



How to Increase the Efficiency of Econometric Meetings

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HOW TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF ECONOMETRIC MEETINGS

Although several most important contributions were made by the participants at our Cambridge meeting and the material organization ran most smoothly, I must confess that I was not satisfied, which may be partly due to personal reasons. Since, however, the few observations that I have to make apply also to most of our previous European meetings, I hope they may be of some use to the organizers of our future meetings. Indeed I think that the efficiency of our meetings is considerably less satisfactory than it could be. I have tried to analyse the reasons why this is so, and I think the following point up the difficulties:

1. There is still a number of our French-speaking members who speak too fast, and some of our English-speaking members who do not speak clearly enough to be understood by many of the other participants. This is particularly true when the subject is a difficult one. I think we should all practice speaking the "econometric English" and the "econometric French" so well-known from Frisch's leading technique at prewar meetings.

2. A most important condition for really fruitful and deep going discussions seems to me to be a sufficient degree of subject specialization at the conferences. Subjects, therefore, should be chosen within a few rather narrow and well-defined fields of research and the participants should be either specialists on those subjects or aiming at specializing on those subjects.

3. Readers should be careful as to the didactics of their papers. Problems should be stated clearly. The same applies to the hypotheses made and the methods followed. The main points should be briefly symbolized on the blackboard. Difficult subjects should be introduced as much as possible by a simple but concrete example and only then be generalized; in this example the main point should be set out very clearly.

4. I think our programs have always been and still are overloaded: three papers per morning and three papers per afternoon, leaving only one hour for each paper (including the discussion), is far too many, particularly, if over and over again only some of the contributors make it possible to distribute their papers in advance. Experience gained at the Driebergen meeting in 1950 on input-output questions and the Paris colloquium in 1952, so I am told, shows, that one paper per morning and one paper per afternoon is a much better frequency. Hence, the papers should perhaps be combined papers.

5. As already observed in the previous point, papers should be distributed well in advance. Perhaps we should simply refuse to accept papers in the final program unless distributed a fortnight before the meeting.

I am sure these observations are partly a reflection of my own lack of understanding new and difficult subjects; nevertheless I do hope that they may lead, if propagated, to a considerable increase in the efficiency of our bi- or multi-linguistic meetings. The expense of our meetings is usually pretty high for each individual participant or for the organization which pays for them. It is our duty to make our meetings as efficient as possible.

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