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A Profit in Our Own Country

RECORD OF A SEMINAR CONDUCTED BY THE CRAWFORD FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, MAY 17 1994

EDITOR: JANET LAWRENCE



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Closing Remarks

RT HON. J.D. ANTHONY

It is all too easy when considering issues concerned with the Third World, the environment, and overseas aid, to exaggerate or to over-simplify, to become either emotional or cynical, to preach doomsday or to bury one's head in the sands of blind optimism. A major aim of the Crawford Fund is to encourage a reasoned and balanced attitude soundly based on the available evidence, with a readiness to modify that attitude as new evidence is published. I do not think that we could have had a better example of this reasoned and balanced attitude than the papers that have been presented today together with the outstanding summary statement by Dr Geoff Miller.

As I remarked at the outset, it is important that we should understand the enormous benefits that come to Australia as a consequence of our involvement in international agricultural research. At the same time, however, we must never forget that these benefits are secondary to the main aim—which is to help raise the quality of life of those who today are suffering indescribably from poverty, hunger, disease and utter hopelessness.

Hope and progress for these deprived people begins with the development of their agriculture and rural industries. This is why we keep stressing the critical role of research in developing the improved and sustainable technologies which constitute the basis of agricultural development. In arguing that aid policies in Australia and throughout the world should give higher priority to agricultural research and development, we are not merely pushing a particular sectoral interest.

Agriculture is not called a primary industry for nothing. In poor communities or countries, improvements in agriculture have widespread economic and social consequences, which lead to better health and nutrition, an improved status for

women, smaller families, higher personal incomes, better education and national economic growth. Now is not the time to review the evidence for all this—perhaps we will do that in a future seminar—but I can assure you that there is no doubt about it. And this is what puts aid for agriculture into a different category to aid for, say, health, or education, or women's affairs. Of course all these things are important and deserve our support—but they simply do not make the widespread, seminal impacts on social and economic development that agriculture does.

My final task is to thank all those people and agencies whose hardwork and cooperation have combined to make this such a successful occasion.

We are immensely grateful to all those who have spoken and chaired sessions throughout the day. I want particularly to mention Earl Kellogg, Jim Ryan, Tony Fischer and Peter Kerridge who have come such vast distances to speak to us. They, like all the other speakers, are extremely busy people and their willingness to give us so much time to support our efforts is a reflection of how they assess the importance of this topic.

We could not have run today's seminar without the excellent cooperation of AIDAB, the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, and ACIAR, and we warmly appreciate such wholehearted support.

Ladies and Gentlemen—I hope that you have enjoyed the day as much as I have. I thank you all again for coming, and I declare the seminar closed.

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