

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

HELD AT
DARTINGTON HALL
ENGLAND
28 AUGUST TO 6 SEPTEMBER 1947

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS volume¹ is printed from a verbatim record of the speeches delivered at the Sixth International Conference. They were subject to revision by the speakers and by the Editor, but apart from verbal corrections the aim has been to keep as closely as possible to the actual proceedings.

The published record differs, however, from the chronological order of the programme. There were five subjects, to each of which one whole day's discussion was allocated. These subjects were taken on the first, second, fifth, seventh, and ninth days of the Conference. On the intervening days, papers were read, and on these only a short time was allowed for questions and comments. In this published volume, it has been convenient to group all the five main subjects together first. The non-discussion papers follow irrespective of the time at which they were delivered.

By this arrangement, it may appear that a speaker is made to refer to a paper which comes later in the volume, but this is not a serious matter.

A photograph, with key, of the members and visitors attending the Conference is placed between p. 484 and the register of attendance on p. 485.

The Editor wishes to thank the transcribing staff for their work in having all speeches ready in typescript on the evening the Conference closed; to the clerical staff of the Institute of Agrarian Affairs for all the secretarial work involved; and all speakers who so promptly revised and returned the transcripts from divers parts of the world.

¹ This is the sixth volume of the *Proceedings of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists*. Volumes i and ii of the *Proceedings*, reporting the First and Second Conferences, held in 1929 and 1930, were published by George Banta Publishing Company, Menasha, Wisc., U.S.A., 1930. Volumes iii, iv, and v, reporting the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Conferences, held in 1934, 1936, and 1938, were published by the Oxford University Press, 1935, 1937, and 1939.

Copies of all five volumes are obtainable from J. R. Currie, Research Dept. (Economics), Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England; and in Canada and the United States of America from F. F. Hill, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

Particulars of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists, its constitution, and a list of officers, members, and correspondents in the various countries will be found on pp. 489-504.

OPENING PROCEEDINGS

THE proceedings being opened by the ringing of the Cow-bell, the President read a letter from the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing regret that Russian representatives would be unable to participate in the Conference. Messages of greeting were read to the Conference from Professor Case, Illinois; Dr. Elazari Volcani, Palestine; Dr. Jack Booth, Ottawa; Professor J. D. Black, Harvard; Professor Benedict, California; Professor Perregaux, Connecticut; Dr. T. Schultz, Chicago; Dr. Brdlik, Prague; Sir John Boyd Orr, Director of F.A.O., and Dr. Tolley, Economics and Statistics Division, F.A.O.

The Earl of Huntingdon then welcomed the Conference on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

EARL OF HUNTINGDON, *Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture*

I am very pleased that I was able to accept the invitation to come here to-day. Most of you have come from far parts of England and some from very different countries, but you all have one thing in common—that is, a deep knowledge and profound interest in agriculture—and for that reason I particularly wish to welcome you here on behalf of both His Majesty's Government and myself and to wish you the greatest success in your discussions and deliberations. I think it is very appropriate that for the first time this Conference has met again since the war it should be at Dartington, a centre which is extremely congenial and well known, and in the county of Devon which, after all, is one of our most beautiful agricultural counties. Certainly if environment can do anything at all it should inspire this Conference to great efforts and results.

Unfortunately there is another side to the picture, for you are meeting in extremely critical days for this country. It might almost be true to say that never since medieval times, when the Black Death ravished this country from top to bottom, and, leaving us with no agricultural labourers at all, threatened our very existence, have we faced such a difficult situation as we have to face now. The Government considers that the way out of the situation is to concentrate on the two basic industries, coal and agriculture, and these have become the keys to the door which will lead us out of the dreadful situation in which we find ourselves. Therefore it is most appropriate, I think, that you are meeting here to discuss the fundamental

problems which we must solve if we are going to rebuild our life and emerge from the post-war crisis, as I am convinced we shall do.

