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THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

CONFERENCES

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. ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

Fifth, 1938: MACDONALD COLLEGE, STE ANNE DE BELLEVUE, P.Q., CANADA.

THE International Conference of Agricultural Economists is almost exactly ten years of age on the date on which this journal goes to press. It was informally inaugurated during the summer of 1929 when fifty economists from eleven countries met for two weeks at Dartington Hall, Devon, England, on the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Elmhirst. For those who had the opportunity of attending that conference, it is a treasured memory, and the atmosphere of the discussions and the community life in rural surroundings have established a tradition which, despite the necessary flexibility of outlook which the changes of time and increasing numbers require, has stamped all subsequent conferences with a distinctive quality.

In the following year, a second conference on a larger scale was held at Cornell University, U.S.A., and an organization was formed and given officers and a constitution for the carrying on of future conferences. Since then conferences have been held as shown above; in Germany in 1934, in Scotland in 1936, and in Canada in 1938. The organization has steadily increased its membership until the total is now 476, in which 34 countries are represented, and in other ways is in contact with nearly all countries where the study of agricultural economics is established.

When one looks back on these conferences, it is a significant fact in itself that the organization has contrived successfully to hold an international conference on an average every second year, three in Europe and two in North America. The demand for so frequent conferences has come from the members, an evidence first of a great broadening of the outlook on the subject and second of the special quality and appeal which these conferences have had.

Agricultural economics has been accused of being a narrowly parochial subject on the ground that farming is a business very materially governed by local conditions and therefore the study of the business of farming is a localized study. Nothing can be further from the truth to-day as a description of agricultural economics. As a matter of historical record it is true that the study and teaching of a science of management in farming has been in most countries the starting-point of a special class of agricultural economists. Agricultural economics has, however, travelled a good way beyond that stage. The development

has been a two-way movement. On the one hand, there has been rapid recognition of the fact that the economics of the farm business stretches far and in devious ways outside the boundaries of the individual farm, and as a result there has been stretching out from the centre of farm management an ever widening study of the factors which lie outside, e.g. marketing, credit, taxation, and so on. On the other hand, there has been a movement from the opposite direction, whereby men working in other fields of economic study have become increasingly concerned with the place of agriculture in these problems. In the past two decades—and even more recently in some countries—there has been a closer combination of these two developments to form a much broader interpretation of agricultural economics and a widening of the horizons of agricultural economists.

Coincident with rapid broadening of the scope of agricultural economics, there have been rapid changes in agriculture itself and more particularly in the political economy of agriculture. The late Dr. G. F. Warren, welcoming the Second Conference at Cornell University, pointed out:

'We are dealing with a new subject, or set of subjects, in which progress has been extremely rapid in recent years. It is important, therefore, that the workers in this field meet each other so that we may know the other man's work and know what manner of man he is. Agriculture is going through a revolution comparable to the industrial revolution. Farming that follows tradition was never before so out of adjustment with what is needed. National policies respecting agriculture which are based on past experiences were never before so out of line with needs of the times. Research work must be pushed actively. National and international conferences are needed for the presentation of results of research for the guidance of future research, and for the stimulus of renewed activity which comes from discussion.'

Professor H. C. M. Case, addressing the same meeting, said:

'It is highly significant that this conference and its predecessor in England a year ago have come into being. They 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. It carries a pertinent suggestion of the best means of meeting other and more serious international problems.'

It is this extension of the sphere of interest which made the International Conference of Agricultural Economists almost inevitable, while the world conditions of the past ten years have quickened the concern to discuss problems internationally despite the growing phase of isolation in national economics.

In addition to the demand for the opportunities of widening the field of the subject to foreign conditions, there has been a special quality and appeal about these conferences which has captured and maintained the support of those

who have attended them. The special features of the Conference are described in the President's Preface to the *Proceedings of the Third Conference*.

'Chief among these, in the minds of those who took part, was the free and unprejudiced manner in which the Conference discussed problems which have in recent years caused acute disagreement among nations, such as the protection of a nation's agriculture in face of the depression in agricultural importing countries, international debt and monetary problems, and the development of regional trade agreements. The success of the Third Conference in this respect was all the more gratifying since the programme was designed to deal exclusively with matters of national and international policy.

'It is one of the most valuable characteristics of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists that, while the subjects with which it has to deal have come more and more within the sphere of politics and government control in recent years, its membership is composed of individuals and academic societies, and not of official representatives of governments, although the Conference numbers several past and present Ministers of Agriculture and many distinguished public officials among its members. This scientific and non-political character of the Conference is a feature which it is most necessary to preserve, especially since the matters for discussion have social and political as well as economic and scientific implications.'

And again from the Preface to the *Proceedings of the Fourth Conference*:

'Government policy is everywhere concerned with the status of agriculture. Swift steps have been taken which completely change the old outlook and procedures governing the production and sale of farm products, and national and international planning shifts the channels of trade between countries.

'Behind all this movement there must be a fundamental striving towards economic security and a betterment of standards of living, in which agriculture cannot take an exclusive place, but in which it must play no small part. In fact the agricultural economist is faced with an immense task and an immense responsibility. The problems of to-day demand the most objective recording, scrutiny, and comparison, not only in the economic sphere but in the relation of their economic aspects to the other aspects of human welfare, social, psychological, humanistic, and aesthetic as well. From one country to another, problems which appear totally dissimilar may have many basic factors in common. Problems which appear local or national in their significance may have repercussions in the most unforeseen parts of the world's economy.'

The papers and discussions of all five conferences have been recorded and published in the *Proceedings of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists*. These volumes are in themselves a small library of world-wide interest on agricultural economics, illustrating as they do in a marked degree the immense and varied scope of the subject. Over 200 agricultural economists from 27 countries have contributed to these volumes, and the contributors also include famous names from other fields of economics and science.

