

Points of View



Projecting for the Future

Current capabilities, the importance of national problems, priorities and goals, and base recommendations for Cooperative Extension are of interest to those working with and for the Service. With the realization that different states are in different stages of development, Cooperative Extension can effectively and efficiently contribute toward solutions of national problems.

The Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee appraised Extension and found substantial strengths for meeting future needs and overcoming weaknesses:

1. The Cooperative Extension Service has a proven ability to reach large numbers of people effectively.
2. Extension offices, located in almost all counties, have great potential for identifying problems and needs, organizing groups, and providing needed information.
3. Objectivity is found in state Extension Services and the universities they represent.
4. The link between research and Extension adds strength and benefit.
5. Federal, state, and local governments are involved in program development and execution.
6. Personnel are highly motivated and strongly dedicated.
7. The existing local power structure is used by Extension.
8. Extension works through groups and communities and with individuals.
9. The total knowledge base of the

university is not always available to Cooperative Extension.

10. There is limited access to the federal establishment outside USDA.
11. Workers have a background in agriculture and home economics and have the image of being orientated to work with farm people.
12. There is ambiguity and confusion as to the function of Extension.
13. State laws in many instances are limiting, but Extension has demonstrated that it can serve national as well as state goals. The close ties with local power raise questions.
14. Many new roles will require a pluralistic agency approach and non-traditional relationships.

The effectiveness of Extension in achieving its mission will be to a large extent determined by how well the staff integrates the entire process of continuing education into an overall strategy of education. The strategy must include:

Planning and preparation—Extension work involves many processes of planning and preparation that must be undertaken before effective teaching can begin. Developing and maintaining a favorable climate for education is an increasingly important part of the Extension function. As Extension programs expand into new areas and acquire more depth in the old ones, there is continuing need for effective integration of research and Extension activity within the USDA and the university. The audience building function of the local staff is becoming an increasingly important and specialized function.

Teaching—The success of any educational program depends on quality of teaching. There must be continual upgrading of professional qualifications and ability, more specialized roles for agents, and focus on "decision centers."

Evaluation—Evaluation is necessary since the program is developed as a continuing process. Evaluation must be based upon two factors: (1) Was the Extension function performed effectively? If so, why? If not, why not? (2) Were results obtained adequately, based on needs of those reached?

Staff recruitment, training, and development—Needs of clientele have been studied, but self-improvement needs have not been as clearly stated. Before a staff can be upgraded it must have an effective and aggressive recruiting program, designed to bring the most capable individuals into Extension. Administration must have policies conducive to retention and encourage individual performance. Organizational efficiency and effectiveness can be improved through leadership and staff training.

Extension must do for itself what it seeks to do for other organizations, namely, improve organizational efficiency and staff competency.

THELMA D. WIRGES

Wichita Falls, Texas

Extension's Greatest Challenge

The report of the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee (*A People and a Spirit*) clearly spells out new opportunities and broader responsibilities for Cooperative Extension. It is apparent that the Committee was endowed with considerable insight regarding the problems of our society. Without such insight, it is hard to believe that they would have made such sweeping recommendations. However, it remains to be seen whether the Extension organization has the capacity and willingness to demonstrate the viability necessary to implement the Committee's recommendations.

Over the years, Cooperative Extension has built a proud heritage upon the concept of providing service and education to meet the needs of people. This feat was accomplished by concentrating on production agriculture. Pro-

duction agriculture is still important, and it is so recognized by the Committee in its recommendations. But there are other areas of national concern, such as poverty, discrimination, and alienation. These, too, were spelled out in the report. It is within these areas that Extension faces its greatest challenge.

It is agreed that Cooperative Extension is not equipped to solve all the social problems of this society, nor should it be expected to try. But it has an opportunity to demonstrate its concern both internally, with regard to staffing, and externally, in terms of clientele served. The organization possesses certain opportunities and competencies which if brought to bear will contribute to a more equitable solution in both areas. However, within this context can be found the basic problem.

