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LETTERS

From You...

John D.

From: Guy Black

Re: Cochrane's Profile of John D. Black

Willard Cochrane's profile of John D. Black, my father, stimulated my own recollections. A family letter cites Richard T. Ely, B. H. Hibbard, F. B. Morrison (Assistant Director of the Extension Station), E. A. Ross, and C. J. Golfin as the examining committee. J. R. Commons opened the examination by declaring "I have read your thesis and it is a capital piece of work." And JDB adds, in the family letter, "After that, all was easy."

Surely the rapid growth in agricultural economics at the time was paralleled in many land-grant universities. A six-fold increase in nine years was not entirely a personal triumph, but in many ways a reflection of the times. Further, the conditions at the University of Minnesota were favorable. (Only New York, Wisconsin, and Iowa appropriated more funds for agricultural economics research in 1924-25.) Many extraordinary faculty became involved with agricultural economics, including N. S. B. Gras, Alvin Hansen, Carl Zimmerman, and P. A. Sirokin who were later with Father at Harvard. That is, students in agricultural economics were treated as if they were studying a branch of general economics, rather than a distinct subject in the hands of agricultural specialists, as it might have been. Agricultural economics, especially at Minnesota in those days and with little exaggeration, can be called the first *applied* economics, and JDB's attitude was most helpful.

By developing the material, first in two mimeographed editions used under the direction of George M. Peterson (later of the Gianinni Foundation), *Production Economics* facilitated a theory-based approach elsewhere. The Preface notes, "My own contribution to the cause was to suggest that the body of economic principles constituting production economics was the very body of principles which is needed to give coherence and substance to the materials of the usual [descriptive] course." This was dated July 1926. It was his insistence on coupling economic theory with the real world that led the Workings to their early work, and then to econometrics, and quantification of input-output relationships exhibiting diminishing returns.

Surely it was from Richard T. Ely, one of those approving Father's thesis, that JDB obtained his Marshallian orientation, thereby attracting the attention of T. N. Carver and F. W. Taussig at Harvard. Marshall, in his famous text, is anything but narrow. Further, could anyone who studied under J. R. Commons have been anything but multidisciplinary? The Preface to *Production Economics* claims that its economics integrated rather than replaced the real-world material, which encompassed engineering, politics, and social conditions. It is a breadth duplicated in a series of publications that Father edited (and wrote for), that I have often felt, should be tried again. There has been established in 1925, with JDB as chairman, an Advisory Committee on Social and Economic Research in Agriculture of the Social Science Research Council. Between 1930 and 1933 it published

a series of 21 bulletins on topics ranging from public finance, agricultural credit, land utilization, rural social work, farm family living, prices and marketing of farm products, and farm management. Among the seven specific objectives listed in the Preface to the first are several topics for research seminars theses, and I'm sure that many graduate students found the suggestions useful, but even more important, such body of suggestions was a way of establishing priorities for a scholarly discipline. It is a recurring need.

Reconstructing the times in which a person formed his ideas is helpful. "Don" reached age 17 when the progressive era, with all its ideas, controversy and activism was getting under way. (His 1929 passport lists his birthplace at Oakland, Wisconsin, June 6, 1983). It was the source of attitudes that stuck with him for life. His reaction to his time is suggested by a 1909 undergraduate thesis on the *Politics of Coleridge* that ends with a regret that the poet changed from a libertarian to a curmudgeonly establishmentarian. While it is a typical youthful attitude, JDB was always for the common man. A memorial written by Edward S. Mason, Arthur Smithies, and J. K. Galbraith (October 18, 1960) notes that the labor strife of the upper Michigan peninsula, where he had taught English for four years, led him to take a course in labor economics at a University of Wisconsin summer school. There he first became aware of the emerging discipline of agricultural economics by accident. That farmers of the time were under great economic and social pressure made it easy to transfer attitudes formed in Michigan.

JDB became a clear example of the academic who participated in government quite early, for example, as chief economist of Hoover's Federal Farm Board. No doubt such involvement was particularly agreeable to his colleagues at Harvard, where it was already traditional, and where the political pressures sometimes felt in publicly funded universities were much less important. He always felt that it was important that the political economy of agriculture be studied and taught in private institutions. As Cochrane notes, he did not favor a separate school of agricultural economics—and one reason surely is that it would isolate its faculty and students from general economics, or other disciplines, for that matter.

If I am allowed to remark that agricultural policy goes in circles it might be taken several ways, but I mean to suggest that *Agricultural Reform in the United States* reviews some proposals current in the 1920s that seem very current once again.

