprised a number of separate villages. On the other hand, an area of a few hundred acres was often insufficient for the best deployment of land while both the labour force and the area were much too small to exploit the possibilities of improvements through irrigation, drainage, afforestation, and so forth. But, since these early days, the communes, which were inaugurated in a burst of enthusiasm in 1958 and hammered into shape in the three bad years that followed, have evolved into an ingenious system for reconciling the requirements of large and small scale.

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FINAL arrangements are now being made for most of the events for the Camden Festival. The woodcraft and handicraft exhibition announced in last month's **SACU NEWS** will be held at the Central Library, Swiss Cottage along with the paintings instead of at the Kentish Town Branch Library, as previously.

The response from primary schools for showing films on China has been good. But we have yet to receive replies from secondary schools, colleges and organisations about films and speakers.

All **SACU** members in London, we hope, have already received the Camden Festival information leaflet. We shall need a great number of people to help steward meetings, sell books and be available to give information about the Festival. If any member is willing to help on any specific date or task, please contact Jennifer Chaston, 24 Warren Street, W1.

BARNET BRANCH

WE regret that our report of the inaugural meeting of the Barnet Branch (**SACU NEWS**, April) did not do full justice to what was in fact an outstandingly successful event. The meeting was attended by more than 100 people, who listened with great interest to Professor Joan Robinson and Mr Stuart Gelder. The enthusiastic atmosphere that prevailed augurs well for the success of the branch, which has now embarked on a programme of activities, including a regular study group.

In addition to a further meeting which it is hoped will be addressed by Mr Gelder on return from his present visit to China, a one-day conference is planned, and arrangements are in hand for Felix Greene's film **China** to be shown in different parts of the borough.

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The organisation of a commune is in three tiers:

The Team: In the standard case (with many variations) the team is the basic accounting unit for production and distribution. It consists of the labour force of some thirty families. It controls a particular block of land with working animals and working implements (tools are individually owned). Sometimes its fields are the very same that these families formerly owned or received at the land reform twelve years ago.

The team accepts responsibility for a particular plan of production over the crop year. In addition to this agreed figure it must also contribute:

(1) **The Agricultural Tax.** Owing to increased production the actual is probably less than the nominal rate of 11 to 13%. However, a team which fails to fulfil its agreed quota will pay a higher rate.

(2) **Costs of Production.** This includes payments for fodder, seeds, tractors, ploughing, etc.

(3) **Contribution to Accumulation.** This varies according to the margin above the needs of subsistence and according to the keenness of the team on socialist construction.

(4) **Contribution to the Welfare Fund.** This is used to secure for member families who are in distress the five guarantees — food, clothing, shelter, medical care and funeral expenses.

The remainder (usually about 60% of the team's gross income) is distributed to the members according to a system of work points. Forward advances are paid out, the balance being distributed after the autumn harvest.

The leader, deputy and accountant are elected by the team members and a meeting is called from time to time to discuss any personal or technical problems that may arise.

A team may choose to sell more than its quota to the State and it may also operate small enterprises such as pig breeding or brick making.

The Brigade: The Brigade controls the allocation of land to special uses and works out the annual crop programme. It may operate enterprises employing wage workers and provide an independent accumulation fund.

It breeds animals and perhaps may own a truck. A family depends upon the team that it belongs to for its daily bread but something like regimental morale attaches to the brigade; rivalry stimulates production.

The Commune: The Commune has absorbed the lowest level of local

Needham Opens Exhibition

Dr Joseph Needham, Chairman of SACU, opened an exhibition of traditional Chinese medicine at the Wellcome Institute, London, in March.

Peter Mansfield, medical student and a member of SACU, went last month to view it.

DESIGNED to acquaint its visitors with traditional Chinese medicine, the exhibition comprises implements, books, models and illustrations.

Reading the brochure's introduction is a rewarding prelude to a tour of the exhibits. One learns of the Yang and Yin — contrasting essences which in varying quantities pervade all things — and their significance for the Chinese physician. The basis and importance of acupuncture, diagnosis by

feeling pulses, and pharmacy, are also outlined. Of more historical interest are references to the establishment of medical schools and regional medical administration in China in the 7th and 8th Centuries and the early use of examinations as criteria of qualification.

The exhibits themselves are all fascinating. Of particular interest is a good collection of the dolls used by Chinese ladies to indicate their ailments, and another of finely made surgical instruments and needles of great variety. Two figures and several charts map the points of acupuncture. A model pharmacy, along with instruments and many preparations, offer a clear picture of the chemist's profession.

government (the *hsiang*) and in that capacity is responsible for registration of births, deaths and marriages, taxation, controlling the militia, police (law courts are at county level) and gearing the commune's contribution to education and health services to the counties.

The communes have the no less vital task of coping with the effects of natural disasters and they can claim credit for preventing the breakdown of the economy during the bitter years 1959-61.

Creating Land

The original nucleus of the commune system was the pooling of resources by a number of cooperatives to undertake large joint irrigation schemes. This remains a continuing fashion, but one of the regulations laid down in the 1960's is that the labour time devoted to capital works must not exceed 3% of the annual total, a limit which is generally disregarded by enthusiastic communes.

