

## Points of View



This Spring issue is devoted to some of the recommendations made and issues raised in the Report of the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee (*A People and a Spirit*). The purpose in doing so is to, hopefully, contribute to the deliberations on and considerations given to the report by Extension personnel. In addition to the articles, a number of people were invited to comment on the report. Some of those comments follow.

G. L. CARTER, JR.  
Editor

### To the Editor

Having just reviewed the recent Report of the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee (*A People and a Spirit*), I can't help but feel it will create a number of reactions, both negative and positive, among Extension workers and others. Personally, I was rather impressed by its implications for several reasons.

*First*, the big question is whether it is a realistic, overall guideline for Extension's future. Many Extension workers would prefer not to tackle contemporary societal problems as outlined under three of its headings—Social and Economic Development, Quality of Living, and International Extension. They would feel that Extension should work only within the specialties it has developed under the heading of Agricultural and Related Industries. However, it seems to me that the report presents the only realistic path to follow. People have always been Extension's central concern. Thus Extension's best route

is to continue to attend to people's problems but in new environments and, yet, not abandon those it has traditionally helped.

*Second*, this report should be useful in gaining the support of those in our nation who are most concerned about problems of our society (such as anxiety, poverty, crime, etc.) which affect all citizens wherever they live.

*Third*, I would like to touch on one particular concept that especially impresses me. It is suggested that Extension make wide use of subprofessionals to reach low-income farmers and to improve quality of living. Why? Over the years Extension has attempted to professionalize and upgrade its staff. Although this has produced many favorable effects, one of the bad effects has been to increasingly widen the social gap between the staff and some of the people who really need help. Thus it has been increasingly more difficult to bridge this gap and truly relate to these people.

Another advantage of using subprofessionals is that it will more easily increase the size of the staff which in turn will enable Extension to work closer to a one-to-one ratio with some of these people. Both of these advantages of using subprofessionals, ironic as it may seem, reflect advantages that Extension had when it first began its work some 60 years ago. At that time it was psychologically and physically closer to the people. Yet it is an appropriate move backward. I would only wish to add to the report by suggesting that many of these subprofessionals be

hired from the low-income farmer group to give added "closeness."

*Last*, and as I've already mentioned, the report will serve as an excellent focal point for further discussions on Extension's future. As I've already stated, it should stimulate both pro and con arguments. This in itself would be well worth the effort because taking into account both sides of an argument has given Extension the strong position it has enjoyed in its traditional rural setting.

LAVERNE B. FOREST

Minnesota

#### To the Editor

A few comments on the Joint Study Committee Report, *A People and a Spirit*. These comments are not intended to convey a pessimistic reaction to the Committee's recommendations. Generally, I concur with the recommendations concerning the future scope, direction, and redirection of the Cooperative Extension Service. Hence, my comments are couched in a mood of optimism while attempting to examine the recommendations and concurrent implications with a sense of realism.

The ramifications associated with pursuing the recommendations of the Joint Study Committee will be perplexing, provoking, and complex. For example, one can speculate about implications related to the recommendation that the professional staff be almost doubled by 1975 (a 95 per cent increase). What does this mean in terms of staff recruitment and training? How about space and facilities for additional staff? Will our present organizational structure accommodate a 95 per cent increase in personnel?

A 95 per cent net increase in professional manpower resources plus some 52,000 subprofessional aides opens a panorama of operational problems. Certainly, these problems are surmountable, and hopefully will not be used as avenues for retreat from the challenges set forth by the Committee.

Considering more specific aspects of the Report, I have some question about the Committee's recommendation on staffing for training and development.

Accepting the Committee's opinion that present training and development efforts are being performed at a maintenance level, it seems that doubling the professional manpower resources while at the same time only doubling the training staff merely retains the training and development function at the maintenance level, if the only concern were with the training of professional staff. However, the magnitude of the training problem can be seen only by considering other recommendations. For example, the 52,000 subprofessional aides would be potential trainees. Furthermore, the expansion of Extension programming into socioeconomic areas not traditionally a part of Extension's focus introduces a potentially greater responsibility for a training and development staff.

Having raised rather pragmatic, logistical questions, I hasten to add that I do not believe an organization should become mired in these kinds of questions while considering the general thrust of the Report. I trust the Cooperative Extension Service is willing to accept the challenge and to do so realistically and with an attitude of optimism.

