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Goals, Values and Cooperative Extension Programs

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IT IS IMPORTANT that the organizations serving agriculture understand each other and that their various goals and values form a reasonably coherent system. Therefore, we must clearly state the objectives and philosophies which all of us hold and we should periodically examine them in light of present situations.

I would like to state two things clearly. First, the Cooperative Extension Service was established by federal legislation which gives it a job description and sets out certain metes and bounds for its operations. Therefore, when we discuss the goals and values held by the Extension Service we are in reality discussing the goals and values held by the representatives of the people as they established the Cooperative Extension Service and as they have continued to support it through the years. Thus an analysis must start with this federal legislation and with the basic job description which has been laid down for Cooperative Extension. In this description, and in the legislation certain goals and values are inherent; others are apparent from the hearings conducted before the passage of the Smith-Lever Act and from later acts of Congress relating to financing of the Extension Service. In addition to the philosophies, goals and values inherent in the act itself, we must also examine a number of satellite goals and values that have been developed through the years. Many of these undoubtedly will not be unique to the Cooperative Extension Service. They are drawn on the one hand from the basic philosophies and values that underlie our democratic form of government: on the other hand they are a part of the normal values of

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an educator. From the standpoint of values, the most unique aspect of Cooperative Extension is its action orientation.

The second point I would like to state clearly is that as a state Extension administrator I speak only for myself in addressing this subject. I believe that these basic ideas are identifiable from state to state and remain rather consistent. Yet each state has great autonomy in this regard, and I would not profess to speak for other states or for the Federal Extension Service.

EXTENSION AS OUTLINED BY SMITH-LEVER ACT

One cannot read the Smith-Lever Act and the hearings that preceded it without reaching two conclusions:

1. The founders of the act had in mind a broad out-of-school educational program to form a bridge between academic inquiry and the problems of people. The basic job of this Extension Service was tersely described in the Smith-Lever Act:

"To aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same."

Several things follow from this:

- (a) The clientele is all of the people of the various states, except as the act states later, "those people who are formally enrolled in the Land-Grant College as students." Although rural people were clearly to be a target audience, the need to reach all people was also recognized.

- (b) The subject matter of Cooperative Extension was to be agriculture, home economics and subjects related thereto. In early Extension work, the primary emphasis was on production technology in agriculture, on homemaking skills and on the development of youth, because these were priority areas of the day and the extension staff was limited. The scope and program have broadened as other problems became of more relative importance. The hearings show a broad interpretation of this subject-matter job description and Congress has furthered this view by its actions in later years. For example, the funds added in 1953 permitted an expansion of Extension in work on the business side of farming, on agricultural marketing and on public affairs. The Agricultural Marketing Act provided for an expansion of Extension work in the field of marketing, and a section added in 1955 clearly stated the responsibility of the Extension Service to increase its work in the broad area of rural resource development.

(c) The job description of Extension is action oriented. Increasing subject-matter knowledge is not to be the only objective of Cooperative Extension. Rather, an equal objective is to motivate action in the application of practical information to problems.

(d) The methods must be informal, since teaching courses for credit is prohibited.

2. The second major factor which is inherent in the Smith-Lever law is that local participation and authority are provided for in several ways. For example, federal funds are distributed on a formula rather than a contract basis. The plans of work to be carried out in the act originate in the state. Local funds are encouraged, and the personnel policies of the state generally apply.

Before analyzing some goals and values that are either inherent in the act or are commonly held throughout Extension, I think it is necessary to state how I plan to use these terms. I will look upon a goal as a result which Extension hopes to attain. I will look upon values as being based upon beliefs. Individuals hold highly personal value systems when the term is applied to society or to various groups within it. But the idea of consensus is important, for the value must be based on a consensus belief. On the one hand these values become criteria by which goals are selected and by which priorities are assigned. On the other they become the criteria for selecting the methods through which the goals shall be achieved. In addition, these values form the basis for a philosophy of Extension work.

