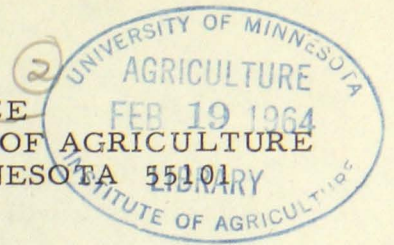


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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE  
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## CHARTING EXTENSION'S FUTURE

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As a one-time Cooperative Extension Director and certainly as a member of the Advisory Board of the National Center for Extension Administration, I can't help but be interested tremendously in extension's future. Arriving so late in the week I'm unacquainted with what's been said so far on the subject. I hope I'll not repeat too much of what was said earlier -- if I do, perhaps we can conclude that there actually is some agreement possible over the future of the service. Comments on the future of extension have in recent years been given almost too freely and have arisen from many sources. Speculating upon what to do with Cooperative Extension, even though the reasons for doing something at all may not be too clear, has become a favorite parlor game in Land-Grant circles and generally throughout the agricultural and home economics complexes.

Extension has appraised itself extensively in recent years, probing deeply into its personnel, its programs, and its mandates. The scope report and similar documents developed nationally and locally have resulted from questions raised by university, governmental and farm group leaders concerning the role which extension should play on the rural and educational scenes. Extension, in the eyes of some, has in the less than 50 years since 1914, eaten itself up, as it were. Extension, even more than the research upon which its program is based, has had to suffer the consequences of circumstances arising from the falling numbers of farms and farmers. Its critics, which include some of Extension's colleagues within the university itself, resort to simple arithmetic: fewer farms and farmers should mean fewer extension workers and fewer dollars for the program. The problem, though, is how do you dump a successful program and how do you find the resources needed to transplant the cooperative extension approach into other fields?

Actually, has the cooperative extension idea been so successful that it could have outlived its usefulness in only half a century? Extension is so young chronologically that the birthdates of perhaps a third of its active members today preceded its founding in 1914.

The quickening pace of the accumulating knowledge on all points made Extension necessary in the first place. Now that the pace has been accelerated, is there less need for the educational process? It is true, perhaps, that extension's first concern has been and still is the farm and the home, but it is also true that it has shaped and it has been shaped by other influences: local, national and international -- economic, social and political -- rural and urban -- terrestrial and planetary. Change and adjustment have been Extension's constant companions. Just think - since 1914:

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We've lived through 2 World Wars, Korea, Laos, Vietnam, the rise of Russia as a world power, the Berlin Wall -- booms and busts -- drought and floods.

We've seen the arrival and take-over by the automobile -- air travel -- radio and TV -- motion pictures -- vitamins -- synthetic fibers -- household appliances for almost every conceivable purpose.

We've added the 40-hour week -- compulsory education -- polio shots -- farm programs -- foreign aid -- social security -- crop insurance -- compulsory military training.

We've watched the coming of national agriculture and home economics -- the SCS -- the FHA -- the ASCS -- the RAD -- the AID -- the Peace Corps -- vertical integration -- general extension -- extension summer schools -- agribusiness -- linear programming -- the Common Market.

When I first entered Extension about 10 years ago, I soon learned how right the fellow was when he observed that "nearly everything is more complicated than most people think." As an Extension director I quickly became aware of the Service's rather sensitive position brought about by its rather unusual place in the Land-Grant system of higher education, its tripartite support emerging from county, state and federal sources, and its split loyalties to the public (one might even ask publics?), to several levels of government and to the university. Even its own workers (Ranta, 1960) look upon Extension as being comprised of a number of sub-professions, an almost schizophrenic circumstance which certainly, over the years, has had its influence upon program construction, upon morale and upon both inter and intramural relationships. With so many allegiances and so many obligations to young and old alike, Extension has, perhaps, the least logical organizational structure in all of the Land-Grant system. It really hadn't ought to work, you know.

This splintering which has characterized Extension goes beyond its three major divisions -- agriculture, home economics and 4-H Club work. It can apply as readily to subject matter areas or to geographical divisions -- it is applicable to individual workers themselves and to the public resident in the counties.

We have, in a sense, allowed such a succession of Extension programs to arise that we have a separate one for almost every purpose: we speak of an Extension program for Clay County, a home economics program for Mackenzie County and a 4-H Club program for Ward County; there is a dairy production Extension program for the farmers and one in manufacturing for the milk processors and distributors. We have them for the young and the old, for large operators and small, for the producer and the consumer, for the obsolete and the modern, for those who farm full-time, part-time, or not at all, for those who sell to farmers and those who buy from farmers -- somewhere perhaps, we have an Extension program for people who do nothing, need nothing, and ask for nothing. It can be doubted whether many Extension Services will be able to afford such luxury in the future. Universities will compel greater coordination of Extension's efforts, with a demonstrable singleness of purpose shown by the agriculture, family living and youth components of the Service.

