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THE BALDERSTONE REPORT: INVITED COMMENTARIES

Preamble

On 21 September 1981, the then Minister for Primary Industry (The Hon. P. J. Nixon, MHR) announced the appointment of a Working Group to prepare a Policy Discussion Paper on Agriculture. The Group consisted of:

Sir James S. Balderstone, Chairman,
Mr. L. P. Duthie,
Professor F. G. Jarrett,
Sir Donald P. Eckersley, and
Mr. J. C. McColl.

The Group reported to the Minister on 24 September 1982.

The Report of the Working Group is a major document on agricultural policy. The Group received as submissions much of the work of agricultural economists in recent years. They also report and discuss many of the issues central to agriculture in Australia in the 1980s. This material is relevant to the interests of agricultural economists and the Society.

In that context, the Editors, in consultation with the Editorial Committee, decided to include some discussion of the Balderstone Report in the *Journal*. Consideration of various alternatives led to the proposal to invite a number of professionals, with expertise in the fields covered by the Report, to prepare commentaries on parts of the Report. Specifically, they were instructed to keep any summary of the Report to a minimum and to concentrate on the new and controversial proposals contained in the Report. Further, neglected issues and issues requiring additional research were to be highlighted in the context of providing some indicators to agricultural economists of possible directions for further research.

The comments include arguments that are not fully developed and some mere assertions. However, that is consistent with our instructions to them, namely, to be somewhat provocative, yet to comply with a 2000 word limit. There will be comments with which people disagree. The Editors invite members to forward further comments on the Report and the Invited Commentaries for consideration for publication in future issues of the *Journal*.

The paper by Frank Jarrett (himself a member of the Group) is a revised version of a paper he presented to the Australian Agricultural Economics Society Annual Conference held in Brisbane in February 1983.

The Editors.