The Conference will perhaps want me to say a few words on what we are doing for agriculture, and the Government's attitude towards the industry in this extremely difficult time. We are planning to do two things. The first is to pursue a long-term policy embodied in the Agriculture Bill—which has just been through Parliament and has become an Act. In the Act we have tried to do two things for agriculture. We mean to give the farmers security, guaranteed markets, and guaranteed prices as one side of the picture. On the other side, we aim to ensure that farmers shall follow their practice with the maximum efficiency. For the first, we have our price reviews. Every February the Government meets the industry, discusses the problem fully in the light of figures which are produced by impartial economists. After those very full discussions a decision is taken on what shall be the prices eighteen months ahead for cereals and other important crops which this country produces. In the case of livestock and livestock products the decision is taken as to what shall be the minimum prices two to four years ahead. No industry can really want more in the way of security. Against that we have taken steps in the Act whereby a farmer who cannot, or will not, increase his efficiency can be dispossessed from his holding. If no good effects result from a simple warning that his farming is below standard then he may be put under supervision for a minimum period of a year. If at the end of that time no improvement is shown, the Minister's agents can recommend that he should be dispossessed. He then has a right of appeal to an outside tribunal. Some of you may think that those are very harsh measures, but I ask you to remember that our area of land is very limited. We really have very little land for our large population, and in these days we cannot possibly afford to allow any of this land not to be used to the best possible advantage, and, therefore, we have considered that where land is being used inefficiently it must pass to another user who will make good use of it.

Those are the two main ideas of our policy in the Act. The products for which prices are guaranteed comprise 75 per cent. of the agricultural products in the United Kingdom, and all the essential products are covered. Unfortunately we have not yet been able to work out a system for horticulture. Owing to the extreme complexity of the industry and the perishability of the produce, it is not easy to guarantee a fixed market and fixed prices, but we are

examining the question and we do hope that eventually something can be done to help the horticultural industry.

The other thing that we have done is to build up an organization called the National Agricultural Advisory Service, which is designed to carry advice to farmers throughout the country. This has only just begun; it is in fact going through its first growing-pains as a rather big service, but we believe that ultimately the Service will revolutionize farming methods. When the individual farmer meets some problem, some disease, whether it be in his crops or his livestock, he can go to the local officer of the Service and ask him for advice. If the local officer cannot help he can refer the problem to the regional organization, and that in turn may refer it direct to the research laboratory at Cambridge or Reading, or wherever it may be. In this way the latest results of scientific research can be brought direct to the farmer. We believe that research is absolutely fundamental for the industry, but the important part is that it should be brought with the least delay into the practical fields so that we can increase the general productivity of the individual farms. That is, I think, going to be extremely far-reaching when it finally develops its full scope.

We are also aiming to reclaim certain land. The Minister of Agriculture has been given powers to take over large tracts of fenland or moorland in order to reclaim it, if necessary, by large-scale investment of money and development work. For that purpose there will be established a Land Commission specially to manage such land. A certain amount of that type of work was done during the war with very good success, but we have vast areas—well, they are not vast areas because this whole country is small in relation to some of the countries you come from, but relative to our own country they are big areas—which, for one reason or another, are unsuitable for any intensive agriculture, and we hope to get them back into a condition to yield the maximum production per acre of which they are capable.

Lastly on the Act I should like to say a word about the County Committees. Some of you who come from abroad may not be familiar with what we have done. The Committee system, however, worked extremely well throughout the war. Different sections of the industry, farmers, landowners, farm-workers, nominate panels of members, and from these panels the Minister chooses a Committee, with the addition of one or two persons of his own choosing. These Committees then act with the authority, and as the agents, of the Minister in each county. We try thereby to get rid of the necessity of what we call here 'farming from Whitehall'. That is to say, we decentralize.

We give a large measure of responsibility and initiative to the Committees; in fact, the effective working out of our policy depends very largely on the suitable choice and the good working of these Committees—built up as they are of practical farmers, landowners, workers, and so forth who really know the industry. It had a wonderful effect in the war, and we believe that the spirit of co-partnership will have an even more beneficial effect in peace.

