

Corporate Planning: Selected Concepts.

BASIL W. DENNING.

McGraw-Hill, New York, 1971. 373 pp. £4.25.

This first book by Basil Denning is a collection of papers by both business planners and academics. As such, most of the material is reprinted, but an excellent introduction to corporate planning written by the editor is published in this volume for the first time.

The papers chosen are of high quality and a wide range of subject material. Similarly, they differ considerably in emphasis, a number being of a fundamentally introductory character whilst others present a conceptual approach which is academically stimulating but liable to irritate the manager to whom the book is avowedly addressed. For instance, the excellent papers by R. G. Murdick on the "Nature of Planning and Plans" and by J. Friedman on "A Conceptual Model for the Analysis of Planning Behaviour" are worth careful reading, and in the latter case, in particular, could trigger research projects or speculative thought. However, the manager impatient to get something of other than purely intellectual value from the book might well shy away at this point.

From these heights, or depths depending on the reader's value system, of academic abstraction the papers return to a more practical level. Practical advice on strategy formulation is given by H. Mintzberg, W. H. Newman and S. Tilles. Introductory accounts of technological forecasting, capital budgeting, manpower planning and program budgeting are given. Four papers on organizing for corporate planning are presented. These are followed by papers on planning in specific industries and types of company. The book then concludes with three case histories.

Throughout the book communication is verbal and schematic rather than mathematical. Those seeking to satisfy their appetite for mathematical models will be disappointed. Likewise, perhaps because it is addressed to managers primarily, a systematic, programmed but not systemic approach is taken. It is a pity that space could not be found for at least one paper like Stafford Beer's "The Aborting Corporate Plan".¹

However, with these minor reservations, the book is to be recommended as an informative and interesting collection of papers. The operational researcher should gain a firm insight into the general conceptual approach to corporate planning. He is also more likely to proceed cautiously and with proper awareness of his role in this area after reading "The Science of Strategy-making" by Henry Mintzberg, included in this volume.

P. H. GRINYER

REFERENCE

- ¹ S. BEER (1969) The aborting corporate plan. In *Perspectives of Planning* (E. JANTSCH, Ed.), O.E.C.D., Paris.