

CHAPTER V

THE POST-WAR PERIOD, 1919-1930

When the Armistice was signed, November 11, 1918, the Extension Service was brought face to face with a new crisis. It had to discard its plans for carrying on food production work for the next year on a more extensive scale than ever before. One item in these plans called for the apportionment of crop acreages by counties and townships. The upset in its program of work, however, was not the most serious problem the Extension Service faced as a result of the Armistice. The serious thing was the loss of \$220,000 which the federal government provided through the Food Production Act. This fund was used largely to support the county agent work and about three-fourths of the counties had employed agents with the understanding that they would receive such aid. The question was, will these counties continue to employ agents and keep up their farm bureaus after this support is removed and after the war hysteria is dead?

1. FEDERATION OF THE COUNTY FARM BUREAUS

The county farm improvement associations, legalized by the Iowa General Assembly in 1913, became the county farm bureaus during the war period. The chief function of these organizations was educational—to sponsor the work of the county agents and to serve as local arms of the Extension Service of the College. Since there were only 24 Iowa counties with agents on the entrance of the United States into the war, it was evident that many of the county farm bureaus were organized as a war emergency, and probably on a temporary basis.

As stated in a foregoing paragraph, the withdrawal of large federal funds which had supported the work of the county farm bureaus and their agents threatened to destroy the local arm of the Extension Service. To have this arm severed was regarded by the executive officers of the Service in Iowa as a most serious loss. This view was also held by a great many friends of extension in other states. Experience had demonstrated that an agent in every county with a farm bureau chairman in every township

and a coöperator for every four square miles was a very effective organization from the standpoint of getting results quickly.

The farmers of Iowa, as in many other states, were also interested in the farm bureau. They had been without an effective organization enrolling large numbers since the rise of the Grange in the 70's and the Alliance in the 80's. The time was right for enrolling large numbers of them in a new organization. While the Extension Service was interested in the farm bureau primarily as an educational agency and had promoted it in the beginning for that purpose, the farmers of the state were interested in it not only as a source of information but also for economic and political reasons. There was a feeling among them that they must organize for protection. The "cost of production" and "cost plus" catch phrases had a strong appeal in securing new members.

a. Legalizing Mandatory Funds for the Farm Bureau

One of the first steps taken to bridge the gap between the war period and the post-war period was to secure amendments to the law of 1913 which legalized county farm improvement associations. These amendments made it mandatory for the county board of supervisors to set aside funds for the use of the farm bureau when certain conditions were met. Section 7 of the 1919 revision (19) reads as follows:

"When articles of incorporation have been filed, as provided by this Chapter and the secretary and treasurer of the corporation have certified to the board of supervisors that the organization has among its membership at least two hundred farmers or farm owners in the county and that the association has raised from among its members a yearly subscription of not less than one thousand (\$1,000) dollars, the board of supervisors shall appropriate to such organization, from the general fund of the county, a sum double the amount of such subscription. Such sum shall not exceed, in any year, a total of five thousand (\$5,000) dollars in counties with a population of 25,000 or over, nor a total of three thousand (\$3,000) dollars in counties with a smaller population."

In Section 8 (2931) of the same act (19) we find the following limitation on who shall receive this aid:

"The only farm improvement association which shall be entitled to receive such county aid shall be one organized to coöperate with the United States Department of Agriculture, the State

Department of Agriculture, and the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts."

With this legal provision for securing county aid and with a farm bureau membership which jumped in 1920 to 110,000¹ at five dollars each, it may be seen that the loss of \$220,000 of federal funds was replaced many times over from these other sources.

b. Birth of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation

In the fall of 1918 the board of directors of the Polk County Farm Bureau voted in favor of a state federation of farm bureaus, and similar action was taken about the same time by the Marshall County board. A little later President Justice of the Polk County Farm Bureau and President Howard of the Marshall County Farm Bureau sent letters to the presidents of the county farm bureaus of the state urging the organization of a state federation. A preliminary meeting of a few farm bureau presidents was held in Des Moines to consider the proposition. This resulted in a decision to call a state meeting in Marshalltown on December 27, 1918. (38, p. 16.)

Seventy counties were represented at this organization meeting in Marshalltown. A constitution and by-laws were adopted and an executive committee of eleven was chosen. This committee met and elected the following officers for the State Federation from its own number: President, J. R. Howard (later president of the American Farm Bureau Federation); first vice-president, A. L. Middleton; second vice-president, Frank Justice; third vice-president, L. S. Fisher; treasurer, J. E. Craven. J. W. Coverdale, of Ames, was elected secretary of the Federation at a later meeting. R. K. Bliss, director of Agricultural Extension, and Murl McDonald, state county agent leader, were made ex-officio members without a right to vote. (38, p. 16.)