Even though specific goals have been identified on a broad national scale, it is sometimes difficult to communicate this commitment through ranks to the field, initiating action at each level. Thus, one is forced to ask: Can Cooperative Extension really adjust its staffing policy and programming efforts to consider the plight of the so-called "fallout group" without a major increase in appropriation and/or redesigning its organizational structure?

It is an accepted fact that any work initiated with the "fallout group" will require what would seem to be an inappropriate amount of time in terms of the result obtained, especially when compared with work devoted to individuals within the mainstream of society. For example, low-income farmers will require more intensive educational assistance than large commercial farmers. One would be naive to suggest that highly trained professionals can readily adjust to this kind of working situation.

If we assume that additional appropriations will be made available to Cooperative Extension, the problem of providing assistance to low-income farmers, the urban ghettos, and the rural slums will not be insurmountable. It will merely be a problem of adding the necessary staff which, for the most part, will bring with it appropriate competencies to do the job.

However, without additional appropriations, one wonders whether social pressures are sufficient to bring about the realignment of organizational priorities. If so, how long will it take to initiate an effective program in the field? Is Extension equipped to provide the basic staff training in social sciences necessary for effective educational work with the disadvantaged and the alienated? Can highly trained professionals develop empathy for the fallout group? These things can be done. It remains to be seen whether Extension can live up to its reputation of adjusting to the changing needs of people as dictated by contemporary society.

One might conclude that some elements of doubt have been expressed here as to Extension's ability, or to the sincerity of the Committee's report. This is not the case. It is rather an attempt to view, in a realistic way, some of the problems faced by the decision makers within the Cooperative Extension organization. If the challenge is accepted with faith that a solution can be found, all people of this nation will benefit.

D. H. SEASTRUNK

College Station, Texas

Projecting for the Future

In projecting for the future, the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee indicated that a focus on a "decision center" rather than on a discipline orientated department is a must. The solutions to problems facing individuals, families, communities, and business seldom come from a single discipline. Rather, resources from a variety of disciplines are needed, bringing subject matter together to apply to a specific problem. This calls for more "task force" or "total problem" teaching teams.

More specialization is also being emphasized for area and county personnel. The idea of expanding efforts to reach urban youth, the disadvantaged, and alienated also is strongly recommended. Who will pay for this work? Research and experience appear to indicate that one of the problems encountered in reaching urban youth and the disadvantaged is the sheer difficulty in communication, rather than any lack of subject-

matter information on the part of Extension workers.

It appears to me that more clarification is needed in the discussion of specialization and training to be given to agents under the proposal. Does the term specialization refer to subject-matter specialization or something else? Would "task force" and "total problem" teaching teams be made up of subject-matter specialists only, or would they include persons trained to work with specific audiences such as urban youth and the disadvantaged?

How much emphasis should be given to training agents in human relations and methods of communication and teaching for these special audiences? Also, to what degree can one utilize urban people and disadvantaged for leadership types of positions in order to make a county or area program "go"?

It would appear that any adjustment in the scope of Extension as vast as that suggested by the Study Committee would necessitate either the complete retraining and redirection of present staff, together with new sources of funding, or the employment of a new kind of person already qualified for the new Extension roles and responsibilities—plus new source of funds from the federal government and/or the new audiences themselves. Isn't this true? Why make global recommendations if these things are not to be funded?

ANNA B. LUCAS

Knoxville, Tennessee

A Specialist Perspective

I'd like to express my appreciation to the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee, and to Lowell H. Watts in particular, for a masterful job in the preparation of *A People and a Spirit*. I was especially pleased with the following statement from page 80: "The Joint Study Committee strongly supports the Cooperative Extension Service efforts to involve people directly in developing, executing, and evaluating local programs. Every effort should be made to strengthen this approach, including the organization of a formal planning group in each county or area and insuring that the group is a continuous one." This is excellent!

