

## BOOK REVIEW

**These two publications were written to mark the 25th Anniversary of CSIRO, Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures in 1984.**

*Pasture Research in Northern Australia—Its History, Achievements and Future Emphasis.* A. G. Eyles and D. G. Cameron, Ed. J. B. Hacker (1985). CSIRO Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures, St. Lucia, Brisbane, pp. 222. \$10 plus postage.

This is a most valuable review of the progress of tropical pasture science in Australia. History can be thought of as a form of inquiry in which our knowledge of the past helps us to think sensibly about the present and the future; this book does justice to the past but places it in the context of how far we have yet to go in tropical pasture improvement. Young pasture scientists should also read this book to mitigate their tendency to repeat the experiments carried out in earlier decades.

The book marks the 25th Anniversary of the CSIRO Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures but its authors escape from narrow institutional boundaries and describe work done by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and by other organizations to generate new knowledge. They are also even-handed in the attention they give to the various disciplines which make up pasture science. This account of the tropical pasture revolution canonises some early saints—N. A. R. Pollock, G. B. Brooks, J. F. Miles, and many others. It makes indirect reference to counter-revolutionary cads in Canberra, but the approach is too bland for any heroes of the revolution to be demythologised. My one reservation about the early sections is that insufficient attention is given to the interaction between landholders and scientists which led to such positive gains; perhaps the unsung heroes of the pasture revolution are A. A. Petrie, C. J. Pinwell, Barney Clark, W. H. Rich, and others.

The main body of the book [pp. 37–181] documents in a readable way the main research findings which have arisen in the past thirty years. Achievements in pasture agronomy and management are described for the different regional situations of northern Australia. This is followed by sections on pasture ecology, problems of legume adaptation, efforts at modelling pasture systems, and research in plant improvement, mineral nutrition, crop protection and animal nutrition.

The final section of the book summarises the principal achievements in pasture technology [as expressed in c. 3.6 M ha planted pasture in Queensland] but also outlines the present priorities in research. These are directed not only to overcoming the deficiencies of technology which have become evident in the application of earlier research outputs but to meeting changed farming needs. Our beleaguered rural industries generally place the goal of cost minimisation ahead of investment in the intensification of production and this necessitates more work on low input systems and on the ecology of native pastures. The low nutritive value of the C<sub>4</sub> tropical grasses and the uncertain persistence of tropical legumes are still intransigent problems for the farming community.

The book has an invaluable bibliography of c. 700 references, but no index. It is attractively illustrated, well produced and available at a bargain price.

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