A little later President Howard appointed the following committees for which provision was made in the constitution: Marketing and Transportation—C. W. Hunt, A. L. Middleton, and J. I. Nichols; Educational—L. V. Carter, G. M. Fox, and A. L. Bishop; Legislation—L. C. Willits, E. H. Cunningham, and J. E. Craven; Organization—W. P. Dawson, I. N. Taylor, and C. E. Arney. (38, p. 17.)

¹The farm bureau membership in Iowa between 1920-1930 averaged about 60,000. In 1920 the receipts from farm bureau memberships were \$437,174 and the county appropriations were \$295,527.

The Extension Service was favorable to the State Federation but its official connections remained with the county organizations. The county agents were the connecting link. The following excerpts from the annual report of the director of the Agricultural Extension Department, R. K. Bliss, for 1918-1919 (38, p. 17-18) are pertinent:

"The organization of the state federation of farm bureaus marks a forward step in the development of the agricultural interests of the state. Many problems not within the power or scope of a county farm bureau can be well taken care of by the state federation. Also the work of the individual county farm bureau can be greatly helped and strengthened by a state organization.

"The Agricultural Extension Department has received thoroughgoing cooperation from the officers and committees of the state federation on educational matters. The state federation committee on marketing and transportation has had several meetings with the specialists of the Agricultural Extension Department and has helped materially in formulating plans. The committee on education also met on two different occasions with Agricultural Extension Department specialists. The president and secretary of the federation have given much helpful advice and suggestions.

"Great corporations have prospered and become wealthy upon the information derived from specialists. The farmers of the state of Iowa working through farm bureaus and in cooperation with the state college are now in a position to make use of special help in working out difficult problems and in building for a permanent agriculture and an independent agricultural people."

c. The Membership Campaign

The Organization Committee of the Iowa State Farm Bureau Federation conducted an intensive membership campaign in every county in the state during the winter of 1919. According to Murl McDonald (44, p. 37), "This was as much a financial campaign as it was to secure members. It was the psychological time for such a campaign. It was proposed to build up a substantial reserve for the State Federation. This was accomplished and at no time since could this have been done so successfully. . . For the first time a uniform membership fee was adopted by all counties."

A five-dollar fee was decided upon for each member. Four

dollars of this fee remained in the county; fifty cents went to the State Federation; and fifty cents to the American Federation.

A maximum membership was built up as a result of this intense campaign. Not less than 2,000 local solicitors and about 200 paid solicitors participated in the drive. Murl McDonald described the campaign (44, pp. 37-38) as follows:

"The psychology used during the campaign was the same as had been used throughout the war period. The 'millions for defense' state of mind prevailed. After-war-depression was threatening and it was proclaimed that other forces were better organized than agriculture. Farmers were urged to organize for protection—this time for self-protection, for the protection of their own interests."

The slump in membership which came shortly after this campaign is explained by McDonald (44, p. 38) as follows:

"Promises were made in the heat of the times [the membership drive] and the immediate fulfillment of these promises, otherwise sound, was easy to anticipate. In addition to this, members had little appreciation or understanding of the real services to be performed. Few had definite ideas regarding what might be reasonably expected.

"The effects of deflation had not yet been felt. Prominent farm leaders, public officials and the farm press held out the promise that dollar corn and two dollar wheat were here to stay. Farm land prices soared to heights heretofore unknown. Money was free.

"Farmers paid their five dollars into the Farm Bureau. The money then was not an issue. Then the deflation came, equities in farm land were wiped out or sadly diminished, many farmers had to give up their farms, and later banks closed which had been cashing the life membership checks annually.

"Naturally there was a shrink in the so-called membership of the Farm Bureau. However, it must be taken into account that the rank and file of Farm Bureau members came in first under the abnormal conditions of war time, and the large membership was built up following the war under conditions equally abnormal.

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"A decrease in membership was inevitable. The astounding fact is not the extent of this decrease but the persistence with which 60,000 farm families have held on steadily from year to year during the last five or six lean years [1922-1928], a membership approximately equal to one-third of the farm families in Iowa."

