



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

HELD AT
DARTINGTON HALL
TOTNES, DEVON, ENGLAND
AUGUST 26 TO SEPTEMBER 6, 1929

The Collegiate Press
GEORGE BANTA PUBLISHING COMPANY
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

1929

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN GREAT BRITAIN

SIR THOMAS MIDDLETON

DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, LONDON, ENGLAND

TOMORROW we are to have a description of agricultural education as organised in the County of Devon. Tonight I propose to outline very briefly the stages in the progress of agricultural education and research in Britain during the past 40 years. I should explain that my contribution is an "extra" in the Conference program. I have prepared no paper, I have few figures with me here, and must depend on memory for most of my statements.

Before outlining the rise of our British system of agricultural education I shall answer Mr. Elmhirst's question about the sources of funds available for research in this country. In the first place there are the Treasury grants to universities, distributed through a committee of which Sir William McCormick is chairman. These grants are for general university purposes, and enable the universities to maintain men and laboratories for research as well as for education. The funds specifically provided for research, in addition to the Research Fund of the Empire Marketing Board, which Mr. Dykes has just spoken of, are, (1) The Development Fund for agriculture, rural industries and fisheries, distributed by the treasury on the advice of the Development Commissioners, (2) funds for urban industries and general scientific purposes distributed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and (3) funds for medical research distributed through the Medical Research Council.

By far the largest part of the Development Fund goes to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in England and the Department of Agriculture in Scotland, who use it for maintaining research institutes and advisory centres, such as the Oxford Institute for Economics and the Seale Hayne College Advisory Centre in this county.

The first large sum of money provided by Britain for agricultural education became available by chance. About 40 years ago, a fund which had been provided by Parliament for a particular object, was not required for this purpose, so it was handed over to county councils with the recommendation that it should be used in part for providing agricultural education. Many, but not all, counties

took the advice and began to provide some form of instruction. Some counties combined to set up colleges like the S. E. Agricultural College, Wye, Kent, or the Yorkshire College, Leeds (now Leeds University). Others, like Devon and Cornwall, began formulating local schemes of education supervised from the county education office. There was in these early days no one system, and it was many years before the Board (now Ministry) of Agriculture succeeded in organising the system that now exists.

At an early stage the Board of Agriculture began making educational grants to the colleges and university departments which came into existence between 1890 and 1900, and these institutions made considerable progress. But the pioneers were confronted with great difficulties. At an earlier stage in this conference we learned that the forebodings of Malthus with respect to population have been falsified by experience, but his doctrine was literally borne out in the experience of the agricultural colleges of Britain. Their staffs (with increasing work) constantly pressed on the means of subsistence, and no head of a department who engaged a new worker could say how he was going to maintain him!

The hard struggles of the agricultural colleges were represented to the Board of Agriculture by an influential deputation that waited on the Board early in 1906. The result was a Departmental Committee, presided over by the late Lord Reay, which explored the position fully and made recommendations. The Board formulated demands for additional funds which were sent to the Treasury. At that time a well-known statesman was, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, pondering the details of a famous budget, the Budget of 1909. This statesman took the view that to give effect to a comprehensive policy of education and research a fund was necessary. The result was the Development Fund.

From 1890 onwards the Board of Agriculture was responsible for higher education (including research) at colleges. The Board of Education from 1902 onwards began to assist agricultural education in the counties. It was not until 1913 that the supervision of all forms of agricultural education was transferred to the Board of Agriculture. In 1910 and 1911 the Board of Agriculture, in consultation with the newly appointed development commissioners, were engaged in formulating schemes for extension of research and of the experimental work at colleges, and three schemes were drafted which are still in operation, as follows:

1. The first provided for a series of research institutes, one or more to deal with each main branch of agricultural science. There are now over twenty of these institutes at work in Britain.

2. The work of the research institute was national and it centred round a subject. There was a need for local investigation and for the services of scientists who could act as consultants to farmers and county officers. These scientific workers were provided by a scheme which stationed a group of them at suitably placed colleges and university departments, known for this purpose as advisory centres. There are now seventeen advisory centres in Britain. At first the appointments made were usually chemists, entomologists and mycologists, but later on other advisers were added, including economists. Nearly all the British economists present at this conference are attached to advisory centres.

3. The third scheme aimed at training investigators. Scholarships for post-graduate training were instituted, and a number of specialists were trained in this way. Professor Ashby, for example, was the first to receive a scholarship in the subject of economics.

After 1913 when supervision of county agricultural education was transferred, the Board of Agriculture took up the subject of improving the existing means for providing agricultural education in the counties of England and Wales. At first, grants for the purpose were made from the Development Fund, but in the post-war period the large extensions made in county educational work have been financed by direct grants voted by Parliament to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The nature of this county work will be explained by Mr. Ross with special reference to the County of Devon.

With respect to the expenditure on agricultural education and research, the two agricultural departments have at their disposal for the purpose about £600,000 of which half comes from the Development Fund and half from the Parliamentary Vote. It may interest you to know that about 10 per cent of the Development Fund grants, or £30,000 is expended on economic subjects, for the support of the Oxford Institute, and of the advisory centres. Of the educational fund about £122,000 goes in grants to colleges and £178,000 to county organizations. In addition to state grants, some colleges and university departments have endowments; as a rule these are quite small. The colleges and departments have also an income from fees. The county educational work is aided by

the local education authorities whose funds are derived from the rates, and from the "windfall" of 1890 already referred to. Including the income derived by colleges from all sources, and the money provided for agricultural purposes by county authorities, the annual expenditure on agricultural education and research in Great Britain may be roughly estimated at from £750,000 to £800,000 per annum.