

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR EMERGENCY WORK, 1917-1918

Following the declaration of war, April 6, 1917, extension work in Iowa changed almost overnight. Many of the old activities were dropped to give precedence to food production and the elimination of waste. This change was made in response to an appeal by the federal government for a greatly increased production of food. "Food will win the war" was the message sent out by our struggling allies. The world was short on foodstuffs because of the great quantities consumed by the non-producing armies, the large cargoes sunk at sea, and the poor wheat crop in 1916.

1. ACTIVITIES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN WAR FOOD PRODUCTION

The Council of National Defense authorized by Congress was permanently organized March 3, 1917, "for the coördination of industries and resources for the national security and welfare." On June 12, 1917, the President requested Herbert C. Hoover to proceed with the mobilization of the voluntary forces of the country which might aid in conserving food and eliminating waste. The Red Cross and other voluntary organizations became interested to varying degrees, in the work of food production and conservation. (65, pp. 135-136.)

As soon as war was declared it was recognized that the nation must act as a unit in the production and conservation of material resources as well as the management of military forces. This meant more federal control and a majority of the people were ready to accept this control when it came on August 10, 1917. On that day President Wilson signed the food-production and food-control bills, and he also established the United States Food Administration with Hoover at its head. (65, pp. 136-138.)

The Food Production Act provided funds sufficiently large to enable the United States Department of Agriculture to greatly expand its extension activities through its States Relations Service and in accordance with the plan already established under

the Smith-Lever Act. It was decided that an essential thing to do was to develop a nation-wide organizations by placing county agents in every rural county. The following selection from the report of the Secretary of Agriculture for 1918 will give an idea of this plan and its success (67, p. 22):

“With additional funds made available through the regular agricultural extension act, and especially through the emergency food-production measure, the Department, in coöperation with the State colleges, quickly took steps to expand the extension forces with a view to place in each rural county one or more agents. When this nation entered the war in April, 1917, there was a total of 2,149 men and women employed in county, home demonstration, and boys’ and girls’ club work, distributed as follows: County agent work, 1,461; home demonstration work, 545; boys’ and girls’ club work, 143. In November of this year [1918] the number had increased to 5,218, of which 1,513 belong to the regular staff and 3,705 to the emergency force. There were 2,732 in the county agent service, 1,724 in the home demonstration work, and 762 in the boys’ and girls’ club activities. This does not include the larger number of specialists assigned by the Department and the colleges to aid the extension workers in the field and to supplement their efforts.”

2. ORGANIZATION FOR WAR FOOD PRODUCTION IN IOWA

On April 3, 1917, Governor Harding held a meeting of about 100 prominent farmers in his office to consider ways and means of increasing the food supply of Iowa. After a thorough discussion of the problem, a motion was passed asking the Governor to appoint a committee, made up of one man from each congressional district with President Pearson of Iowa State College as chairman, for the purpose of devising ways and means of increasing food production. (37, p. 37.)

This committee met a few days later in Des Moines and prepared a program entitled “Iowa’s War Duty” which was published by the Extension Department of the College. The committee urged everyone who was physically able and who was not then employed on work vital to the war emergency to assist in increasing food production. The following extracts are taken from the program prepared by this war emergency food committee (37, pp. 38-39):

"All persons, old and young, in country, town and city, are asked to give a helping hand in carrying out one or more of the above activities.

"Organizations to give assistance in connection with farm labor and to otherwise promote food production and food conservation are needed in every section of the state. They should be started immediately in each county not now organized for this purpose. Agricultural leaders, bankers, and others most concerned are urged to start these organizations. Suggestions based upon organizations in twenty-seven counties where county agents are employed will be sent to anyone applying to the Agricultural Extension Department at Ames.

"A bureau of information should be established in connection with the office of the county agent in each of the twenty-seven counties having these agents and such bureau should be established in connection with organizations in other counties as rapidly as they are formed. This bureau should coöperate with local offices at different points in the county and all should give special attention to the problem of finding additional farm labor.

"The county bureau of information and local officers can render a valuable service also by making an inventory of tested seed corn, especially for late replanting wherever in the state that becomes necessary. Also, they may make inventory of other special seeds that are now becoming scarce in some sections.

