

Points of View

Improving the Journal

After being among field staff, one common opinion expressed about the *Journal* was that it's only for administrators, researchers, college-teachers. It's not written for the practitioner—county agent, youth agent, etc. Whether these opinions are valid is another question; but, they were expressed. Many are generally more interested in "how-to-do-it" information and less interested in the theoretical thinking and research reports. However, I wouldn't argue the point that they should be interested in the "why's" in addition to the "how-to-do-it's."

What is the point? If we recognize that professionalism and upgrading of staff is one of the key purposes of the *Journal*, then we should also recognize, as many people recently have, that there are various types of professionals within extension education. And, they can be legitimately interested in various types of information.

Therefore, why not make a concerted effort to assist the practitioners with information they can quickly use in the field? This information would require less of the practitioner's time



to integrate and digest. It could be more of the "how-to-do-it" information.

This could be handled many ways. For example, one section of the *Journal* might be set aside and called "Practitioner's Corner," "This Month's Handy Hints," or "Making Theory Practical." Included in this section could be "success" stories, or actual *short* articles on transforming the abstract into reality, or check lists for good meetings, programs, evaluations, etc. It could take previous articles and revise them. Some could refer to more abstract articles in the current or past issues.

You might argue that this would downgrade the *Journal*, thus, reducing its usefulness. However, I can think of many reasons why this wouldn't be so. For example, it might make it possible to aim the current articles only at research, etc., and therefore avoid the present pitfall of trying to appeal to too wide an audience. Also, it might make it more readable for another type of professional and, in turn, more useful.

And finally, it could eventually result in more field staff developing a taste for the more theoretical, empirical, and abstract articles by having to

refer to those articles or by having to page through them to get to their articles. There might be many, many more advantages, if one really thought about it.

LAVERNE B. FOREST
Madison, Wisconsin

Public Affairs or Public Policy?

In Reeder's "Rethinking Public Policy Education," (Spring, 1970, *Journal*), confusion abounds. He can't start an article with "public affairs information," extend it to "public policy," enter into "community development," conclude with "public policy," and successfully focus on the problem.

Since the editors can't delineate their audience, they can't expect to successfully have a two-way communication. In a pure "public affairs" issue, there's no need to describe the audience. The problem exists in California as well as in Maine, Washington, Florida, or Texas. Such problems are inevitably individual.

A "public policy" problem always has an audience that can be delineated. It may be as small an audience as that related to in Reeder's swimming pool example, or one as complex as a national audience related to welfare policy.

Distinguishing between the audiences will help to develop the ability to work on collective decisions—the "public policy" decisions. Combining collective decisions with "public affairs" confuses the problem with the general—not the precise—methodology. As long as this continues, it will cause almost certain failure for editors, writers, columnists, Extension personnel, and any others involved.

J. PAXTON MARSHALL
Blacksburg, Virginia

Extension Reports—A One-Way Street!

Perennially, records and reports are a "thorn in the side" to most Extension workers. In my few years in Extension, I've seen three different reporting systems adopted and each has received the same negative reactions. Visiting with other Extension personnel, I've questioned why we resent the necessary records and reports.

The consensus is that reports take too much valuable time from other work—and provide no apparent benefit. What benefit is derived from these reports? Where do they go? Who sees them? How and for what purpose are they read?

So far the only answer I've received is that our reports are used for justifying our continued existence. They're presented to Congress to defend our budget requests.

I won't minimize the importance of justifying or explaining our activities to Congress. However, if this is the only use, we're missing the boat. No corporation keeps records and prepares reports just to impress the board of directors.

Reports can and should be management and training tools. This won't happen if they're handled as an annual tribute paid into a federal coffer, never to be heard from again. Such communication fails to accomplish any supervisory or training function.

I spend about 15 man days a year keeping records and writing reports. Assuming I'm an average Extension worker and others devote an equal amount of time, this constitutes a tremendous man-day input. Are we getting our money's worth for this expenditure? I don't think so.

Here are some specific questions we should ask ourselves:

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1. Are copies of state reports in each specialty area forwarded to a federal specialist for critical review and analysis?
2. Do the federal Extension specialists return any constructive criticism to their state counterparts concerning the programs, teaching methods, goals, evaluation techniques, etc., as reported to them?
3. Does anyone investigate reports for innovative teaching methods and techniques and report these to all Extension personnel for consideration in individual programs?
4. Does anyone check reports for new teaching devices, audiovisual programs, and other teaching aids that might be of national use and arrange for duplication and exchange?
5. Does anyone compile a national report in each specialty to inform state specialists what their counterparts in 49 other states are doing?
6. Does anyone report his failures and are the reasons for these examined? We can often learn as much from our failures as our successes.
7. What provisions are now made for reporting the whole back to the individual parts that went into constructing the total?

Basically, I'm asking why all reporting is aimed upwards through the administrative structure and why this mass of valuable information isn't interpreted and returned to the Extension personnel who could derive many benefits from it?

E. BLAIR ADAMS
Laramie, Wyoming

Points of View



We thought you'd be interested in some of the comments about the Journal's "New" content and format changes.

JWA

I have subscribed to the *Journal* from the beginning. The Spring, 1970, issue is the first one I have ever read (been able to read) marked, reread, quoted from, and will not give away.

Thank you and your contributors for coming down to earth where some of us without lengthy degrees live.

DOROTHY EMERSON
Washington, D.C.

The information and content is there, but I get tired of reading thesis material.

ROBERT HUGHES
Ellendale, North Dakota

Six or 12 issues per year, with balancing increase in subscription.

HOWARD MCCARTNEY
Dardanelle, Arkansas

I think the *Journal* is very good and I'm proud of it and the function it serves.

DAVID W. TABER
Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania

The Spring, 1970, issue is excellent. Articles were of direct application to work with clientele. Please continue this approach.

EDWARD J. AUSDERAU
Whitehall, Wisconsin

Thanks for providing a professional publication.

NANCY R. HIGH
Winston-Salem, North Carolina