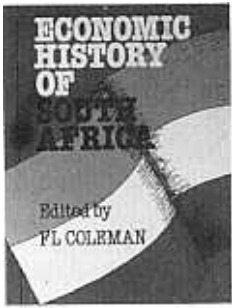


BOEKBESPREKINGS/ BOOK REVIEWS



F.L. COLEMAN (ed.). *Economic history of South Africa*. HAUM: Pretoria, 1983. 274 pp. Illus. R24,00 (exclusive). ISBN 0 7986 0954 0.

First published in 1983, this book has already established itself as an invaluable aid to undergraduate students at universities offering courses in South African economic history. The editor is to be congratulated on compiling this useful volume, though an introductory chapter providing a chronological framework and linking the chapters would have added much to the book. This collective work does not tie itself to a temporal context and the treatment in each chapter is topical. All chapters discuss early economic developments of the 17th and 18th centuries but, in effect, the emphasis falls on the economic history of the country since the major mineral discoveries of the second half of the 19th century.

In the first two chapters Dr Peter Wickins (University of Cape Town) skillfully shows that land and labour are inseparable issues in the economic history of South Africa. He stresses that the politically dominant White community sought a land ownership system that would guarantee it perpetual predominance in an economy where land ownership represented access to wealth. At the same time White enterprise was unthinkable without a supply of unskilled Black labour. Therefore successive governments, both colonial and post-colonial, intervened in the free enterprise economy to ensure a mobile Black labour force attuned to wage labour. Wickins also assesses the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions of the 1970s as landmarks in labour relations, showing a greater sense of realism in their approach to these problematic relationships than earlier policy documents. In another chapter Wickins sees the shortcomings of agriculture as a result of the subtle mix of climatic constraints, cultural limitations and government intervention. He shows an awareness of recent research into peasant economies by writers such as Bundy, but remains unconvinced of the general applicability of these arguments to the African farming world of the 20th century.

Dr V.E. Solomon (formerly of the University of the Witwatersrand) contributes two chapters on transport, money and banking. His approach is narrative and there is little controversy in his account. Railway politics in the period 1886 to 1910 could have been treated in greater depth because of its very complexity and importance in the relationships between the Boer Republics and the two British Colonies. The chapter on money and banking is a good introduction to the topic but again the coverage is broad and not very detailed. For example, the Bank Act of 1965 was a model piece of banking legislation, but had numerous flaws and shortcomings. Solomon is rather cursory in his criticism of the Act and needs to relate its operation more fully to the functioning of the South African economy in the crucial 1960s and 1970s.

Another contributor to this book is Dr Arthur C. Webb (Rhodes University) who has written a relatively long chapter on mining development. His approach is also narrative and the chapter would have benefited by division into sub-topics. He explains why the mining industry came to dominate the South African economy so soon after the initial discoveries and touches briefly on the academic controversy concerning the role played by the Randlords in the Jameson Raid. Webb does not however become embroiled in the minutiae of the debate. His discussion of the 1922 strike is similarly not obsessed with the issue of labour relations in mining.

A fourth author, Dr A.B. Lumby (University of Natal), covers the industrial development of South Africa. He deals with the subject on a macro-level with numerous statistics to show the rate of growth in different periods. The emphasis falls on attempts by the government and the industrial sector to devise ways of promoting industrial growth by means of tariff protection. Lumby shows that despite the rapidity of industrial growth, the industrial sector still relied heavily on the continued existence of the gold mining industry; for it was the mining sector that provided the demand and foreign exchange earnings necessary for industrial expansion. Yet tariff protection pushed up the price of South African manufactured commodities to the mining companies. It is far more difficult to write on industrial developments since World War II, for a clear perspective on the recent past is not easy to achieve. However, Lumby tackles the controversial issues of industrial decentralisation and import substitution versus export promotion with a sure grasp of the key issues.

Obviously in a study of this type the book reflects the interests of the contributors. There are some significant gaps — no chapters on South Africa's foreign trade, her role in the international economy or in Africa's development are included. Topical and relevant themes such as the government's role and the nature of the capitalist system in South Africa should not have been neglected.

The book can nevertheless be recommended in particular to undergraduate students, and is to be studied rather than read. It is in the liberal tradition of historical writing, although none of the contributors becomes embroiled in the neo-Marxist-liberal debate about approaches to South African history. This publication which includes an excellent bibliography, updates D. Hobert Houghton's study, though lacking that book's comprehensive coverage of the economy.

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E.E. KENNEDY. *Waiting for the boom* (introduced by Maryna Fraser). South African Library reprint series 13. South African Library: Cape Town, 1985. 60 pp. Illus. No price. ISBN 0 86968 053 6.

This is a very welcome reprint giving the reader an interesting insight into the pioneering years of Johannesburg, as the town was not quite four years old when this book was written. The author was a London stockbroker who arrived in Johannesburg in the middle of June 1889 with the sole purpose of making a quick kill on the Stock Exchange when it experienced its next big boom. The market however crashed almost without warning, and towards the end of 1889 prices reached their lowest point. After a stay of nine months in Johannesburg, Kennedy left the town towards the end of March 1890 to return to London — incidentally, the next boom did not occur until 1895.

Inevitably the writer's narrative concentrates on his experiences on the Stock Exchange with the result that readers who are more interested in everyday life in old Johannesburg may be disappointed. At the same time, however, Kennedy provides interesting snippets about the dusty streets and dust storms, the cost of living, the crime rate and unsanitary conditions. In this regard Kennedy observed that Johannesburg was only a place to go to in order to make and lose money, but that in future it might be a town in which people would be willing to spend their days.

Furthermore, the fact that Kennedy was writing from the perspective of the Uitlanders' makes this publication quite valuable. According to him the most important grievances of the Uitlanders were the high cost of labour and expensive transportation, because the "wretched Dutch government" was reluctant to allow railway lines to be built on Transvaal territory. Kennedy also mentions the Uitlanders' demand for voting rights, although he does not emphasise this as being a major grievance.

Maryna Fraser's introduction provides a very useful supplement to Kennedy's work. This reprint of *Waiting for the boom* by the South African Library can be seen as a wise decision, because it is undoubtedly a piece of Africana.

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I.B. MATHEWS *et al.* *Transvaal philately*. Reijger Publishers: Cape Town, 1986. 291pp. Illus. R150,00 (exclusive). ISBN 0 620 09752 3. (Luxury edition: R225,00 (exclusive), ISBN 0 620 09753 1).

The subtitle of this large and handsome volume is "the stamps, forgeries, postal history and miscellanea of the Transvaal territories from inception to Union". For the foreseeable future it will undoubtedly be regarded as the definitive work on the subject and it has already won for its author an international gold medal. Major Ian Mathews is a retired British

Army officer who was honorary editor of the South African Stamp Study Circle newsletter. He is currently president of that body, as well as being the Southern African representative of the Transvaal Study Circle. He is also the author of a number of articles on philately, while his co-authors (K.A. Baker, B.J. Bowden, D. Crocker, G.H. Jonkers, J. Kaupe, D. van Zeyl and M. Wigmore) are all experts in their particular fields.

Part 2 of the publication provides a fascinating overview of the development of postal services. A chapter on postal markings is followed by one listing Transvaal post offices with the dates of their establishment, where this could be determined, and the type of canceller used, where known. Also included is information on postal rates and a listing of internal mails