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K. William Easter

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#### BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

AT

### THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

# "COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCE OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SINCE WORLD WAR II"

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### INTRODUCTION

When we selected the general theme of the Seminar, little did we realise what we were taking upon ourselves. Even when the Outline was prepared, it was still comparatively easy. But when we started collecting the material which was to serve as background information for Seminar discussions, the pile grew in a frightening proportion. Apart from the expanse of the geographical coverage of the theme, the variety and the complexity of the issues which have a bearing on agricultural development was so immense that it shook our confidence in our competence to prepare a set of background papers which could provide a meaningful framework for Seminar discussions. Yet, the fascination with the theme persisted, and we went ahead with the task.

Since the end of World War II, agriculture in the developing countries has gone through startling vicissitudes, watched with a mingling of hope and despair by the world community of scholars from many disciplines. Economists generally like to fish in troubled waters and the waters were undoubtedly troubled for the lethargic to agriculture provide a large catch. Within a few weeks, my office roomand home—were brimful with the catch—books and articles—and smelt of nothing but agriculture. It was then that we took fright and started a process of jettisoning. Geographical coverage was the first casualty: The developing countries whose agricultural problems we shall discuss would be only the countries of Asia and the Far East. After a further

painful process of elimination—in which my two colleagues Dr. C.H. Shah and Dr. V.M. Rao assisted with broader brooms, more courage—and less compassion—we were left with a selection of about 75 articles and extracts, estimated by my very efficient steno—typist to run into 2000 mimeographed pages. As you will see, we had to settle at about 20 extracts of 500 pages. At that stage, decisions became arbitrary and the sense of priority and relevance got weakened, and I must personally accept the responsibility for errors of judgment and omissions.

But this is not the end of the process, and we hope, with the active co-operation from the participants, we shall be able to improve and expand the selection.

Finally, we wish to thank the authors and publishers for the permission to reproduce the extracts.

Bombay 1st October, 1971

M.L. Dantwala

### CONTENTS

			Page No
	Introduction	M.L. Dantwala	1
1.	Environmental, Technological and Institutional Factors in the Growth of Rice Production - Philippines, Thailand and Taiwan	S.C. Hsieh and V.W. Ruttan	5
2.	Agricultural Producti- vity Differences Among Countries	Yujiro Hayami and V.W. Ruttan	25
3.	U.S. Malinvestments in Food for the World	Theodore W. Schultz	51
4.	India's Agricultural Performance: Achieve- ments, Distortions and Ideologies	Michael Lipton	75
5.	The Functions of Agri- cultural Prices in Economic Development	John W. Mellor	99
6.	Intersectoral Terms of Trade and Marketed Surplus of Agricultu- ral Produce, 1951-52 to 1965-66	R. Thamarajakshi	129
7.	Land Reform and Development	Doreen Warriner	157
8.	Agrarian Reform in Asia	Wolf Ladejinsky	173
9.	Evaluation of Land Reforms	M.L. Dantwala and C.H. Shah	181
10.	Small Farmers Develop- ment Agency: Outline of a Programme of Action	B. Venkatappiah	215

		<u>Pa</u>	ge No.
11.	Farm Production Credit in Changing Agricul- ture : Conclusions	B.M. Desai and D.K. Desai	243
12.	Attitudes Toward Agri- cultural Marketing in Asia and the Far East	G.R. Spinks	257
13.	Environmental and Other Factors Influen- cing the Performance of New High Yielding Varieties of Wheat and Rice in Asia	Randolph Barker and Mahar Mangahas	287
14.	Some Questions Concer- ning Growth, Transfor- mation and Planning of Agriculture in the Developingt Countries	K.N. Raj	307
15.	Opportunities in the Green Revolution	B. Sen	347
16.	The Employment Impli- cations of the Green Revolution	Robert D'A. Shaw	377
17.	The Effect of Techno- logy on Farm Employ- ment in India	Martin H. Billings and Arjan Singh	393
18.	Agricultural Mechani- zation in South Asia	Ronald G. Ridker	411
19.	Production Opportuni- ties in Asian Agricul- ture: An Economist's Agenda	T.W. Schultz	421