Households, Social Service and Variations

Three generations live together in conditions varying from the clean and airy to the muddy and ill-lit.

Payment by the work-point method is augmented by produce from small private plots, which is important to the family but which contributes less than 10% to marketed supplies for the nation. Further income is earned through side occupations such as the nurture of silk worms, but it is becoming more and more usual for this type of enterprise to be organised by the peasants themselves along cooperative lines in the interests of greater efficiency.

There are, of course, local variations,

both in the standard of life and in the mode of organisation. In some communes the brigade takes a greater measure of responsibility than in others. There are also differences in the level of morale. In some revolutionary élan has been maintained through the difficult years. In some slackness and even corruption crept in. The general mass, between the brilliant and the bad, are more or less satisfactory and steadily improving.

Again, there are variations in the field of health. Sometimes everything, including drugs, is provided free from the welfare funds. At the other extreme, a doctor is merely invited to come in and collect what he can for fees. Fees for indigent patients must be paid from the welfare fund according to the five guarantees.

Marketing

Like production, sales are organised in three tiers. At the lowest level there are periodic fairs at which households can sell eggs, fruit, and so forth in small quantities. Prices are freely determined under the pressures of supply and demand. At the next level, individual teams and brigades can sell products such as noodles, sauce and wine to the supply and marketing cooperative. Here prices are fixed in what is considered to be a reasonable relation to costs. Lastly, the main outlet for agricultural produce is through the state procurement agencies which have the sole right to handle the main crops.

The procurement system for cash crops, surplus grain, and market garden products, which guarantees to the producer a stable market for fixed outputs at fixed prices, is the basis of the whole system and makes all the rest possible.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CHINA and PEACE

CATHERINE E. WILLIAMSON, mayor of Canterbury during the early years of the war, and an active member of SACU, is presently lecturing on China at various universities throughout Britain. At the end of her tour she will have visited 28 universities. She reports that the students today are keenly interested in all aspects of Chinese life and culture, and are far better informed than were her own children at the same age, and 'miles better than we were when we were young'.

In May, following a visit to Trinity College, Dublin, Mrs Williamson will speak on four separate occasions at Canterbury University. Her subjects are: (1) Government in China from 1949 to the present day; (2) Communism and its impact on daily life in China; (3) Communes; (4) The place of the Christian Church and the philosophies under the new government in China.

Below we reprint a letter to the editors of the 'Guardian' (16 March, 1966) from Catherine Williamson:

Sir,—I note with some surprise Richard Scott's account (March 7) of Senator Fulbright's speech in the Senate. Quite clearly, Senator Fulbright has altered his outlook. According to Richard Scott, Senator Fulbright says: 'It is the view of certain Chinese experts in our Government that the Chinese leaders themselves expect to be at war with the United States within a year, and it is clear that some of our own officials also expect a war with China.'

As a person who has been, and is, closely in touch with Chinese affairs, more particularly members of the Chinese Assembly, I can assure Senator Fulbright that the Chinese leaders do not expect to be at war with the United States within a year; and, further, they have no intention of making a war with the United States unless the United States makes war on them.

Further, China has promised at least twice that she will never use her

A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY

Dear Member,

As you will know from the April issue of SACU NEWS, the first Annual General Meeting of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding Ltd has been summoned for 2.30 pm on Saturday, 21 May, 1966, in the Central Hall, Westminster, SW1.

This meeting is being held a year after the inauguration of SACU on 15 May, 1965, and will thus constitute an occasion for reviewing the first year's work of the Society. Formally, however, it will be held in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum and Articles of Association: SACU was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 4 April, 1966 (not in March, as prematurely announced in the last issue of SACU NEWS), thus gaining legal protection for its aims and objects. Copies of the Memorandum and Articles are available to members who may wish to peruse them at the Society's office, or elsewhere as may be convenient.

As was explained in the April issue of SACU NEWS, the first Annual General Meeting of the incorporated Society has been arranged within this short period after incorporation in order to give members the earliest possible opportunity of exercising their rights in relation to the new Society. At the meeting, those members of the existing Council of Management who are willing to continue to serve and have been duly nominated, will come up for election, along with other candidates as may be nominated. There will also be an opportunity for discussion of SACU policy, in relation to the draft resolution submitted by the Council (the text of which was published in SACU NEWS, April issue).

The Council realise that members of the Society have not yet been consulted on the question of the Constitution, since it is not practicable for the Memorandum and Articles of a Company to be approved by every member of a large existing Society prior to its incorporation. However, it is intended that at the Annual General Meeting there shall be an opportunity for a general discussion on the Constitution so that the Council may have the benefit of members' views thereon. No formal changes in the Constitution can be made at this Meeting, but it may, if necessary, be amended by an Extraordinary General Meeting, of which at least 21 days' notice is required.

The Council hope that the AGM will not be merely an occasion for the transaction of formal business, but will in itself make a positive contribution to the work of the Society. To this end, we are endeavouring to arrange for a recent visitor to China to speak after the formal business of the Meeting is concluded.

