

Points of View

Personnel Plateauing

What do you do with an employee who has been with you 15 or 20 years, who has had several promotions, but who now at age 40 is coasting? Let us assume that you have tried in different ways to rekindle his interest in his job and that your efforts have not been successful.

Let us assume, too, that you have concluded that you cannot advance him further and that it would be wrong to discharge him outright. But the thought of this employee hanging on for another 25 years appalls you.

What is your next move?

Some companies probably would discharge the man without further ado. Others might try warnings, job changes, or downgrading. But the experience of most companies with such approaches has not, on the whole, been encouraging.

Undoubtedly some executives do plateau in middle age after making the grade in business. (I recall from *The Academic Marketplace* that the same phenomenon has been noted among professors.) Certainly many persons, whether in business or elsewhere, simply are not able to maintain the pace during their 50's that was easy for them during their 30's.

Several years ago I talked with an officer of a manufacturing firm in the Midwest, and he told me of some counseling he had attempted with six middle-management executives. These supervisors were barely earning their keep on the company payroll. Yet they were men of undoubted ability and once had been regarded as promising employees. For their own good, as well as for the company's, management decided to do something about them. It was felt that these individuals, all in the 35- to 45-year range, still had time to make second careers for themselves.

My informant (the company's personnel vice president) sat down with each man in turn, explaining frankly how the

company felt. He made it clear to each man that he should start thinking in terms of another position. He offered his help and the help of his associates in launching a campaign to locate the "right" job for the man, in another company. The emphasis was not on "just some other job," but on one that would lead to a rewarding second career.

The effort was successful beyond the company's most optimistic predictions of what might be accomplished. Within one year, five of the six men were well established in new jobs. They were grateful (in retrospect!) that the company had lit a fire under them. The sixth man, troubled by a serious personal problem, had not been able to find suitable employment according to last report.

STEPHEN HABBE

New York, New York

"Gaps" in Journal's Contents?

The *Journal of Cooperative Extension* is starting its fifth year of publication. The articles selected have, in the main, been interesting, informative, and thought provoking. A quick review of the *Journal's* contents since Vol. I, No. 1, issued in 1963, shows at least two "gaps." Perhaps other readers have noticed this or feel hesitant in bringing the matter to your attention.

The first "gap" concerns the future. What do administrators, policy makers, "forecasters," and opinion leaders foresee for Extension in 1976 or 1980? Three articles have touched the fringe of various aspects of the future but were inadequate to the task: "Extension's Future," I (Winter, 1963), 239-44; "Problems Facing Rural America," II (Fall, 1965), 165-72; and "Whither Goest the CES?," III (Winter, 1965), 200-4.

The second "gap" involves an area in which Extension is a respected leader, but not one article has been published.

on the topic. This is the international aspect of Extension: its influence, contribution, and future role in agricultural development around the world. Thousands of Extension workers have served or are now serving abroad. Hundreds are involved in training international visitors who come to the United States for training. Even greater demands and responsibilities will be made of Extension in the future, not the least of which will be recruitment for assignments abroad.

Our *Journal* could well devote space or, better yet, a special section in each issue to the international aspects of Extension education. I would be willing to contribute information and articles in this field.

I strongly believe articles directed to fill the gaps noted above, articles which should be thought provokers, will be enthusiastically received by *Journal* readers.

WARREN L. PAWL

Manhattan, Kansas

Dear Mr. Pawl:

Thanks very much for your comments and suggestions regarding the *Journal of Cooperative Extension*. We have been receptive to articles that would be especially relevant to the international aspect of Extension work. There are at least two problems: (1) we have not received material of this sort that has been judged publishable and (2) we have to keep in mind the interests of those who receive the *Journal*. Unfortunately, at present not too many U.S. Extension workers on foreign assignments or nationals of other countries who do extension work receive the *Journal*. However, this does not preclude our publishing material that is relevant to the idea—especially if its relevance is not restricted only to those on foreign assignments. We would be glad to receive possible material from you for consideration.

We would be interested in your elaboration of the point on "forecasting" Extension of the future. What would you see as the focus, nature, and purpose of such material? Do you have specific people in mind who you think would make worthwhile contributions in

the area? Your further ideas here will be helpful and suggestions, contributions, and comments will be welcomed.