As we broaden our program area, expand our staffs, and encompass the total university system we must not drift away from this sound approach. Our continuing strong support by local leaders and state legislators is convincing evidence to us. The job ahead for Extension will require outstanding educators as staff members.

For many years some of us have been critical of the undergraduate curriculum, claiming that it concentrates on technical subject matter to the neglect of education courses. What do we do? We come along and build a strong staff of subject-matter specialists and employ a meager number of staff members with competence in educational principles, techniques, and methods.

I am not suggesting that we have outlived the usefulness of subject-matter specialists. To the contrary, we need their technical knowledge but we also need to provide the competence necessary to put their knowledge to work. *A People and a Spirit* worked around the edges of this need, but I was unable to find a clear-cut recommendation addressed to it. One recommendation concerned the doubling of the present Extension staffing for staff training and development. This is headed in the right direction but increasing from one to two may not be adequate.

This is a good one: The Joint Study Committee recommends that the Cooperative Extension Service should be the "educational arm" of the USDA and educational support arm for other governmental agencies. I am serious, this is a good one, but when will we do something about it!

I can speak best from experience. During 1957-1963 I was Extension Dairy Scientist for the Federal Extension Service. I was the educational arm for over 40 research scientists located at Beltsville. The only other responsibility I had was to try to give educational leadership to 165 Extension dairy specialists in 50 states and Puerto Rico. In addition, most of the agencies within USDA had their own offices of information. They carried on their own educational activities and they did not need any help from me—although I had plenty of time! Now, we are including

agencies outside of USDA. The only question I am raising is: Do we really mean what we say?

But let's end on a happy note. I have lived through the *Kepner Report* and the *Scope Report*, but *A People and a Spirit* is unmatched. We have the challenge. Let's get going.

RICHARD E. BURLESON

College Station, Texas

Change Is the Key

The prologue to *A People and a Spirit* is a moving and highly appropriate opening to this stimulating and visionary, yet realistic, projection for the future course of Extension.

Two challenges are spelled out which seem to encompass the purpose of its existence: (1) to encourage sufficient application of knowledge to keep the mainstream moving forward; (2) to move dropout or alienated individuals and communities back into the mainstream.

Change is the key word: Change in concept, attitude, direction, even certain values (from the traditionally oriented programs with carefully defined boundaries to a broader range of social action programs).

In the Quality of Living section covering home economics and youth, outmoded and limiting patterns of near inflexibility—which were designed for particular audiences at the beginning of Extension work and are still followed today in much the same way—are called to our attention. Because of its unique structure and competence, attention is drawn to the disadvantaged families and Extension's responsibility.

Special training in the social and behavioral sciences is necessary for personnel to be able to understand and communicate with this audience. We need training directed to alleviating the immediate problems but also to the causes of poverty and alienation.

Present programs using trained aids from the target audience seem to be one of the more successful ways of reaching the most people in the shortest period of time. Education needs vary with different audiences. To adequately prepare personnel changes in college curriculum seem essential.

Drastic changes in patterns of youth programs must be made if Extension hopes to continue to have a strong appeal to this group. To some extent at the state level, and all too frequently at the local level, the objectives of youth program are lost in the scurry for immediate, materialistic gain. Too few persons involved in the youth program ever see the "big picture" or are motivated beyond "winning a contest." Having known life only in the age of technology and urbanization, youth face many problems never dreamed of a generation ago. Adults are not prepared to give understanding and guidance with such problems.

A sentence lifted from the Epilogue, paraphrased, arouses us to attention: "If we care, we will seek beyond the present."

MARY L. COTHRAN

Overton, Texas

Little Emphasis on Staff Relations

More specific than the *Scope Report*, the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee Report (*A People and a Spirit*) is truly a blueprint for Extension progress. While outlining a tremendous expansion in programs and personnel, the roles and functions of Extension at all levels are clarified with areas of future emphasis specified.

