

northern edge of the Negev desert between Beersheba and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip 'our' Kibbutz was started in 1948 when 120 young adults and three children came to settle on 14,000 dunhams (1 dunham =  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre) of land which they leased (for 99 years) from the Jewish Agency which owns most of the land in Israel. These people were young and had little, if any, capital and the land they had to farm was semi-desert. From the Jewish Agency they were able to obtain 30-year loans to put up the few buildings which were immediately necessary while from the central Kibbutz Organisation they were able to obtain further loans with which to buy agricultural implements, stock, fertilisers, etc. The Government supplied piped water from the Yarkon river, some miles away and with this the people began to irrigate their land and grow what they could. Working up to twelve hours a day for six days a week they gradually began to improve their land and their pastures and to build up the supply of equipment which a modern farm must have; silage stores, a proper milking shed, tractors, a combine-harvester, a work shop, and irrigation equipment. Today this Kibbutz has a total of 4,000 dunhams of land under irrigation at any one time of which 2,000 dunhams are watered by overhead sprays supplied by moveable light aluminium pipes. Of these 4,000 dunhams 420 are under citrus; 500 under soft fruits such as pears, peaches, plums, and grapes; 1,000 dunhams are used for growing food although the shortage of labour has stopped the growing of labour-intensive crops like tomatoes; another 400 dunhams is under pasture for the dairy herd; 120 dunhams for irrigated wheat; 16 dunhams for commercial roses; and the rest is under cotton, sugar-beet, and potatoes; a certain amount of non-irrigated hay is grown as well. The Kibbutz also has 400 sheep which are milked mechanically, 110 Friesland cows, 60 beef cattle, and 12,000 hens of which 8,000 are layers. Added to this is a printing press employing 13 people, and a 15-man carpentry shop which is at present closed because of the shortage of man-power on the Kibbutz. All these things are owned collectively by the 160 adult Kibbutzniks who work their Kibbutz as one unit and who meet once a week to discuss matters of

policy; various committees, elected annually, are responsible for the day-to-day organisation of the farm which includes allocating each man or woman his or her job.

But the Kibbutzniks are more than just good farmers: they are idealists who have attempted to build themselves into a real community of equals responsible for each other. Working on a Kibbutz is not only a method of farming; it is a way of life. For the outsider the most striking feature is the fact that all meals are eaten communally in the large dining hall. In the well-equipped kitchens, a number of the Kibbutzniks, both men and women, take it in turns to prepare the food and serve it to their fellows when they come in from the fields. There are separate tables each of which takes from 6 to 8 people so that where two people have quarrelled or do not get on they can avoid each other. Yet, at the same time, the fact that everybody eats together is probably the biggest single factor in building up a feeling of common responsibility for, and belonging to, the community. Most adults on the Kibbutz are now married and have children: each family has its own house, with a small garden, and here the father and mother live and make their home. The children do not in fact sleep with their parents but this did not seem to break up the family in any way; indeed we felt that family ties were often strengthened. The children, from the time they are babies, live with their age group in buildings not far from their parents' homes; here they are looked after and educated by trained teachers who are themselves members of the Kibbutz, but each child goes home for at least two hours every afternoon to be with his parents who, now that the day's work is over, can devote their full attention to their children. This system not only gives boys and girls the independence which many argue is the chief value of boarding schools in our society, but it also enables them to see their parents constantly and to grow up under their love and care. It has been argued that the children of a Kibbutz are wild, undisciplined, and impossible to control: this *may* be true in some places but we did not find this in any of the Kibbutzim we visited. In fact on our Kibbutz were a number of children who had been sent there from the

## AFRICANA

- *T.T.A. Resolution 1960*: That the government be respectfully requested to subsidise the purchase of tractors by Bantu farmers on a pound for pound basis.

*Department of Bantu Administration & Development reply 1963*: Everything taken into consideration the purchase of tractors cannot be supported . . . it would be more advantageous for the Bantu to continue his ox-culture—*from the Proceedings of the Transkeian Territorial Authority 1963*. [R.M.]

- A nourishing meal for about 15 cents served in the canteen is helping to improve the efficiency of White office workers at a big Paarden Eiland concern, just as the canteen for the Africans is helping to improve their productivity.—*Cape Times Paarden Eiland Supplement*. [H.H.]

- *Cars in the City*: Symbol of new wealth. And the Bantu own one in ten. [Below a photograph of Johannesburg traffic.]—*Newscheck*.

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