

# letters

## Church and State Issue?

Dear Editor:

The forum by David Youmans in the March/April, 1980, issue on "The Nondialogue Between Extension and the Church" really piqued my interest. I recall William M. Smith, Jr., now retired, telling about his sabbatical experience in Holland. The Dutch Extension Service has a Protestant, Catholic, and Neutral home economist. I can imagine someone calling in with a home canning question. The secretary

answers the phone and asks which home economist was preferred. "Neutral," the client says. "I'm sorry she's out" and hangs up. We certainly don't want to go in that direction!

Let's keep firmly separated church from state.

We must, in many cases, ask for use of church buildings for 4-H meeting homemaker's groups, special interest workshops. Many meals and meetings are held in churches. The facilities are

a fine shared community asset. Undoubtedly some who came in through the back door for a meeting come in the front for a regular worship service. Some church members who learn of a program like a parenting seminar taking place in their church attend their first Extension-sponsored meeting.

Many of us have been resource people in church programs on world hunger, communications, parent-child relationships, home canning, breadmaking, and quilting. Some do know we are there with our expertise in youth, family living, and agriculture. The principle of separation of church and state must be adhered to, in order to remain an unbiased service to all.

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Dear Dave,

Your forum in the *Journal's* March/April, 1980, issue was a pleasant surprise. Perhaps it would have been more accurate to title it, "The Limited Dialogue Between Extension and the Church." However, your point is well taken and I'll be interested in the extent and nature of the response, if any.

Of more recent years, a major factor I've found inhibiting work with church groups has been the Civil Rights-Affirmative Action emphasis. This has indirectly dampened the "Heart H" program in 4-H, and the spiritual life emphasis among our Homemaker Clubs.

Over the years, I've found very few Extension top administrators who ever think of, let alone consider, the church as a viable clientele group.

My appreciation to you for raising the issue and to the *Journal* for printing it.

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Dear Mr. Youmans:

I read with great interest your March/April, 1980, forum. Even in the so-called "Bible Belt," your observations would be valid.

Perhaps an avenue of explanation might be that Extension personnel reflect our society at large. That is, the majority is only nominally religious and actually uncomfortable in the presence of devout believers.

However, are you aware of what the Illinois Extension Service has been doing? I recently received some information from them concerning their annual Church and Community Institute.

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