There is a good description of Extension relations with other organizations and groups; but, little emphasis is placed on the relationship between staff members. For an organization whose personnel are accustomed to considerable latitude for independent action, expansion recommended by the Committee is likely to require a more coordinated approach to activities.

Program coordination, personnel supervision, and clarification of individual responsibility should receive much attention if staff members are to serve effectively with a minimum of friction. Staff competence and training in these areas may approach the importance of subject-matter mastery.

M. H. BROWN, JR.

Groesbeck, Texas

Sighting on the Future

Wonderful! But help! This sighting

on the future leaves one a little shaken—mostly from the challenge of the new or improved skills needed by this agent to become an effective part of this future. Having been subject-matter oriented and with only very modest success in people motivation, one despairs at reaching the goals so dynamically outlined.

This report is gratifying to those of us interested in families. Recognition of people, their lives, their needs for growth, the value of better living, and changing social needs is an affirmation of the home economists place in the scheme of things.

Living in an urban area, it is also exciting to think of the possibilities of combined planning with several counties and of the specialized skills of agents being shared over an area.

We do need to re-evaluate our place in continuing education in this urban area. There are four local universities and a new aggressive junior college, all of which offer formal short- and long-term courses. In this situation, planners may feel our most effective contribution would be to concentrate more on the limited-income families. With the aid of all departments of the Land-Grant University this becomes an exciting possibility.

The future for Extension may not be an even pace, but it certainly appears to be exciting, innovative, and engrossing to those interested in the big dreams and better living for all peoples.

MARGARET B. GUY

Dallas, Texas

Griffith on Target

I was glad to have the opportunity to read Griffith's article ("The McGrath Report: A Critique" in the Summer 1969 issue. I found it quite interesting. In general, I tend to agree with his criticism from a research point of view.

Much of what was in the report needed to be said. But the lack of sound analysis gives no substantive basis to McGrath's recommendations. In a sense then, home economics is no further along than it was; everyone interprets the recommendations and what data there are, according to their own biases, or simply ignores the report.

This seems to be tragic, since obviously home economics is badly in need of a study (or something) which would do what the McGrath Report should have done.

Griffith points this out very well in his section on self-studies in home economics. I agree that fairly frequent self-studies are valuable, but where they constantly survey the same problem and reach few conclusions and even less action, drastic steps are necessary; unfortunately the McGrath Report provides little impetus for this. It may actually slow down change, due to its ambiguity which both pleases and displeases no one, simultaneously!

I'm not sure of Griffith's own position on some of these issues, or whether he has one. But some (not all) of the questions he asks from page 73-76 seem to be asking for evidence that the status quo is the "best" way of doing things. (Incidentally, this may be my own interpretation also, since I realize that I, personally, advocate quite a few drastic changes.) For example, questions on page 75, related to the administration of home economics programs by agricultural colleges, fail to ask other pertinent questions, such as: Is the mission of home economics now more relevant or at least equally relevant to urban families? If so, what is the effect of its tie-in with agriculture here?

In his report, McGrath did emphasize the importance for home economics to associate itself and to be associated with families first, regardless of where they live. In this area, Griffith's assessment of the report may be somewhat weak; I think McGrath's assumption of the need for a non-agricultural view of home economics should be recognized, even though his analysis of data supporting his recommendations is as weak as elsewhere.

Generally, Griffith's criticism of the data analysis in the report and the historical view of the search for objectives by home economics seems most valuable. His indication of the similarity between the 1933 and 1968 reports should be emphasized to everyone in home economics, at least; it seems to say some important things about all of

home economics. It's too bad (maybe) that the McGrath Report wasn't more similar to the Flexner study. At least it would have stirred some controversy and, perhaps, substantive discussion.

DOROTHY Z. PRICE

Pullman, Washington

To the Editor

The other day I was in a good position to watch the faces of an audience. I was chairing an agricultural seminar for bank managers in one of those modern close-up lecture theaters. What I saw in those faces got me thinking. Just how effective is lecturing as a method of teaching?

