

forum

The Forum is published each issue to allow space for Journal readers to express their feelings on any topic they think is important to Extension. If you have some strong feelings about what's happening in Extension education, we'd appreciate having your contribution. We ask that the Forum comment be no more than two double-spaced pages. Send them to Editor, Journal of Extension, 310 Poe Hall, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27607.

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Response to the Responses: My viewpoint was originally presented in a slightly longer version to a "Noon Brown Bag Seminar" of graduate students and faculty in the University of Wisconsin Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. There the discussion focused on a thoughtful consideration of the questions I tried to raise.

These questions include: (1) Does the standard writing about Ag Extension take a hard look at its accomplishments or is it essentially public relations rhetoric? (2) What are the major political, economic, and social viewpoints of Extension personnel? (3) How well does Extension practice jibe with the best of humanistic educational theory? (4) Does Extension predominantly serve one economic interest to the detriment of others? and (5) Are there clues in the history of Extension to the reasons for its present thrust?

While the "Brown Bag" group took the piece for what it tried to be—a dialogue stimulator—the five replies in the July/August issue of the *Journal* seem characterized by avoidance of these questions, personal attacks on me and the authors cited, defensiveness, more public relations rhetoric, and minor criticisms of points raised.

There isn't space here to deal with these criticisms. But it is disappointing to note that the commentators in making these criticisms mainly repeated the language of "success stories" and echoed simplistic views of complex educational theories without real consideration for their political and economic contexts.

It is clear to me that dialogue did not occur. The differences between the "Brown Bag" group and the replies could mean that I should have prepared my viewpoint for publication in another form. Another possibility is that this *Journal* should consider trying a couple of additional approaches.

in eliciting comment on Forum articles: (1) print a condensation of a tape-recorded discussion of a Forum piece and/or (2) invite replies also from grad students and others who may be less entrenched supporters of Extension.

But despite my conclusion that the responses failed to address squarely the issues I tried to raise, I believe that by instituting this Forum section, the *Journal* should be congratulated for taking a very worthwhile step forward. Especially in these days when, among adult educators, dialogue and controversy on significant questions are largely conspicuous by their absence.

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Plaudits to Gene Ross for his straight-on statement regarding equal employment and program opportunity (Jan./Feb., '75).

It's time to put aside all "the-Devil-made-me-do-it" arguments. It's time to face our responsibilities as both citizens and federal appointees. It's time to create a giant result demonstration showing how real freedom and social justice can irradicate disease and disorder.

Extension can do it if we give ourselves in the same degree we did to fight boll weevils, make mattresses, and introduce hybrid corn.

If Director Ross' statement can be faulted, it is simply that it ought to have been scrutinized for sex bias.

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and*

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Watts' comments in your May/June issue concerning our article on "Institutional 'Future Shock' in Extension" warrants a short rebuttal.

First, we *do not suggest* that those whose educational needs are not encompassed by the missions of universities should be ignored. These needs are important and should be served. What *we do suggest* is that higher education is infinitely more complex than it was 100 years ago, new institutions have emerged that want and are perfectly capable of handling "a piece of the action." When this development is combined with budget crunches and with increased scrutiny for unnecessary duplication or overlap, it becomes increasingly important for each and all institutions to develop their roles and scopes to take care of as many of the needs as the total resources allocated to all of higher education will permit. In delineating these differential missions, the question is not so much what universities *might be able to do* as what, in light of total needs, other institutions might be as capable of doing as well (or nearly so). Like it or not, higher education (including Extension) is becoming increasingly a part of a total systems design.

Secondly, nowhere do we suggest that there is anything wrong with the transmission of practical or useful information nor the application or knowledge. The essence of a university

involves the generation and dissemination of knowledge. This, however, does not relieve us of the obligation to make decisions on "what knowledge is disseminated "to or through whom" in "what ways."

We agree that just because something is not new is no reason to view it lightly or negatively. But, we also suggest that just because it is old is not justification, in itself, for a place of sanctity not subject to critical examination. It is precisely the adaptability which Watts feels important that we insist must take place—both on the part of the parent institution and in Extension itself. That part of the university that has little or no understanding of the methods of Extension can learn from Extension experience and vice versa. But, this learning is not likely to be effective unless the discontinuities between them can be reduced. This means more integration and less separatism.

Of course, the land-grant system built its reputation on serving society well. So does any system or institution that survives. But the social, economic, educational, political, and technological climate is so different than in 1862 or 1914 that it just may be that if the major goal is to continue to serve society well, major, traumatic adaptations must be made to achieve this goal.

