

Points of View

Concern for Direction

My reaction to "Whither Goest the CES?" by Shannon and Schoenfeld was that of becoming a little more weary of exposure to the conflicts that seem to exist concerning the proper direction and scope of Extension among the leadership of Extension, the public, and our government officials.

Many influential persons and groups theorize on this matter. It is not easy to judge accurately whether each proposal is founded on uninformed opinion, wishful thinking, selfish interest, honest belief, or some other noble or base premise.

As a consequence, it becomes more frustrating to those of us who look toward our Extension leadership for great strength of purpose and find it somewhat lacking. I can appreciate that in an organization such as ours there perhaps can be no absolute and completely concise direction, but it would seem that Extension could safely be somewhat more forceful in communicating certain agreed upon objectives to Extension critics. Perhaps I'm guilty of wishful thinking or uninformed opinion.

A very minor but personally sensitive point: In the "Upshot" section of the article, I would like to take issue with the statement, "The surviving agricultural entrepreneur is at least as savvy as the run-of-the-mill county agent." To me run-of-the-mill denotes "average" and thus makes the statement incorrect.

I believe that the authors used more words than necessary in emphasizing the rapid diminishment of social differences between farm and non-farm people. All of us should have been well aware of this for some time. Many Extension workers have worked diligently to foster the "homogenization" that is occurring.

The authors' last paragraph indicates to me a very admirable, though per-

haps ambitious, direction for Extension (or some other agency or group). Do I properly understand their manner of "fashioning a truly university-community-wide outreach enterprise?"

I actually believe that Extension in some counties is effectively moving in the "community-wide" direction. How far Extension can go in this direction would likely depend mostly on the amount and quality of resources provided to Extension and Extension's (or other groups') ability to coordinate an effort.

As a public organization, I do not believe that Extension can ignore the opportunities to provide educational services to people concerned with problems outside of commercial agriculture. As far as at the present time Extension, to the extent it can, should effectively operate in those areas that range from human community development and public affairs. However, Extension, when doing an effective job, cannot afford to compromise established guidelines in order to appease the whims of political interests.

WILLIAM E. UMBRETT
Erie, Pennsylvania

Not a Complete Story

It seems to me the authors of the article entitled "Whither Goest the CES?" (Winter, 1965 issue) have not been as specific as one would suspect in discussing a topic of this nature. They have obviously overlooked one of the main objectives of the Agricultural Extension Service and that is the development of people. The article has been cast in the view of food and has given no visual treatment to the human element.

Secondly, the article has minimized the activities of Agricultural Extension Service arbitrarily when there is sufficient evidence that many other alternatives could and do exist. There is

many fine examples of this throughout the United States.

Third, the article has left out a large segment of our society which is the nonfarm population. Under the purview of the article this group would be almost a forgotten group and would perhaps find it difficult to secure services from anyone.

Fourth, the article has taken a very narrow or dim view of the use of technology in agriculture. It would suggest that we do away with efficiencies in agricultural production simply because we have a small surplus. There is evidence to prove that the surpluses we have today represent only about 7 to 8 per cent above our day to day food and fiber requirements. Furthermore, the production of technology normally does not reflect itself in actual production, in many cases, for several years.

Fifth, too, to curtail the use of technology would inevitably result in less efficiency of production resulting in higher food prices. Efficiency in production is one of the major reasons why American consumers can satisfy their needs with a smaller percentage of their total labor income than any other country in the world.

Sixth, the article assumes that General or University Extension would be able to serve all segments of our Land-Grant institutions exclusive of agriculture. This may not necessarily be the case which would soon result in other colleges of our institutions setting up additional Extension Services to meet off-campus responsibilities.

Having served on the Executive Committee of the Land-Grant Association for three years, I am thoroughly convinced that the average Land-Grant president today is thinking of some organizational process of serving the entire public of his respective state rather than to segment his institution into several off-campus organizations such as is suggested in this article.

Finally, the argument made in the article contending that General or University Extension should serve all the needs of the institution outside of agriculture could just as effectively be used to state that the Agricultural Extension Service could do the same thing.