That is our long-term policy. Short-term, in view of the present difficult situation, the Prime Minister has appealed to the agricultural industry to increase its production by £100 million by 1951-2. That is an enormous amount. It is, roughly speaking, 20 per cent. measured in value over the present net output, but we think that the agricultural industry, the farmers of this country, if they really put in all the initiative which they can show and have shown, can do it. It will make an enormous difference to the feeding of our people and will help in the solving of our general problem. We are, of course, placing particular emphasis on those products which will save dollars—of which, unfortunately, we are so short in this country. Briefly those products are mutton, beef, pigmeat, eggs, and cereals. We are also going to grow much more linseed. Linseed has been a crop of which we have not so far grown very much, about 150,000 acres, I think. We want to increase that by 400,000 acres to give us feeding-stuffs for our livestock and a residue for other commercial use.

We realize, of course, that a lot of money will have to be spent to carry out this task and therefore we have increased the guaranteed prices of various commodities. I will not list them all, because they have been announced in the Press. We have, however, given very generous increases in the prices of all staple commodities. To provide other incentives we are giving various grants, a ploughing-up grant for land which is ploughed up and then sown to approved crops or grass mixtures; a grant for the Calves Scheme, by which calves born between now and September 9, 1949, and reared up to twelve months can get a subsidy; the grass-land improvement scheme; and free artificial insemination for beef cattle in all the parts of the country where there are stations. Those are all measures to stimulate the farming industry. But fundamentally this very big increase is only possible if we can furnish the necessities for houses, farm-buildings, machinery, feed, fertilizers, and feeding-stuffs. In order to try and give those to the farming industry, the Government has given an absolutely top priority to agriculture in order that we can get whatever steel or other materials are necessary so that the industry can go ahead.

We have a gigantic task in front of us. I can assure you that all these plans and other schemes are only turned out after a great deal of thought and discussion, and the agricultural economists in this country have been extremely helpful in working them out. In the future their help will be even more necessary. We are coming more and more to rely on your wisdom and on your knowledge, and for those reasons particularly I wish you fruitful deliberations and success in this Conference.

THE EARL FORTESCUE, *Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Devon*

In my official capacity there are occasions when I have to make speeches on subjects about which I am sorry to say I know very little, but I think I can claim to have a great deal of personal interest in the subject of your deliberations. For the information of those of you who come from abroad, may I say that I own roughly 100 farms and about 150 cottages. I am the largest farmer in extent in the whole of Devon, as I farm over 9,000 acres myself, although admittedly a great deal of it is bare moorland upon which we run sheep and cattle. As an agriculturist, therefore, I welcome you all to this county, and especially to this lovely place, Dartington Hall. We claim that Devon is the prettiest county in the whole of the British Isles, and it is also one of the most fertile. We have a lot of different kinds of farming: dairying, stock-raising, and hill-farming, so that you can take your pick of what you would like to see.

I am going to be so bold as to raise some points on which as a practical agriculturist I would like to see guidance from agricultural economists. First of all there is the question of gluts and famines in certain countries. Before the war I understand Canada suffered from a glut of wheat, and in Argentina there was a glut of maize. On the other hand, there is India, on which I see from your programme you are to have a discussion on Saturday, where there is the very great problem of feeding a vast population that is growing at the rate of millions a year. I take it that the solution is a better system of distribution. The second point is to awaken the public to a willingness to pay a proper price for farm commodities so that the farmer and his labourer can get a fair return. In the past, as you all know, the farmers have had a very hard time, and the agricultural labourers were the worst paid of any labourers in England. Surely they deserve a proper wage? The farmers have to have knowledge, have to be organizers, and their labourers have to be men of all skills. The public needs to be awakened to these facts if remunerative prices are to be paid. Then the third point is this: when technical advisers produce new ideas of

farming and forms of machinery, we would like to see figures to prove whether the processes and improvements which they advocate are economically sound. That point requires no more elucidation. We get plenty of schemes proposed. The question is, are they sound or are they not from a business point of view? There are great opportunities for development as you may see from a few figures of what we have done in Devon during the war. The tillage increased from 211,000 acres in 1939 to 467,000 in 1943. Potato acreage increased from 6,000 to 36,000; wheat from 23,000 to 95,000; barley from 21,000 to 65,000. On the other hand, the population of sheep fell from nearly a million to three-quarters of a million, and pigs from 157,000 to about 52,000. All that was done without any increase of labour by means of mechanization. If we can get the machinery designer to provide the efficient machines, and the agricultural architect to see that our buildings are constructed for labour-saving, which means that they must work hand in glove with the economists, then we shall prosper. I wish all your deliberations every possible success.

