

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
MERRILL KELLEY BENNETT
(1897 - 1969)

Merrill Bennett, emeritus professor of economic geography and director of the Food Research Institute, died at his home in Monte Sereno, California, on January 8, 1969, at the age of 71. He first came to Stanford in 1922 as instructor in English, but joined the staff of the Food Research Institute as a junior associate in 1923. He served successively as executive secretary of the Institute from 1933 to 1941, as executive director from 1942 to 1951, and as director from 1952 until his retirement in 1962. An imaginative and productive research scholar and teacher, he played a major role in the development of the Food Research Institute over three decades and was a recognized authority on the world food economy.

Professor Bennett was a New Englander, born in Killingly, Connecticut on February 13, 1897, and educated at Brown University, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in 1920 and of Master of Arts (in English) in 1922. He was won to economics shortly after his arrival at Stanford, and qualified himself in that discipline with a Master's degree from Harvard in 1926 and the Doctorate of Philosophy from Stanford a year later. Brown conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1954. His early love of good writing and good books never left him, and all the things he wrote reveal the man who knew how to use words naturally, but sparingly and precisely.

Professor Bennett's research in the interwar years was directed primarily at study of the world wheat economy, but monographs and other writings of that period foreshadow some of the problems that were to attract his interest after World War II. Through this intensive study of one commodity he learned to use the commodity approach, and he taught his students how to use it, to "get a handle" on a complex research problem. The "Growth of Wheat Consumption in Tropical Countries," which was published in 1930 came 23 years before he was to initiate under his direction the Institute's sustained research into the economies of tropical Africa; "British Wheat Yield per Acre for Seven Centuries," published in 1935, stands as a classic use of fragmentary and fragile data for historical reconstruction, to be repeated in the "Food Economy of the New England Indians" in 1955 and in an unpublished manuscript on the food economy of the Inca Empire. The knowledge and skill employed in monographs on wheat utilization, acreage, and yields in the 1930's were later employed to produce "Change in the American National Diet from 1879 to 1959," and a series of studies of the physical determinants of the distribution of farinaceous food crops in the 1950's and 1960's.

Within the University Professor Bennett served as Chairman of the Library Committee, as long-time Chairman of the Faculty Committee on University Publications, and from 1945 to 1948 as Dean of the School of Social Sciences. In the town he was for many years a member of the Palo Alto Library Board. When the United States became a belligerent in World War II he served first as chief statistician of the Office of Food Programs in the Territory of Hawaii and later as Chief of the Division of Food Allocations of the United States Foreign Economic Administration. He was a member of the Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee of the United States Department of Agriculture from 1950 to 1958, of the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council from 1954 to 1957, and of the Interdepartmental Committee on

Nutrition and National Defense of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare from 1955 to 1961.

Many of these experiences bore fruit in Dr. Bennett's own research and in the research that he initiated and directed. His wartime duties with the United States Foreign Economic Administration helped to influence the Food Research Institute to undertake under his general supervision a worldwide study of Food, Agriculture, and World War II that records and analyzes, in thirteen volumes, the experience of the belligerents on both sides in the wartime administration of their food and agricultural resources. His experiences in Japan in 1947 as a member of the United States Scientific Advisory Group contributed to Institute research on Japanese food administration; and participation in the Carnegie Corporation's committee to study barriers to economic development in East Africa in 1951 laid the groundwork for a continuing major effort of the Institute.

It was also under Dr. Bennett's directorship that the Institute initiated a formal graduate program leading to the doctorate and intended to afford students from all parts of the world an opportunity to participate in the research activities of the Institute and to acquaint themselves with its approach to the problems of the world food economy.

Professor Bennett's published works are numerous. They include a long list of articles and monographs in Wheat Studies of the Food Research Institute and of articles in the professional journals, and six books. Of these, two are classics in their field: The World's Food (1954) and The Rice Economy of Monsoon Asia (1941) which was written in collaboration with Professor V. D. Wickizer. He initiated (in 1959) and was the first editor of the periodical Food Research Institute Studies and continued to assist in its editing until his death.

Dr. Bennett is survived by his wife Dorcas, his daughter Helen Josephine, the wife of Dr. Andrew D. Lucine of Monte Sereno, his sons Dr. John F. Bennett of the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Stephen W. Bennett of the World Health Organization, Geneva, and by six grandchildren. To them we of the Academic Council express our pride in his distinguished career and extend our deepest sympathy.

Bruce F. Johnston
Edward S. Shaw
William O. Jones, Chairman