Overhead Costs.

Insufficient information is as yet available from this study to justify the publication of any figures relating to overhead costs. Using other sources of basic data, and relying to some extent upon overseas experience, figures have already been published elsewhere* showing approximate overhead costs for the types of tractor generally in use on dairy farms. It is worth noting that in no case did any of the tractor owners who provided records have their tractors either registered or insured.

** See "Tractor Operating Costs"—"Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales," December, 1948.*

THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS.

(The Report which follows has been received from Wyn F. Owen, Economics Research Officer and Walter and Eliza Hall Research Fellow. Mr. Owen was one of five Australians who attended the Conference at Stresa.)

From the 21st to the 28th August, 1949, over 250 persons working or interested in the field of Agricultural Economics in various countries met at Stresa, a small resort on the shore of Lake Maggiore in Northern Italy. The discussions which took place during the week, both formally and informally, constituted the Seventh International Conference of Agricultural Economists.

Many countries were represented at the conference, including: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Western Germany, Great Britain, India, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and Turkey. Before discussing the events in Italy in more detail it may be of interest to survey briefly the history of these conferences.

The International Conference of Agricultural Economists was informally inaugurated in 1929, when 50 economists from 11 countries met at Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England. The credit for the original idea must go to Mr. and Mrs. Leonard K. Elmhurst of Dartington Hall. It is fair to claim too, that, but for the interest and generosity of these two people it is extremely unlikely that the idea would have become a reality, and that workers in that comparatively new field of study—Agricultural Economics—would now have this permanent and useful medium of international contact and collaboration. This is very clear when we are reminded that delegates to the First conference attended Dartington Hall for the two weeks as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Elmhurst, and when we appreciate the admirable manner in which Mr. Elmhurst has performed the functions of President of the International Conference since its inauguration.* Mention, too, must be made of the

**Dartington Hall itself is a further constructive contribution by Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Elmhurst to Agricultural Research and Education. Founded in 1925 it was in Mr. Elmhurst's own words, "an attempt to find out whether education and research could be allied with the commercial development of a derelict Estate." That the attempt has been marked with success is evidenced by the world-wide reputation the Institution has established for itself.*

contribution and untiring work of J. R. Currie, of the Economics Research Department of Dartington Hall, as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Conference since its inception.

The Second International Conference was held at Cornell University in the United States in 1930. This was on a much larger scale than the first, and it was here that the International Conference was given a formal constitution and officers were elected for the ensuing period. In summary, the conferences held to date have been as follows:—

First, 1929, Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England.
Second, 1930, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York State, U.S.A.
Third, 1934, Bad Eilsen, Schaumburg, Lippe, Germany.
Fourth, 1936, St. Andrew's University, Fife, Scotland.
Fifth, 1938, Macdonald College, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, P.Q., Canada.
Sixth, 1947, Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England.
Seventh, 1949, Villa Delle Azalee, Stresa, Italy.

Briefly, it may be said that there is a dual purpose behind the organisation of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists. The more obvious purpose is that of bringing together agricultural economists to discuss research results and methods and international problems in the field of agricultural economics, and to promote effective and rapid exchange of agricultural economic data. In the words of Professor H. C. M. Case, speaking at the Second Conference, "They (the Conferences) . . . give recognition to the fact that the problems in the field of farm economics have much in common the world over and that the best means of progress between nations, as well as within a nation, is to come together to compare opinions and to get a common view of our problems."

The other purpose is that workers in various countries should establish not only professional contact but also have the opportunity to establish personal bonds of friendship. In the words of the late Dr. G. F. Warren: "It is important that workers in this field meet each other so that we may know the other man's work and also know what manner of man he is." The latter objective is perhaps a necessary forerunner to full achievement of the first.

One cannot but feel too that there is some truth in what was said in addition to remarks previously referred to, by Prof. Case, that such conferences "carry a pertinent suggestion as to the best means of meeting other and more serious international problems." At least it is true that international friendships established as a result of these conferences have influences for good stretching beyond the limited field of Agricultural Economics. And to fully exploit this possibility the intention has always been that, as far as possible, the International Conference of Agricultural Economists should be approached as an informal, rather than an official gathering. In his opening address at the First Conference Mr. Elmhurst said: "The war has left a trail of fear across the world and has set up barriers of fear between one nation and another, and it has seemed to me that there was no better way of trying to overcome these fears and barriers than getting you together as a family party rather than as a group of specialists."

A fourth valuable characteristic of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists is that its membership is comprised of individuals and academic societies, and not of official representatives of Governments. It is considered essential to preserve this scientific and non-political character, especially since the matters for discussion have social and political, as well as economic and scientific, implications.