"Officers of organizations are urged to take up the question of food production with all their members. Editors are asked to appeal to their subscribers, teachers to their pupils, presidents of labor unions, clubs, societies, and commercial bodies, Y. M. C. A. secretaries, and G. A. R. commanders to their memberships to have gardens this year for raising food for their own use next winter.

"Younger Boys and Girls of Iowa—Here is a wonderful opportunity for you to serve your state and country. Your ambition might well be to feed Iowa so that the Iowa farm crops may be used to help feed our nation and our allies.

"Older Boys.—You are needed on the farms. You will be performing a patriotic duty in doing farm work this year. The nation needs food as well as munitions.

"Bankers, Manufacturers, and Business Men.—Many of your employees have had farm training. Will you assist and encourage them to offer their services to farmers during the busiest periods of the season?

"Mayors of Cities, City Officials, and Secretaries of Commercial Clubs.—You can list unused land and secure permission for its use and see that it is made available to those who would have gardens.

"Farmers.—The heaviest burden is upon you. Use your facilities to the utmost, for the sake of your country. One additional row of corn is a big help. Get in touch with the county or local organization and make known your needs for extra help. Report your needs as to seed and your surplus seed which might be needed in other sections of the state. Do not fail to retain tested seed corn for use in case replanting becomes necessary."

3. ORGANIZATION OF THE EXTENSION DEPARTMENT FOR WAR FOOD PRODUCTION

The appeal of the Governor's committee on the war food emergency met with a hearty response from all concerned. The burden of organizing and educating the farmers of the state, however, so that they would be able, with a decreased amount of labor, to produce an unprecedented amount of food, was left largely to the Extension Department of the College.

This responsibility fell to the Extension Department because it was apparently in a better position to do this kind of work than any other agency in the state. It had the organization, the staff, and the contacts for doing just this sort of thing. Official sanction for its going ahead came from the fact that President Pearson¹ was made chairman of the state committee, and also from the fact that it was designated by the federal government as an agency for stimulating food production in Iowa.

In order to meet its war obligations, the Extension Department set up within itself a central organization headed by J. W. Coverdale. Men were employed to go into all the unorganized counties of the state to help the people organize farm bureaus and to assist them in employing county agents.

This vigorous effort to organize the local farmers resulted in an increase of farm bureaus and county agents from 24 at the beginning of the war on April 6, 1917, to 100 on March 1, 1918. It also resulted in the placing of 41 permanent county home demonstration agents, 55 temporary county home demonstration agents, 3 county boys' and girls' club leaders, and 14,000 farm

¹R. K. Bliss acted as secretary of the governor's committee and had much to do with directing the work of the committee after President Pearson was called to Washington, D. C., to assist with the national food production program.

bureau coöperators or one for each 4 square miles of land. (32, p. 2.)

The work of organizing the counties was facilitated, no doubt, by the fact that there existed a national emergency because of the war, and also by the fact that the federal government provided the salaries of the county agents. The local people, however, had to pay the cost of maintaining the agent's office and meet his other expenses. The fact that Iowa was one of the first states to organize indicates what the records show—that Coverdale and McDonald and their helpers were very active in carrying on this work. In fact, this achievement is said to have been the most effective extensive piece of organization work ever accomplished in the state in such short time.²

4. THE WAR FOOD PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN

The federal government through its Food Administration asked Iowa to increase her pork production 25 percent; her wheat acreage 25 percent; to promote war gardens; to encourage the canning and drying of foods; to establish labor bureaus; and in other ways to increase the food supply of the nation. This was to be accomplished in the face of the fact that 50,000 farmers, or one-third of those between 21 and 31 years of age, were called for military service. (32, pp. 1-2.)

That this demand for more food was met is indicated by the fact that Iowa produced more foodstuffs in 1917 and 1918 than in any other two years previous in her history. The production of pork was increased about 25 percent and the total yearly production of corn, oats, wheat, barley, and rye for these two years was 26 percent above the ten-year period immediately preceding the war.