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Re-entry . . . for Today's Women: Can the Extension home economist help women with a really rough task? Can the professional reach out beyond the meetings and projects to help some women learn re-entry skills? What are re-entry skills? Skills needed to re-enter the world of work! Yes—and even some former Extension home economist may need these skills for herself if she is facing major decisions about re-entering the world of work. Re-entry is tough!

Why? Things are supposed to be super today for women. Men tell us that it is the best of times!

For women, it is the *best of times* in these ways: There is an awareness of women as equal; legislation exists that promotes equality; a change in attitudes toward roles of women is emerging. Yet, it is the *worst of times* because women are still finding impossible obstacles—traditional expectations are still looming. Tough decisions regarding a woman's own roles have to be made; and there are increasing demands on her time, energy, and ego! A concern shared with many is the helplessness she experiences when it is necessary to re-enter the work force. And whether it is the best or the worst of times, *re-entry* into the job market is a reality. She seeks the entry for a variety of reasons and her task is not always easy.

In 1973, in the United States, more than 40% of all workers were women. Many of these women are heads of households. The lifestyle of the majority of these women is

entrenched with limited income, the challenge of performing multiple roles, the nagging feelings of guilt or neglect concerning her children and herself, and often a shattered self-concept resulting from a rejection by a former spouse.

The woman who has been working regularly or periodically finds the adjustment to the business world difficult but possible . . . traumatic at times, but she has learned to cope with everyday minor and major crises. The person who was an active Extension home economist may have some difficulty, but will manage. But the situation is radically different for the woman who is thrust suddenly into the head of the household role after total involvement with her husband and children for some 10-40 years.

The statistics do not tell the total story either. Feelings of inadequacies may emerge (for the women who must compete with the younger, often more attractive, and more recently educated female) and social graces and home skills mastered during years of devotion to the "hearth or nest" may suddenly become handicaps to many. Must it be so?

Re-education and/or continuing education is recommended. But for these new heads of households or late career women this is not an immediate answer. Reality is simply that at age 35, 40, 50, and beyond, she seldom has the physical, psychological, or financial resources to begin again.

Projections for the labor market indicate a rise in the demand for the service skills. Not professional, necessarily—but service. One answer is to capitalize on her homemaking skills either temporarily or with long-range career plans in mind. What are some skills learned in homemaker groups that she has mastered quite well? What can she do *now* with *minimum* financial investment during the transition from making the grocery list to earning the pay check to buy the groceries? Come think with us. The following are some suggested possibilities for service-related marketable skills:

- A good cook (and one who enjoys cooking) could: cater meals and/or specific foods; bake by appointment; prepare party foods (service and cleanup); prepare gourmet foods by appointment; provide refreshments for meetings, etc.; and plan and conduct birthday parties.
- If she lives near a campus, a woman who types could do typing for students or faculty.
- An organizer could create: a baby-sitting agency (bonded) to provide sitters for children; an animal watching or walking service; a cleaning service for builders; a fix-it service that might include painting or hanging wallpaper; a furniture refinishing service; a "Kelly Lady" house-cleaning service; a "house-sitting" service; a car-care agency for those who are

too busy to wash, wax, or have the car serviced; or a plant care service—indoor and outdoor—for vacationers.

- Nimble and talented hands could: sew boutique items or crafts; do custom sewing and alterations; make accessories for the house; or teach the skills to others. The green thumb could raise and sell plants and flowers.
- A good driver could (by appointment): drive aged or handicapped persons to grocery, shopping center, beauty salon, etc.; visit and check on aged or lonely persons for a family; shop for aged or handicapped or a busy professional person on a regular basis; pick up and deliver children or drive a car pool for neighborhood or school.
- A creative person could become a shopping consultant—shopping, wrapping, and delivering gifts or other items.

These are only to start you thinking. You know the people who need help and you know their potential. Think!

All of the above can be done at home as a starter. The use of proper business methods, personal bonding, posted rates for services, receipts for cash received, records, promotion of services through various outlets, and a private telephone will add to one's success.

A word of free advice: don't charge too little or give away services! People expect to pay and will pay a fair rate for a professional job well done.

The Extension professional or former professional may not like this list. It may be too "homey." O.K., but at least some money may be generated while she or the clientele person enrolls in a class or program or course . . . in real estate, perhaps? Thus, simultaneously upgrading all the person's facets . . . to be more competitive in the real world. It can be the best of times—if you work at it!

And another word of advice for the former Extension professional or homemaker: involved with the nest and have no need for the added income? Take advantage of the many continuing education opportunities available . . . your personal and future career goals might be enhanced immeasurably. And *re-entry* will not be a dreaded trip, but a pleasant splash down!