The Conference was also welcomed by: Mr. Denis Phillips on behalf of the Devon County Council; Mr. J. P. Newman on behalf of the Rural District Council of Totnes; Mr. W. E. Phillips, the Mayor of Totnes, on behalf of the Borough of Totnes; and Mrs. Dorothy Elmhirst on behalf of the Dartington Hall Trustees. Dean E. C. Young, U.S.A., and Sir Manilal Nanavati, India, replied for the members of the Conference.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, L. K. ELMHIRST

IT is a commonplace statement to say that we meet to-day in a world that has undergone considerable changes since our last Conference in Canada in 1938. But it is also true that at each one of our Conferences before the war the same statement could have been made with full justification. When we met here at Dartington in 1929 it was in a world freed in large measure from the difficulties which the First World War trailed behind it. There were signs of a real recovery of world trade. America, particularly, was in a state of great prosperity, and if this country and Europe were not nearly so prosperous they could at least have been in a much worse condition. This, to their cost, they were to discover later. When we met a year later at Cornell, there was already in August 1930 an undercurrent of concern with the obvious decline in prosperity. The greatest slump of all had yet to come. The writing was already on the wall for those who had eyes to see, although our discussions at Cornell, when read to-day, look somewhat academic in their slight concern with the acute reality of a depression which lay only just round the corner.

When we met again it was four years later, in Germany in 1934, eighteen months after Hitler had come to power and a few weeks only after his notorious blood purge. There the atmosphere was heavily charged, but the world was not yet conscious of the major changes which Hitler was going to bring to the lives of every one of us.

Two years later, in 1936, we met at St. Andrews in Scotland. Once again the world seemed on a more level keel. There was a feeling of optimism that things were righting themselves. We thought that the world was pulling out of the great depression as it had pulled out of other depressions in the past. War was still not considered as in the realm of possibility, and the recession of 1937 had not yet arrived.

In 1938, when we met in Canada, the world atmosphere had again changed. The economic optimism of 1936, mild though it was, had a slight set-back in 1937, but it was the political and the psychological atmosphere that had visibly deteriorated. We met on the eve of Munich, with all that that fateful meeting implied, not only to Czechoslovakia but to Europe and Great Britain and the world.

But as we milestone these changes of atmosphere for each of our Conferences, they fade into insignificance when compared in magnitude and importance with the change that has taken place since we

last met in 1938. True, nine years is in itself a long period, as long as the period which included our first five Conferences, but what a nine years it has been for all countries and all persons! Many of us could have discussed the great depression of 1931 with some personal detachment, and, even in 1938, the threat of war was not acutely personal to more than a few of us. But since then warfare and economic upheaval have been a vivid reality to every one of us. There is probably no individual here to-day who has not been through great personal difficulty, tragedy, or hardship.

It was, I suspect, the overstrain caused by the war that deprived us by death of Carl Ladd, the late Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell, in whose fertile mind the idea of the Conference originated. From the time of his six months' stay in England in 1928 he was always foremost in pressing that these Conferences were vitally necessary, not only for professional understanding but also for the understanding and treatment of world economic problems. There was, I believe, no one else at that time, except Dr. Warren and Dr. Taylor, so convinced of the essential service these Conferences could render. There was certainly no one else to whom I could turn so readily for guidance and understanding at all times. I wish he had been here to-day. Other members who have died in the last nine years include our old and honoured Vice-President, Dr. Sering; and Andrew Boss of Minnesota, that grand pioneer and still grander man. Some of you will still remember his paper on the 'Evolution of the American Family Farm' in 1936; Dr. Wehrwein of Wisconsin; Dr. W. Allen, Canada; Professor Weaver, Pennsylvania; Professor Grimes, Kansas; M. Rouilly, France; and Dr. Bela Kenez, Hungary.