Underutilization

From: James L. Hedrick

U.S. General Accounting Office

Re: Yetley's "Rural Labor Underutilization"

(Fourth Quarter 1988 CHOICES)

Measuring the extent to which resources are fully used is one way of assessing how well an economy is working. Yetley's article provides some new underutilization measures for one of our

most basic resources—the human resource. Official statistics define the unemployed as those not working but actively looking for work. Many observers have commented on the limitations of unemployment as the principal measure of human resource underutilization, but Yetley does something about it! To the unemployed, he adds four categories of underemployed—discouraged workers (those who have given up looking for work), part-time (those working part-time but willing to work full time), working poor (working full time but earning below poverty income), and occupationally mismatched (those whose job fail to fully use skills). He estimates the number of underemployed—and lost earnings—in each of these four categories which, when added to the number of unemployed, provide a more comprehensive picture of labor underutilization in rural and urban America.

It is not my intent to critique Yetley's approach; instead I shall comment (first) on some extensions of his approach that appear useful, and (secondly) on the significance of his underutilization measures to rural development issues. Yetley estimates the number of underemployed and unemployed workers in both rural and urban counties (technically, Metropolitan Statistical Areas as "urban" and all other counties as "rural"). But those gross numbers do not enable direct rural-urban comparisons of underemployment and unemployment *rates*. Also, self employed workers are omitted from Yetley's analysis for lack of data, but this leaves an important gap as farm operators (and others) are excluded. Might such underemployment data for farm operators be *approximated* from data comparing labor actually used with labor requirements for growing crops and livestock? Developing such estimates for other self-employed groups might prove even more difficult.

It would appear useful to present the summary results in tables such as the following:

Unemployed/Underemployed Rates

	Workers		Self-Employed (where available)	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Unemployed				
Underemployed:				
Discouraged				
Part-time				
Working poor				
Mismatched				
Total				

A similarly structured table could show *lost earnings* as well. A useful disaggregation of this table would be to show this same table for each of the ERS economic dependency categories—farming, manufacturing, mining, government, persistent poverty, federal lands, and retirement. Other disaggregations are likely possible and useful.

I think that Yetley's approach—with potential expansion—is needed to shed light on issues of national concern. For example, the underutilization of labor—estimated by Yetley at nearly 10 percent of the rural work force—represents a challenge to policymakers to enhance rural productivity to better compete in U.S. and world markets.

Also, his approach, as expanded, would contribute importantly to a new rural development policy now on the horizon. With information such as labor underutilization now available, rural problems and rural-urban differences can be identified and

quantified to a greater extent than in the past—and policy responses can be designed more appropriately. An ERS publication, *Rural Economic Development in the 1980s: Preparing for the Future*, July 1987, together with a number of related ERS publications provide much of the rural problem data base needed for a rural development policy.

Building on what ERS and others have done, GAO recently completed a report, *Rural Development: Federal Programs That Focus on Rural America and Its Economic Development*, January 1989, requested by Representative E. Thomas Coleman as Ranking Minority Member of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development. This report describes the federal effort, whereas the National Governors' Association has described state efforts in rural development—many being quite recent and quite important.

These, and other, ongoing research activities help provide a solid base for future rural development policies and programs. Yetley's measurement of underutilization adds an important dimension.

Revitalizing

From: Kim Haden and Greg Pompelli

Assistant Professors

The University of Tennessee

Re: Connor's "Undergraduate Ag Programs"

Larry Connor raises several important points in his article, "Land-Grant Undergraduate Ag Programs: They Need Revitalizing." However, he gives only brief attention to issues that are at the heart of declining enrollments. Agriculture has changed greatly over the past 50 years from a production dominated sector, to a sector in which activities beyond the farm gate have become of increasing importance in terms of revenues generated. These changes were well documented by Leo Polopolus in his 1982 presidential address. Yet, the response of the agricultural economics profession in the classroom to these changes has been to give minimal attention to what happens to agricultural products beyond the farm gate. Given that the majority of our students take jobs beyond the farm gate, it is a mistake to minimize the economic analysis of agricultural products beyond the farm gate. As may be indicated by declining enrollments, perhaps students have already begun to recognize the profession's lack of response.

