

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CCP DEHONG DAI NATIONALITY AND  
QINGBO AUTONOMOUS ZHOU COMMITTEE: "SEVERAL QUESTIONS  
IN STRENGTHENING AND PERFECTING THE JOB RESPONSIBILITY  
SYSTEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION" (1980)

### Introduction

The new post-Mao Communist Party leadership under Deng Xiaoping began its program of economic reform in the countryside. Under Mao Zedong (1893-1976), family farming had been eliminated as farmers, their land, animals, and equipment were first organized into agricultural cooperatives and then into vast people's communes in which agricultural work was completely collectivized. Deng's policy was to allow the communes to assign land to individual farming families on a contract basis. The family, now the basic unit of production, was under contract to sell the state a certain amount of grain at a fixed price. They could sell the surplus on the market at market prices.

These reforms, combined with good weather, resulted in sharp increases in production and significant increases in average family income and standards of living in the early to mid-1980s.

In the following document, a local Communist Party office supplies answers to questions about the system in a document dated November 7, 1980.

### Document Excerpts with Questions (Longer selection follows this section)

From *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 494-496. © 2000 Columbia University Press. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

**From the Office of the CCP Dehong Dai Nationality  
and Qingbo Autonomous Zhou Committee:  
"Several Questions in Strengthening and Perfecting  
the Job Responsibility Systems of Agricultural Production" (1980)**

Owing to the shortcomings of the movement of collectivization, the ultra-left interruptions, and the fact that for a long period of time the Party had not shifted the emphasis of work to economic construction, the current material and technical bases for the collective economy are still comparatively weak. ... Because the collective economy has not been doing satisfactorily, people in a few backward and poverty-stricken localities have even less faith in agricultural collectivization. We must face these problems squarely, and solve them aggressively and step by step. At present, it is necessary to regard improvement of management and administration, implementation of distribution according to work, and improvement and

## Primary Source Document, with Questions (DBQ) on

### **“SEVERAL QUESTIONS IN STRENGTHENING AND PERFECTING THE JOB RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION” (1980)**

perfection of the system of job responsibility for production as the central link for the further consolidation of the collective economy and for development of agricultural production. ...

3. Under the moral encouragement of the Third Plenary Session, Party cadres and the masses of commune members have in the recent two years proceeded from actual conditions, liberated their thought and boldly explored, and established many forms of job responsibility systems for production, which can be generally divided into two categories: one is contracted work of small segments with payments according to fixed quotas, and the other is contracted work and production quotas with payments in accordance with actual production. ... Especially noteworthy is the emergence of a system of job responsibility that gives contracts to specialized persons and gives payment in accordance with actual production ...

#### **Questions:**

1. How does this Party Office account for the mistakes of the past? In doing so, what explanations do they avoid?
2. What changes or new policies is the Party Office explaining here?
3. Are these changes or new policies really a form of collective labor?

#### **Longer Selection**

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#### **From the Office of the CCP Dehong Dai Nationality and Qingbo Autonomous Zhou Committee: “Several Questions in Strengthening and Perfecting the Job Responsibility Systems of Agricultural Production” (1980)**

Owing to the shortcomings in the movement of collectivization, the ultra-left interruptions, and the fact that for a long period of time the Party had not shifted the emphasis of work to economic construction, the current material and technical bases for the collective economy are still comparatively weak. Meanwhile, there also are matters in need of improvement and perfection concerning systems and structure of the people’s communes, the weakest link being the management and administrative work. For a long time there have been no significant improvements and breakthroughs in implementing the principle of distribution according to work and in perfecting the system of job responsibility for production. This has caused suppression of the peasants’ socialist initiative as well as insufficient exertion of the superiority of collectivization. Because the collective economy has not been doing satisfactorily, people in a few backward and poverty-stricken localities have even less faith in agricultural

collectivization. We must face these problems squarely and solve them aggressively and step by step. At present, it is necessary to regard improvement of management and administration, implementation of distribution according to work, and improvement and perfection of the system of job responsibility for production as the central link for further consolidation of the collective economy and for development of agricultural production. It is necessary to put in a lot of strenuous effort to grasp it tight and grasp it well. ...

3. Under the moral encouragement of the Third Plenary Session, Party cadres and the masses of commune members have in the recent two years proceeded from actual conditions, liberated their thought and boldly explored, and established many forms of job responsibility systems for production, which can be generally divided into two categories: one is contracted work of small segments with payments according to fixed quotas, and the other is contracted work and production quotas with payments in accordance with actual production. Results of implementation indicate that most areas have increased production by acquiring some new experience. Especially noteworthy is the emergence of the system of job responsibility that gives contracts to specialized persons and gives payment in accordance with actual production, which is widely welcomed by commune members. This is a very good start. Leadership at various levels should sum up the positive and negative experiences, together with the broad masses, and help the communes and brigades perfect and improve the system of job responsibility to energetically push further the management work of the collective economy.

...

5. The system of job responsibility, of giving contracts to specific persons and giving payments in accordance with actual production, is a system based on division of labor and cooperative work. Under the system, the labor forces [peasants] who are good in agriculture receive contracts for arable lands according to their ability, while those who are good in forestry, stock raising, sideline production, fishery, industry, commerce, and so on receive contracts of various trades concerned according to their ability. Contracts for production of fixed quotas in various trades are assigned to teams, to labor forces, or to households, according to the principle of facilitating production and benefiting management. All operations in the process of production are to be centralized whenever centralization is suitable, and decentralized whenever decentralization is good, by the production team. Centralized distribution [of payment] is made for the portions under fixed quotas, while rewards or penalties are given for production in excess of quotas or unfulfilled production. These are stipulated in the form of contracts for the current year or for the next several years.

This kind of system of production responsibility has many more merits than other forms of contracted production: it can satisfy the commune members' demand for calculating payments in accordance with production, stabilize the production team's position as the main economic entity, concretely consolidate both the mobilization of production initiative of individual commune members and the exertion of the superiority of centralized management as well as division of labor and cooperative work; it is favorable to the development of diversified business, popularization of scientific farming, and the promotion of production of commercial

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items; it is good for people to exert their talents, things to exert their usefulness, and land to exert its potential; it is favorable for the commune members to take care of their sideline business; and it is convenient for making arrangements for production to ensure a livelihood for the four categories of bereaved households ... and the weak-labor households. This form is, on the one hand, applicable to areas currently undergoing difficulties while, on the other, it can be developed into a system of job responsibility that further divides specialties by an even higher degree and with more socialist characteristics.