MYRON D. JOHNSRUD

North Dakota

#### To the Editor

As an Extension worker for the past 17 years, I have had the opportunity to review several national and state documents related to Extension program guidelines, but none with the magnitude of *A People and a Spirit*. Out of necessity, a document of this nature and purpose has been written in rather general terms. Most of the ideas presented are not new but they are well written and much more descriptive than previous documents in this area.

As you know, to some degree we have discussed most of these program ideas for several years but have not made significant headway in implementing them. It seems to me that the real challenge for Extension is, when continuing to talk about these, to develop a dynamic action-oriented program for their implementation. I am particularly impressed with the section

on relationships with other agencies. It is not enough to say we need to cooperate with them; we need specific formal plans for cooperative effort.

In the past we have used more or less the brotherhood approach, but it seems there are too few "brothers" and too many "hoods." In my opinion, Extension has always provided more cooperation and support to programs of other agencies than it received. Extension should give first priority to developing a broad, in-depth, and encompassing Extension program with cooperative supporting roles for other agencies.

To me, the document shows perceptive insight and reflects what Extension has been, what it is now, and what it can mean to the nation's future. However, Extension must be more aggressive in developing and reporting these plans to those in positions of leadership. No doubt with the proper approach, county, state, and national leadership will be receptive to the program guidelines set forth in this document.

If the report is to be significantly useful, the Extension Services must plan for its use and move with all deliberate speed to incorporate these recommendations into an expanded program. I feel that time is a very important element and calls for aggressive action. It will mean the Extension Services must rapidly face up to the challenge of change—change in program staffing policies and procedures and change in organizational structure. No doubt the report will be scrutinized and criticized—and it should be—but it does provide an excellent base from which we can plan for the future.

G.L., I feel that *A People and a Spirit* is an outstanding piece of educational programming. The committee is to be congratulated for a job well done. If all Extension Services adopt and make vigorous use of these guidelines for future program direction, we will not have to wonder what place Extension will have in the future of our great society.

ULYSS G. WORD, JR.  
Little Rock, Arkansas

#### To the Editor

Certainly credit need be given Extension for the willingness to evaluate its organization, its structure, goals, and objectives. Also Extension has been willing to submit itself to evaluations from outside its own organization. If we continue to utilize evaluation reports such as *A People and a Spirit* and make the necessary changes to fit societal needs, Extension will continue to have a major influence in the development of our nation.

In establishing goals and objectives for a clientele group I believe the needs and wants as expressed by that group should be taken into consideration. I'm not sure this is adequately reflected in *A People and a Spirit*. The question of becoming all things to all people is a notion with which Extension must grapple. It is a question that many Extension personnel have not yet answered in their own minds. We must decide what societal needs can best be met by Extension and those that can be met by other social agencies or institutions. With such a decision, we can develop our goals accordingly.

Philosophical objectives that are stated about entire societies are, by necessity, very broad. These will have to be interpreted and translated into more specific objectives if they are to be of value as guides at the teaching level of Extension field personnel. *A People and a Spirit* should provide a basis for stimulating and productive discussions within State Extension Services, but each state and county must decide for itself the long range goals and immediate objectives they need to pursue.

MAURICE E. JOHNSON  
Moscow, Idaho

#### To the Editor

The Report of the Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee has been read with much interest and enthusiasm. The information and recommendations pertaining to International Extension had special appeal to me. I recently returned from a two-year tour of duty in a developing Middle East country.

The "self help by developing nations" guideline presented in the Re-

port is sound and essential for any semblance of lasting success, with potential for expansion in nations with whom we work in agricultural development. It is within the broad boundaries of this concept that Cooperative Extension can contribute best to the economic and social improvement of developing nations. Extension education, as a way of working and communicating ideas, is of equal import to the agricultural technology shared with and developed in any nation in this world.

Cooperative Extension education is based on a philosophy which many times is unheard of or difficult to conceptualize within cultures of other lands. This philosophy is based on assisting, helping, being available, sharing, and working together for mutual beneficial accomplishments. This philosophy can permeate all levels within a social structure—not only at the village or farmer level but also between government agencies—for the purpose of mustering and developing resources which will contribute toward mutually understood and strived for goals.

The development of a philosophy and a tradition within agencies and institutions of other lands whereby agricultural technology can be developed, improved, and applied for sake of economic and social improvement requires a great deal of conversation in low key and a great deal of communication between U.S. input and host nationals where the cut, fit, and try approach of various alternatives can be envisioned by all concerned. This type of dialogue must be carried out over a long period of time before the host nationals themselves develop their own philosophy and set of values.