While Connor laments that the graduate student body is less concerned with traditional agrarian and rural values, this should not be considered an indictment of our students. Rather, it should serve as additional evidence of the changing composition of our students, as well as the changing future of our profession. While an understanding of rural and agrarian values is of importance to an understanding of the agricultural sector as a whole, so is an understanding of other values, such as those of consumers of agricultural products. Thus, our efforts should not be aimed at reshuffling courses in an attempt to maintain the purity of our traditional agrarian and rural foundations. Instead we should be incorporating tools and techniques that will advance the training of our students and meet the challenges confronting our profession.

From: Larry J. Connor
Re: The Author Responds

Haden and Pompelli argue that it is a mistake to minimize the economic analysis of agricultural products beyond the farm gate, since the majority of our students take jobs beyond the farm gate. I agree. They obviously did not read page 14 where I discussed the current agricultural college emphasis on production agriculture, and the necessity of changing the relative emphasis to the larger food system.

They next argue that although the graduate student body is less concerned with traditional rural and agrarian values, this should not be considered an indictment of our students. They do not comprehend the importance of maintaining a graduate student *balance* from agricultural college graduates, other domestic majors, and foreign students. Failure to maintain a student balance will not result in the balanced understanding of values which they advocate for graduate students and future faculty.

Finally, Haden and Pompelli state that we should "incorporate tools and techniques that will advance the training of our students," instead of changing courses "to maintain the purity of our traditional agrarian and rural foundations." I would hope that agricultural colleges have a broader vision of undergraduate education than one of just incorporating tools and techniques. The changes I argued for were in the design and administration of majors, general education requirements, and quality of teaching. The importance of a good general education should not be underemphasized, nor the results of the recent Agribusiness Management Aptitude and Skills Survey by Litzenberg and Schneider, which indicated that major characteristics desired by employers were "interpersonal characteristics" and "communication skills." The desires of potential employers cannot be ignored.

The...Nexus

From: Michel J. Petit

The World Bank

Re: Mellor's "Food, Poverty, Aid, Trade, Nexus"

First, I would like to stress my fundamental agreement with the thrust of the argument presented by Mellor. Developing countries need to adopt an agriculture and employment-based development strategy. This is the best way to contribute to the alleviation of hunger and poverty and to limit the degradation of the environment, a point Mellor does not make but which I am sure he agrees with. In addition, such a strategy is compatible with the long term interests of U.S. agriculture. Such a strategy would increase the involvement of developing countries in international trade, both as importers and exporters of agricultural commodities. For developed countries and aid granting institutions, the main instruments to support such a strategy would be technology transfers, easier market access, food aid, as well as policies designed to facilitate the stabilization of international agricultural commodity markets.

In addition to registering this fundamental agreement the purpose of this letter is to call the readers' attention to a few issues that are somewhat neglected by Mellor. Yet they must be recog-

nized and reckoned with for the strategy which he advocates to have a chance to be successful. Very serious obstacles have to be overcome.

First is the issue of the international debt of many developing countries; that debt has forced them to adopt structural adjustment policies which constrain their ability to pursue an aggressive growth strategy. Implicit in Mellor's argument is the assumption, commonly made when government decides on the adjustment programs, that once the adjustment will have taken place, a long term growth strategy can then be pursued on a sustainable basis, in other words the adjustment problem is viewed as a short term problem. Even if one recognizes that we may be blinded by the current situation, the depth of the debt crisis should not be underestimated. The essential point here is that because countries are excessively indebted, they are forced to reduce their current public spendings and this hampers tremendously their ability to pursue an aggressive growth strategy. Also, the debt situation limits the flow of capital from developed to developing countries whose creditworthiness is jeopardized. This feeds a feeling of despair in developing countries, which is not favorable to investment and favors capital flight, both legal and illegal, outside of the countries. If the debt issue has to be behind us before the Mellor strategy can be adopted, it is unlikely that it can be implemented for some time to come. This is unfortunate, because such a strategy promises a long-term route out of excessive indebtedness by generating future incomes needed to finance the service of the debt.

In that perspective, short-term solutions are needed, involving some form of debt forgiveness. But this requires an international consensus on very hard choices among conflicting interests. Fundamentally, such choices are of a political nature; but the truth of the matter is that the economic interrelationships among countries, particularly among developed and developing countries, have reached a level which taxes the necessary political ability of the world. In the absence of a world government, finding political compromises among nations is very difficult.

Another obstacle to be overcome is the domestic political and organizational problems within developing countries in order to productively harness food aid. I agree with Mellor that food aid can be potentially very useful. It is also true that tremendous production potential in the developed countries could be tapped to provide food aid. But to ensure that reliable food aid is available would require strong political will on the part of the developed countries. Present conditions on international markets are such that probably less food aid is available now than in recent years. If we assume that this could be overcome, there would remain the political and organizational difficulties of putting that food aid to good use in developing countries. We know from example in India and Bangladesh that food for work programs can be effective. But many other examples illustrate that many obstacles must be overcome if the strategy is to be successful.

