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What Lies Ahead

"America's Next Twenty Years," by Peter F. Drucker (Harper, 114 pp. \$2.75), is an economist's analysis of the consequences of population growth, overcrowded schools, decline of natural resources, automation, shifting patterns of business ownership, etc., on our lives. John S. Gambs, Hamilton economics professor, reviews it.

By John S. Gambs

SOME readers may be misled by the title of Peter F. Drucker's little book, "America's Next Twenty Years." It is decidedly not a book about the glittering future—about the space ships in the heavens and the moving sidewalks of New York that we may expect to see in 1977. It is a somber book about this year and the next, and about the many hard things we shall have to go through in the calculable future if we are to maintain peace, prosperity, and world leadership. It is a checklist of the dreary but important economic prob-

lems that confront us today and tomorrow, and that must be solved during the next two decades.

In 114 compressed pages Mr. Drucker raises many large issues: explosive population growth and its manifold repercussions on the labor market, the schools, the problems of old age; automation—what it can do and what it cannot do; decline of natural resources and the implications of this fact for our external politics; current investing habits and their impact both on the formation of capital and on the management of corporations. And there is more, for this book is packed. Most of the problems he raises can be solved, Mr. Drucker feels, but solutions will not be easy, one-shot solutions. They will require self-discipline and vast intelligence on the part of labor, management, and government—indeed, on the part of all of us—editors, physicians, teachers, clergymen—as well as businessmen and laboring people.

This book is no ringing call to action, but it does say something like this: "You've all heard about population growth, overcrowded schools, dearth of engineers, decline of natural resources, automation, ownership di-



—From "Artistry in Ink."

THESE JOLLY FELLOWS, believed to be the handiwork of a fifteenth-century Japanese artist named Shuban, now make their home in the Tokyo Art Museum. There are 48 such plates in "Artistry in Ink" (Crown, \$6), a Japanese-

produced book chronicling the evolution of the ancient Sino-Japanese art of ink painting. Westerners, to whom this will all be quite novel and charming, will find Seroiku Noma's essay authoritative and informative.

forced from control, suburbia, and so forth; well, you don't know the half of it; everything is going to be either bigger or smaller or worse than you think it's going to be."

Let us briefly examine one of Mr. Drucker's theses as a sample of his argument. During the next ten years, he thinks, the total number of hours of work will not change much; but the American population will increase twenty per cent. Can we produce what we need in the same number of hours? If we cannot we shall have inflation. But will not automation come to our rescue? Automation will help, but we cannot put our whole trust in it, for automation requires continuous production at a set level of output for a considerable period of time. One cannot change production schedules except at exorbitant cost, and small faults of judgment may lead to bankruptcy. Automation will place vast demands on both employees and management, and we cannot be sure that our schools will be able to turn out good enough men in the quantity re-

quired. Indeed, the number of competent teachers will be declining sharply relative to our increasing needs.

It has been said that generals prepare for the next war by fighting the old ones over again and that economists theorize about the next depression by restudying the last—and that mankind suffers from this backward-looking. Mr. Drucker is not guilty of such errors. Not all will agree with all of his theses, but none can deny that his vision of the next twenty years is fresh and perspicacious. He bases his work on present trends and visible needs rather than on developmental theories or congenital optimism. The middle years of the 1950s appear to be years of complacency, probably because after a long season of war, depression, and inflation, we Americans have at last achieved a few quarters of peace and prosperity. But many things hard and sore still lie ahead of us, Mr. Drucker believes; and we must very soon and in dead earnest seek ways of mitigating their impact.



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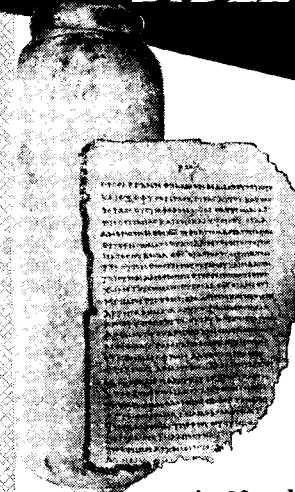
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