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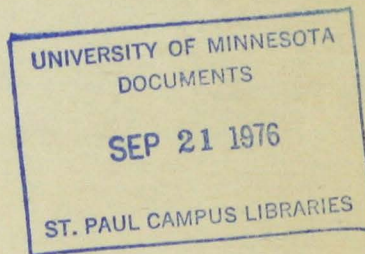
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A STUDY OF COUNTY AGENT TENURE

By

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April 1948
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to acknowledge help from many sources in the preparation of this report.

Appreciation is given to C. H. Bailey, Dean and Director, University Department of Agriculture, and P. E. Miller, Director of Agricultural Extension, for making study leave possible; to H. P. Hanson, Extension Specialist in Field Studies for constructive suggestions; and to the numerous Minnesota county agents and former county agents for their cooperativeness in compiling the bothersome questionnaires.

Helpful contributions were made by many Extension workers interviewed, including especially Karl Knans, Charles Potter, and C. A. Sheffield, Field Agents, and Mrs. Laurel K. Sabrosky, Extension Analyst, Extension Service, Washington, D. C.; F. B. Morris, County Agent Leader, New York; R. C. Blaney, H. R. McCulloch, and T. H. Patton, Assistant Directors, Pennsylvania; B. B. Spohn, Supervisor of Projects and Programs, Ohio; R. B. Baker, State Agent, Missouri; L. F. Neff, District Supervisor, Kansas; H. D. Finch, Administrative Assistant, Colorado; J. E. Tippet, Assistant County Agent Leader, California; W. L. Teutsch, Assistant Director, Oregon; R. M. Turner, Assistant Director, Washington; H. G. Gould, Assistant Director, Nebraska; and by county agents in states visited.

A STUDY OF COUNTY AGENT TENURE

Problem

Minnesota has had a large turnover of men employed in county agent work. It takes at least two years for an agent to become acquainted with the people of a county, to win their confidence, and to acquire the experience necessary to do best work. The large turnover of agents with only a few years of service not only results in loss of efficiency, but also in a lower standard of service. The rapid turnover of agents also adds to the cost of carrying on the work.

Purpose

This study was undertaken:

1. To determine our actual tenure record.
2. To ascertain the factors which have influenced agents to leave the service.
3. To find the elements in county agent work that agents find most unsatisfactory.
4. To assemble the opinions and judgments of county agents in regard to problems inherent in county agent work.
5. To ascertain whether the most serious problems can be corrected and if so, how.

That there are great satisfactions of service and accomplishment in county agent work goes without question. Recognition of this, however, should not blind us to the fact that there may be some defects and weaknesses in the county agent system. This is obvious to those who work closely with county agents. It is with the hope of finding and weighing the importance of these defects and ultimately correcting those that can be corrected that this study is being made.

As a result of this study we can more accurately appraise our own situation in Minnesota and should be able to make definite recommendations to strengthen our organization from the standpoint both of length of tenure and effectiveness of work. The next step would be to develop ways and means for improving the service.

Methods Used in Study

1. Personnel records were studied as to tenure.
2. Study was made of the positions to which agents were attracted when leaving county agent work.
3. Former agents were questioned as to factors which influenced them to leave the service.
4. Eleven Minnesota county agents were interviewed in regard to:
 - a. Elements in their work that they found unsatisfactory.
 - b. Their judgment as to remedies.
5. Thirty-eight additional agents were questioned as to work load and other factors affecting tenure.
6. Factors surrounding county agent tenure were studied during a two and one-half month leave for study. Ten days of this period were spent in the Federal Extension Office, Washington, D. C., in studying methods with the Field Studies Staff and in reading related field studies. The tenure studies were in relation to:
 - a. Salary and promotion schemes.
 - b. Working conditions.
 - c. Organization of work in counties.
 - d. Scope of county program.
 - e. Effect of salary and work load in holding personnel.

This study was made through conferences and interviews with extension directors, vice directors, supervisors, and county agents in the following 15 states: Wisconsin, Michigan, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

STUDY OF TENURE RECORDS OF MINNESOTA COUNTY AGENTS

This study was made to find the facts as to length of tenure and to ascertain, if possible, the reasons for the rapid turnover of personnel. A study of the facts involving tenure may help remedy the situation.

In the study we have included (1) agents on regular appointment, (2) emergency agents appointed in 1933, and (3) assistant agents in training.

Through December 31, 1947, Minnesota has had 491 county agricultural agents. Ninety-one of these were on the job December 31, 1947. The average tenure for the 91 agents on the job was eight years. The average tenure of former agents was 4.55 years. Of these 400 former agents, 65, or 16.2 per cent, served less than one year; 75, or 18.7 per cent, one to two years; and 67, or 16.7 per cent, served from two to three years. Of all the men who resigned before December 31, 1947, 207, or 51.7 per cent, had served less than three years.

Table 1 Tenure Record of 400 Terminated Agents (by years)

| <u>Years</u> | <u>Number Agents</u> | <u>Per cent</u> |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Less than one | 65 | 16.2 |
| 1 | 75 | 18.7 |
| 2 | 67 | 16.7 - 51.6% |
| 3 | 35 | 8.7 |
| 4 | 33 | 8.2 |
| 5 | 22 | 5.5 - 74 % |
| 6 | 20 | 5.0 |
| 7 | 11 | 2.7 |
| 8 | 7 | 1.7 |
| 9 | 14 | 3.7 |
| 10 | 14 | 3.5 |
| 11 | 4 | 1.0 |
| 12 | 7 | 1.7 |
| 13 | 7 | 1.7 |
| 14 | 1 | .2 |
| 15 | 7 | 1.7 |
| 17 | 2 | .5 |
| 18 | 3 | .8 |
| 20 | 1 | |
| 21 | 1 | |
| 24 | 1 | |
| 25 | 2 | |
| 27 | 1 | |

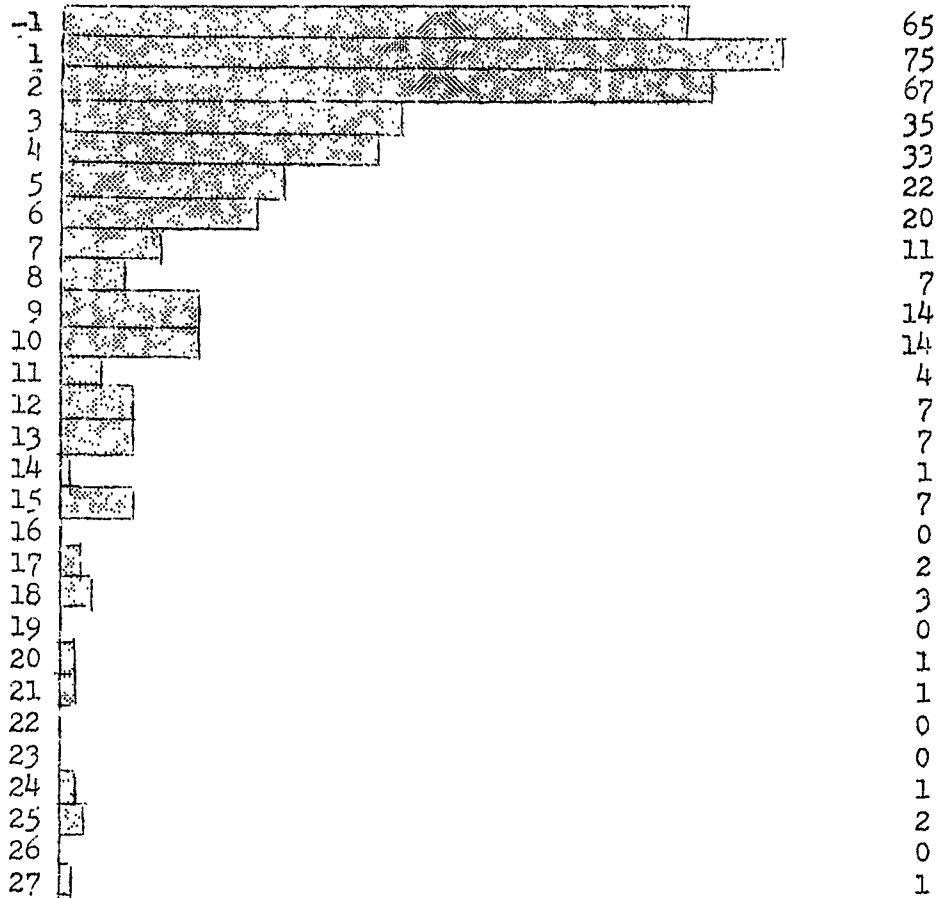
It would seem that the first three years are the critical test years. Extension administration could well take cognizance of this fact in planning for a stronger and more permanent county personnel.