The problem becomes more complex because of the strong influences exerted upon staff and program by Extension's many local audiences. From these, Extension has over the years drawn its strength. From them too, have arisen habits which often have made Extension vulnerable to charges of favored clientele, provincialism, professional isolation and academic insufficiency.

The fact is that Extension in practice is not a single agency -- it isn't even a composite of 51 state and territorial groups. It is, rather, a conglomerate of some 3,000 units which can become well coordinated into a scheme of program and procedures, or they can easily become little entities of their own with major responsibilities only to themselves. A lot of good ideas like farm and home development, program projection, public affairs education and leader training have become casualties in many counties because of this.

When the educational program of Extension was the only one functioning for the farming public, its position was clearly understood. Its program, largely production oriented, was specific and practically unqualified; its administration was decisive, sometimes almost autocratic.

Today, Extension has to operate under completely different circumstances. Now there are hosts of public and private agencies ready to serve the farmer; hundreds of general and commodity organizations are eagerly seeking his membership. (I recall from my Pennsylvania days that there are over 500 dairy organizations alone in that state.)

Advances in agriculture and home economics more frequently come to the attention of the public first via the mass media rather than from Extension. Marketing problems today many times outweigh those of production and a new clientele, both adult and youth and often non-farm, clamors for attention. Farm organizations concern themselves as frequently with such matters as zoning and tax structures as with the problems of production -- and urban organizations want to know about farm problems, conservation of soil, water and wildlife, and how to start a horse and pony club.

The day is past when Extension can work as an assemblage of disjointed segments. Today, dairy problems are often solved by engineers or agronomists or entomologists, as we have come to recognize in our marketing program that many of our problems in this area are solved at the production rather than the distribution level. Programming must become a team effort with the staff free to contribute without being encumbered by arbitrary departmental barriers. Home economists are helpful in the appraisal and development of program proposals in agriculture and there is no basis to the oft-stated contention that agricultural agents have no interest in the home and family; if we accept the "family living" concept, the usefulness of the contributions of the agricultural, home economic and youth staffs in the entire broad area of Extension programming becomes obvious. It is clear too, that outside agencies and other divisions of the university can also make worthwhile contributions to Extension program development.

This past June, at the seminar on Agricultural Administration at Colorado State University, a task force of Land-Grant presidents reported its concept of the colleges of agriculture of the future. The report called upon extension to provide greater breadth and depth in its program utilizing

the university's resources broadly in problem-solving. Principal to the latter, of course, is the shifting population pattern of rural America and the reduced requirement for human labor on our farms. Implicit here are many of agriculture's and extension's real sticklers: over-production, professional competence, retraining of surplus labor, interdependence of subject matter areas, of research and education and many others. Some, despite intensive effort, technical advances, legislative action and even reorganization of the extension structure have defied successful solution.

Extension, for the most part, has come to recognize three rather fundamental truisms: single subject matter approaches to problem-solving are generally inadequate for the purpose; the scope of competence of our colleges of agriculture (and home economics) is no longer adequate to service the entire needs of agriculture; the solution of many of agriculture's main problems must be found outside rather than within agriculture itself -- this is especially true of problems arising from labor surpluses on the farm, increasing farm size, automation and the like.

Extension, and all divisions of the colleges of agriculture and home economics, for that matter, should be expected to become more precise in determining the course of any rural community. With all the data we now have on environmental influences, upon production patterns, population movement, farm land losses and the like, programs concerning agricultural production and management and natural resource use trends should be detailed enough to establish programs geared to the needs of the near and distant future. Where in the nation or within each state, for example, will the livestock and dairying interests, the grain, fruit and vegetable production ultimately settle? Why should our programs so many times be established after the event, as it were -- after the farms have been lost, after the market has disappeared, after the farm youth have been trained, frequently as Senator Fulbright has put it, for unemployment. Should not North Dakota, for example, announce and begin now to ready a production and resource use program for the day that waters from the Garrison Reservoir are made available for irrigation of farm lands -- shouldn't we now plan and build towards the kind of program which will accommodate a rural complex with 10,000 fewer farms in 1975 as compared with 1959? What commodities should these farms, almost 200 acres larger per unit than in 1959, produce and for which markets -- how much labor will they need -- what research should be initiated now -- which will ease the pains of the transition? Will other segments of the industry - in a manner similar to cheese makers who in the last several years moved from Wisconsin to North Dakota - move into the state? In this case, the production of cheese in North Dakota jumped from virtually nothing to 6.5 million pounds in two years, must these shifts happen by chance -- or can they be planned and directed?