A brief description of the major activities of the Extension Department in its food production program is given herewith. (32, pp. 3-14.)

a. Seed Corn Campaign of 1917-1918

Confronted with the most serious seed-corn situation in the history of Iowa, the Extension Service organized a most extensive seed corn campaign of early picking demonstrations, testing, locating old corn and in educating the farmers as to the seriousness of the situation. As a result of this work, the farmers in the

²W. H. Stacy, extension sociologist in charge of rural organization work, Iowa State College, holds this opinion.

spring of 1918 secured one of the best stands of corn in the history of the state and, in spite of hot winds, harvested 44,000,000 bushels above the average for the ten-year period preceding the war. (32, pp. 3-7.)

b. Increased Wheat Acreage Campaigns

Because of the great shortage of wheat in allied countries the United States government asked Iowa as a war measure to increase the normal acreage of wheat 25 percent. Twenty additional men were employed for a period of three to four weeks to locate stocks of seed and urge farmers to increase their acreage. Governor Harding issued a proclamation urging the farmers of the state to grow wheat. The state and county councils of defense and the Food Administration also assisted. The response was very gratifying and within a few weeks' time the grain corporation of the Food Administration was drained of its supply of seed. Iowa's normal spring wheat acreage of 250,000 acres was increased to 750,000 (32, pp. 7-8), and the total wheat acreage was increased from 420,000 in 1917 to 1,050,000 in 1918. (16, p. 637.)

c. Pork Production Campaign

Late in the summer of 1917 the United States government sent out alarming statements concerning the shortage of meats, and especially of fats, in England, France, Italy, and neutral countries. Iowa was asked to increase her pork production 25 percent, which was a big asking in view of the fact that she normally produced more hogs than any other two states. In counties having county agents, the agent visited banks and farmers and explained the object of the campaign and enlisted their support. In counties without agents, a department specialist performed a similar service. Every county in the state was visited; 115,000 *Produce More Pork* cards were distributed; and 8,000 copies of mimeographed articles on the hog situation were distributed among banks and prominent farmers. The daily, weekly, and agricultural press gave much assistance in publishing timely articles. The campaign was effective in increasing Iowa's pork production about 25 percent—the quota set by the United States Food Administration. (32, pp. 8-9.)

d. Campaigns to Save Corn Fodder

The campaign to save corn fodder centered mainly upon urging farmers to build more silos. The Extension Department

furnished literature to farmers, county agents, bankers, dealers, manufacturers, and the press pointing out the value of silos in preserving corn fodder. In addition, a three day speaking campaign was carried out by specialists from the Extension Department in each of fourteen counties. There are no records which show just what effect these campaigns had, but it is known that farmers built a very large number of silos at that time.

e. War Garden Campaigns

Owing to the fact that war was not declared until April, the war garden campaign did not accomplish so much in 1917 as in 1918. A special effort was made in the spring of 1917, however, to increase the number of gardens and to secure local leadership in this work. School boards in a large number of cases paid the salaries of these local leaders. The Extension Department issued plans of organization, and distributed 50,000 bulletins on gardening besides thousands of special bulletins on bean growing and on vegetable crops.

The campaign in 1918 was much more extensive. In the fall of 1917, a circular letter was sent out to the mayors of the state urging the appointment of a city garden committee in each city and town. It was urged that this committee immediately locate vacant lots and other unused land and arrange to have the land fertilized and fall plowed. Letters were also sent to commercial clubs, school boards, Rotary clubs, women's clubs, and other organizations urging their active coöperation in the movement.

During February and March the Extension Department sent organizers to 227 of the larger cities and towns of the state, and organization plans were mailed to the smaller places that the Department was unable to reach.