On technology transfer, I have only a small quibble with Mellor, as I feel that he neglects the role of agricultural extension. I feel that this is important and must be viewed in close connection with agricultural research. Mellor refers to education and we agree on this. But the complexity of the problem to be solved is that research, education and extension must be fully integrated and we know that this is difficult to achieve, mainly for cultural and institutional reasons. In spite of these criticisms, there are very positive lessons to be derived from John Mellor's argument and he is probably right to be optimistic. He helps us to see the silver lining behind the clouds of the current crisis. Technology transfer, market access and food aid are indeed very important

instruments that developed countries and aid granting institutions can use to help developing countries pursue a successful development strategy. Hopefully this view will contribute to enlighten the leadership of U.S. agriculture and public opinion. The U.S. public must be led to understand that the potential gains for the United States from development in the developing countries are very high indeed, both on economic and more importantly on political grounds. The current indifference or sometimes even hostility to aid is a major obstacle which must be overcome.

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From: Kenneth L. Bader

American Soybean Association

Re: Mellor's "Food, Poverty, Aid, Trade, Nexus"

For the most part John Mellor is on the mark in identifying the important elements of effective trade and foreign assistance programs for developing nations. I am pleased that Mr. Mellor and others in the foreign assistance community are increasingly recognizing private sector-oriented agricultural development can and must be consistent with American agriculture's need to build growing commercial markets in developing nations. Indeed, a major reorientation of U.S. foreign assistance programs is needed to maximize developmental gains in LDCs and U.S. agricultural export expansion.

The American agricultural community has never questioned the positive relationship of LDC economic development to U.S. agricultural export growth. We know our future is strongly tied to increased demand from nations that are now too poor to buy the commodities they need. Our concern has been with the developmentalists who felt self-sufficiency at any cost was the path to pursue in alleviating hunger in LDCs. Such an approach misses the reality that the efficiencies brought on by open trade and competition affords developing nations the best opportunity to increase incomes, food availability, and economic stability.

One developmental strategy that can help developing nations is the development of animal agriculture. Investments in the production of swine, poultry, and ruminants creates a demand for local feed grains and protein crops as well as an opportunity for an improvement in the quality of the diets of the people of the LDCs. Rural livestock producers can gain needed income from selling their animals in the cities and, in turn, transfer part of that income to local grain producers that grow the feed for their animals. Development of a grain economy in the absence of a livestock industry provides little more than subsistence for the rural residents. Moreover, a developing livestock industry brings rural employment in the slaughter and processing infrastructure necessary to support the livestock industry. U.S. commercial interests and non-profit cooperator organizations are more than ready to provide the technical assistance needed to support the growth of a livestock industry.

OIC agree with Mellor that infrastructure development is essential for sound agricultural development in LDCs. Roads are needed to allow the transportation of locally produced and imported commodities as well as the movement of inputs to rural areas. Port-side off-loading and storage facilities are essential to allow the efficient importation and waste-free storage of imported commodities. Thousands of non-farm jobs are created in building and manning such facilities.

The most important element needed in LDCs to foster agricultural trade and development growth is sound governmental policies. No development effort will be successful in nations that

artificially hold down agricultural prices, limit access to imported inputs, and stymie private ownership and operation of agricultural industries. The private sector must also have access to capital and new technologies. Taxes must not be so punitive as to destroy the incentive of the people to work.

The agricultural and developmental communities have made great strides toward achieving a common view on LDC development. We must build on that growing consensus by working together to reform foreign assistance delivery institutions. Our goals may be different but they are not inconsistent. We can achieve simultaneous agricultural development in LDCs as well as expanded agricultural exports to developing nations. It's time we began to make it happen.

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From: Daniel E. Shaughnessy

President, TCR Services, Inc.

Re: Mellor's "Agricultural Development in the Third World"

John Mellor makes some good points in his "Agricultural Development in the Third World" article. Countries with higher incomes are demonstrably better customers for U.S. goods than are the poverty-stricken. Using food aid to pay labor for rural infrastructure is a good idea now, just as it was when P.L. 480 began its food-for-work projects several decades ago. Perhaps Dr. Mellor could have paid some stronger attention to the city poor and unemployed as well, in view of the soaring urbanization in developing countries today.