GOALS OF EXTENSION

One of the most significant values of the Extension Service is that within the broad framework of the Smith-Lever Act the goals and means to be used in reaching them should embrace our democratic philosophy; special consideration should be given to the goals and values held by the clientele toward whom programs are directed as indicated through their representatives on program building councils and committees. From this basic belief comes such Extension philosophy as "You must start where the people are." Inherent in the act is the belief that an informal educational, action-oriented program will help achieve both personal and national goals. Therefore, the basic goal of the Cooperative Extension Service is to contribute to the development of the whole individual through educational means, and through the development of the whole individual to help individuals and groups perceive the

difference between what "is" and what "ought to be" in their own frame of reference. An equally important goal of Extension is to help people intelligently apply information relating to agriculture and home economics to these various problems.

I have stated these basic goals in terms of increasing the knowledge and action of individuals as they pursue their individual decision-making prerogatives or as they act collectively in reaching decisions. This is because it is individuals who learn and make decisions and manage change. It would be possible to state the objectives of Extension in an entirely different manner — for instance along such lines as better managed resources, increased levels of production, optimum levels of economic growth, higher farm income, etc. Naturally, the Extension Service expects to contribute substantially to such over-all objectives of society. But I have chosen to treat these specific educational objectives as sub-goals to this basic goal. However, I think it is more meaningful to state these goals in terms of individual learning. Such learning must be the focus of an institution that hopes to make its contribution through action based upon increased knowledge and understanding.

Extension frequently discusses whether or not it should simply inventory these goals as they exist, or whether in fact it is a change agent with regard to the goals as well as the means by which various goals are pursued. In my judgment, Extension is a change agent with regard to both the goals of people and the means by which they pursue them. For example, many rural people have held the value that an advanced education was not important for their youngsters. Today, Extension is actively pointing out the trends that are occurring and the consequences of such a value.

Another value Extension strongly holds is that it should not impose its will or the will of the Extension staff member on the decision makers involved. Rather, it should enlarge the knowledge of people through educational methods with regard to the facts involved, the possible consequences of various courses of action and the alternatives which may be open to them. Thus in time people may have a changed perception of a given situation that may result in some modification of their own value system. This accounts for the value of Extension workers that you must start where people are and go only as fast as they are willing to go. This means an almost certain conflict between individual, community and national goals as well as conflict between the goals of various organizations with which Extension works. Extension works at the cutting edge of change. At this level, conflicts between values and goals are normal, and one frequently

finds emotion, ignorance and confusion. Stating its goal in terms of increased knowledge and individual understanding keeps Extension free of the conflict between the goals so that it may concentrate on its job of objective education. Through this approach a great many of the apparent conflicts between goals can be harmonized when the goals are examined in light of the full information that bears on the problem.

Extension faces a potential dilemma in the situation when the goals of farm families — a major clientele group — come into apparent conflict with other social goals. Should Extension be a champion of agriculture? For example, should Extension lead the fight for increased farm income at any cost? The goal of consumers for cheap food would be in conflict with constantly higher prices for farm products. The point is that no consensus value exists at a given time in terms of such an issue. Extension, in attacking such a problem, helps all groups involved to understand the issues and the problems. Extension helps consumers see the need for "fair" prices for farmers and the effect of low prices on the nation's agricultural industry. At the same time it helps agriculture see itself in relation to the nation as a whole and the consequences of pursuing a goal of higher prices at any cost. Society, through its democratic processes, needs ultimately to make the decision.

Another way to say this is that Extension tries to create full understanding at the various levels of decision making involved and then to carry out its mission assigned by the Smith-Lever law to encourage action. It must accept the goals as defined by the relevant decision-making unit. This may mean that as long as these goals are consistent with such basic goals as the maintenance of democracy, etc., the profit of a given farm unit will not be maximized. The family involved may choose to temper its pursuit of profit, for example, in order to have time to pursue other ends on which it places more value. In this event maximum economic national growth would not be achieved. But Extension would consider that it had fulfilled its mission if it had helped the family to see clearly the alternatives open and the consequences that would result from pursuing the various alternatives. Too, Extension would respect the right of an individual to give up a fortune to become a beachcomber if that decision were made after careful analysis. The goal of increased gross national profit would be given lower priority than recognizing the individual's right to determine his destiny.

In pursuing these over-all goals there are obviously many sub-goals which must be established. Again, there will be conflict between those which can only be resolved as values are

established by the decision-making unit involved. For example, such sub-goals may include the development of a safer agriculture, the conservation of natural human resources, expanded economic growth in rural areas, the maintenance of a strong agricultural sector based on the family farm, increased farm income, increased efficiency in the marketing system, greater understanding of public issues and improved efficiency of homemakers. These are important goals. These become specific educational objectives that Extension pursues. I refer you to the Extension "Scope report" for a more complete listing of them.

