

Extension—A Risk Taker in the Revolution

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We're in a revolution the author says. And, ". . . When occasions warrant, we should take a risk and pool our resources with those of vocational-technical institutes, high schools, private schools, outside industries, or arms of government to devise the best possible educational programs for all the people. While this concept is somewhat heretical, it's this kind of total commitment risk that colleges and universities must take if they're to help the forthcoming academic revolution." McNeil says extension needs money, support, commitment, and the will to take risk. The time for change in extension is now, he says.

Not all revolutions are immediately successful. More than three years ago I stated:

. . . an academic revolution—the extension revolution—is now in process . . . [it is] an academic revolution still in its incipient stage, but one so great that eventually it will transform the role of the modern American university in society.

It was a great new world we envisioned then for University Extension. There would be new, imaginative, worthwhile programs; the extension campus would extend to wherever people needed education; stable financing and honest administrative commitments would guarantee educational opportunity; and,

at long last, University Extension workers would gain acceptability on the campuses and a just reward system would be instituted.

If the American Revolution were as successful as the predicted extension revolution, the father of our country might be George III—and I don't mean George Washington.

Perhaps, though, we are at Valley Forge. This may just be our winter of discontent.

The national administration is trying to eliminate Title I and technical services. We're making no progress in getting grant and loan support for part-time adult students. The Office of Economic Opportunity is reevaluating its role and

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reducing many of the programs it funded through universities. Training and retraining moneys from various cabinet level departments are drying up.

At the state level, legislatures aren't recognizing the demand of adults who want to continue their education and the moneys are simply not forthcoming. Foundations aren't supporting to any great extent off-campus programs or those designed for the adult population.

Within University Extension most operations are still forced to pay their own way. Few colleges and universities have a proper reward system for the public service function. Administrators still pay lip service to public service, with great attention bestowed on extension when the institution is asked what it's doing for society at large or when service to the people is needed to justify budgets.

On the other hand, many of our own people aren't trying to bring about the extension revolution. Some have become pacifists in the cause. Their affluence, or self-satisfaction with doing just a little, borders on academic smugness. Where affluence has not taken its toll, defeatism has, and too many extension people are still trying to mimic their colleagues on the campuses. Instead, they should be designing and devising new methods, techniques, and programs especially suited to the student bodies they're serving.

Of more dire significance are those campus administrators who

got their start in extension, moved on to positions of broader responsibility in the academic structure, and then promptly denied their heritage. In their new jobs their perspectives changed. In their new view, burgeoning enrollments and research demands began to cancel out public service. Their old love, dedication, and commitment to extension subsided. They began to talk like people who had never been exposed to extension at all. While these people aren't exactly the Benedict Arnolds of the Revolution, they aren't the Nathan Hales either.

Our problem now is to break out of Valley Forge and search for our Yorktown. Ultimately we'll win the revolution. It looks now, however, as if it will not be a short war. We undoubtedly will lose a few more skirmishes before the final battle is won. However, with determination, courage, a little more daring, and a little more risk taking we can hurry the victory.

I fully understand that extension has to gain acceptability within the power structure. I understand, too, that extension's standards must be high enough that our efforts will be recognized inside as well as outside the university.

However, standards of quality shouldn't be confused with the varieties of programs. A university project operating in the inner core of a city may have extremely high quality, but not the same *kind* of quality that would be manifested in a campus classroom where a group of 18-year olds and a university professor

are engaging in the learning process. A different kind of a professor operating in a different kind of environment with a different kind of a student body will have to have just as much quality, but he will have a different *kind* of quality and a different approach. Therefore, a community leadership training program for mothers of high school dropouts, while not engaged at the same academic level as a Sociology 101 course, may offer just as high a quality of instruction, though of a different type.

What we need in University Extension operations is more risk taking. We have to try new and sometimes unpopular things.

For example, we haven't properly utilized the media. How many institutions have really worked on either closed circuit or open broadcasting television? We've had radio with us for 50 years and still it has never been utilized by colleges and universities in this country. We're finally getting around to using video tape and radio tapes a little, but we haven't used them in a way that might benefit millions of adults who are away from campus centers—in short, right where they are. We have very few pioneering programs that combine self-study with use of the telephone, the dial-access systems, state or regional computers, radio, or television.

Moreover, in our risk-taking ventures, we should be taking apart the present curriculum and putting it together again in light of adult experience and new teaching methods.

We should be using people who are specialized in a single academic field to help teach the vast numbers we'll have to teach in the years ahead. Not everyone needs a Ph.D. to teach a single subject well. We should be exploring combinations of lecture study-discussions, seminars, and self-teaching methods.

We should be going into places we've never gone before. Prisons are probably our best examples, but what about the "neighborhood campus" we used to talk about for adults, or the libraries, supermarkets, nursing homes, churches, settlement houses, community centers. Shouldn't we be going into the businesses and the factories? Shouldn't we be using elementary and secondary schools during off-hours when they're not being used by young students? There's certainly nothing wrong with extended-day education.

I propose that people now consider the idea of total mass education as a substitute for individual extension projects and specific programs funded with categorical grants. In short, extension should mean a continuation of total support of all people for at least two years work beyond high school.

Technology demands this kind of extended training. The age of the work force requires opportunities for adults beyond the usual college age. Such a concept of total education and total support of it is a risk in itself. We will be accused of substituting quantity for quality and for educating people who don't "need" to be educated. The Land-Grant

principle and other lessons of history, especially as manifested by the G.I. Bill, denies these allegations. All people should be educated to their potential. Universities and colleges have an obligation to provide that opportunity. Therefore, we should stand firm on that principle and expect attacks on this old risk-taking adventure adapted to the new needs of tomorrow's society.

In like fashion, we can't let jurisdictional pride get in our way. When occasions warrant, we should take a risk and pool our resources with those of vocational-technical institutes, high schools, private schools, outside industries, or arms of government to devise the best possible educational programs for all the people. While this concept is somewhat heretical, it's this kind of total commitment risk that colleges and universities must take if they're to help the forthcoming academic revolution. The Colonists didn't refuse cooperation from France during the Revolution. Extension can't ignore the support and cooperation of other vested-interest allies.

It's true that we're going to have to take care of our present constituents. We'll have to continue many of our existing programs, but unless we enlarge on the concept of education for the few, the revolution will not come. It will merely substitute one aristocracy for another. Ex-

ension will never be anything more than a fringe activity, its workers merely second-class soldiers, forever operating on a self-supporting basis, consistently attracting the lesser lights to the profession.

Furthermore, Extension must become a risk-taking agency that will move into controversial issues of the day. There'll be problems to be sure, but extension must apply its techniques to help individuals solve problems. The institution doesn't solve them for the individual. It merely offers the educational programs to enable the individual to handle the problems himself. Those problems may be some of the most controversial in our society ranging from race relations to rural development, from pollution to poverty, from cultural deficiencies to community development.

Our need is to move now—we can't insist on a neat administrative structure, complete financing, and total commitment before instituting a stronger position for extension.

Risk taking doesn't begin with the other professor or the institution next door, but right on our own campuses.

We need money, support, commitment, and the will to take risks. The time for change on our campuses is not a year hence, but now.

Long live the revolution!