A list of the volumes with summarized contents is as follows:

Proceedings of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists

FIRST CONFERENCE, 1929: published by the George Banta Publishing Co., Wisconsin, U.S.A. *Pp.* ix+353.

Summary of Contents: Papers and discussion from various countries on:

The Agricultural Situation.

Land Tenure.

Agricultural Co-operation.

Research Methods in Farm Management and the Marketing of Farm Products.

SECOND CONFERENCE, 1930: published by the George Banta Publishing Co., Wisconsin, U.S.A. *Pp.* xi+1079.

This volume contains 83 papers dealing with problems in 16 countries (U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, G.B., Germany, Denmark, Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, U.S.S.R., China, Japan, India, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand).

Among the subjects dealt with by several papers were: The Agricultural Depression, Agricultural Policies, Land Utilization, Agricultural Co-operation and Marketing, Agricultural Credit and Insurance, The Application of the Science of Agricultural Economics.

(The first two volumes of PROCEEDINGS are obtainable in Canada and U.S.A. from C. E. LADD, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N.Y., U.S.A. Elsewhere from the Secretary, J. R. CURRIE, ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT (RESEARCH), DARTINGTON HALL, TOTNES, DEVON, ENGLAND.)

THIRD CONFERENCE, 1934: published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London. *Pp.* xi+498.

The contents of this volume are divided into four sections:

SECTION 1. NATIONAL POLICIES IN AGRICULTURE—THE FORMS, STAGES, AND LIMITS OF PLANNED ECONOMY.

(Countries dealt with, G.B., Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Holland, Danubian Countries, India, Canada, U.S.A.).

SECTION 2. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FARM ORGANIZATION.

(Sub-sections, (a) The Small Farm System, (b) Collectivist Farming.)

SECTION 3. INTERNATIONAL POLICIES RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

(Sub-sections, (a) International Money and Credit Problems, (b) International Trade Policies, (c) International Planning of Supply and Protection.)

FOURTH CONFERENCE, 1936: published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London. *Pp.* xii+528.

The contents include:

A. Papers with extended discussion on the following main subjects:

1. THE RELATIONS OF AGRICULTURE TO INDUSTRY AND THE COMMUNITY.
2. THE RELATIONS OF LAND TENURE TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE.
3. FARM ORGANIZATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NEEDS OF TECHNICAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE.
4. PROBLEMS OF CONSUMPTION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.
5. THE PROVISION OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT.

B. Group Discussions on:

1. Commercial Policy and the Outlook for International Trade in Agricultural Products.
2. Problems of Milk Marketing Regulation.
3. Part-Time Holdings for Urban Workers.

C. Papers without discussion on the following subjects:

The Agricultural Situation in Belgium.
Compulsory Syndicates for Regulating Agricultural Prices
The Natural Products Marketing Act in British Columbia.
Government Regulation of Public Utilities in the United States.
Relation of Meat Production and Consumption to Farm Income from Livestock in the United States.
The Work of the Agricultural Service of the International Labour Office.
The Evolution of the American Family Farm.
Changes in Chinese Currency and their Effect upon Commodity Prices.

FIFTH CONFERENCE, 1938: published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London. *Pp.* xiv+436.

The Contents include:

Papers with extensive discussion on the following main subjects:

- (1) THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN PRESENT DAY AGRICULTURE.
- (2) LAND TENURE AND THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF THE USE OF LAND.
- (3) FARM LABOUR AND SOCIAL STANDARDS.
- (4) INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN RELATION TO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

These four sections occupy 290 pages.

Papers without discussion on the following subjects :

- Some Economic Aspects of Agriculture in Argentina.
- Recent Changes in New Zealand's Economic Policy.
- Agricultural Co-operation in Canada.
- The Mexican Agrarian Reform.
- National and Local Taxation in Rural Areas.
- The Land Tenure of the Western Slavs.
- Recent Agricultural Experience in Eire.

Volumes 3, 4, and 5 are obtainable from the publishers through all booksellers. The volumes may be purchased direct in Canada and U.S.A. from C. E. LADD, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N.Y., U.S.A., and elsewhere from the secretary J. R. CURRIE, ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT (RESEARCH), DARTINGTON HALL, TOTNES, DEVON, ENGLAND.

Volume 5 is sent free of charge to all persons joining the International Conference for the current period. (For particulars see Inside Back Cover). Earlier volumes can be purchased by members at reduced rates.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

President: L. K. ELMHIRST, England

Secretary and Treasurer: J. R. CURRIE, England

*Sixth Conference to be held in Hungary
August, 1941*

THE OBJECT of the Conference is that of fostering development of agricultural economics and of furthering the application of the results of economic investigation of agricultural processes and agricultural organization in the improvement of economic and social conditions relating to agriculture and rural life.

MEMBERSHIP is open to all individuals interested in the above objects. The majority of members are agricultural economists engaged in research, teaching, or public administration, but the membership is representative of a wide range of other agricultural and economic interests.

THE MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION is £1, Rm 20, \$ 5, or the equivalent of £1 in other currencies. The subscription is not annual but is for the Conference period which is defined as the period from the end of one Conference to the end of the next. The current Conference period is three years and will end approximately at the beginning of September, 1941. Members for the current Conference period receive the volume of Proceedings of the last Conference. Earlier volumes can be purchased by members at reduced prices.

MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE will obtain free of charge all the numbers published of this Journal from the date of payment of their subscriptions for the current Conference period.

ALL INQUIRIES, applications for membership, &c. should be sent to the Secretary, J. R. CURRIE, ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT. (RESEARCH), DARTINGTON HALL, TOTNES, DEVON, ENGLAND.

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