Finally, it is almost unnecessary to mention that papers and discussions at all conferences are recorded and published under the title, *"Proceedings of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists."* These form very useful texts and references for workers in the field of Agricultural Economists in all countries. The Proceedings of the first two Conferences were published in America. Since then both the recording and editing has been carried out by Mr. J. P. Maxton and the staff of the Institute of Agrarian Affairs, University of Oxford, England.*

The Programme of the Seventh International Conference at Stressa.

At the Seventh International Conference three main papers were presented and discussed:—

1. "Diagnosis and Pathology of Peasant Farming," introduced by Professor Giuseppe Medici (President, National Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rome).
2. "Agricultural Co-operation and the Modern State," introduced by Professor A. W. Ashby (Director, Agricultural Economics Research Institute, University of Oxford), and Professor Visocchi (University of Florence, Italy).
3. "The Spread of Industry into Rural Areas," introduced by Professor R. G. Tugwell (University of Chicago, U.S.A.).

In addition, and following the usual practice at these conferences, several papers on diverse subjects were read. These were:—

1. "The Machinery of Forward Price Fixing."—Professor Edgar Thomas, University of Reading, England.
2. "The Trend of American Farm Prices."—O. C. Stone, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.A.
3. "Evaluation of Productive Factors in Agriculture."—Prof. W. J. Anderson, University of British Columbia, Canada.
4. "Outline Picture of Italian Agriculture."—Prof. M. Bandini, National Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rome.
5. "Progress of Agricultural Recovery in Germany."—W. Klatt, German Supply Department, Foreign Office, London.
6. "The Work of the Economic Co-operative Administration."—B. H. Thibodeaux, Office of E.C.A., Paris.
7. "Some Aspects of Canadian International Trade."—Prof. G. L. Burton, Macdonald College, Canada.
8. "The Present Condition of Agricultural Statistics in Europe."—J. Chambart de Lauwe, F.A.O., Geneva.

* *The Institute of Agrarian Affairs also publishes the International Journal of Agrarian Affairs. This journal has been well received by Agricultural Economists in many countries. The two numbers available so far are entitled: "The Problem of Surplus Agricultural Population," Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct., 1939; "The Changes of Eight Years in Agricultural Economics," Vol. 1, No. 2, Oct., 1947.*

9. "Reducing Costs of Agricultural Production in High Cost Areas."—H. Harwood Long, University of Leeds, England.
10. "Land Valuation and Credit."—Professor W. G. Murray, Iowa State College, U.S.A.
11. "Farm Appraisal Problems in the Netherlands."—M. J Boerendonk, Ministry of Agriculture, Netherlands.
12. "Land Reform in Italy."—Prof. Rossi-Doria, University of Naples, Italy.

It is obviously out of the question to comment on these papers in this short report. However, the above list is of interest, as it does give some indication of the scope of the conference. The reproduction of the papers and the discussion on them will be awaited with interest by many Agricultural Economists.

One cannot speak too highly of the welcome given the conference in Italy and the efficient manner in which the Italian Committee made all the necessary arrangements. Several Conference Members travelled to Stresa by a special 'bus tour from England through Belgium, France and Switzerland. Also after the conference two tours were available to members. One of these traversed the Eastern and Southern Po Valley in Northern Italy travelling by way of Milan, Verona, Venice, Bologna, Piacenza and Genoa before returning to England via Southern France and Paris. The second, passed along the western side of the Po Valley and on through Florence and Siena to Rome. On each of these tours several farm calls were made, and members were able to benefit both from further personal discussion, and by obtaining at first hand an appreciation of Italian agriculture and its problems.

In general, the Seventh International Conference was highly successful in regard to each of its objectives. In his closing address, however, the President made an appeal for increased membership, particularly in those countries which so far have had little contact with the conference.

Pleasure was expressed by members that as many as five Australians were present at the Stresa Conference. It is very important that the link now established be strengthened by membership and by attendance at future conferences. Perhaps the time is ripe for the formation of an Australian Agricultural Economics Society along the lines of that existing in England. Such a society could serve a dual purpose—that of bringing together workers interested in the field of Agricultural Economics throughout Australia, to discuss common problems of their rapidly developing science, and, secondly, on their behalf of establishing permanent contact with similar societies in other countries and with the International Conference of Agricultural Economists.

The next International Conference is to be held in the United States in 1952. Particularly if the development suggested in the preceding paragraph takes place, it may be possible for a formal invitation to be made for the Conference to be held in Australia at some future date.

Agricultural Economics in Italy.

Following this short review of the Seventh International Conference of Agricultural Economists, it is appropriate to add a few notes referring to the situation of Agricultural Economics in Italy.

