



Cross-fertilization—participants at an international conference hosted by Chung-Hua discuss issues relevant to the ROC's economic development.

Taiwan, is generally agreed to have enjoyed the most important role in the institution since its founding. "Chung-Hua was initially established to study mainland economic issues," says Dr. Lee Hua-hsia (李華夏), the vice-director of the First Institute, "so this emphasis in our research work is not surprising."

Nevertheless, the spotlight is gradually shifting to the Third Institute, which analyzes Taiwan's economy. "Although the government puts high value on our study of mainland economic affairs, the research work on the mainland's economic status is actually relatively limited in Taiwan," Lee says. The shift in emphasis is also due to the larger number of government projects now given to Chung-Hua concerning local economic affairs.

Institution researchers are also more inclined to work on local issues since most of the research done on mainland economic affairs have been classified or limited-circulation studies. Because of these publication restrictions, many younger scholars were reluctant to jeopardize their careers by having such low academic profiles.

Even though the former restrictions on publishing work concerning mainland China have been greatly relaxed, scholars are still more inclined to focus their efforts on Taiwan's economic develop-

ment, especially since the so-called "Taiwan miracle" is rapidly moving into an even more complex stage.

Although the Third Institute is far busier than before, its research fellows face a number of difficulties. One of the most troublesome is the government's tendency to restrict the circulation of research results. "The government considers research studies secret time and again, especially when it is not satisfied with them," Hsueh Li-min says. "It seems as though the government hasn't yet realized that policies should be discussed openly before decisions are made."

To circumvent some of these difficulties, Chung-Hua has expanded its services to the intellectual community by hosting various forums and conferences. It also has increased the number of its open publications. "With the exception of the research work done for the government, all research results are open to the public," Tsiang says. "But we are still terribly misunderstood—too many people think that we serve only the government."

Tsiang complains that the private sector has not yet cultivated the habit of farming out research to private institutions, but when it does, Chung-Hua will be pleased to accommodate their needs for in-depth economic analysis.

"To serve government is to serve society in indirect manner," says Liu Tai-ying of TIER. But sometimes it is a long time before the work bears fruit. Both TIER and Chung-Hua have similar frustrations when dealing with the government: there is too much time wasted between the production of a study and the implementation of its recommendations.

"A long time ago, we advocated economic internationalization and liberalization," says Chung-Hua's Tsiang, "but the government only recently has taken the necessary steps. In the long-term view, the government is finally catching up with our recommendations."

The same is often true of work done by TIER. "We have provided information and research results to the government through various channels, and around 80 percent of our recommendations are accepted," Liu says. "But it takes a long time for things to be implemented. We suggested many of the government's recent policies a long time ago."

One excellent example of an institute recommendation, that has worked very well is TIER's suggestion that shrimp be cultivated in Taiwan and sold to Japan as a replacement for declining farm product exports. Today, Taiwan is known as the "kingdom of shrimp cultivation."

Even when policies are finally adopted, it is often difficult for either TIER or Chung-Hua to identify the specific parts with roots in their own recommendations. But this is a common fact of life in the interaction between think tanks and governments. The positive side of the picture is that recommendations are actually useful and often are adopted. And as think tank researchers admit, it is the attractiveness of playing a role in policymaking that makes the effort seem worth it all. ■

A Taipei department store gets into the spirit of Christmas, and shows that the government has accepted think tank recommendations about opening up the economy.