Figure 1

MINNESOTA COUNTY AGENT TENURE RECORD

Years of Service
Before Resignation

No. Agents Resigning
of the 400 Total



In considering this tenure record, it must be remembered that great care has always been taken to select and place the most highly qualified men on the job as county agricultural agents. Experience in working with people, ability to get along with people, personality, genuine interest in farmers and their problems, and expressed interest for this kind of work are only a few of the necessary qualifications considered in selecting county agents. For the most part the men have been hand-picked for the job. This makes the turnover all the more disappointing.

Figure 2

PER CENT OF FORMER COUNTY AGENTS IN EACH TENURE CLASSIFICATION
MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

(INCLUDES ALL TERMINATIONS)

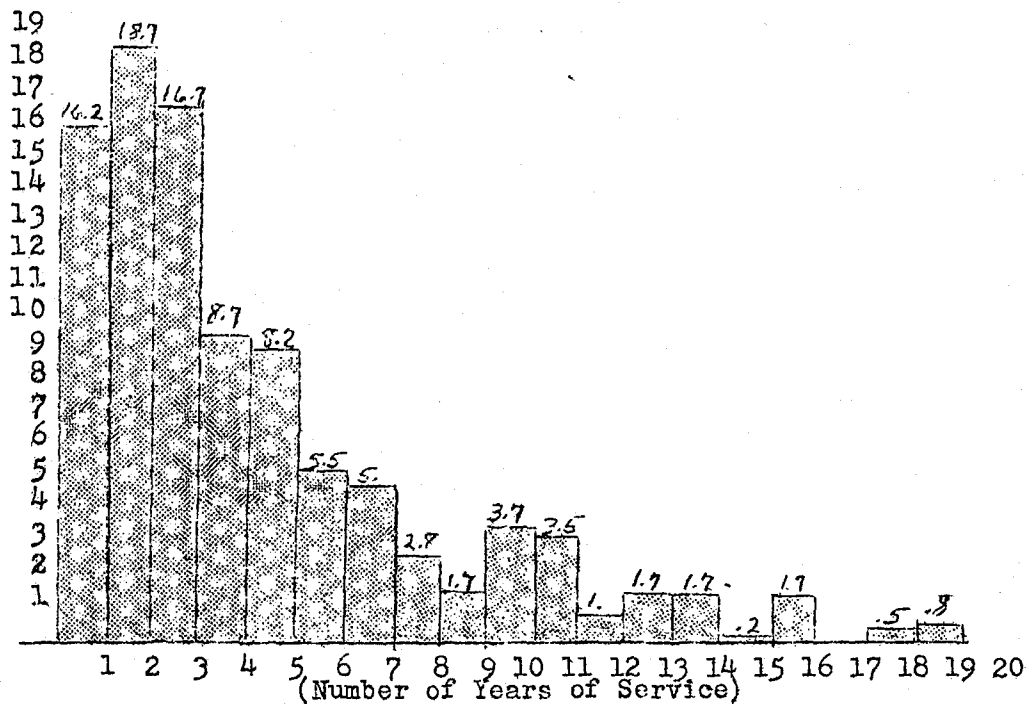
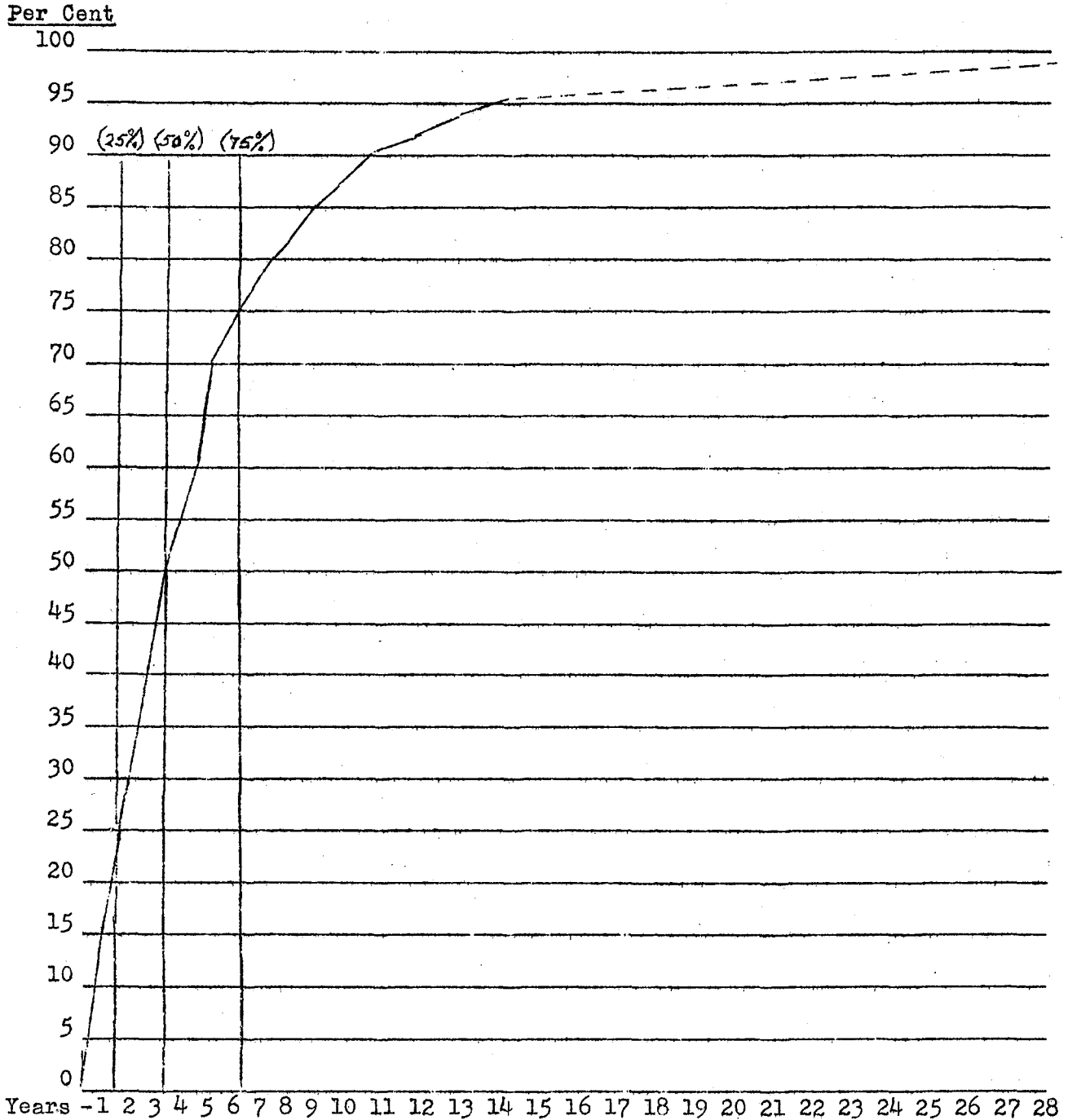


Figure 3

CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE OF ALL FORMER AGENTS TERMINATED,
BY TENURE CLASSIFICATION
MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