Some basic questions can be raised at this point: Is Extension organized to meet such problems through an interdisciplinary approach -- does it exert the influence it should upon research -- does it really believe it can merely enumerate the alternatives and hope its constituency will make the right choice?

Here, perhaps, we may be at the roots of Extension's perplexities -- the uncovering through exhaustive analysis of problems but many times offering no forthright approach to their solution, especially when drastic adjustment in farming systems may be indicated. The President's task force alluded to this in its report to the Colorado State Seminar. "When

changes are necessary, extension must recognize the need and provide the initiative to make such changes. Otherwise, it cannot hope to retain the confidence of the people it serves or perform its full obligation to society. A danger here lies in reliance upon the public to recognize and initiate changes. True enough, the changes initiated must meet the test of public review, but they should most often originate from Extension leadership." One can assume these principles apply as well to changes within the Extension structure as to changes on the rural scene.

Extension must find greater objectivity, greater depth, greater flexibility, greater leadership in the application of its resources to the task of the future. Robert W. Sarnoff, in speculating on the dynamic developments to be expected in communications, transportation, nuclear science, etc., says that the next ten or fifteen years will bring global changes to a degree unwitnessed ever before by a single generation. Sarnoff says, "New plant and animal strains, bred from deeper understanding of the mechanisms of heredity, will multiply the sources of food for human consumption everywhere. We are probing the nucleic structure of the living cell, and we may one day evolve a hardier, longer-lived and more emotionally stable human species. Our grandchildren may all be a homogenized blend of a Rhodes scholar, an astronaut and a Decathlon champion." The vastness of our capacity to produce, bound as it is to achieve even greater dimensions under the impact of the even greater discoveries still to come, will enforce a management revolution on the rural scene that we are ill-equipped to organize, evolve and govern. Extension -- or somebody -- will be expected to provide the leadership needed.

Extension must place increasing stress upon strengthening of its competencies -- it must attain a correctness beyond levels yet unforeseen. The costs of production will rise to greater heights as land values, taxes, machinery and labor charges continue their upward trend. The penalties of errors in judgment or in management can be expected to become increasingly more painful. One is especially vulnerable when it's the other fellows dough that's being put on the barrelhead.

Extension must develop a new versatility, a new, speedier responsiveness, a new alertness and a new daring in its program of educational service to agriculture and public in general. Nowadays, new ideas and new discoveries need almost immediate exploitation. That Extension chin is just going to have to be stuck out on the issues of production, marketing and resource use if the Service is to retain its position of leadership among the host of private and public agencies clamoring to be of assistance to the belabored American farmer.

Just as it's important to delineate the future and geographic supply circumstances of farm commodities in the United States in the future, Extension will have to take into account the changing world-wide agricultural situation. In fact, Extension must make its own contribution to the advancement of the farm economy and the building of improved levels of living of peoples in many disadvantaged lands. As production of farm commodities is improved and stabilized throughout the world, the American export pattern will change. This, in turn, will alter substantially the production and marketing pattern of this nation itself.

Catering to the needs of an affluent society when at the same time you're plagued with abundance doesn't ease the job for Extension. Goals are much more clearly defined in the face of a tight economy and short supply. How, then, can Extension gear itself to meet the expected changes in agricultural production, management and natural resource use?

First of all, it is manifest that the Extension staff must be completely up-to-date subject matter-wise. The times demand there be no let-up in the drive towards greater efficiency of production largely through the immediate introduction of technical advances into the farming system. This means intimate liaison with research, industry, sources of capital, government and the consumer, whose preferences have a growing influence upon production of farm commodities. And speaking of government, it would be impractical to conclude that farm programs or that local, state or federal controls would not continue to effect substantially the production and land use programs of the foreseeable future. With some products and in certain places these influences can be expected to have exceptional effects upon production practices and upon marketing. Extension will have to reorganize itself intramurally and philosophically in many instances in order that it can engage more generally in inter-disciplinary approaches to problem-solving. If it's true, as we hear at every point, that it is important that we commit the resources of the entire University to the job at hand, it is obvious we should at first make certain that we can and do commit the resources of all of Extension. This isn't easy to accomplish - despite all claims - for the county worker is subject many times to vested local interests which often demand the program retain a narrow perspective -- and specialists frequently fear their individuality may become submerged in any team effort. Organizational patterns can be devised to prevent this from happening but it often means some comfortable and long-standing ties must be broken. Extension unity, a merger of the thousands of individual extension programs existing today, is a task of first order in the modernization of the Service. Otherwise it can hardly be expected to function effectively within a University-wide extension effort.

