

THE WHITE MAN'S DILEMMA. By Lord Boyd Orr. (Allen and Unwin; 9s. 6d.)

This book, though short (it has only 117 pages), is of the greatest importance and interest. Lord Boyd Orr sets out to show that the food resources of the world are not adequate to maintain the present population, which is increasing at a greater rate than in any other period of history. Woven into this thesis is a fascinating survey of the history of civilisation in terms of man's relations with his material environment. Deforestation, soil erosion, man-made deserts are all part of the story.

The outstanding theme is hunger and its overwhelming and paramount importance in promoting revolution and producing chaos. The accompanying theme is power: that of the more developed countries of the West. He observes in them, what is true of every neurotic individual, the unwillingness and inability to react to a new and different situation, except with a response which would have been adequate and successful in the past, but is wholly inadequate in the present circumstances, and he quotes Professor Toynbee in saying 'nothing fails like worldly success'. The compulsive repetition of a policy and attitude that have been successful in the past, now that conditions are different, seems to him to be the main blockage to the solution of the problem of feeding the world. 'Nineteenth-century economics and politics cannot carry twentieth-century science.'

Lord Boyd Orr shows how the Western powers could co-operate with the East in a world-embracing plan to develop and husband the resources of the earth. This would give ample scope to the scientists and technicians, and all the industrial undertakings now concerned with armaments could be absorbed in food production. He foresees that in a century or two this phenomenal increase in population will reach some kind of stability, if in the meantime hunger can be averted; if not, the destruction of Western civilisation is inevitable.

The 'White Man's Dilemma' is in fact this: He must choose between destruction, or a modification of the view which he has of himself in relation to the world: black, brown, and yellow. He is now called upon to do collectively what each human being is bound to do individually in his journey from the cradle to the grave. At each stage of development, from the breast to solid foods; from infancy to childhood; from puberty to adolescence; and finally adulthood with its recurring demands for adjustment and reorientation; he must, as St Paul well knew, 'put away childish things', although at each earlier stage such responses had been suitable and fitting. With growing maturity this act of 'putting away' has to be more and more conscious. It is the recurrent sacrifice each individual has to make, and it is this kind of sacrifice that Lord Boyd Orr is calling

on the Western powers to make in face of the present grave situation. The world is hungry: it is dangerous to delay too long.

DORIS LAYARD

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SOPHOCLES. By F. J. H. Letters. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

This is the second Sophoclean study from New South Wales within three years, but not so stimulating and commendable as Professor Waldock's. Such merits indeed as it contains are compromised by the errors in its opening chapters, which are so gross and damaging to Athens and to Sophocles that we are obliged immediately to correct them.

Passing over such oddities as the reference to Cybele (p. 1) and the description of Nausicaa's game of ball as rounders (p. 39), and the misprint Athens for Athena (p. 20 fin), we notice Hippodamus described as Themistocles' engineer (p. 5): it was of course for Pericles that he town-planned Piraeus in the modern American manner. Marathon (p. 55) should be Salamis (correct on p. 38) for Sophocles' first public appearance. He died in 406, at ninety, and if he sometimes sighed for his lost youth and at the burdens of age, to argue that he was obsessed with the subject (pp. 57-60) is as exaggerated as to say (p. 58) that this feeling was 'peculiar to Athens'. That Athenian education, compared with Roman, neglected the three R's (p. 38) is just untrue: every Athenian learned to read, write and calculate; they were perhaps more literate than we succeed in being today.

Mr Letters is very preoccupied with Athenian morality. His indignation leads him to wildly mistaken judgments on the Athenian attitude to women, marriage and the family, to put the Athenian birth-rate impossibly low, to say that infanticide was rife and that only the desire for posthumous offerings induced the Athenian to marry and have children at all. He jibes at the Athenian ephebe as 'more feminine in manner and feature than a boy should ever be', and mutters that 'Greek athleticism was not inconsistent with youthful effeminacy, a truth that modern worshippers of athletics might well ruminate'. What nonsense this all is! A. W. Gomme has proved that Athenian women had substantial freedom, influence and respect, the birth-rate was exceptionally high, 'higher than in modern Greece' (*Population of Athens*, Blackwell, 1933); infanticide there is improbable, nearly every Athenian was married, and had considerably more than two children as a rule. Even Letters (p. 53) admits that Sophocles had four sons and probably as many daughters; in fact, his population statistics (p. 10) are at least 100 per cent too low: Gomme gives for Attica in 431 B.C., 172,000 citizens, 28,500 metics, and 115,000 slaves. That manual labour was necessarily abhorrent to a freeborn Athenian (pp. 30-1) was dismissed long ago as a 'grotesque' idea by Zimmern (*The*