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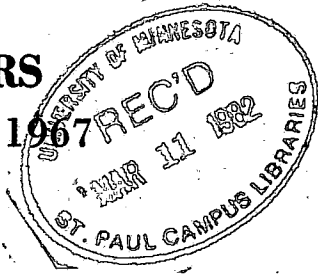
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**Reports of Discussion
Groups at the
International Conference
of Agricultural Economists
Sydney, August 1967**

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FOREWORD

THE Thirteenth International Conference of Agricultural Economists, held in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, in August 1967 was the first to be held in the southern hemisphere. It carried further the development in the organization which has been taking place in the course of recent conferences. This had the general aim of giving more opportunities for close discussion and for contact between members, the latter being important with conferences of 500 or more participants. A programme of discussion periods outside the main conference sessions was introduced at the Mysore Conference in 1958 under the guidance of Dr. Harry C. Trelogan. This was extended and developed at the Cuernavaca, Mexico, Conference in 1961 and at Lyon, France, in 1964.

The whole body of conference participants was divided between about twenty to twenty-five discussion groups in these sessions. Furthermore, provision was made on the programme for each group to meet several times on its allotted subject and the subjects assigned to them invited concentrated study on quite narrow fields. Consequently it was possible for discussions to be pressed to greater depth than those in full session, for members to make repeated contributions as the discussion progressed, and for members to get to know other members of their group rather closely.

These arrangements for discussion groups were continued at the 1967 Conference in Sydney. At this conference it was associated with extended provision for discussion in bigger groups which was provided by dividing the participants into four sub-groups for a considerable part of the conference. The Discussion Group programme at Sydney was arranged by Mr. Emerson Brooks.

In the 1958, 1961, and 1964 conferences provision was made for summary reports of the discussions of the groups to be given to a plenary session at the end of the Conference. The 1961 and 1964 reports were also published in an issue of the *International Journal of Agrarian Affairs* under the general title of 'Contemporary Problems in the Economics of Agriculture' as Volume III, No. 3 and Volume IV, No. 6 respectively. For the Sydney conference it was decided to provide, as before, for a short summary report to be prepared of each Group's discussion. They were not given to the Conference, but they are contained in the present issue of the *Journal*.

It is clearly impossible to compress into less than one thousand words the contents of eight hours or more of vigorous discussion. In

a lively session there might be initial exploration of a whole range of facets and deep penetration of only a few. One participant may value the stimulus of the wide range, another of the depth. It is unlikely that any two members would be wholly in agreement on the correct balance of emphasis in any such summary. Nevertheless, the reports provide the general reader with a useful review of 'contemporary problems in the economics of agriculture' as they strike a group of agricultural economists of diverse training and experience from fifty or more countries, and the reader who has the insight of the specialist will see many pointers to the state of the subject.

Though the reports of the group discussions at the two previous conferences have been likewise extremely compressed the issues of the *Journal* containing them have clearly been highly valued by members. What each participant gained from the group discussion was something very personal to his own interests. No doubt the regard with which the published reports are held stems from particular interests too.

The participants are very much in the debt of Mr. Emerson Brooks who organized the Discussion Groups and to the Local Conference Organizers in Sydney for providing convenient meeting places for so many gatherings. The efficiency of Mr. Brooks's organization has made it possible to send the complete edited issue to press very shortly after the end of the conference.

The *Proceedings* of the conference are in preparation and will be published in due course. Readers will remember that the 'theme' paper of the conference, 'The Economist and Farm People in a Rapidly Changing World', appeared as Volume V, No. 2 of the *Journal* in May 1967.

THE EDITOR