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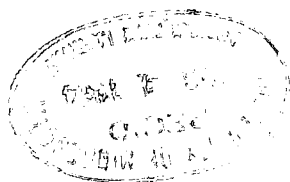
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**The Changes of Eight
Years in Agricultural
Economics**



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The Changes of Eight Years in Agricultural Economics

INTRODUCTION

THE war which filled the years since the first, and last, number of this *Journal* was published was a war of movement for many agricultural economists, as it was in the military sense. Duties involving new approaches, forcing speedy readjustments, and bearing unfamiliar responsibilities, took them to many new countries as well as to unfamiliar parts of their own. Yet, as the years passed, agricultural economists everywhere were increasingly conscious of a feeling of isolation from their professional fellows, even in their own countries. Partly it was because there was less travelling, except for official duties, and fewer occasions for meeting. But it was partly, too, because everyone was too much absorbed in the immediate tasks and the current anxieties to think about what his colleagues were engaged on.

Upwards of seven years is quite a space of a human life. In the ten years from 1929 when the first International Conference of Agricultural Economists ever to be held took place until 1939, five conferences were held at which those taking part were able to discuss their common problems and learn of each other's work. The contrast of those five conferences in ten years with the seven blank years since is very sharp, and the general knowledge of one another's daily work would have slumped for that reason alone.

But, in addition, there have been great changes in the outlook and emphasis of research workers, which render some of our previous knowledge obsolete. The changes, as they affect research projects and research technique, are perhaps not as numerous or so fundamental as might have been expected, but there has everywhere been a quickening of interest and a probing into new avenues.

Since this *Journal* is primarily designed to meet the needs of agricultural economists, we have thought to bridge the gap of war years

by devoting this number to an assessment of the developments which have been brought about in this field of study since 1938, when the last International Conference of Agricultural Economists was held.

Although the authors were set the same theme, each for his own country, it will be found that the articles are not written to formula. There are differences of approach and emphasis. That is to be expected when the countries differ so widely in their stage of development of agricultural economics studies as, for example, U.S.A. and India. There are also differences arising from the degree of absorption in war effort.

The variations of emphasis, however, are a matter of interest in themselves, for example, the keen interest in some cases and the comparative neglect in others of the problem of the relation of academic and official departments to one another and of both with the acts of governments, the attendant problems of financing investigations and research institutions, and so on.

The length of a journal article is too short for anything like a full outline and assessment for any one country. Where the authors were asked to embrace all the activities in a whole country, they have rightly complained that it is all too short, and that in any case they could not be expected to be personally familiar with all aspects of the wide field. Some tolerance is asked for the authors in that respect, although that is not to suggest by any means that apology is needed for their work. In the case of the U.S.A. the enormous development of studies there compared with any other country merited some special procedure. It was decided there to divide the total field into four well-established divisions and to invite a specialist in each group to contribute an article on it. Even then, considering the amount of work done, the opportunity allowed to each to expand his outlines was all too restricted.

This number covers only a few countries. It may be possible at a later date to devote another number to the work of other countries. The Editor will be glad to receive information on the subject from countries not dealt with in these articles.