Education and research in Agricultural Economics in Italy as in most countries is of comparatively recent origin. It was not until the end of the last century that the study began to emerge as an organic

doctrine. Present-day rural economists in Italy speak of Arrigo Serpieri as the "father" of Agricultural Economics research work in their country. His influence was not really felt, however, until early in the present century. Previous to this, and in common with developments in other countries, contributions to the field of study as we know it to-day were rather of an *ad hoc* nature and can be traced largely to a few technical agriculturalists whose foresight took them beyond the narrow confines of their particular interests.

At the present time there are eleven Faculties of Agriculture in Italy. Four are situated in Northern Italy (Turin, Milan, Padua, Bologna); three in Central Italy (Florence, Pisa, Perugia); and four in Southern Italy and the Islands (Portici [Naples], Bari, Palermo, Sassari). In each case the duration of the course is four years, divided into two biennial periods. Farm economics and agrarian policy form an essential part of the curriculum of the second biennium.

To every University Chair of Farm Economics and Agrarian Policy is attached an Institute of Farm Economics and Agrarian Policy for those students who intend to specialise in these subjects or to take up scientific research. Most of these Institutes were founded in the late nineteenth century under State legislation and with autonomous administration. In the 1930-35 period they were all incorporated in the existing University structure and transformed into Faculties of Agriculture. The essential role of the University Institutes is the preparation of post-graduate students for scientific research or an academic career.

An interesting characteristic of the organisation for research in Italy is the presence of a number of Agricultural Academies and Societies of more or less ancient origin. In general, these organisations have autonomous administration and are State endowed. Most owe their origin to the initiative of particular scholars or enlightened State Governments. The principal academies and societies which have made significant contributions in the field of Agricultural Economics and Policy are situated at Florence, Turin, Bologna, Persaro and Milan. Naturally, much of their work is of considerable historical interest.

But most important in the field of Agricultural Economics Research is an institute of more recent origin. This is the *National Institute of Agricultural Economics*,* which has its headquarters in Rome. The institute was constituted by Royal Decree on 10th May, 1928, as an autonomous corporate body attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The first President was Arrigo Serpieri. He has been followed by the very capable and popular personality, Sen. Prof. Giuseppe Medici.

There follows a concise summary of the organisation of the above Institute:—

The Institute was formed with three objects in view—

1. To promote and carry out research and studies on agricultural and forestal economy, with special regard to the needs of agrarian legislation, rural administration, and of rural categories and their contractual relations.
2. To promote, in line with established directives, the gradual constitution of farm accountancy centres.
3. To direct and co-ordinate the activities of the various agricultural economic observatories.

*Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria.

"The central organs of the Institute are: (*a*) The Council; (*b*) the President; (*c*) the Secretary-General; (*d*) the Scientific Committee.

"The Council is composed of seven members: the Director-General of Agriculture at the Ministry of Agriculture; the Director-General of the Central Institute of Statistics, or, at the discretion of the President of the Institute, the Chief of Division of Agricultural Statistics of the Institute; two permanent members of the teaching staff of the Faculties of Agriculture of the Universities, specialised in Agricultural Economics, appointed by the Minister of Agriculture; and three other economic experts appointed by the Minister.

"The Scientific Committee is formed of all the professors holding the Chairs of Agricultural Economics in the Faculties of the Universities, and the Secretary-General of the Institute. It assists the Council and the President in all matters concerning the scientific activities of the Institute.

"The Institute has a head office in Rome, and ten regional observatories of which most are attached to the Chairs of Agricultural Economics in the Provinces."†

In summary, there are three sets of organisations concerned with agricultural economics research work in Italy; the University Institutes, the Agricultural Academies and Societies, and the National Institute of Agricultural Economics. In conclusion a few comments may well be added regarding the type of work with which these organisations are concerned. These must necessarily be of a very general nature.

Italy provides a good illustration of the inevitable and powerful influence of the history and peculiar exigencies of a country on the type and characteristics of internal scientific research. By far the major problem facing Italy is that of over population in relation to current resources and development. For this reason agricultural economics research, for the main part, must of necessity focus its attention on this problem and particularly the aspect relating to excess pressure of population on the land. Each of three alternative solutions is receiving at least some attention. They are:—

1. The problem of how to increase the area of land under cultivation, or alternatively how to provide economic opportunities for intensification.
2. The problem of how to facilitate the movement of excess farm population to non-agricultural activities.
3. The question of the scope for immigration abroad.

In particular, significant contributions are being made by Italian economists in the fields of land reclamation and improvement, irrigation, land ownership and land appraisal, the theory of farm labour and the economics of farm management. The Institute has published a number of monographs on various subjects connected with its research projects. It is also responsible for the publication of the new Year Book on the Agricultural Economy of Italy, and since 1946 has also published a quarterly review called the *"Rivista de Economia Agraria."*

WYN F. OWEN.

† "The Situation of Agricultural Economics in Italy." Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria, Roma, p. 37.