The above may seem somewhat critical and I have the feeling that some space should be afforded for giving the other side of the picture because I do not believe one can get a complete story from this article.

C. A. VINES

Little Rock, Arkansas

A Question of Professionalism

In a recent Program Building Seminar in our state Dr. Joe L. Matthews, Federal Extension Service, and a psychologist, Dr. William Robinson of Texas A&M University, motivated us to consider the stages through which a profession progresses, and some of the characteristics of a profession. This recent exposure, Helen Hurd's article in the Fall 1965 issue, and your question in "Look Here First" prompt me to make this comment:

Frequently we are confronted with the question of whether Extension is a profession. It is my feeling that we are definitely approaching or becoming a profession. Miss Hurd suggested some characteristics for professionalism which can be used to appraise activities and our work with people. Other authors have provided similar guidelines.

A profession is often described as having a body of knowledge, people centered programs, a theoretical framework, a program of excellence, a uniqueness of application — as contributing to society and to the growth and development of people. Creativity and problem solving are results attributed to a profession. These descriptive terms are not unfamiliar to Extension workers.

I hope it will be possible for future articles in the *Journal* to be directed toward more clearly defining the functions, attributes, and objectives of Extension. Thus Extension workers may more objectively and aggressively pursue the course of professionalism as we move from service functions to a science or profession.

CLAUDIA G. WILLIAMS

College Station, Texas

Vitality in Innovation

Extension is surrounded by signifi-

cant opportunities which it seems afraid to embrace: some of these relate to new categories of clientele; some relate to new areas of subject matter; some relate to new educational methods; some relate to new organizational patterns; some relate to new kinds of working arrangements with other agencies.

The common characteristics of all these opportunities is that they represent something "new." This also may be the root of our reluctance. There is comfort in the familiar and threat in innovation.

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves, as individual Extension workers, that there is also vitality in innovation. The kind of organization that can accept innovation is the kind of organization that can attract able young workers because it provides them the chance to grow. If we are concerned with the quality of our colleagues and our successors, we have to be concerned with our own attitudes toward change.

This journal *can* be a force which we create and use to bring about dynamic progress within our profession. If it is to become such a force, we must provide room in it for the airing of unresolved issues and the sharing of diverse points of view. We have to be willing to expose ourselves to the possibility of change.

As one example, is there any valid reason that we should not be exploring radically different types of geographic organization as a basis for program? There is growing acceptance of multi-county staffing for specialized agricultural needs, but should we also be thinking about school districts, port districts, zoning districts, and Resource Conservation and Development Project areas? Should certain audiences be served directly from the University without any attempt to involve a local staff of agents? Should the coverage area of a major newspaper or television station be a basis for staff organization for particular program purposes? Why not try specialist staffing on a multi-state basis?

Might we also be thinking about the

short-term employment of people with special skills to operate a concentrated effort in a particular field which we do not attempt to follow up on a continuing basis? Perhaps a team of these people might move from state to state through a contractual arrangement.

Considering any of these changes involves assessing the probable consequences in terms of gains and losses. What would be the effect on our educational accomplishment? And how could that be measured? And on what standards evaluated? And by whom? What would be the effect on our public relations? What would be the effect on our own jobs?

Most of these answers eventually will have to come from trying out the ideas in a real life situation, for experience up to now doesn't provide a firm basis for prediction. It seems to me that Extension as a profession should be vigorously encouraging such innovative trials in the institutions of which we are a part to the end that we evolve a new Extension organization to meet the needs of a changing society. What do you think?

JEAN W. SCOTT

Corvallis, Oregon

Economy of Learning

Extension workers are busy people. It is difficult for us to find time to read, study, interpret, comprehend enough to fully utilize the ideas and suggestions made in numerous good articles.

I am afraid that much of the good misses its mark because it often requires so much diligent study on the part of the reader to extract the full meaning and significance of the ideas presented in the text.

I am afraid that we as Extension workers follow the pattern of the clientele in the trend toward economy of learning. We want to know these things and use refreshing new ideas but we find time or fail to understand the ideas and concepts because an article is difficult to read.

JOHN E. WATSON

Mountain City, Tennessee