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FOREWORD

By L. K. ELMHIRST

President of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists

I AM particularly glad to welcome the reappearance of the *International Journal of Agrarian Affairs.*

In the summer of 1939 I contributed a Foreword to Vol. I, No. 1, of the *Journal.* Before even the copies were delivered from the press war had been declared, and for seven years it has been impossible to continue publication. As the sign of a returning peace and of re-established international contacts, the reappearance of the *Journal* should be welcome in a world where hostilities have ceased but where peace has yet to be discovered.

For a *Journal* of this kind in the post-war world there is ample scope. The economic problems of the world's agriculture are not a whit less numerous or less important than they were. They are indeed more conspicuous and more urgent than ever. Since the International Conference last met in Canada in 1938, all kinds of new institutions, national and international, have been invented to grapple with day-to-day problems and the practical issues. Never before have agricultural economists been drawn into the fields of administration and of politics to such an extent, with the result that from now on they are likely to be expected to share an increasing responsibility in matters requiring statesmanship, national and international. It will be one of the tasks of this *Journal*, as of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists, to maintain contact between these greatly widened spheres of activity and the functions of teaching and research in which, before the war, most agricultural economists were engaged. It has never been the policy of the Conference to restrict either membership or the invitation to participate in its proceedings to those who were agricultural economists by training or experience, let alone to those who were employed professionally as agricultural economists. Membership has always been open to anyone who had a keen and direct interest in the wide field embraced by agricultural economics and who was internationally minded enough to realize that the problems of meeting the needs of humanity as well as of those of the farmer and worker on

the land were problems which neither respect nor adhere to national boundaries. It is, then, the aim of this *Journal* to catch and hold that part of the minds of agricultural economists which is seeking objectively beyond the daily task to a deeper understanding of the fundamental agrarian problems. Neither the Conference nor the *Journal* can hope to participate directly in the solution of problems of state which official international organizations are specifically created and equipped to attack. But by being independent of official commitments, by being truly objective, by seeking a real understanding of the factors which influence national policies, they can the more effectively clear and prepare the ground out of which, one day, true international accord may grow. It is the responsibility and privilege of academic institutions to uphold such an independence and detachment of outlook in research, in teaching, and in extension work, but all thoughtful men to-day wish themselves to shoulder some of that responsibility. They know that they have from their own experience something to contribute even when their working lives are spent in harassing and urgent affairs of politics and economics, far away from the life of wider margins and horizons which must return in full measure to the Universities in times of peace.

The objective which the Editor outlined in his Note in Vol. I, No. 1, is as important to-day as it was when it was written:

'Many of the problems of the economic and social conditions of agriculture are common to all countries. They may be present in greater or less degree in some types of countries than in others, and everywhere the forms and manifestations may vary, but the problems are international in the sense that they are fundamental issues in the agricultural economy of all countries.

'These are the problems which will be the subject-matter of this *Journal*. The aim is to emphasize the universal concern with the solution of similar, and sometimes identical, problems. Ultimately, it is on the international understanding of these basic problems that the firmness and security of international relations will depend.

'The intention is to have them discussed from all possible angles. The angles necessarily vary according to differing lines of academic and political thought, differing national or racial circumstances, political and social as well as economic, and so on. The aim in the first place is to emphasize the universality of the essential problem, to indicate its various forms and implications, and then to outline various efforts at solution.

'While the contributions will necessarily include useful and important facts and figures pertaining to the various problems, the *Journal* is designed as a forum for international discussion and not as a statistical year-book or encyclopaedia of agricultural information. International publications of the latter kind are already available, published by institutions infinitely better equipped for the purpose.

As an essential complement to the fact and figures there is need for international discussion of fundamental problems, and it is this need which the *International Journal of Agrarian Affairs* hopes to satisfy in some measure.'

The reappearance of the *Journal* is particularly welcome at this time, because in the autumn of this year the International Conference of Agricultural Economists will resume activities with a Preparatory Conference to be held in England. For a number of reasons the attendance will have to be restricted to less than 100, as compared with a pre-war attendance of several hundreds, but it is likely that more countries will be represented than ever before. The present intention is that this Conference, while engaging in a two-week programme of discussion, will review proposals for the future operation of the Conference as well as for holding a full meeting in 1948 or 1949.

The production of this *Journal* will, as in the past, be the responsibility of the Institute of Agrarian Affairs, University of Oxford, and the Editor is Mr. J. P. Maxton, Director of the Institute.