The response was most favorable. The garden acreage was greatly increased. The boys and girls also responded to the call. A report to President Pearson (32, pp. 10-14) states, "Altogether 230 Boys' and Girls' Garden Club Leaders were appointed. Of these 115 were paid by their local school boards and 115 did their work voluntarily. Twenty-four received part of their pay from federal funds. Approximately 90 percent of the local club leaders were teachers in public schools. All literature, instructions, reports, etc., were handled through these local leaders. A total of 18,572 boys and girls was enrolled in the junior garden work or an increase of 7,259 over the previous year."

f. Canning and Drying Campaign of 1917

Early in May of 1917, it became apparent that so much garden truck was being raised that an effort must be made to care for it. Because of the difficulty of canning such products as peas, beans, etc., it was decided to send trained workers into the field rather than to rely solely upon printed literature. Consequently, twenty-five additional workers were employed and given a week of intensive training before being sent into the field. Each worker was supplied with a canning outfit, roll of charts, and printed material.

Every county in the state arranged for demonstrations with the result that 1,702 demonstrations were held; 95,475 people were reached directly; 1,485 food conservation clubs were organized with a membership of 50,352; and 220,000 leaflets were distributed. While there is no way of determining the actual results of this work, it is estimated that between 15,000,000 and 20,000,000 additional quarts of fruit and vegetables were canned. (32, pp. 10-11.)

g. Food Conservation Campaigns

The principal work of the home demonstration agents during the war was to organize the women of the state in order to carry out the appeals of the national government for food conservation.

Beginning with the canning campaign in the summer of 1917 there followed meat-saving, wheat-saving, sugar-saving, wool-saving, and general conservation campaigns. This work was done in coöperation with the United States Food Administration, the woman's sections of the State Council of National Defense, the women's clubs of the state, and farm organizations.

While it is impossible to definitely state the results of this work, reports were gathered from many families which indicate that much good was done. The home demonstration agents reported that 26,048 families saved 2,288 twenty-four pound sacks of wheat flour by substituting potatoes, and 968 families used no wheat flour at all. In the wheat-saving campaign carried out late in the spring of 1918, home demonstration agents reached 96 counties and 3 cities. Altogether 111,000 people were reached personally and 150,000 leaflets were distributed. (32, p. 12.)

h. Farm Labor Bureaus

Acting upon a suggestion of the Iowa War Emergency Food Committee, the Extension Department in April, 1917, worked out and published a plan for organizing farm labor bureaus.

In counties having agents, the county agent took charge of the labor bureau. In other counties, the county chairman of the state bankers' association was relied upon. The county councils of the state council of defense, which were organized at about this time, rendered valuable assistance.

Altogether 391 farm labor bureaus, including every county in the state, were organized. One hundred and eighty-seven of these reported the placing of 7,896 farm laborers. Of these about 87 percent were single men, 11 percent were married men, and less than 2 percent were women. (37, pp. 39-43.)

5. ENROLLMENT IN BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUB WORK JULY 1, 1917, TO JUNE 30, 1918, INCLUSIVE

Garden Club enrollment	18,239
Corn Club enrollment	889
Baby Beef Club enrollment	1,400
Pig Club enrollment	1,708
Canning Club enrollment	1,681
Food Club enrollment	458
Garment Club enrollment	1,061
Poultry Club enrollment	741
Total enrollment	26,177

6. SUMMARY OF FIELD WORK BY SPECIALISTS JULY 1, 1917, TO JUNE 30, 1918, INCLUSIVE

	Lec- tures given	Dem- onstra- tions	Judging exhibits	People reached
1. Campaigns and demonstrations	977	*3,164	45	188,913
2. Chautauquas, picnics, rural life	81	24	10	13,854
3. Clubs, granges, and general farm meetings	283	19	8	21,257
4. Conference and organization..	1,051	34	2	77,870
5. Convention, association and educational trips	138	41	12	17,915
6. Contests and shows	114	54	134	26,930
7. Fairs and exhibits	257	482	289	160,848
8. Farm and individual visits.....	85	158	1,051
9. Farm tours	49	3	3,752
10. Farmers' institutes	195	31	79	21,592
11. Junior clubs	**5,989	586	153	164,946
12. Short courses	713	371	108	23,010
13. Teachers' meetings	37	6	2,957
Totals	9,969	4,973	840	***694,895

*Includes canning demonstrations given during the summer of 1917.

**Includes lectures by local club leaders.

***This figure does not represent different individuals. The same person may attend a dozen meetings during the year and be counted a dozen times.