

experienced (white) management personnel has been partially offset by rapid Africanisation aided by the return of educated political exiles. There is, however, a lack of managerial experience at management level. Agritex is increasingly aware of the importance of farmer groups and farming communities and is seeking their involvement in the decision making processes. Real problems in this regard do exist. The pivotal role of agricultural extension within the rural development strategy is now acknowledged, but a shortage of manpower, finance, and political stability in Matabeleland, is preventing Agritex from operating at its maximum capabilities. Greater importance should be accorded to the EW's who undertake most of the essential work but who are poorly remunerated and serviced (other than in terms of senior staff).

The various agencies concerned with rural development in South Africa should benefit from the Zimbabwean experience. In particular the importance of appropriate in-service staff training, the necessity to liaise with various other agencies involved in rural development, the absolute necessity of involving the communities in the decision-making process, and the concept of building upon and supporting the useful knowledge and practices of farmers are issues of particular relevance for the decision-makers in South Africa.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: THE MAIN ISSUES

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| * Only emphasizing agricultural output | or | emphasizing the improved socio economic status of households |
| * Top down imposed technology and changes | or | involving communities in the decision making process |
| * Abandonment of traditional methods | or | researching into and building on useful traditional methods |
| * Setting grandiose unobtainable objectives | or | setting short-term, modest, attainable objectives based on consultation with farmer groups |
| * Providing individual instruction (usually to males) | or | training in group sessions with those responsible for agricultural production (usually women) |
| * Training extension staff once prior to going into the field | or | providing continuous in-service training as well |
| * Extension staff operate in isolation | or | extension staff are part of a multi-disciplinary integrated development programme |

BOOKS RECEIVED

William Plomer: **The South African Autobiography**; David Philip Africa south Paperbacks, 1984.

This book is both delightful and distasteful. The delight is inspired by the first half, which deals with Plomer's progenitors, who provide him with an ancestral and historical sense of 'identity' and context along with his 'literary' and 'political' one, and who are perhaps more interesting than Plomer is himself. It is, however, to his credit, that he gives them their due, describing them with affection and humour, displaying (without sentimentality) morality, imagination, kindness and wit. He enters into their existence from Victorian pomatum recipes to their experiences of earthquakes, death and social conscience. A variety of anecdotes are repeated with an almost Bosmanesque combination of humour, precision and irony.

The second half of the book (which concerns Plomer from birth to young manhood) describes Plomer's growing perception of dualities: upper and lower 'classes', the English and the South African, the 'Sermon on the Mount' and 'bayonet practice in the park'. The autobiography also makes evident to what extent his South African existence influenced his South African writings, such as **Turbott Wolfe** and the short story 'Down on the Farm'.

The book is distasteful, however, because of the not entirely justified arrogance which is displayed towards Kipling, Hughes and Scott and the 'bellyaching' and 'name-dropping' which occur, despite Plomer's expressed intentions to the contrary. Furthermore, Plomer's attitudes and vocabulary are unavoidably those of a colonial, albeit a liberal one. The Epilogue is inherently contradictory and

simplistic in spite of his comment that Africa is to him 'a complex and violent revelation' and he ends by diminishing the socio-political role of the artist, advocating 'lawn-order' and benevolence and thus failing to do justice to himself, to **Turbott Wolfe** and to the African experience. □ M.A.Y.

William Plomer: **Selected Stories**; ed. Stephen Gray, David Philip, Africasouth Paperbacks, 1984.

In this selection of short stories, the editor, Stephen Gray, chooses stories representative of four geographical areas: South Africa, Greece, Japan and England. The South African stories comprise roughly half of the book, and stylistically dominate the collection as a whole. Of these stories, "Portraits in the Nude" in particular lingers in the reader's memory. It is a curious story, at once violent and ephemeral, and it is to Plomer's credit that he can align these two atmospheres with success. Other memorable stories include "Down on the Farm", "The Child of Queen Victoria", "Nakamura" and "A Friend of Her Father's", all of which superbly capture the essence of the land about which they are written. Slightly less successful are stories such as "Bed Number Seventeen" and "Local Colour", in which the reader suspects Plomer of attempting to suggest a profundity in a rather insignificant event, of employing suggestion to the point of obscurity — a technique which made this reviewer a little irritated and impatient. Nevertheless, Plomer's **Selected Stories** is certainly a representative selection of the author's work as a whole, and has a deserved place in the history of South African literature. □ K.I.B.