IOWA FARM BUREAU MEMBERSHIP
1918-1930 (31, p. 122)

Year	Number of Members	Index
1918	25,180	23
1919	29,477	26
1920	109,543	100
1921	96,255	89
1922	73,323	68
1923	72,541	68
1924	62,610	59
1925	61,697	58
1926	60,565	57
1927	58,342	55
1928	57,880	55
1929	60,168	56
1930	61,738	58

d. The American Farm Bureau Federation Organized

While Iowa's county farm bureaus were forming a state federation the counties in a number of other states were doing the same thing. The next logical step was for the state federations to form a national federation. On February 12, 1919, representatives of 12 state organizations, on invitation of the New York State Farm Bureau Federation, met at Ithaca, New York, to consider the advisability of forming a national farm bureau federation. As a result of this meeting, invitations were sent to all the states having farm bureau associations to attend a national meeting in Chicago, on November 12-14, 1919. Out of this meeting came the American Farm Bureau Federation. (62, p. 44.)

During the interval between the Ithaca meeting in February and the Chicago meeting in November, interest in agricultural circles was worked up to a high heat. Here was the possibility of creating a new national farmers' organization on a different basis from anything that had preceded it. It was recognized that here was a sleeping giant that might be awakened to full power almost immediately.

"The question as to what the major functions should be," says Kile (55, pp. 114-115), "immediately occupied the attention of agricultural leaders. The educational groups associated with the colleges of agriculture saw the advantages of such an

organization but feared that in the hands of necessarily inexperienced men the great powers created might in the end be the means of wrecking all their carefully built-up work for years. Already farm leaders in the Middle West were talking of using the new organization as an instrument to solve their marketing problems on a nation-wide cooperative plan. The argument as to whether the prospective organization was to be primarily educational or whether it should be designed specifically to bring about improved business and economic conditions, increased as the date for the convention approached. In general the Eastern, Southern, and Western states championed the former view, while the Middle West (which was more completely organized and farther advanced in state farm bureau activities) insisted upon the business organization idea."

The convention in Chicago was attended by some 500 delegates and visitors. Each state represented was given one voting delegate. Representatives of the different sections presented their views but finally came together and elected as president, J. R. Howard, president of the Iowa Federation of Farm Bureaus, who took a middle ground position. J. W. Coverdale, who had been prominent in the development of county agent work in Iowa, and had been instrumental in effecting the Iowa State Farm Bureau Federation, was elected secretary. Gray Silver, of West Virginia, was elected Washington representative. Headquarters were located in Chicago. (55, pp. 115-123.)

The idea of attacking the economic problem at once gained in favor. This decision was influenced by a speech by Henry C. Wallace, editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, and later appointed Secretary of Agriculture, who said (55, p. 123), "This federation must get to work at once on a real business program if it is to justify its existence. . . . This federation must not degenerate into an educational or social institution. It must be made the most powerful business institution in the country."

e. Change in the Relationship Between the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service

The early county farm bureaus were promoted by the federal Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural colleges for the purpose of giving the county agent support, and an organization through which he could work. At its inception it was primarily an extension organization. With the development of state and national farm bureau federations, this status was changed.

The American Farm Bureau Federation recognized this change in the county agent's relationship to the local farm bureau and joined the United States Department of Agriculture in a *Memorandum of Understanding*. This memorandum sets out, among other things, the following:

"Since these county extension agents are part of a public service as defined in the Smith-Lever Act and receive some part of their salary from public funds, they are to perform service for the benefit of all the farming people of the county whether members of the farm bureaus or not, and are to confine their activities to such as are appropriate for public officials to perform under the terms of the Smith-Lever Act. The county agents will aid the farming people in a broad way with reference to problems of production, marketing, and formation of farm bureaus and other coöperative organizations, but will not themselves organize farm bureaus or similar organizations, conduct membership campaigns, solicit memberships, receive dues, handle farm bureau funds, edit and manage the farm bureau publications, manage the business of the farm bureau, engage in commercial activities, or take part in other farm bureau activities which are outside their duties as extension agents."

2. THE CAPPER-KETCHAM ACT

The purpose of the Capper-Ketcham Act as set forth in the law itself reads: "An Act—To provide for the further development of agricultural extension work between the agricultural colleges in the several states receiving the benefits of the Act entitled 'An Act donating public lands to the several states and territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts,' approved July 2, 1862, and all acts supplementary thereto, and the United States Department of Agriculture."

In other words, the Capper-Ketcham Act provides additional federal and state funds for coöperative extension work in the land-grant colleges along the lines of the earlier Smith-Lever Act. The funds provided in this act total \$1,480,000 annually from federal sources and \$500,000 from state sources.

The first year of the act, 1928-29, \$20,000 was contributed by the federal government to each state land-grant college, including Hawaii, a total of \$980,000, without requiring state offset thereto. The second year this total amount was increased by \$500,000 with the provision that the states raise a like amount

and expend it for the same purposes as the federal funds. While this bill was supplementary to the Smith-Lever Act, it required that 80 percent of all funds available under it be expended for the salaries of county extension agents for the further development of the coöperative extension system in agriculture and home economics.