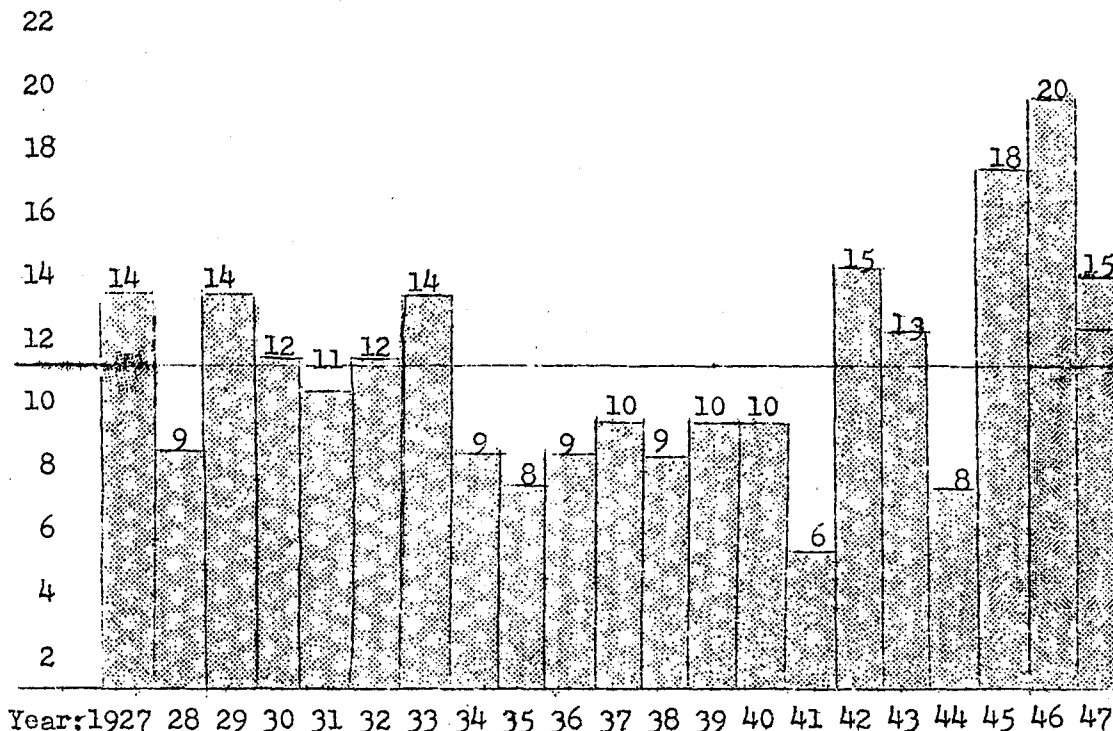


Pattern of personnel turnover. Annual termination of Minnesota county agents for twenty-one years is shown above. The lowest period of turnover occurred during the depression years, 1934 to 1941; the highest during the boom following World War II. This fluctuation is quite understandable. The constancy of the turnover through the years is more impressive than the fluctuation.

Figure 4

ANNUAL TERMINATION OF COUNTY AGENTS
IN MINNESOTA FOR TWENTY-ONE YEARS

Number Agents
Resigned Per Year



On the average, just under 12 agents have been replaced each year for the past 21 years. This would indicate that there should be 12 assistant agents in training at all times.

Positions Former County Agents Accepted on Leaving Extension Work

In order to better understand why such a high percentage of agents left the service, new positions accepted were listed and classified. The entire list of 400 former agents was checked and positions accepted listed as far as information was available.

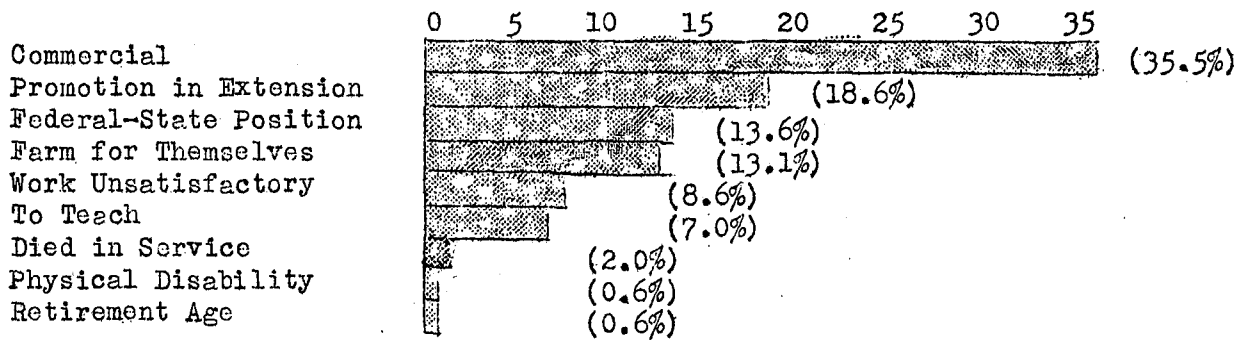
The reason cited for resignation in extension personnel records of service was not used in all cases. Instead positions which these agents are known to have accepted were listed. In a number of cases agents took a year or more of graduate work after leaving the extension service and before accepting the other position. However for the most part, the additional work was for training in a specific field which they later entered. Military service is not listed as a reason for leaving county agent work. However, if agents went into other work after return from military leave this new job is listed. The tenure time counted was the actual period of service on the job as county agent. Agents whose work proved unsatisfactory are segregated. The positions this group accepted are not listed separately.

Table 2 Positions Accepted on Termination by Former Minnesota County Agents

| Reasons | Number | Per Cent |
|------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Commercial activities | 111 | 35.0 |
| Better positions in extension work | 58 | 18.6 |
| Federal-state positions | 43 | 13.6 |
| Engage in farming | 41 | 13.1 |
| Work not satisfactory | 27 | 8.6 |
| Engage in teaching | 22 | 7.0 |
| Died in service | 6 | 2.0 |
| Physical disability | 2 | .6 |
| Reached retirement age | 2 | .6 |
| Total | 312 | 99.6 |

Figure 5

DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENT OF KNOWN REASONS FOR TERMINATION



Of the 400 resigned county agents, 111 accepted commercial positions. Ninety-one were hired by commercial concerns, and 20 engaged in commercial activities of their own. Fifty-eight agents accepted other positions in extension work. The majority of these were promoted into positions as supervisors and specialists in Minnesota (31, or 7.8 per cent) and other states. Listed in this group are men who accepted better county agent positions in other states. Forty-three accepted positions with state or federal agencies. Forty-one went into farming for themselves, twenty-two accepted teaching positions, the majority as agricultural instructors in high schools.

The work of 27 of the 400 men, or 8.6 per cent, was found unsatisfactory and their services were terminated. Reason for termination of 88 is not known.

Unfavorable Factors Which Influenced Former Agents to Leave

To get further information as to real reasons county agents terminated their service, a minor study was made among men who had left the service. A letter and questionnaire were sent to these former agents. This list included all the men whose present post office addresses were available. Of these questionnaires, 57, or 80.1 per cent, were returned.

The percentage of agents who left county agent work for various reasons is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Factors Which Influence Agents
To Leave County Agent Work

(Listed in Order Checked)

| | <u>No. of Agents Checking Factors</u> | <u>Per Cent</u> |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Too many night meetings | 36 | 63.1 |
| Inadequate salary | 32 | 56.1 |
| Dead end job - no chance for professional advancement | 28 | 49.1 |
| Had to spread effort over too many projects | 25 | 43.8 |
| Did not have time to finish projects started; work load too heavy | 12 | 21.0 |
| Hours of work too long | 11 | 19.3 |
| Wife or family objections | 11 | 19.3 |
| Too many bosses | 10 | 17.5 |
| Work too nerve-racking | 9 | 15.8 |
| Not sufficient help from state office | 7 | 12.2 |
| Health adversely affected | 6 | 10.5 |
| Unable to see satisfactory results | 4 | 7.0 |
| Disliked public speaking | 4 | 7.0 |
| Did not like supervisors, specialists, or office assistant | 3 | 5.2 |
| Disliked working with public | 3 | 5.2 |
| Lack of job security | 19 | |