G. L. CARTER, JR.

Editor

Occupational Choices

In the Summer, 1966 issue of the *Journal of Cooperative Extension* was an article entitled "Occupational Choices of Rural Youth" by Archibald O. Haller. I agree with much of what Mr. Haller said, but there are some parts that I could not agree with.

It is difficult for us to evaluate the understanding of boys or girls when they think of occupations they might enter. But it has been my experience that most of them know more about occupational choices than we give them credit for knowing. It is true that occupations are changing drastically—so drastically, in fact, that about all we can do is make an educated guess about the future.

The statement is made that youth who want to become farmers lack interest in the nonfarm world. Generally, I have found that boys who intend to enter farming show quite a bit of interest in the nonfarm world. Actually, I don't know whether we could call it nonfarm world, since everything originates from and is dependent upon agriculture today.

In my own area, the percentage of people actually farming is low, but if we consider people in agri-business then this takes in a good part of the population. Considering this, I wonder if youth in isolated rural areas actually do have a limited knowledge about the so-called nonfarm world.

In any case, I believe that we in Extension have an obligation to acquaint the youth of our area with careers in farming and other fields, too. More than ever our young people need to have high educational backgrounds and qualifications to enter agriculture. Young people I have worked with realize this and have gone all out to become the best farmers possible. They cannot be good farmers unless they adequately prepare themselves educationally. I believe they realize this.

One reason young people do not go

into farming could be that they don't have the investment necessary to begin farming and to make the income they would like to make. Farming is highly mechanized and it takes a greater investment to enter the farming field than would be true for most other occupations in today's society. Only a very small part of this investment has been made with the buying of land and buildings.

The article also refers to studies on the nonfarm occupational success of farm people, showing that those reared on farms are much less likely to be successful than those reared in cities. Why is this a factor? It seems to me this reflects a great deal on our educational field in Extension—and we Extension workers are definitely in the educational field. I wonder if we are underselling the ideas we give to youth so that these young people are not doing the jobs that they should on the farm.

Another project mentioned, carried out in a good agricultural county, showed that among other things "farm boys tended to be lower in measured intelligence, more submissive, more tied to relatives and to the local area, and lower in faith in their own ability to influence events than were nonfarm boys." In the years that I have had with young people this has not been the case. Farm youth have wanted to learn. They have tried to learn just as hard as the youth who knew that they would never enter farming.

I realize that the views quoted in the article are views of different people concerning occupational choices of rural youth. It is my feeling, however, that rural youth of today take as long a look at occupational choices as do youth in any area. I feel that rural youth are very serious-minded, and that Extension has done a wonderful job in helping them mold their everyday lives. Choosing an occupation is a decision that has to be made by the youth themselves. The guidance that these youth receive from home, Extension, and other areas, has helped them plan ahead so that they will not be isolated

in their thinking from the thinking of their urban counterparts.

C. HOYT WEBB

Dadeville, Alabama

The Agent's Role

"Improving Agent Selection" in your Winter issue had a very significant and understandable statement I was pleased to read.

Moon and Crooks said, "Our typical agricultural agent appears to be more of an administrator with a touch of social service and salesmanship than does the person who quits. He is less like the farmer than we might originally have thought."

Let's apply this to all Extension agents and not just limit it to agricultural agents.

First, I believe as educators we in Extension must also be *enthusiastic* salesmen for our wares—not the high pressure type, but rather one who understands all of the techniques of selling. I stress enthusiasm, for the best sales ideas without this ingredient will fail.

Let's look at social service. This may agitate some, but let's be honest. This is primarily the desire to help others. After all, the first ag agent in my county had the idea of social service when he went about his work killing gophers and moles in demonstrations which built the early foundations of Extension. He was helping others.

When we get to the term "administrator," I shudder a bit. I would like to think of an Extension agent being an able administrator when he (or she) can cut through the red tape, reams of paper work, hours on the telephone, etc., but always keeping his eye and his program on the objectives and goals ahead.

Possibly this is our biggest frustration—this role of administering our job.

I am glad we have been duly recognized in this article as not just technicians but as *administrators* with a touch of *social service* and *salesmanship*.

N. JOHN HANSEN

Dallas, Oregon