

# ROTHAMSTED EXPERIMENTAL STATION

(LAWES AGRICULTURAL TRUST)

Director: SIR WILLIAM GAMMIE OGG

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS  
(Research Statistical Service)

Head of Department:  
F. YATES, Sc.D., F.R.S.

HARPENDEN

HERTS.

8th February, 1952

My dear Ron,

2.30 on 6th March will be quite convenient for me; doubtless somebody will let me know the place of meeting in due course.

Rothschild did mention the question of giving due credit to statisticians when I saw him last.

To dispose of the least important category first, I have always found that acknowledgements at the end of a paper mean very little. Firstly, one cannot stop authors acknowledging one's help, when in fact all they have done is to have a conversation and then go away and ignore everything that has been said. Secondly, different authors seem to have very different standards as to what merits acknowledgement. If, therefore, acknowledgements are really to mean anything we shall have to lay down some form of wording which will differentiate them from the casual acknowledgements which are thrown around by some authors.

More important, I think, are the other two categories. My own opinion is that if the statistician has contributed to the interpretation of the results as a whole and is prepared to make himself jointly responsible for the whole substance of the paper, then he should be a co-author. If he has contributed by developing new statistical techniques but is either unwilling or unable to associate himself with the work as a whole then these statistical techniques should be made the subject of an appendix or a separate paper, depending on their importance and the space required for their presentation. If an appendix is added to a paper then the responsibility for this appendix rests squarely on the shoulders of the writer and not the author of the original paper. ~~(This should be made quite clear, and it should also be made clear to the editors.)~~

do  
Editors of journals ~~will~~, of course, adopt some control over

such appendices, but this control is at present not very critical, and I think it might be suggested to them that they should ask the question: "Is your appendix really necessary?"

These, I am afraid, are my immediate and unconsidered reactions; I certainly think it would be a good plan to have the whole subject ventilated by the Biometric Society. I do find that at present I have to tell some people who ought to know better that it would be appropriate to include the name of one of my youngsters as a joint author in ~~some~~ <sup>their</sup> work.

The problem is, of course, not entirely one-sided. We have a particular headache here in the reporting of survey work and co-operative field experiments in cases where the field work is done by a number of members of the National Agricultural Advisory Service, but in which most of the planning and the critical analysis and consideration of the results is carried out by our people. The difficulty here is that there are too many names of people involved in the N.A.A.S. for them to be placed at the head of the paper, but it does, quite rightly, I think, create bad feeling if the only names are those of the Rothamsted staff. It has been suggested that such papers should have no name at the head, but should state the names of the associated workers in the introduction. This, however, creates great difficulties in indexing. I have suggested that the N.A.A.S. should pick one or two of their people who are particularly interested in the work to be co-authors and make themselves jointly responsible with the people here. This, however, is liable to slow things down as it is difficult to get their agreement in any reasonable time. The alternative would be to put the N.A.A.S. names in the form of "A.B. Smith et al, National Agricultural Advisory Service" with a footnote giving the names of the others.

All these matters I think require thorough ventilation; there is considerable ill-feeling engendered from time to time and it is important that young scientists should get a reasonable number of papers to their name, as, rightly or wrongly, their prospects of promotion are greatly influenced by this. Actually, I am one of those who believe that a man cannot be a good, or at least a useful, scientist unless he publishes his work. Unfortunately, however, the selection boards tend to read the papers in title only and frequently do not give sufficient consideration to their real merit.

Yours sincerely,

*J. Smith*

P.S. I have your note about the revised <sup>with</sup> ~~ed~~ of the 4th edition of Statistical Tables. Perhaps we might have a word about this - there is no hurry as Oliver & Boyd are following their usual custom of allowing the material to mature before getting around to printing it.