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DECISION-MAKING AND AGRICULTURE

PAPERS AND REPORTS

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OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

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Inauguration of Leonard Elmhirst Lecture

We have gathered today to honour the memory of our Founder-President, Leonard Knight Elmhirst.

Leonard Elmhirst was a man of great vision and initiative, a patron of the visual and performing arts as well as of the social sciences and a champion of the downtrodden and deprived all over the world. This last concern of his, in particular, prompted him to help the Indian poet-philosopher, Rabindra Nath Tagore, to initiate path-breaking experiments and studies in rural development in India, to undertake other valuable experiments in his own country and to establish the International Association of Agricultural Economists, of which he was the Founder-President for four decades.

I do not propose to take your time by going into the story of his unique life. A succinct account was published in the proceedings of our last Conference and many of you must be familiar with it.

I may briefly note, however, some crucial events in his remarkable career, which are of direct interest to our profession, namely, his first acquaintance with problems of under-developed agriculture during the First World War, his decision to study agricultural economics at Cornell University shortly thereafter, his close association with Tagore in setting up the Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan, India, his many faceted experiments in the arts, crafts, education and social sciences at Dartington Hall in England, his initiative in organising and developing the International Association of Agricultural Economists and P.E.F. (Political and Economic Planning), his assistance for the International Institute of Agrarian Affairs (which was effectively our Association's base for 40 years) and the Oxford Institute of Agricultural Economics and his constant endeavour to facilitate communication between agricultural economists working under different social systems.

Leonard Elmhirst and his contributions for the promotion of the science of agricultural economics will be remembered by the members of our Association with deep gratitude for ever.

He was a man of many parts with a special gift of friendship and inspiring people for great endeavour. He had a deep human concern and his constant exhortation to his fellow economists was that they should always keep "man" as the main focus of all their analysis. The message that he sent in August,

1973, to our last Conference held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, aptly expressed this basic approach of his. He wished "for lots of down to earth discussions at the grass roots with plenty of vision for the future, and with the boots of economists firmly rooted in the soil and their heads in the skies". "May the computers", he urged, "be kept properly in their place as servants of, and not masters over, humanity". He gave this Conference the broad humanist outlook that characterises it. What he sought to promote was the study not merely of the economics of agriculture but also of the political economy of agriculture.

It is not that all his widespread endeavours proved to be successful. He had his share of failures. But that never daunted him. He referred to his failures as "negative results", judging them as no less useful than "positive results" in any scientific experiment and cheerfully taking up new experiments. Even at the age of 80 when he died he was looking forward and not backward. He was one of the blessed few who are ever young at heart.

Your Executive Committee felt that the best way in which your Association could honour Leonard Elmhirst's memory would be to invite one of the world's outstanding agricultural economists to give in each of our Conferences a lecture to be known as the "Leonard Elmhirst Lecture", on some theme which would touch upon one of the key problems in the field of agriculture which was so close to Elmhirst's heart.

I have, therefore, the great privilege today of inviting the doyen of our profession, Professor Theodore W. Schultz, to deliver the first Leonard Elmhirst Lecture.

Professor Schultz was born in 1902 and obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1930. The same year he began his academic career as a teacher at the Iowa State College where he served as Professor of Agricultural Economics from 1934 to 1943. He joined the University of Chicago as Professor of Economics in 1943 and retired as the Charles L. Hutchinson Distinguished Service Professor in 1972. He has served with great distinction in many U.S. Government and international assignments in the field of agricultural economics and policy and travelled widely in both developed and developing countries. He has been President of the American Economic Association and Fellow of the American Farm Economics Association and a number of other important learned societies. His contribution to the development of the science of agricultural economics has been outstanding and his defence of academic values courageous. He is a pioneer among agricultural economists in emphasising and analysing the role of human capital. Among his many publications, special mention may be made of his books: *Redirecting Farm Policy*, *Agriculture in an Unstable Economy*, *Production and Welfare in Agriculture*, *The Economic Organisation of Agriculture*, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture*, *Economic Crisis in World Agriculture*, *Economic Growth and Agriculture*, *The Economic Value of Education and Investment in Human Capital*.

The theme on which Professor Schultz will be speaking today is "Economics, the Farm People and the Political Economy of Agriculture". There could not be a more appropriate subject for this first lecture instituted to honour the memory of Leonard Elmhirst.