Relative to the passage of the Capper-Ketcham Act, Smith and Wilson (62, p. 46) make the following statement: "In the passage of this act, the general popularity of extension work was shown, through endorsement of the measure by 19 national associations including the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and by more than 100 state associations. The National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work and the Association of Land-Grant Colleges were especially active in obtaining its enactment."

3. DEFINITE COUNTY PROGRAMS OF WORK

The leading project for the spring of 1920 was the initiation of a definite program of work in each county. The development of this program was one of the important changes in extension work following the war. During the war the program was more or less nationalistic, now it was to be much more local.

Twelve district conferences to discuss programs of work and office administration were held the first of March. These were attended by 95 county agents, all of the home demonstration agents, 3 assistant county agents, 58 office assistants, and 100 officers of the farm bureaus. (39, p. 16.)

The next step was to call meetings of county farm bureau boards of directors. These meetings were conducted on the round table plan and the following questions were discussed (39, p. 17):

a. Farm enterprises

- (1) What are the chief sources of income in the county?
- (2) What are the chief problems connected with such sources of income?
- (3) What can be done to meet such problems?
- (4) Who will do the work? How much?

b. Home enterprises

- (1) What are the chief home enterprises?
- (2) What are the chief problems connected with such enterprises?
- (3) What can be done to meet such problems?

- (4) Who will do the work? How much?
- c. Community enterprises
 - (1) What are the chief community enterprises?
 - (2) What are the chief problems connected with such enterprises?
 - (3) What can be done to meet such problems?
 - (4) Who will do the work? How much?

Similar meetings were then held in each township and the farm people were encouraged to state their problems and help to plan how they might solve their problems.

From these district, county, and township meetings was initiated the definite, long-time, program of work which has characterized the educational activities of the Extension Service since the close of the war.

The relationship between the county farm bureaus and the Extension Service in carrying out their mutual program of work is well explained by Director Bliss (39, p. 14) as follows:

"The Agricultural Extension Department in conformity with the law designates the county farm bureau as the agency through which all extension work shall be done in the county. Under this plan, county agents, home demonstration agents, club agents and others who may be employed carry on their work through the one organization. In order to simplify the administrative work and prevent duplication and misunderstandings, one of the co-operatively paid workers [the county agent] is designated as chairman of the agricultural extension work in the county. The object of the Agricultural Extension Department is to develop all round extension work in the county through one organization rather than to develop men's work, women's work, or boys' and girls' work through three organizations. The extension specialists support the work of agents in the field by giving special advice on technical matters, by helping to develop programs of work, and by furnishing printed material."

4. THE LOCAL LEADERSHIP PLAN DEVELOPED

Along with the development of the county program of work, and closely associated with it, was the development of what is known in extension circles as "local leaders." While local co-operators were enlisted during the war and local help was often used before the war, the local leadership plan in Iowa matured in the early part of the reorganization period following the signing of the Armistice in 1918.

The local leaders are voluntary, unpaid local assistants to the county extension agents. Their work is varied. They carry instruction from the county agents and extension specialists to the group they represent; they call together local groups for instruction by the county agent or extension specialists; they serve as chairmen of local committees on some particular piece of extension work; and they help in securing financial support for extension work by soliciting farm bureau memberships. They may act as local 4-H club leaders, help with exhibits at fairs, arrange for farmer picnics, help establish farmers' coöperative organizations, organize tours, keep certain extension records, and make reports.

The reason Iowa, as well as many other states, turned to the local leadership plan was the physical impossibility of the county agents' reaching all the farm people in their respective counties. At first the county agents did most of the extension teaching personally; but, as the years went by and the demands for their services increased, this became impractical and expensive. This was especially true in Iowa after the great increase in farm bureau membership in 1919 and 1920. Director Bliss (39, pp. 2-3) explained this situation as follows:

"The net result of the farmers' movement so far as the Iowa State College is concerned has been to greatly increase the demands made upon the Agricultural Extension Department. The pressure was first felt by the county agents. Instead of a membership of 200 as was the case a few years ago [Report for 1919-1920], he now had to serve a membership of 1,100. It was a physical impossibility to give personal service to so many. The county agents appealed to the Extension Department for specialist help, but the department was already short on workers. The situation thus created demanded special treatment and the work of the department during the past year has been largely in the nature of helping local farm bureaus to develop county and community projects and to develop local leadership in order that every farm bureau member might have an active part in the county program. Lack of funds has made it impossible to extend this plan to all communities but where it has been carried out, the results have been unusually successful."