With this issue of SACU NEWS you will also receive an agenda for the meeting and a draft Form of Adherence. Please sign the latter and if, as we hope, you can come to the Meeting, bring it with you to serve as your credentials. If you have joined after the Society was incorporated on 4 April, 1966, you need only bring your membership card as credentials.

Yours sincerely,

DEREK BRYAN.

atomic bomb unless the atomic bomb is used on her territory. These statements can be vouched for.

The leaders of the People's Republic of China today are engaged upon building up their country for peace, and nothing could have struck greater sorrow upon the Chinese than when the news came through from England in May, 1965, that the Labour Party was wholly on the side of America in their warlike policies in Vietnam and the views which America held against the Vietnamese.

I am not speaking from a little experience only, but after very considerable contacts with China over the last ten years and having visited China four times, when I came in touch with Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, and many of the most important Government persons. All this has taught me that present-day American policy against China is driven against one thing and one thing only, and that is to contain communism. And, after, if that were possible, to absorb the rich lands of China and their industrious people unto themselves.

Book Reviews

I Stayed in China, by William G. Sewell, Allen & Unwin Ltd., 25s.

AT THE BEGINNING of the war Mr Sewell was teaching chemistry at Dulaing University in Szechuan Province. He was interned by the Japanese, returned to Dulaing after the war and remained until 1952. He thus witnessed the birth of a new way of life in a rather remote part of China.

What distinguishes his book from many others is the wholehearted way in which he shared the lives of his Chinese students and identified himself with their problems. There was a constant ferment of protest against Kuomintang corruption and oppression, which among the students often took the form of underground or semi-underground activity. The writer allowed his house to be used both as meeting place and hiding place and when inflation was at its height he refused his salary, paid from abroad, and accepted the same as his Chinese colleagues.

After liberation he became one of a closely-knit group that included students and a university worker previously considered a menial. Here he experienced the pleasure of sharing and discussing ideas and the sometimes bitter pains of creating new men and women.

Thanks to his ability to discard European conventions he was also able to strengthen his ties with his students and fellow-workers and enrich his own life. Sometimes he was dubious about the methods used, but he never had the arrogance to believe that he was more likely to know the truth than another and he persisted in thinking that the Chinese were entitled to manage their own affairs and to work out their own way forward.

He took part in, and benefited from, the great movement of criticism and self-criticism, recognising that it brought about a unity that, far from destroying individuality, 'enabled the personality of the individual to flower'.

This is a profoundly human book that should be read several times. One does not wonder that, when Mr Sewell regretfully decided that he must return to Britain, he was given such affectionate farewells or that, on the long journey to Canton and Hong Kong, he still found himself among friends. 'It was more like a family affair—greeting with happiness a newly discovered relative—than a brief moment in the life of a stranger.'

C.T.P.

Through the Bamboo Curtain, by Beryl Grey. Collins, London, 1965, 30s. Illustrated.

'THE ATMOSPHERE WAS warm, friendly, and unhurried. Suddenly I felt immensely relieved that in this first encounter with the Chinese on their own soil we should feel relaxed and at ease so quickly.

I had feared that working with a people whose outlook on life might be completely different from our own would be a great strain. Talking through interpreters naturally complicates things. But these people spoke to us with such sympathetic interest and gentle courtesy that I felt it was going to be all right after all. I had the feeling then, and it grew later, that the Chinese have a way of tuning in to one's thoughts and emotions.'

This unpretentious and very readable book describes a five-week visit to China by the author and her Swedish husband (whose excellent photographs both embellish and illuminate the narrative) in the spring of 1964. While Dr Svensen looked at some of China's new hospitals and observed the practice of acupuncture, his wife, one of Britain's best-loved ballerinas, worked with the young Chinese ballet company. She writes in a straightforward and transparently honest way of her experiences, and it is clear that the contact was a most fruitful one.

Miss Grey's observation of China was sympathetic, but by no means uncritical. She was sometimes exasperated by the insistence on politics, even high up on the Great Wall and down in the tombs of the Ming Emperor Wan Li. But her own understanding of what the Chinese are attempting, and of what they are achieving, in their country today is of the essence of politics, which, in Dr Sun Yat-sen's words, are everybody's business.

D.B.

Library Hours

THE LIBRARY at Head is now open to SACU members at the following times: Mondays 6 to 8 pm; Tuesdays 2 to 5 pm; Wednesdays 10 to 5 pm; and Thursdays 7 to 9 pm.

Further donations of modern books on China published in Britain are still needed. We also need more copies of books already in the library so that the lending section can be enlarged.

ABOUT SACU

Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (Founded 15 May 1965).

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Believing that understanding between Britain and China is of the highest importance, SACU aims to make information about China widely available in order to help every interested person in Britain to make his or her own assessment.

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Membership of SACU is open to all who subscribe to the aims of the Society. Members are entitled to receive SACU NEWS monthly free of charge, use the library at head office, call upon the Society for information and participate in all activities of the Society.

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