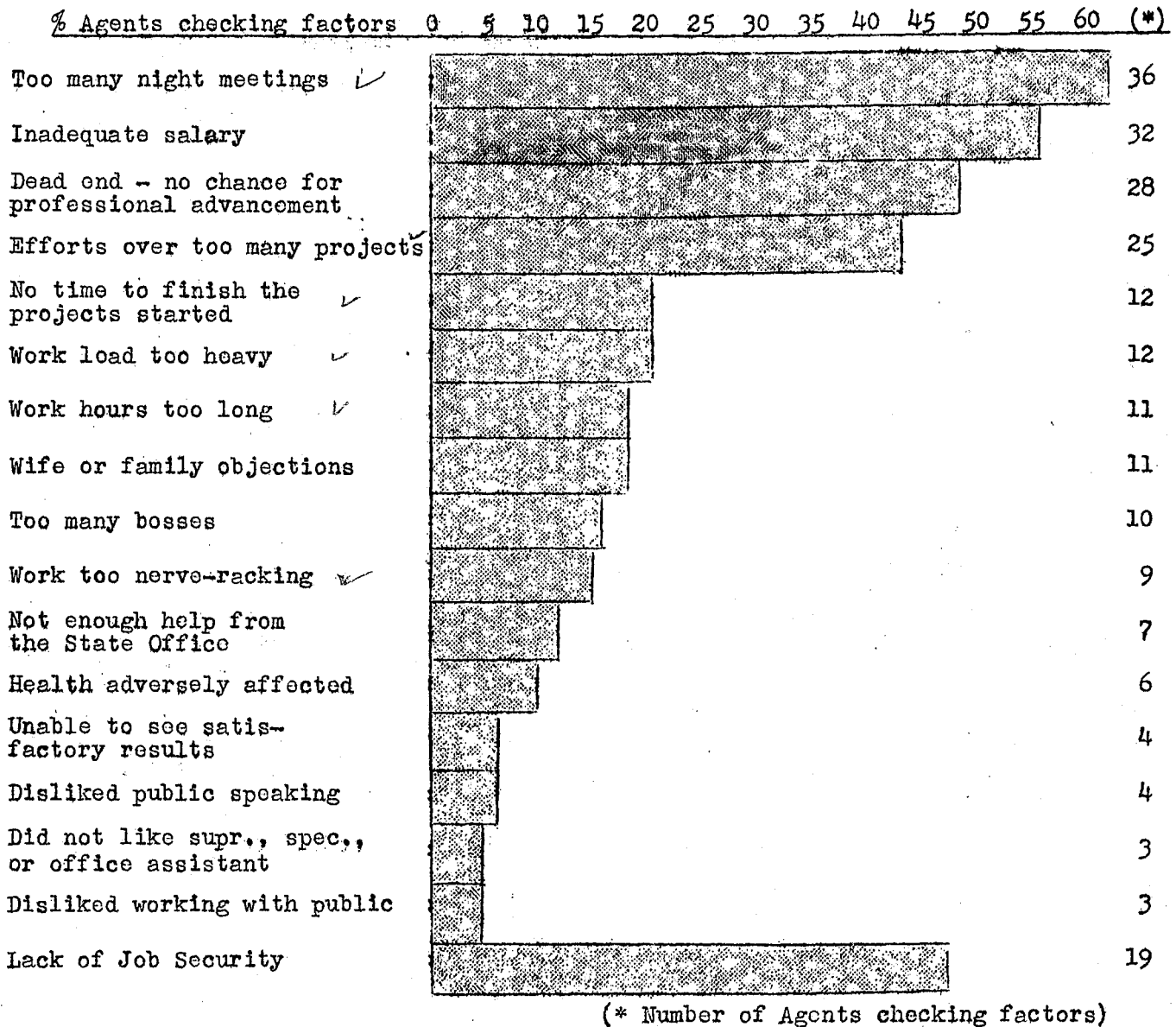
The relative importance of these factors is shown in Figure 6. This is set up in order of factors receiving the largest number of checks. Former employees were not asked to check the most important factor which influenced them to leave the service, but rather to check the factors. The range in number of factors checked was from one to eight, with an average of 3.5.

"Too many night meetings" received the largest number of checks as a factor which influenced former agents to leave the service. This should not be interpreted necessarily as the most important factor. Rather, it was a factor which affected the largest number of former agents. "Too many night meetings" was checked by 63.1 per cent of the agents.

"Inadequate salary" was given by 32, or 56.1 per cent. This study and other facts indicate that low salary is the main reason for leaving service. Many of the retired agents, in addition to checking, made special reference to low or inadequate salaries and to the fact that the new position offered more financial remuneration. Forty-eight former agents, or 49 per cent, checked "dead end job, no chance for professional advancement" as a factor which influenced their retirement from the service. The rather large checking of this factor was a surprise, as complaints along this line have been rather infrequent. As a matter of fact, spreading of the county agent's effort over too many projects is a much more common complaint than the lack of chance for professional advancement. "Working with too many projects" was checked by 25, or 43.8 per cent, of the agents replying.

Figure 6

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE AGENTS
TO LEAVE COUNTY AGENT WORK



A totally unexpected spread is noted between the first four factors and those remaining. Figure 6 would indicate that (1) inadequate salaries, (2) too many night meetings, (3) lack of opportunity for professional advancement, and (4) efforts spread over too many projects, are the major factors which influence former agents to seek other positions. The other factors checked may be considered as more or less minor in nature;

Lack of Security

Apparently one of the most important of all factors influencing former agents to look for other positions was their feeling of a lack of security in county agent work. In the questionnaire used, former agents were asked to list additional reasons which influenced their leaving extension work. Forty of the 57 agents replying listed additional reasons, "Lack of security" was by far the most frequent of the additional reasons cited. Nineteen persons out of 40, or 40.5 per cent, listed "lack of security". Frequently mentioned as a cause of lack of security was the necessity of going before the county board of commissioners each year for appropriations to support the work. Several said they would have felt more secure had all salaries been paid from federal-state funds. The feeling of insecurity probably was more prevalent in the early years of county agent work. The item of insecurity should no doubt have been listed in the questionnaire.

Former Agents Give Reasons for Leaving the Service

A number of former county agents who returned questionnaires made rather pertinent statements as to factors which influenced them to go into other fields. Since these are supplementary statements volunteered when returning the check-sheet, they may be considered rather significant. Without using names, we quote:

"The weakness in the county agent set-up was the eternal struggle for appropriations. To encourage the top young men to go into county agent work there must be greater opportunities for advancement either in the extension field or in related fields of work than seemed to be present at the time I was in the work."

"I don't think there is any occupation more enjoyable than extension work. However, I felt that I couldn't have improved my position by changing counties and I felt that eventually it would be necessary because of my age to slow down, which wouldn't be good for the work in the county. My training and experience seemed to be insufficient to fit me for any other extension work."

"One of my main objections to county agent work was the fact that the program was supposed to be planned and, more or less, to be local in nature. However, we had programs subjected upon the people from a federal standpoint which quite often were personally objectionable to me."

"County extension work is wonderful training and experience. My eight years' work is of great value to me as an individual. However, I assume that your problem is to keep that experience within your own balliwick. Probably the one best way is to get salaries up where they belong, and this certainly should be on a merit basis. One of the stumbling blocks on salary apparently always has been and always will be the fact that they are compared to local county political offices. There is a great tendency for some of those people to want to see that county agents' salaries are below theirs."

"A definite liberal pension plan should be set up that will keep a man comfortably when he is retired - 20 to 30 years in this work, if a good job is done, about finishes a man."

"My chief reason for making a change was that the work was about all "leg work". By that I mean that a person had to be on the job all the time, either making farm calls or at the office and meetings. The large number of night meetings meant that a person would not have much time to spend with his family and friends."

"A second objection was that you were at the mercy of the county board of appropriations and the extension board to have your contract renewed, and that you had to play politics all the time. To a certain extent it seemed that you had to play state politics to get a chance at a better county as it might open up."

"A person had to give special attention to Farm Bureau members and often some of the best farmers in the county did not belong and there was always a little fight on in the county from this angle. If the job could be on a straight salary from the state and county it would be better, so that you could work with all on the same basis. Now with many of the farm bureaus getting into the field of private business, it is making the job of county agent that much harder."