I must turn, however, to the present. Revivals after long intermissions are not easy, and although the post-war wreckage around us may make such a Conference as the one we open to-day all the more necessary, it certainly does not lessen the difficulties. When I consulted the Director of F.A.O., Sir John Boyd Orr, he urged upon me my duty as President, in spite of his own plans for utilizing the services of agricultural economists, to get the Conference under way as soon as possible. He emphasized the difference between his conference, which was inevitably of official representatives and of government officers, and ours which drew, in the main, upon teachers and research workers attached to universities or to unofficial institutions. To have held a full Conference this year open to all applicants would have been impossible. We might have found ample accommodation and food in the U.S.A., but members from 'sterling' countries would have had their special problems in obtaining the necessary

dollars. A few of our old members, too, seemed uncertain as to the permanent future of the Conference.

And so it seemed best to all the members of council I could contact that we should hold a limited and somewhat informal gathering here, and use this opportunity to discuss intimately how to work our plans for the future.

Each country, therefore, except the U.S.A. and Great Britain, who are entitled to their full quota of council members, was asked to send two delegates. Twenty were invited from America and Great Britain and five from Canada. Where places have not been filled I have, as your elected President, had to use discretion in offering these vacancies to others. It is no small tribute to the reputation of the Conference in the past that of the original fifty members who came to Dartington Hall in 1929, nearly twenty years ago, some seventeen are here to-day.

In accordance with the constitution adopted in 1938, the programme has been built up as a result of discussions or correspondence with council members in every country where our old contacts could be re-established, and the war travels of your President, twice to the U.S.A., once for six months around the Middle East in 1942, and for nearly a year in India in 1944-5, have also helped to keep interest alive and to develop it in a number of new countries.

The outstanding problem of the modern world, and, by implication, one that is peculiarly that of the economist, is the devising of a sufficiently wise and efficient allocation of world resources to satisfy the legitimate material needs and preferences of the greatest number of people. The social implications, therefore, of the economist's task are daily becoming more and more apparent.

In our programme for this Conference we have tried to face up to the implications of the new world around us. Our main subjects for discussion raise fundamental issues. They are not new. We were discussing many of them at our Conferences between 1929 and 1939. But as practical problems they have become more acute than ever, and demand immediate attention.

I should like to say a word here about a subject which we have had to leave out owing to the telescoping of our programme, a subject which concerns every economist. Quite a few of us will remember the days some twenty years ago when most agricultural economists carried on their research and teaching work without much interference from the world outside, and often in remote academic seclusion. Some developed quite a sense of frustration because of it; they felt they could, like good physicians, diagnose trouble and

prescribe remedies, but no one seemed to want to ring the surgery bell. The change began to come in the early 1930s, and I remember our Vice-President, the late Dr. Warren, complaining to me in 1931 that he ordinarily liked eight years in which fully to digest newly collected research material, but that the demands from the new State Legislature in New York State for schemes for the economic rehabilitation of rural areas had suddenly begun to come in to his office, and to come in so fast that his ideal period of rumination was being cut in half.

To-day the agricultural economists are brought into consultation by governments at every turn. They are employed professionally as advisers to cabinet ministers and corporations. The work of F.A.O. is occupying a large number of our own old members in Geneva to-day on the practical application of their wisdom and experience to problems of international importance.

This wealth of new opportunity and of new responsibility offers its reward in giving new status to the profession, but it also has its risks. The political and the business worlds exist too often in an atmosphere of day-to-day emergency need. *Ad hoc* remedies are snatched at. Public prejudice or the private idiosyncrasy of an individual minister may be married disastrously into a programme that demands far-sighted statesmanship and expert technical advice. How, under such conditions, can the professional economist best retain his professional integrity? How can he satisfy his preference as a scientist and as a humanist for the slow distilling of truth from a careful digestion of all the relevant facts and related experience?