I note that Ralph G. Nichols in a paper given at the University of Wisconsin stated, "I think it is accurate and conservative to say that we operate at precisely a 25 per cent level of efficiency when listening to a ten-minute talk."

Is that really good enough? What percentage do we take in from a dull, lengthy speech? Well, what are the problems?

Basically, I suppose our poor listening habits would be the prime cause of ineffectiveness. But communication is in one direction—from a speaker to a heterogeneous, captive audience. As our experiences and backgrounds are all different, speakers have a difficult task. How do we overcome these problems?

Perhaps, instead of a lecture as we know it, the chairman should spend say five minutes introducing the speaker and reviewing briefly the field he is prepared to discuss. The meeting then breaks up into discussion groups. Group leaders ask questions to find out knowledge gaps. These knowledge gaps become questions for the speaker. At the end of a question-and-answer period speakers should be given a short time to bring out any points not covered during questions.

For too long we have taken for granted the lecture as an ideal learning medium. During 1968 I attended over a hundred lectures across the United States. My conclusion: your lecture techniques are no better than ours. The most effective learning situations I came upon comprised small groups, with

common interests, and where there was the maximum of group participation.

My conclusions: (1) Whenever possible we should set audiences up for speakers; (2) audiences should be as small as possible; (3) they should be selected for common interests; (4) they should be stimulated by background reading or group discussions; and (5) speakers should be briefed on how best to fill knowledge gaps.

Unfortunately, the trend these days is away from small audiences. How can we get the maximum participation from a large audience? It is still possible to get a common-interest audience if we deal with a specific area, such as management problems for corn growers or dairy farmers or similar groups.

You can set up a large audience, especially if a subject is controversial, by means of preliminary press, radio, or TV discussions. You can get some form of participation at a large meeting by answering questions or preferably by using such techniques as panel and symposium forums with representatives from the audience.

The advice we give our staff for running large meetings is to: (1) obtain the best speakers possible; (2) run meetings like a vaudeville show—short, non-stop papers with plenty of variety; (3) get as much participation as possible; (4) deal only with topical, practical problems; and (5) reinforce teaching with handouts and post-meeting publicity material.

My theme throughout these Points of View letters has been to harness the tremendous potential in the extension forces already at our disposal, by using people to participate in their own planning, training, and welfare. Good extension workers show people how to help themselves. Satisfaction comes not from praise but from seeing clients grow through their own efforts.

GEOFFREY MOSS

Wellington, New Zealand

Competence for CRD

Community resource development is a fairly recent addition to our Extension program and we have moved into it in a rather cautious way.

Most of the people now working in CRD have been transferred out of our traditional Extension programs where they were trained in the agrarian sciences. Thus, there is a tremendous need for training to build up the competencies which are necessary to work with the complex clientele mix and the complex problems encountered in community resource development.

I have heard some of my colleagues express the opinion that there is little need for placing emphasis on the social sciences in CRD. My own feeling is that we must have contact with the social sciences, whether in the formal classroom or elsewhere. By definition the social sciences are the sciences which teach us to work effectively with people. I do not believe that working in the natural or biological sciences provides the necessary qualifications for working with group problems.

I think it is essential that we learn something about group dynamics, the political process, group decision-making processes, and the dynamics of cultural and institutional change.

We have essentially moved in CRD from an adult education program which gave answers to an adult education program which acts as a catalyst in decision making. Once the decisions are made, Extension can continue to perform a tremendous service in making available the appropriate competencies to carry out the decision in terms of an action program. However, most of our CRD agents' first responsibility is to work with the groups in terms of helping them improve their group decision making. This is a considerably different role for Extension.

J. B. WYCKOFF

Amherst, Massachusetts

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES come to all, but many do not know they have met them. The only preparation to take advantage of them is simple fidelity to what each day brings. —A. E. DUNNING