The philosophy of a way of working—available through Extension education—would add a much needed dimension to International assistance in agriculture. Extension training centers could provide added opportunities for the development of this needed philosophy among U.S. technicians and personnel of other nations who are, or will be, associated with and responsible for agricultural development abroad.

D. E. LOEWENSTEIN

*Lincoln, Nebraska*

### To the Editor

Traditionally we have recruited men who have had training in agricultural production, agricultural education, and the social sciences oriented to the rural, middle-class income levels and assigned them to 4-H positions. We have provided for promotions of these young staff members to agricultural agent, county chairman, area and state subject-matter specialists, and administrative positions.

This comprehensive Joint USDA/NASULGC Extension Study Committee Report causes one to re-assess the traditional recruiting practices and ask if the agricultural college disciplines can adequately do the job expected of the Cooperative Extension Service.

The prestige enjoyed by Cooperative Extension will not continue on its own momentum unless we take stock of the broader assignment as identified in this study. Statewide, we are just as strong as our trained field staff performs. The study is of little value if we do nothing about it state by state.

The Committee recommendations have many implications in the recruitment of field staff. In the first place, if Extension is placed on a university-wide basis in order to achieve objectives and potential of both the university and its Extension Service, some guidelines in recruitment and placement are needed. The total educational responsibility is too extensive to place under one university discipline.

Seeking personnel with a degree in technical agriculture or home economics may not be enough. Cooperative Extension has operated in a few states within a general university extension concept. Varying degrees of success have been reported but finding qualified, trained personnel for each staff position appears to be a common problem.

The study committee recognized the strengths of the traditionally trained Extension staff by the tie between research and extension teaching, the use of the knowledge and resources of the university as it relates to problem solving, the skills in teaching methods, and interactions in group dynamics. These strengths must not be weakened as we

plan ahead. Many of these skills may be applied to other disciplines; but from the very beginning it is essential that the university administration take the initiative to acquaint each college dean and department head with the program objectives and potential of the total university resources and the need for full cooperation from all disciplines within the university.

To serve the many new audiences, new approaches to recruitment and training of professional and semi-professional staff will be needed. It is essential that the Land Grant University develops a graduate and undergraduate curriculum that will include seminars and interdisciplinary course offerings where the broad aspects of a total university extension philosophy are reviewed. A university-wide curriculum committee which includes representatives of those disciplines offering extension work throughout the state could review the graduate level training now available for candidates in field staff positions, and expand course offerings for students interested in youth work and county Extension Director positions.

For most effective programming in the 1970's we should be recruiting candidates who will qualify for the field staff positions that will be needed to achieve the broad Extension Service objectives. The recommended pattern of operation to do the job needs to be known at an early date so that a minimum of conflict results. For example, if subject-matter specialization in agriculture and home economics for area centers is recommended, then a Master's degree in the specialized discipline should be known at the recruitment and screening level. The present pattern of staffing at county and area centers has public acceptance in many states. Extension has identified areas in agriculture and home economics that can serve just as well on an area as on the traditional county basis.

It seems advisable to maintain the county financial support for the coordination of the many disciplines of the university as they would be available for use in any one county. The geographical county unit may continue to

support a total youth program in the county, including urban, low income, minority groups, and others not now reached. The power structure with which Extension has worked quite successfully is more readily identified with county and city boundaries.

The Committee is to be commended on the breadth of the study and the implications that the adoption of recommendations would have on future staff recruitment and placement. The recommendations of employing more specialized agents and upgrading the professional competence of personnel can be defended provided:

1. Extension administration has ample financial resources to employ the more highly trained personnel.
2. Recruitment of agricultural and home economics trained candidates are for area or multiple county positions.
3. Recruitment for youth agents be guided by broader criteria than the degree requirement from the college of agriculture and home economics.
4. Other university disciplines are willing to support financially the employment of area staff who would work closely with Cooperative Extension.
5. The Land Grant University recognizes the need for a county Extension Director position and develops a position description for use by Extension administration. A personnel selection committee for interviewing candidates for county Extension Director positions may well include other representative disciplines of the university.
6. In any change in staffing patterns, every effort should be made to maintain existing strengths of Extension in its degree of objectivity, the ability to identify problems and needs of people, effective committee and group involvement, and effective interaction between groups and interagency contacts and related industries.

CHARLES A. HAAS

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