What I would like to see is a follow-on explanation by Dr. Mellor refining some of his economic generalities into specifics for those who might want to take practical steps against hunger and poverty in developing countries, while promoting U.S. farm exports. Inferentially, at least, I presume he thinks the United States should drop its sugar quotas, and I would look for that as an item in a practical how-to-do-it piece.

What is a "labor-intensive agricultural commodity" from the Third World? Bananas? Or if their farmers labor more than ours to produce a bushel of wheat, does their wheat qualify as a "labor intensive" commodity?

Inasmuch as America's brightest future in agricultural exports lies with processed, value-added products, why should we focus on basic staples for developing countries? Our labor force needs work too.

The Mellor proposal requires "large numbers of trained people" and "mobilization" of U.S. and other research and education capacities to help in the task. How many people and just what mobilizing does he have in mind?

Food aid would be tripled for 15 years. What if U.S. supplies are so tight, as presently the case, that the wheat reserve is being drawn down just to keep the program going at current levels? What if we face a choice on whether to use limited commodity supplies to help U.S. agriculture exports compete in foreign markets or for food aid?

What if the U.S. Government is in massive budget deficit? Obviously the Mellor plan will cost billions. The money would have to come from some governmental account, at the expense of some other programs, or from a revenue increase, or from more government borrowing.

While I agree with much of what the Mellor article says, I would look forward to his follow-on giving specifics. It would help us weigh what steps would be most practical amid today's difficult realities.

From: John W. Mellor

IFPRI

Re: The Author Responds

Ken Bader's attention to the livestock issue is important and merits a paper in itself. Because of the importance of waste and byproduct feed in base consumption by Third World livestock and the inelasticity of supply of such feed sources, the demand for concentrate feed, e.g., coarse grains, is highly elastic with respect to the growth rate. Thus, rapidly rising incomes in Malaysia have provided a 12 percent rate of growth in livestock production and a 16 percent rate of growth in coarse grains imports, including rapid growth in soybean imports for cake. Taiwan has switched from being a net exporter of cereals to importing 60 percent of consumption, mostly coarse grains.

Because livestock production provides a high factor share to labor, in low-wage countries, it is good development policy and good anti-poverty policy for foreign aid to emphasize technical assistance to the livestock industry. This need is reinforced because if relative cost of production rises, the relatively high price elasticity of demand will quickly shift consumption away from livestock and toward other, perhaps less labor-using, products. The highly variable performance of developing countries with respect to livestock production and feed use makes this a ripe field for economic research.

Yes, I agree with Michel Petit that debt is a major problem, although not particularly in Asia where the big growth has been in recent years—perhaps the latter proving the point. It seems to me that a populist approach to this issue, which has long attracted me in this context, is in effect now gaining ascendancy. One cannot, of course, expect an international bank to be innovative with respect to writing off debt!

I have two comments with respect to the availability of increased food aid and aid more generally to make a major attack on poverty in the context of increased knowledge of what to do. First, a major point in my argument is that development policy has been grossly distorted away from labor and hence food consumption—I argue for more food aid in the short run, but the real point is more food consumption. In that context, I doubt if the developed countries will feel reticent about their ability to produce it. As to more aid generally—that is a question of where the developed countries' priorities are. Note that in the Reagan administration, foreign aid doubled. Now the question is how it should be allocated. One could even ask if the context of national security goals has changed with the Gorbachev initiatives.

Humor

Rabbit Hunting With Econometricians

Three econometricians go rabbit hunting. They flush a rabbit. The first econometrician shoots about a foot in front of the rabbit. The second shoots about a foot in back of the rabbit. The third yells, "We got him!"

Contributed by William E. Kost, Assistant Director, Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division, ERS/USDA.

Share your fun with *CHOICES* readers by sending your jokes, puzzles, and similar items to Bill Kost, care of this magazine.

Finally, as Dan Shaughnessy notes, these are days when the foreign assistance community is overwhelmed by urbanization projections for developing countries. An agriculture-based development strategy will accelerate urbanization, not slow it. But it will distribute that urban population more widely geographically, not concentrate it in a single megalopolis. The way to get at the urban poverty problem is not directly, but through rural growth that accelerates employment creation in widely dispersed, rapidly growing market towns that will soon develop a life of their own. A concern for urban poverty must cause an increase in emphasis on the rural sector in countries that are substantially rural.

Editor's Note:

We are impressed how difficult it is for policymakers and program administrators to learn about new crises that merit their attention and how infrequent they hear when programs are working well.

