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SUMMARIZING REMARKS

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A few weeks ago Dr. Christensen called and asked if I would serve as a 'summarizer' or roving gadfly that moves around from section to section harassing speakers and absorbing wisdom for later deposition as 'misinterpretations'. It is difficult for me to reject non-budgetary requests these days.

With five sections being held simultaneously it was impossible to attend more than 20 percent of all sessions. I moved around and listened to reports on varied subjects and, whether related to selection or something else, the presentations were very good. The quality was good and the speakers are to be applauded. It has been a most gratifying meeting and I am delighted to be a participant.

After reviewing the agenda of topics in each section meeting and listening to reports on land use planning using the empiric model, the need for a coordinated information system for natural resource planning, problems in implementing anti-poverty programs, a rural development project in Maine, water quality and income generation by recreationists and measurement of economic growth in Pennsylvania it is apparent that agricultural economists in Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada are modifying traditional teaching and research roles and adapting to a social system which is demanding even greater attention in what we once called non-agricultural areas. Manifestation of this adaptive process is found in the speeches we hear, the problem areas that we deliberately select to support with our limited research resources and over the last five to ten years I need not remind you of:

- (a) The number of Agricultural Economics Departments that have changes their names.
- (b) The number of Agricultural colleges that have changed their names.
- (c) The changes in course titles, course content and curricula being offered in recreation, planning, resource management, environmental quality, conservation economics, water economics and public finance and taxation.
- (d) New extension programs and structures.
- (e) Sea Grant Colleges and funds for studying our ocean resources.
- (f) Rural development centers including the one at Cornell.

On the strength of this evidence one might conclude that agriculturalists generally and agricultural economists specifically are exceptionally wise about social change or merely political pragmatists in professional garb. I judge their abilities as about average for social soothsayers and well above average as political pragmatists.

Quite candidly I am pleased to be a member of a profession that is indicating by action that it has the ability and capacity to adjust when evolutionary processes of social and economic growth demands that adjustments be made in the use of our teaching, research and extension resources. For many years economists pointed out the significance of consumer demand, resource supplies, mobility of resources, input mixes and substitutions among inputs. When one reflects upon the changes made in our teaching, research and extension programs over the last ten years it is readily apparent that agricultural economists have begun to demonstrate that professional talent can adjust to changing social priorities.

One can seriously ask: "Do we have the capacity to support these new ventures or do these new ventures simply represent fragmentation of professional talent, research, teaching and extension funds with anticipated low returns to our resources?" A review of the USDA bulletin on professional workers at the experiment stations, together with the recent note in our American Agricultural Economics Association Journal on memberships by states, indicates that professional talent in the Northeast is relatively scarce when compared to other areas of the nation. In view of the wide array of research areas being studied by agricultural economists in Northeastern United States, and the number of individuals to conduct the research, one should ask if concentration of effort on fewer problems areas would not lead to greater returns for our research resources. One might also ask if concentration of research programs among experiment stations would not lead to greater returns, e.g., regional experiment stations with limited objectives at each station.

A second perspective of these new ventures by agricultural economists might be entitled expansion of research, teaching and extension jurisdictions. When we note some of these new areas such as;

- _____ Community services
- _____ Land use planning in rural and urban areas
- _____ Recreation
- _____ Regional analysis
- _____ Rural development
- _____ Environmental quality

it is obvious that we are attempting to use our talents in what appears to be more meaningful social problem areas. In this process our motives as well as abilities are often questioned by those who are shop members in each area.

To establish 'position' in these new jurisdictions will be costly, frustrating, require time and patience, require theoretical developments, require better information systems and a desire to overcome what Veblen termed 'trained incapacity'. For example, some of the loudest cries for more and better quality data are coming from researchers in these new areas. In many of these areas such as outdoor recreation, environmental quality and especially community services we are operating without the theoretical guides that have traditionally kept agricultural economic researchers on the track of systematic additions to our store of knowledge. We must devote an increasing proportion of our energies to the development of theory in these new jurisdictions else our empirical research will be inadequately directed.

At the present time it often appears that researchers are riding off in all directions at the same time. One man observed that its anarchy gone wild with every person doing his own thing and little or no coordinated effort. No doubt there are elements of such behavior in our ranks but it is reassuring to observe that when economists reach out in this jurisdictional quest they carry along a 'bag of tricks' that seems to pop up with great frequency in their analytical reports in these new areas.

During the 1970 annual meeting of the American Economics Association, Professor Leontief observed that agricultural economists had a very healthy blend of theory, quantitative analysis and empirical research. Further, he observed that this blend had developed over a long period of time. In his words, our association with agronomists and animal scientists had been so close in our research efforts that when we noted the inputs of fertilizer for given product levels we knew what we were talking about. Dr. Leontief's words were kind, flattering but in larger measure well deserved by members of this profession. However, when we consider recent tendencies for fragmentation and jurisdictional expansion how long can we sustain the healthy blend of theory, quantitative analysis, and empirical research. In future time periods we must assess our input-output relationships in these new ventures. Will it be possible to evaluate our aggregative impact if the tendency toward fragmentation continues? If our theoretical structures are not strengthened? If the outputs we evaluate are not products but services and amenities? If we do not initiate processes for concentration of effort among problem areas and concentration of programs among experiment stations?

At this point I would like to shift the conversation to the 1973 meeting of the Northeastern Agricultural Economics Council. On behalf of the State of West Virginia, West Virginia University and The College of Agriculture and Forestry I cordially invite each of you, with your wives and children, to our campus in Morgantown, West Virginia for the 1973 meeting.

Professor Mary Templeton is in charge of local arrangements for the meeting and she has some material which she has brought along concerning

our city and state. We will try to be as gracious and charitable as our hosts here at Truro but it will be a little difficult to improve upon their hospitality. We have air conditioned residence housing and there are motels and hotels nearby. We have eight flights daily from Pittsburgh and two from Washington. Pennsylvania has a very good road network and we are seven miles from Pennsylvania.

We will be in communication with members of NAEC later on but for now have a safe trip home and visit West Virginia University at Morgantown during the 1973 annual meeting.