"The annual wrangle with the county board begging for the appropriation and the worry each two years about the state appropriation. Farm Bureau membership responsibility fell on the county agent. The solicitor's daily story, which seemed to be part of his entertainment, was to tell me all of the adverse things he had heard about the county agent. He had always heard plenty."

"If the agent must satisfy the University, county commissioners, Farm Bureau, and extension committee (it is almost humanly impossible to satisfy that many), he must have more money to make it bearable."

"I could not see any future for the average man. (Only few men who have either pull or luck get anywhere.) The farmer has more chance to get ahead and the farm is a much better place to rear a family than the average small town or city."

"The constant friction and bickering of the various agricultural agencies having programs in the county was getting under my skin (no friction at the county level, but at higher levels, which could not help but be felt in the county), with the county agent being continually given a minor educational role and not much of that as far as some of the programs were concerned. I had been somewhat disillusioned over this fact, as I had hoped that all farm programs would have been coordinated on a strictly non-political basis with the county agent as county director."

"Too much work to do; too much had to be left undone. Too much help from state office in suggesting directly or indirectly what should be done, and not enough help in actually doing it."

RESULTS OF SURVEY AMONG PRESENT MINNESOTA AGENTS

A study was made with 49 Minnesota county agents during the spring and summer of 1947. This concerned factors affecting tenure, primarily the work load. The purpose of the study was to get the reactions of the agents in relation to the work load they were carrying and to get their suggestions for improving the work pattern. The questions dealt with complaints which agents have made in the past.

A survey form was used. Eleven county agents were interviewed personally. Questions were asked and replies were checked on the forms after the interview.

Thirty-eight forms were mailed to agents. Twenty of these were sent to the agent in the northwest district who had not been interviewed, 16 were sent to agents in other parts of the state, seven of which had formerly served in the northwest district, and two were sent to agents in another state. The survey, therefore, reached all agents in the northwest district. These would be about average agents. The other 18 would be classed as better than average.

Replies were received from 31, or 81.5 per cent, of the 38 agents. This response indicated good interest. The following summaries combine the 11 interviews and the 31 questionnaire returns.

Nine of the questions were set up so that they might be answered with "yes" or "no". The number in percentages of the "yes" or "no" answers to the nine questions is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Reaction of 42 Agents Now Employed as to Unfavorable Elements in County Agent Work

| | Yes Replies | No Replies | Per cent | | Per Average Cent |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | | | Yes Replies | No Replies | |
| Is Salary Adequate | 7 | 24 | 22.5 | 77.5 | |
| Do agents have too many bosses | 6 | 35 | 14.6 | 85.4 | |
| Do agents feel they are over-worked | 32 | 7 | 82 | 18 | |
| Are there too many night meetings | 38 | 2 | 95 | 5 | |
| Can night meetings be avoided | 16 | 26 | 38.1 | 61.9 | |
| What should the night load be per week | | | | | 2.4 |
| What if anything is being done to offset night meetings | 21 | 21 | 50 | 50 | |
| Is there evidence of health injury | 22 | 15 | 60 | 40 | |
| Average number of hours worked per day | | | | | 11.2 |
| Do agents need more help in organizing their work | 20 | 7 | 74 | 26 | |
| How many major projects should be set up in year's program | | | | | 3 |
| Do agents have procedures for finishing projects | 10 | 31 | 24.5 | 75.5 | |
| If not does this leave impression of an unfinished job | 29 | 10 | 74.3 | 25.7 | |
| Per cent time spent on the less important - less essential work | | | | | 41 |

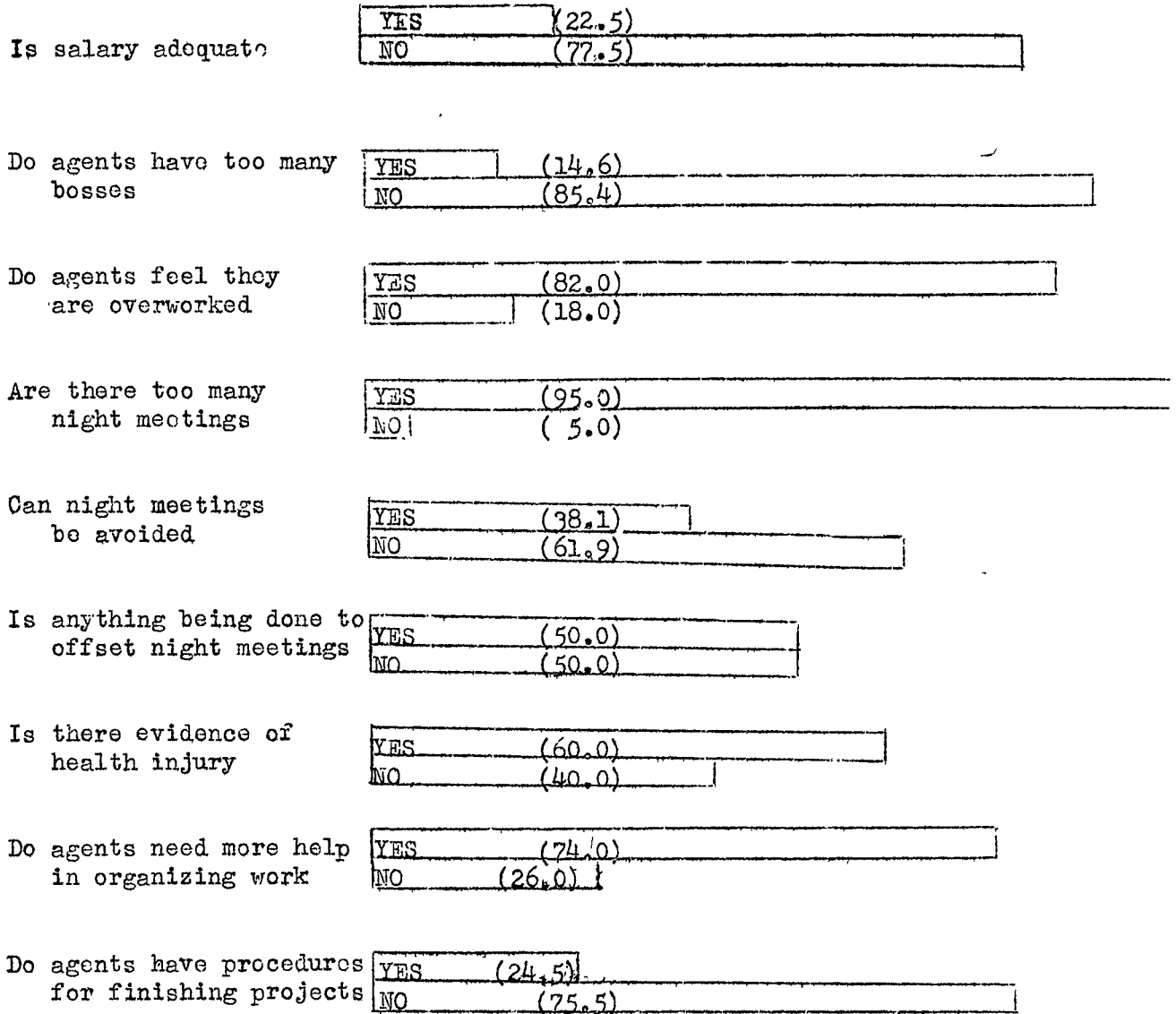
In reply to the question "how many night meetings per week would not be too many?" the average reply was 2.4. That is, a majority of the agents felt that they should not be asked to hold more than two or three night meetings in any week. They had no objection to this many.

In reply to the question "how many hours, on the average, do you work per day?" the 42 agents' replies averaged 11.2 hours, the range in hours per day being 9 to 15.

In reply to the question "what per cent of time is devoted to work which you consider comparatively less important and less essential than the major programs?" the answers ranged from 10 to 65, with the average being 41 per cent. This question probably was not well enough defined. The replies in percentages of "yes" and "no" are shown in figure 7.

Figure 7

UNFAVORABLE ELEMENTS IN COUNTY AGENT WORK
SUMMARIZED FROM AGENTS' REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE



Per cent replying: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90

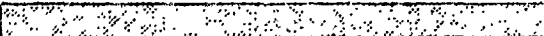

Comparison of Replies from Retired and Present Agents on Three Factors Affecting Tenure

A comparison of replies from retired and present agents on three factors affecting tenure is shown in Figure 8. Since the surveys were taken separately, the cross check would indicate that the evidence in the replies is reasonably correct.