Therefore, we welcome Hugh Martin's letter and invite others to write when they notice conditions to which government should be responsive and when these programs are being effectively implemented.

From: Hugh Martin

Chicago, IL

Re: "Hello! Is Anybody There? We Have An Aflatoxin Crisis!"

It does not happen very often, but when we have a crisis like a fire or a burglary in our home we know what to do and what to expect. We would call 911 and the operator would immediately dispatch the right number of police or firetrucks, depending upon the magnitude of the problem. It's reassuring to know that a branch of local government stands ready, willing and able to assist a person in need.

Apparently this model does not always work when the federal government is involved.

We are experiencing a crisis on our farm in Warren County in western Illinois. The elevators in a very wide area are rejecting from 60 percent to 80 percent of the corn delivered by farmers because of high aflatoxin levels. We are spending a fortune hauling, hauling back, screening and rehauling grain. We are not able to deliver on the forward contracts which were made. The morale of farmers is low because they do not know what to do and nobody is stepping forward, on either the state or federal level, to give any information or direction.

In contrast, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* report that aflatoxin is a very potent carcinogen produced by a mold that grows in stored grain. It is known that aflatoxin can cause liver cancer, that it is presently in the food chain, and that it usually appears after a drought.

There are many technical and policy questions. First let me list the questions that farmers are asking.

- It appears that aflatoxin levels decline when the fines are screened out of the corn. Should the fines be fed to livestock or should they be destroyed, and if so how?
- Are there any chemicals that can kill or limit the growth of aflatoxin?
- Once our bins are contaminated, what should be done with this year's harvest? Can the bins be cleaned?
- Will contamination increase during the warm summer months, and if so what levels of air should be circulated in the

bin to minimize the problem?

- What happens when new crop corn and rejected grain are mixed to lower the aflatoxin level?

- In screening out the fines, dust blows all over; is it safe to breathe this air and are we reinfesting our fields when we screen the fines?

With respect to policy there are other questions:

- What is the responsibility of our university, or State Department of Agriculture, and our USDA to respond to our "911 call about aflatoxin?"

- Is FDA, USDA, or some other agency making sure that aflatoxin is not contaminating the corn flakes and other food we buy in the grocery store?

- Who should bear the risk and the cost of keeping the food chain as clear of carcinogens as possible? Historically the food processor has the duty to recall any tainted food and he bore the cost of both the recall and any damage to the public. Being a farmer, I'd prefer for the government to cover the losses.

A crisis begins to recede as information flows. It has never been possible to contain a crisis by ignoring it. Crises do not disappear with news embargoes or by "news management." There are thousands of farmers who are suffering a loss of morale, who are confronted with rising costs, and who may be facing financial ruin if their grain cannot be sold. We feel we have a crisis and when we dial 911 we would like somebody to answer the phone.

AAEA FOUNDATION

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Funding of "Agriculture and Rural Viability" Research Proposed

A task force of the Experiment Station Committee on Policy and Organization (ESCOP) has proposed a program of research focused on the rural economy, rural families and rural communities. The task force of 20 agricultural economists, rural sociologists, home economists, and other scientists proposed funding of \$38 million the first year with increases to \$64 million by the third year. These would be new monies administered by USDA's Cooperative State Research Service. Most of the new program, when funded, will be competitive and special grants, rather than formula funds. In selecting projects for funding special emphasis will be placed on the multidisciplinary nature of the project and the team of investigators.

The target date for first year funding is FY 1991. This item is not in the President's FY 1990 budget now being considered by Congress. However, ESCOP is recommending an initial \$6 million for rural viability and plus another \$4 million for family well-being. Also, an implementation subcommittee and others continue to guide the funding proposal through the USDA and congressional budget processes.

James Zuiches, Director of the Agricultural Research Service at Washington State University led the Task Force. He also serves on the ESCOP Budget Committee and will chair the ESCOP Budget Committee as it prepares the 1991 federal budget request.

Copies of the task force report, *Agriculture and Rural Viability*, are available from the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, North Carolina State University, Raleigh 27695-8107.

*Contributed by Ronald C. Wimberley,
North Carolina State University.*

Humor

Looking For Black Cats

Being an economic historian is like looking for a black cat in a dark room. Being an economic theorist is like looking for a black cat in dark room when it isn't there. But being an econometrician is like looking for a black cat in a dark room when it isn't there and saying, "I found it!"

—Attributed to Jane Robinson

*Contributed by William E. Kost, Assistant Director,
Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division, ERS/USDA.*

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