In the world of economics emergency advice and long-term research are not of course exclusive. The first will be the sounder for being based solidly on the latter, but each of us is probably having to make choices of policy in a kind of world to-day that simply did not exist twenty years ago.

We cannot then shirk the risks of the political market-place, where bargaining is the order of the day, nor, more especially if we are paid to teach students or to advise farmers, dare we, at our peril, separate ourselves from the stern discipline and detachment of the search for truth, however slow and laborious. The economist may have felt he was too detached twenty years ago, but to-day when the choice of our research projects, the ends for which research is carried on, and the amount of finance available are likely to be affected by the colour or predilection of the political party in power, he, his university or institute, or the civil service to which he belongs, may each or all be put in a most embarrassing and dangerous predicament.

This means, that unless the objectivity and scientific detachment that have been associated with the work of agricultural economists and with their research and graduate teaching at universities is continually safeguarded, agricultural economics can easily become a prey to the evils of the short-term expediencies and long-term prejudices of everyday business and politics.

As I look back at our Conference *Proceedings* I note with satisfaction a high standard in the attitude and approach to problems discussed, and only on very rare occasions a suggestion of partisan expression. I have every confidence that this tradition of objective discussion will prevail at our Conference which opens to-day.

In our first main subject we deal with the allocation of people and their labour to that variety of employment most likely to be beneficial to themselves and to the community, both nationally and internationally. People and their labour are, after all, the most important of all the resources which we have at our disposal. But we cannot class them just as one among other raw materials. They and the full and proper satisfaction of their personal and group needs and demands are the whole purpose of the economics of our existence. The balance between these two 'goods' (the labour which people contribute and the satisfaction which they derive) is the complex which lies at the root of the material needs of our social existence. A study of the movement of farm population from country to country, from place to place within countries, from agricultural to industrial occupations, or from rural to urban living, is of the utmost importance. If the movement is well understood and well designed we are likely to attain a very high degree of efficiency and satisfaction in labour use. Sometimes the movement is spontaneous; at other times, however, the question arises of how quickly it is possible to move people away from circumstances in which survival is won at a level only a little higher than that of animals, and where any 'fullness of life' in the modern sense is unobtainable. A serious study of the movement of farm populations is bound to reveal the dynamic problems of how to change both the habits of individuals and the pattern of group custom and culture. To deal with such problems we must, as agricultural economists, be ready to accept and develop new instruments and techniques of social research. We shall certainly find it necessary to consult and collaborate with other social scientists, psychiatrists, and social anthropologists if the nature of the problem is to be fully understood and if unnecessary friction and blind opposition to change is to be avoided.

In our second main subject we deal with the problem of how to

achieve the most efficient use of the land. The customs and laws that have grown up around the ownership and the use of land vary from country to country. Each country, too, has woven around the land a philosophy which is the product of time, place, and history. Even the desire to change land systems, as Ashby has pointed out in an earlier Conference, is liable to reflect the aspiration towards refinements of freedom which every new generation may develop. Friction tends to arise when long-established custom, law, or philosophy associated with the land comes into conflict with new developments, technical, economic, or social, or with new human aspirations. We need to study the various means whereby the land system (and with it the mode of supplying capital monies and long-term credit which cannot easily be dissociated from the land-tenure system itself) can be made flexible enough to meet new circumstances and to satisfy new and socially desirable ends.

Fundamental to so many other issues, and to our first two main subjects as well, is the job of devising sound economic machinery whereby the needs and preferences of the public for produce from the land are best expressed and made effective at the producing end. Fully competitive enterprise in the nineteenth century depended on the automatic working of the market mechanism. It is many years now even in our modern industrial world since we ceased to allow the market mechanism entire freedom to determine the quality of our economic and social existence. Nevertheless, up to the war the boom and slump of the market mechanism did, however clumsily, work as the automatic regulator of our economic machine. But for this last six years national economies have been controlled and directed ruthlessly to meet war conditions. The market mechanism, although still playing an important role in many countries, was considered as secondary to the essential task of organizing all resources for war. The *war* purpose is now ended, but there is still as great and as difficult a *peace* purpose to be met. Many, and in fact most, countries in facing this challenge have no choice but to go on using this war-time device of a directed economy. In some the change-over may be so complete as to merit the term 'revolutionary', but in many others there is still little more than a change of emphasis. The trend, however, especially in recent weeks, seems to be moving towards an economy directed by the deliberate decision of a central authority, and the market mechanism then becomes merely one device, one method, one tool, within the control of that central authority instead of, as in former years, the ruthless automatic governor of our economic fate.