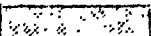
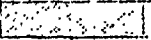
Figure 8

COMPARISON OF REPLIES FROM FORMER AND PRESENT AGENTS

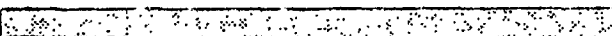
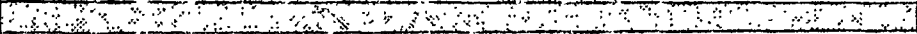
Salary Inadequate:

| | | |
|----------------|--|-------|
| Retired Agents |  | (56%) |
| Present Agents |  | (77%) |

Too Many Bosses:

| | | |
|----------------|---|-------|
| Retired Agents |  | (15%) |
| Present Agents |  | (14%) |

Too Many Night Meetings:

| | | |
|----------------|--|------|
| Retired Agents |  | (63) |
| Present Agents |  | (95) |

Since replies of present agents were obtained during an inflationary period, it is natural that a large percentage of them would feel that salaries were inadequate. A higher percentage of present than former agents were concerned over too many night meetings. This is more likely due to prevailing attitude than indication that more night meetings are now being held than formerly.

Since this part of the study to ascertain from the agents themselves their judgment as to defects and weaknesses in their work patterns that can be corrected, certain specific questions were asked. One of these, "can a better work pattern be developed?" was asked ten of the agents interviewed. Without exception the answer was "yes".

Another question, "can a project be set up on a course of study basis?" received unanimous "yes" answers from the agents. Other questions asked are stated and will be followed with quotations from the answers received.

Quotes from Agents' Replies to Questions

1. What is being done, if anything, to offset time spent at numerous night meetings?

"I have the 4-H agent stay at home part of the morning. He has the big night load. The home demonstration agent has 90 per cent day meetings."

"Nothing; full day's time spent at work regardless of number of night meetings."

"Nothing. Folks, including co-workers, expect one to be on the job at 8:00 a.m. like all 40-hour a week workers."

"I come down at 8:30 to 9:00 and often take a long noon hour when tired out. We need more people to share the meeting load."

"I can't arrive at the office late in the morning because our farmers are in the office just after they deliver their milk and cream."

"Better planning. Several efforts made to substitute day meeting for evening events, but efforts seem to result in just more meetings both day and night. This approach is inadequate but better planning offers hope."

"Not much. We do not expect the personnel to come to the office as early the next morning but it seems they need to be there to get the work done."

"Nothing for the most part. Most of us put in full daytime work in addition to night meetings and don't get to take full vacation allowance."

Note: The request of agents for not more than two or three night meetings in any one week seems reasonable. Supervisors can and should aid in achieving this goal.

2. What can be done, if anything, to improve "line supervision and administration?"

"Supervision is best by suggestion and encouragement as is now done in Minnesota."

"Concentrate on an extension program to meet the needs of the county. Don't be too concerned about yearly balance between 4-H, home, and agricultural phases of work. One district supervisor instead of three."

3. What can we do that we are not now doing to help agents in analyzing, organizing, and systematizing their work?

"Should have time set aside for preparation on projects. Specialist should work up illustrative material to be left with agent throughout the program."

"A state-wide policy on Saturday night and Sunday meetings and a limit on week night meetings may help. A policy of having the morning off if one had an out-of-town night meeting."

"Aid with publicity, help in preparing material for meetings, a full-time assistant agent, or full-time man club agent would probably help the most."

"Help evaluate relative importance of different lines of work. This is largely done by program planning."

"Set up a state-wide office day routine; reduce out-of-county activities."

"Clear all requests for help from staff members and commercial concerns through one man. Now everyone in the United States is free to ask us for a lift to do his job."

"I spend too much time collecting information for other people. In planning project work, the time of the agent should be minimized where possible even if it means reducing scope. I have come to believe that use of the extension service for campaigns such as safety week, accident prevention, etc., desirable though the objectives are, is an entirely unwarranted intrusion into the local agent's time. He gains nothing, not even the respect of his group. Farm people are intensely practical about such matters. They are glad to let somebody else do the work."

"Have a trained, well-qualified person (like H. P. Hanson) spend considerable time in a county, analyzing county and work done prior to recommending changes. More emphasis on press and radio publicity."

"Establish standard policies on office hours, meetings, personal services, etc. Establish salary scale to provide for term as agent and to take care of counties having a low valuation, etc."

4. What is to be done with a full program when new and additional projects and programs come along?

"Certain things in a county cannot be omitted from a program. Some things need cutting out. Maybe we should handle one or two projects in a county over a period of two or three years as a major. All other minor. Then shift around from year to year. Do fewer things and a better job of these."

"Train leaders to carry it through. Complete it (if possible) before launching the new, or drop if the new program seems more necessary."

"Cut down on the least important items."

"Check to see if other county staff members can carry on extra project. There is no point in one staff member carrying a dozen or more projects and others carrying two or less. We are still running separate programs."

"Ease up on old programs and turn more of them over to leaders."

"There must be careful elimination."

"Turn them down or let some 'ride' for a time. Select those most valuable to your county at present time. Agents have to learn that this world was not made in a day and that there will be lots of work left to do even after they die. Use a little 'horse sense'."

"This is a good question. If agents are expected to continually add projects to the planned program each year, then the program of work should be pared down to fewer projects when it is planned each fall. Otherwise, they should not be asked to take on additional programs during the year. OR, put an assistant agent in the county."

5. What are your less essential jobs?

1. City-farmer problems (city laws, etc.).
2. Chamber of Commerce problems.
3. People who want you to help them with personal things.
4. Unnecessary out-of-county meetings."

"Farm help program, insect program, radio program, civic organizations."

"Livestock disease problems, personal service work, farm help placement (takes considerable time)."

"Office calls and requests on material other than major programs takes lots of time but I don't consider it a 'less essential' job. Talking at Farm Bureau meetings and 4-H meetings month after month (I'm going to cut this out)."

"Veterinary work, culling flocks and herds, work with other groups."

"Personal service and advice on small matters."

- "General relationship problems, farm organization work, allied organizations."
- "Work on various local committees, time spent at State Fair."
- "Odds and ends of personal service must be attended to."
- "Attending district events (4-H, Rural Youth, etc.)."
- "Community activities, minor activities (for example work with cabbage growers), meetings with various and sundry committees, non-educational office activities (reports, etc.)."
- "Individual service on minor matters."
- "Time spent with commercial representatives of every conceivable organization, meeting with organizations just because they want county agent there."
- "Collecting information not directly connected with program, arranging meetings of programs for various cooperating groups. Not so much Farm Bureau here as cooperatives, etc. A town of this size creates a lot of public relations work. Sometimes it is important, too."
- "Office calls, aid to various groups and organizations, numerous reports."
- "Blue Cross activities, commercial organization demands, attending miscellaneous local and district meetings, questionnaires, reports, records, and letters. Many office calls take too much time."
- "Civic responsibilities, work with other agencies, particularly Soil Conservation Service."
- "Office calls, attending routine meetings, community service jobs, 'bookwork' report."
- "Community spirit, build up 4-H interest all the time, sire searching, acting as arbitrator in community or county problems."
- "Going to general 4-H meetings, attending general Farm Bureau (not unit) meetings and keeping machinery of their organization oiled, some 'fringe' projects which are added during the year, obeying requests to promote some national or state campaign in which there is little interest locally."

6. What are the principal weaknesses in the present work pattern?

- "Too many jobs and requests."
- "To me we do not accomplish what we should for the amount of time we spend on a 4-H program. Trying to pick up and carry projects that people are not extremely interested in."
- "Too many interruptions in office when preparing reports or subject matter for presentation. Heavy night schedule with the feeling that I should be on deck during the day also."
- "Work spread too thin."

"We have done a rotten job in selling the idea that we have a program of our own. Everyone feels free to call upon us to help them do their job. No program has been made to remedy this in the last 15 years."