The new role being devised for Extension within the University community originates in large part from the position in which agriculture finds itself today. The problems of over-production and the real and imagined decline in the importance of agriculture in certain areas due to the fall in number of farms and farmers has led to the assumption that Cooperative Extension's mode of operation and its emphases need revision if not diminution. In some states, the Service has been removed from its classical setting in the College of Agriculture to be joined with General Extension in a new enterprise where hopefully the total resources of the University can be devoted to off-campus service to the public. Assuming the arrangement can be made workable, the problems of the moment stem from Cooperative Extension finding itself in an unfamiliar and uncertain setting wherein it is discouraged from emphasizing the most familiar aspects of its program, such as the production phases, and is encouraged to enter fields in which it has still to gain competence. A real danger lies in the likelihood that a major disassociation with farm and home research could follow. It is unfortunate too, that the other divisions of the University being brought into the union are generally not ready to accept the extension function as a primary responsibility. We hope fervently that one day soon extension -- all kinds of extension -- will be accepted as a function and not merely a division of the university.

Nevertheless, the efforts are all for the good. Cooperative Extension really never had the right to develop within its structure competencies already well-established elsewhere within the institution. Furthermore, it shouldn't be expected that these competencies should be supplied to Extension freely and without charge all in the spirit of cooperation. If other disciplines can make a contribution they must be arranged for and compensated within their own setting. The control of programs designed to service the rural scene can no longer be the exclusive responsibility of Cooperative Extension -- for it is expected that many of the most spectacular advancements in the future -- as already in the past -- will result from the application of discoveries originating outside the agricultural and home economics research enterprises.

The Presidents' task force in its report at the CSU Seminar stated that "the Land-Grant College of Agriculture, with its resident instruction, agricultural research and cooperative extension programs, has been the most influential sector of our universities in changing the environment and social structure around it. . . . .the agricultural college has not fully met the research and education needs arising from these broad changes with which it is associated and which it has helped to create. It has concentrated disproportionately on particular services to a small sector of the community." The agricultural College and its components, therefore, must make its competencies available to the public in general, which in the long run remains the largest benefactor of the total effort. To continue quoting from the report, "The agricultural college cannot afford to operate as an institution oriented to a special farm public and an entity apart from the university as a whole."

If Extension is to play its fullest role within the university it must ultimately attain levels of academic and professional achievement comparable to those expected of research and instruction. A functional result anticipated would be greater distinction between specialists and county workers responsibilities, with the specialists more concerned with program development and training and operating less as itinerant county workers.

Conversely, instruction and research are going to have to recognize that it is in the university's interest to encourage the entry of their most able graduates into extension for these are the men and women who, for thousands, provide the image of the university. Too often, especially among supervisors of graduate study, extension is judged as a last alternative for able students, who often, because of their aptitudes, would succeed more spectacularly in extension than in research. It has always been a source of wonder to me that the colleges and the university would allow so successful an enterprise as extension to grow up so aimlessly -- admittedly this does not excuse the splintering which has characterized the extension organization and its program, nor its frequently self-imposed isolation from the university. If there is one guess to be made about the future role of extension, it is that of all its attachments, federal, county or state, public or private, its tie to the university will become overwhelmingly dominant.

The recognition of extension as an important member of the team would enhance the position of not only extension but also of the colleges of agriculture and home economics within the university and in the eyes of the public. The Common Market, moon shots, population growth and shifts,

educational TV and the like, cannot help but influence the educational process. The pressures of new knowledge -- this country has spent more on research in the last 10 years than in all of its previous history -- will force adoption of new techniques in research and broader approaches in programming onto extension. The growth of cities, of highway systems, industry, etc. taking place as they do largely on our farms, affect directly the lives of farm residents, of production and marketing patterns and of the organizational structure of the rural communities. Since they happen on farms, they are truly farm problems and give legitimacy to the entry of the forces of extension into such fields as public affairs, community development and public responsibility and into family and youth development programs broad in their perspective and extended beyond the often confining limits of organized groupings (including many times Extension's own women's groups and 4-H Clubs).

With the multiplicity of educational opportunities available to the public today, our efforts should be unique in their objectivity, in the usefulness and in their breadth of influence. Our programs should open up new opportunities for our constituents, should secure the economic progress of our farmers and help to ease the severity of adjustment when drastic changes in farming and community patterns become necessary. It is probably with the unexpressed -- or more correctly, unrecognized -- needs of the people that the Cooperative Extension Service will find its real opportunities for service. Here it can exercise true creativity, can be adequately analytical and can inspire the emergence of true leadership within our farming public, our communities and within itself.

As the Presidents' report at the CSU Seminar stated, "The extension idea must be preserved."