How long such use will continue, how far it is likely to come into conflict with the essential freedoms which make up the democratic way of life, how far the directed economy can be limited to a few essential aspects of deliberate national control, are things which we are going to discuss. The results of such discussion I certainly am not going to anticipate.

In attacking the problem of the future of international trade we have in our title restricted the discussion to one particular aspect, namely, buying and selling by the State. But State buying and selling within free world trading can have both a wide and a narrow interpretation. It can be narrowly interpreted as the State entering into trade and doing its own buying and selling for itself, or it can be interpreted as the State making agreements with other States over the terms on which its nationals can carry on trade with one another. We hope that both aspects will be discussed, although the opening paper will deal with some of the background conditions in general of trade between nations. Protracted negotiations for a charter of international trading are under way in Geneva. Not all of us here are implicated in these talks, but some are. We should like those who are to feel that here they are free to discuss the problem as they wish without committing their governments and, if they prefer it, without being reported in the Press or in the *Proceedings* of this Conference.

Finally, we face what is the most awkward question that can be asked of any man, be he economist, sociologist, or just plain farmer, farm-labourer, or ordinary citizen, namely, what is it that we want from life, and how far do our economic activities and our social ways of living fulfil that desire? For all time mankind will go on asking and giving tentative answers to this question. We shall not expect to find even one of the tentative answers as a result of the deliberations of this Conference, but we do hope that by the time the Conference is ended, not merely from the discussion on this particular subject, but from all the discussions, and from our meeting together here for these ten days, we may achieve a better understanding than we had before of what factors are involved. It was through the mixing with people of other countries, with other social ideas and other social customs, that the meeting here in Dartington in 1929 contributed not a little to the appreciation of the wider implications of agricultural economics. I should like to think that it is still possible in the atmosphere of this place to broaden our horizons as much through new friendships made as through the formal papers and discussions.

In addition to these main subjects we shall have as usual a series of sessions devoted to non-discussion papers. These cover a wide

field, and provide an opportunity for raising, in a less extensive way than on the main subjects, particular matters which are of interest to particular people and places and which the rest of us want to hear about and to have on record for reference purposes in the future.

We hope also to arrange group meetings to discuss questions of research method. These, however, are subject to your request for facilities. If you have a subject you want to discuss in a group, consult the Secretary.

We have in addition a programme of excursions and a number of purely social gatherings during these ten days: a reception to-night, a trip on the River Dart on Saturday afternoon, an entertainment arranged by the Dartington Hall Arts Section to which you are invited on Sunday evening, our own particular type of informal smoking concert on Monday evening, and a bus trip for the afternoon and evening of Thursday next which will take us to a farm near Cullompton north of Exeter, to Exeter and its cathedral, and back over Dartmoor in the evening.

We are to live here together for ten days, eating our meals together, loafing together in the few hours that the Secretary has allowed entirely free for rumination, for talking, and playing together. It is the capacity to enjoy doing all these things in a friendly, frank, and understanding way that will help this Conference to serve its real purpose. The discussions on the main subjects are of the greatest possible importance in the world to-day. There is, too, a special value in the papers upon research method or results and upon the experience and description of problems in this or that country. But it is this living and thinking together, well away from urban distractions, which has always made the International Conference of Agricultural Economists what it is.

This new gathering, in which there are many new faces mixed with those of tried friends of long standing, will, we trust, develop and take away from Dartington the same feelings of close understanding and friendship that others have taken away with them from our other gatherings in the past. The staff and the organizers will do their best to contribute to what we hope will remain with you for the future a rich and fruitful memory; the rest is up to you.