"Just have more work than can receive proper attention."

"Most projects are never finished - at least are continuing. Try to cover too much ground."

"Not time enough for real follow-through - a little too much skipping over details."

"Can't lay out a definite calendar of work and stick to it. Too many people come in with a program they think Extension should carry out."

"We are spread too thin. The agent cannot delegate details - he has to do most of the dirty work. Not enough time to plan and work and to lay its background."

"Often difficult to have any free time during office hours to do planning, studying and any work."

"Too many unforeseen jobs enter each day's work which handicaps planned programs. The agent probably should try to discourage office and telephone calls in favor of meetings, tours, demonstrations, etc."

"Insufficient time to properly prepare or complete a subject."

"Reports need simplification. No chance for successful vacation and rest periods. A man should be triplets and not married."

"Spreading efforts a little too thin - i.e., a few too many projects in program of work. Not enough time available for reading and professional improvement. Cutting down night meetings would help on this."

7. What can we do that we are not doing ~~now~~ to accomplish more effective results with less effort?

"Wider use of local leaders. Get men to do some of the things the ladies are doing."

"We need a way of putting our material across more with visual aids but they must be of a local nature."

"A policy on office hours or days may help. Assistance in training leaders to present material and conduct meetings. A good 4-H leader would considerably lessen my load."

"Stop long enough to plan."

"Tear a page out of the books of other groups. Be firm and state that these extra jobs are outside our fields. Lots of room for help on this from the top."

"Have more assistance - assistant to agent or full-time male club leader."

"Try to have leaders do more of the work. Take a chance, it probably will work."

"Try to get some meetings changed from night to day. Have a screening committee at headquarters to weigh new projects suggested by people outside the county after year's program is drawn up."

"More personnel to spread the load of meetings and other events. We need more competent office workers. Some sort of training course might help. Agent should cultivate a strong negative to use in replying to requests for some sorts of help."

"Cut 'red tape' to a minimum. The people of the county are only interested in what they can see is being done."

Conclusion

Some conclusions that can be reached from this study are:

1. Agents do not consider salaries adequate.
2. They are not particularly concerned about too many bosses. Those replying "yes" mentioned Farm Bureau officials and "three" district supervisors.
3. Agents in the main feel that they are over-worked.
4. They think there are too many night meetings. They do not object to two or three per week but do object to four to six.
5. They are about divided on the question as to whether anything can be done to correct the night meetings. Part of those replying "yes" are already taking some steps to remedying the situation.
6. There is evidence of work-related health problems especially among the older agents.
7. Agents would appreciate more supervisory help in connection with their work organization.
8. Agents definitely feel that they are so crowded with work that they cannot satisfactorily finish projects which they have undertaken. They would rather carry fewer projects and do a more thorough and effective job of teaching.

IS THERE A HEALTH ANGLE IN COUNTY AGENT WORK

Findings indicate that there is a definite health hazard in county agent work as it is now being carried on. Numerous agents call attention to it. Director Warren Clark of Wisconsin says they recognize that there is a problem of overwork among county agents, partly due to the overload of night meetings. Five Wisconsin agents have had health difficulties during the past year. In Washington, Assistant Director Turner stated that there were eight men on the present list of 39 agents who have suffered from poor health recently. These included several heart cases as well as several nervous breakdowns.

In Nebraska there is a problem of overwork in the county agent job, according to Assistant Director Harry Gould. Several Nebraska agents have recently had sick leave. At present there is one case reported as a nervous breakdown.

Mr. J. E. Tippet, Assistant Director in California, thought there were no particular health problems. County Agent D. M. Smith of Red Bluff was of a contrary opinion:

Colorado reports no serious health problems. The night load is a real burden and source of considerable complaint on the part of county agents. Colorado is rather liberal in allowing leave, including 30 days' vacation annually, three weeks of summer school on pay, and three weeks' sick leave.

Kansas supervisors do not feel that the work load is such as to endanger health. County Agent P. O. Hale of Topeka reports to the contrary.

Ohio has recently lost two agents through heart trouble. One agent at present is on disability pension.

In Minnesota there seems to be considerable evidence of health difficulty among agents. Apparently this is more serious in the northwest district where at one time eight, or 25 per cent of the agents, were having health difficulties that, according to their physicians, probably originated with their long hours of work under nervous strain. We know of other cases where enforced layoffs were taken under the doctor's orders. Recently three Minnesota county agents died within a 12-month period. Three other deaths in service are recorded.

A former Minnesota agent reported as follows: "The week after I finished my work I went to a doctor and had a physical examination. He found that I had bleeding ulcers. As my blood count was down to 51, I was ordered to bed for three weeks, and as I had never been bothered with ulcers before I was county agent, this condition was undoubtedly caused by some phase of the work. Within a year after leaving county agent work I was back in good health and have been feeling fine ever since."

Long hours under nervous tension, coupled with a minimum of needed rest, probably indicate at least a minor health hazard which should be recognized.

Probably the existing situation can be corrected by better organization and planning, fewer consecutive night meetings, sufficient rest following consecutive night meetings that are unavoidable, planned relaxation, and more regular and systematic use of vacation time. Supervisors should accept responsibility along this line.

ESTABLISHING MORE PERMANENCE IN TENURE

A good salary scale based on merit and length of service seems to be the most important factor in keeping county agents on the job. There is some evidence that security is as important as salary. Tenure records are better when the salary is paid from federal-state funds under a specified plan that provides for salary promotion on merit and also rewards experience. This is also the judgment of administrators and supervisors in the many states visited on the study trip.

Use of Salary Scale for Extension Workers

The "Preliminary Report - Working Conditions of Extension Workers" (Sanders Committee) states: "Only 11 state extension services have established definite salary scales for paying extension workers. These states are Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. Only five of these have provisions for periodic salary increases. Factors most often checked as important in personnel rating listed in order are: (1) merit, (2) seniority, (3) initial training, and (4) professional in-service training."

Increases in salary of county workers practically are wholly dependent on county funds in 30 states. The "rule of thumb" method seems to be used in most states to determine salaries. The Sanders Committee report also states, "This committee recommends that groups in extension with comparable responsibilities be brought to the same salary level considering experience, training, tenure, and all other factors; second, that a system of evaluation be established; third, that a salary promotion scale be worked out for each state and made known to the workers." The committee also recommended a policy of increasing funds from federal-state sources for county professional workers, thereby releasing county funds for clerical and other local needs.

Salary Recognition for Length of Service

Salary range has always been rather narrow in Minnesota. Proven ability and experience on the job has not had enough recognition.

The 10 agents of longest tenure (9.3 years) in 1927 were paid an average of \$263 per year above the average of the state. In 1929 the 10 oldest agents in point of service (11.2 years) received \$2890 average salary as compared with an average salary of \$2480 for 10 beginners with an average tenure of six months. The average higher salary of \$473 does not seem adequate recognition for 11 years of service.

The 20 agents with the longest tenure in 1937 (14.2 years) received an average salary of \$2741, this being \$261 more than the state average that year.

During the past six years beginners have commonly started at salaries higher than retiring agents, many of whom had served up to 10 to 14 years. This was, of course, an abnormal period.

We have tacitly accepted the principle that merit and experience would be rewarded by local committees. This has often been done, but county boards are usually conservative in their financial support. There is some tendency on the part of county committees to start new agents where the retiring agents left off. Apparently not enough provision for salary increase has been made to keep good men on the job. This would seem to be another problem for the administrative and supervisory staff.

Several states have made definite provision for length of service increases. To mention a few, Wisconsin adds \$200 to county agent salaries from federal-state sources after ten years of service. Consideration is now being given toward raising this to \$500 and spreading it over a five-year period. New Jersey increases salaries of county agents \$240 after one year of service. Virginia provides for a salary increase every 18 months. Ohio has set up a salary scale plan and is "moving in this direction" from a starting salary of \$1600 to \$1900 per county in training, \$2000 to \$2800 for assistant agent or instructor, \$2900 to \$3800 for junior agent or assistant professor, \$3900 to \$4500 for extension agent or associate professor, \$4600 to \$6000 for senior extension agent or professor.

The Michigan scale provides for a \$1700 raise in 25 years, from \$3300 to \$5000 for Class A men in selected counties.

Personnel Evaluation

Some excellent rating forms have been set up by the Extension Service in Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, and Colorado. They include some very excellent ideas which should be carefully studied in the event it is decided to use a salary scale based on merit ratings and length of service.

LIBERAL STATE SUPPORT NEEDED

Evidence was found while studying state systems for financing that the better tenure records are in states having rather liberal state support and with salaries not dependent on local committees, but paid from federal-state sources.

Table 5 Tenure Record of Present Agent Staff in Various States as of Date of Interview

| | <u>Salary</u> | <u>Average Tenure Years</u> | <u>Salary Federal-State</u> | <u>Authority</u> |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| California | \$6300 | 20 | Yes | J. C. Tippitt |
| Pennsylvania | 4500 | 25 | Yes | J. M. Fry |
| Michigan | 4200* | 15 | Yes | E. A. Werner |
| Oregon | 4215 | 10 | Yes | Chas. Smith |
| Minnesota | 3741 | 8 | No | |
| Missouri | 3250 | 8.8 | With Excep. | Bob Baker |
| Kansas | 3249 | 7.5 | No | L. F. Neff |
| Maine | 3200 | 4 | No | G. E. Lord |

*Estimated

The consistency with which tenure rate follows the salary curve seems rather significant. An analysis of the percentage of total extension funds used by the various states visited indicates that states with fairly liberal state support pay the better salaries.

The higher salaries are paid in states that either have liberal state support or support from farm organizations, or both. The states having the highest average salary rate such as New York, Pennsylvania, California, Michigan, Oregon, and Washington, also have the lowest turnover in personnel. States like Maine, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and even Wisconsin and Minnesota, which are more largely dependent upon county funds, average lower salaries and a higher rate of turnover in personnel. The average tenure of agents now on appointment is 25 years in Pennsylvania.

Table 6 Percentage of All Extension Funds From Different Sources 1946

| <u>States Ranked by Per Cent of State Funds</u> | <u>One Co. Agt. Salary</u> | <u>Federal</u> | <u>State</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>Farm Org.</u> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| Oregon | \$3854 | 29.4 | 45.8 | 24.8 | |
| California | 5500 | 36.9 | 41.2 | 21.9 | All |
| Michigan | 3719 | 49.1 | 34.3 | 16.6 | above |
| Pennsylvania | 4291 | 59. | 32. | 9. | \$3500 |
| Indiana | 3573 | 46.8 | 31.1 | 22.1 | |
| New York | 3592 | 24.1 | 30.03 | 33.7 | 12.2 |
| Washington | 3538 | 44.1 | 24.7 | 31.2 | |
| Ohio | 4026 | 59.2 | 21.6 | 19.2 | |
| Colorado | 2967 | 56.5 | 17.8 | 25.7 | |
| Wisconsin | 3436 | 51.6 | 17.1 | 31.3 | All |
| Nebraska | 3160 | 55.5 | 16.5 | 28.0 | below |
| Missouri | 3204 | 60.7 | 16.5 | 18.0 | \$3500 |
| Minnesota | 3417 | 61. | 15.1 | 22.5 | |
| Illinois | 4154 | 46.7 | 14.9 | .6 | 37.7 |
| Kansas | 3249 | 40. | 11. | 39. | 10. |

This table was set up in Washington, D. C., May 1947, from the 1946 data then available at the extension business office. It is submitted as a rather convincing indication of the need for adequate state appropriations.

The eight states having more than 20 per cent of state funds average \$4,056.66 for county agent salaries, excepting Illinois because of its 37.7 per cent of Farm Bureau funds. The seven states with less than 20 per cent of state funds average \$3,281.57. The state appropriations for these same states for 1947-48 are listed below.

Table 7

State Appropriations for Extension Work
(1947-48 figures)

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Oregon | \$ 577,136.00 |
| California | 1,213,147.03 |
| Michigan | 595,608.00 |
| Pennsylvania | 580,128.89 |
| Indiana | 524,665.00 |
| New York | 929,936.30 |
| Ohio | 419,511.00 |
| Colorado | 150,000.00 |
| Wisconsin | 276,952.18 |
| Nebraska | 242,411.20 |
| Missouri | 307,500.00 |
| Minnesota | 228,365.00 |
| Illinois | 467,610.00 |
| Washington | 323,722.00 |
| Kansas | 162,400.00 |

SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE MINNESOTA SITUATION

Minnesota ranks fifth in agricultural income. Funds for extension work, however, rank much below this. For the year 1947-48, Minnesota ranks 17th among all states in allowance of federal funds, 28th in state funds, 14th in county funds, and 31st in average salary paid agents.

This would indicate that for Minnesota the state contribution is the weakest link but that more of both state and county money is needed if we are to attract and hold the more highly qualified men.

We cannot expect to maintain a strong virile organization if we continue to let our best young agents leave after a year or two of service.

Men with the highest qualifications have always been needed. Now with new technological developments and with other governmental agencies and many commercial concerns attempting to carry on educational programs (patterned after extension), it is more important than ever that the most capable men that can possibly be found be kept in county agent positions. It is only in this way that extension can stay out in front and maintain the high tradition of the service.

Better salaries and more security in tenure are urgent. A systematic salary promotion plan based on both merit and length of service may be the solution. It might be correlated with a more or less flexible plan for starting inexperienced men in agriculturally less desirable counties.

Final authority for determining salaries should rest with the state office. This would not preclude the local committees from participation and acquiescence in salaries paid. The state administration would also participate in the responsibility for terminating the services of those men who fail to meet the high requirements of the service. Every effort would be made to keep the good men on the job in order to maintain desired efficiency.

Our tenure study shows that 51.7 per cent of the 400 Minnesota agents who quit did so before they had served three years. The first three years, therefore, seem to be the important hump to get over.

It would seem that after three years of service a substantial salary boost should be provided as an incentive to carry on.

The first three years should also be considered a probationary period and made the point of cut off for the less satisfactory workers. Only after three years of service should the appointment be made a permanent one. While this may look like the Scotchman's "bag of oats" we feel that specific salary raises should be provided annually or at least by two or three-year periods thereafter.

The salary range could well be from \$3000 for beginners up to \$5000 for the better qualified experienced men. The average salary by groups might be, for preliminary consideration at least, \$3500-\$4000 and \$4500-\$5000, respectively, for the grouping proposed.

Salaries on this basis would require a total of \$372,500 for the 91 Minnesota agents. The 1947 total was \$313,478.97; thus only \$59,021.03 additional would be needed to meet the proposed scale.

A substantial increase in county appropriations has already been made for 1948. It can hardly be expected, however, that present county appropriations can be maintained after the current inflation subsides.

During the depression of the 1930's state support of county agents did not decline to the extent that county support did.

Since salaries in the past have been too low it is important to retard salary cuts of agents as much as possible as inflation recedes and in this way hold salaries at the desired levels.

THE COUNTY AGENT WORK LOAD

Extension has grown rapidly and has accepted without question almost every job and assignment proposed by individuals and groups on county, state, and national levels

It is time to reappraise and eliminate time-wasting and insignificant "remnants of the past" and if possible to organize the work pattern for its most effective operation.

County agents have themselves stressed four important points in connection with their work load: (1) They want to do a clean-cut teaching job on projects without being so crowded that they cannot satisfactorily finish what they have started; (2) They want to eliminate the less important, less essential "chores"; (3) They see no reason why the same subject matter should be repeated year after year to the same groups; (4) They want to organize a week's calendar of work to provide time enough so that they may prepare creditable material for talks, radio, and newspaper publicity, as well as reports. These are reasonable and laudable requests. Supervisors should be the first to recognize the need for some reorganization, as well as better organization, in helping agents to meet these needs. Along with adequate salary, we should set up and maintain satisfactory working conditions in the counties.

A study to determine present use of county agents' time is underway. We hope this may provide the basis for remedying such weak spots as are still inherent in extension organization. A supplementary report will be made when the study is completed.

JAN 19 1961

Due 2/13/61