In establishing these goals another value of Extension comes into play. This value is based on the belief that people develop their fullest potentials through the process of identifying and solving problems which confront them and that much of this development takes place through group participation and family involvement in local programs. These sub-goals are built up through a give-and-take process that involves value judgments on the part of local councils and other volunteer leaders working in harmony with Extension staff members. Extension is not entirely passive in this matter. It may establish pilot demonstrations, and it often develops materials to help point out problems and program approaches that might be taken to solve them. But it places high value on the judgment of local people after they go through a process of problem identification and study in developing the Extension plan of work. It is through such a process that Extension's emphasis is determined, the emphasis to be given among the wide range of possible sub-goals which might be pursued at a given time. This process is frequently an irritant to Extension workers because they are impatient. But it keeps Extension working where the people are — and in an action-oriented program Extension believes this is important.

ACHIEVING GOALS

I have so far stated a number of Extension Service values that affect the way it works. I shall not take up all of the relevant goals, but only some of the more significant ones and shall indicate how they relate to Extension programs and operations. In summary, the Extension Service reflects the values of Americans, especially farm people. It places a high value on the concepts of democracy, upon such democratic ideals as freedom and the need to undergird these philosophies by its operating procedures. It places great worth on the individual, upon his perception of his situation and upon increasing his ability to deal effectively

with his environment. It recognizes the high value individuals place on achievement and how this relates to the respect and esteem of their fellow men.

In this regard, work and activity are valued in many rural communities as ends in themselves; e.g., the farmer who has his light on first has a certain status. It has respect for the dignity of work and for the significant role of agriculture in our economy. It recognizes a special responsibility to agriculture. But it also realizes that this responsibility must be pursued in light of the value systems of all Americans and that intelligent public action is critical to achieving many of agriculture's goals. It has respect for the role of the family as a unit of society and it places high value upon the development of youth in the family framework. It recognizes that the nation places high value on constantly increasing efficiency, on higher standards of living, on science and technology. Extension recognizes that these are values of all Americans, but that rural people hold some of them more highly than other segments.

In view of these values it recognizes that different methods may be required to carry out some types of programs. For instance, research can show that some farm practices are good from almost any point of view. As an example, certain conservation practices may be economical from the individual's point of view and clearly in the national interest. Extension can forthrightly encourage the adoption of these. But a good answer in the area of farm programs depends upon the collective value judgment of the nation upon the one hand and upon individual beliefs and value judgments on the other. In many such areas no clearly determined national value has been established. Here Extension must clearly restrict itself to increasing understanding of the matter rather than promoting any particular course of action.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAMS

As I have implied several times, the goals of Extension will be achieved through educational efforts which involve both increased understanding and intelligent action by relevant decision-making units. In promoting an understanding of the Cooperative Extension Service program, it is important to stress that the potential program is broader than Extension can carry forward aggressively at a given time with its limited resources. Within the broad framework, Extension shifts emphasis with the changing importance of problems, or with changing values that become

the criteria against which the importance of problems are measured. This shift is accomplished through the program development process, which involves thousands of local volunteer leaders in studying these significant programs.

The program efforts of Cooperative Extension have been placed into five broad areas by most Extension Services:

1. Production, Management and Natural Resource Use.
2. Agricultural Marketing.
3. Home Economics.
4. 4-H and other Extension youth programs.
5. Community and Area Resource Development and Public Affairs.

Several trends seem to be apparent in the Extension program area. One of the most spectacular of these is the increased attention to the programing process and to the adjustment of programs quickly in light of changing problems and values. As evidence of this, many state Extension Services have employed an individual at the administrative level to give full-time attention to programs. Most Extension Services have increased their efforts on the business side of farming while continuing a strong program in agricultural technology. The significance of this problem area and the value placed upon it was indicated by Congressional action to increase funds for this specific purpose. Greatly increased efforts have been placed on helping local people organize and study the problems of their community so that they may assess the trends occurring, set objectives for themselves and take steps to manage change in light of these goals. By adding a section to the Smith-Lever law, Congress has recognized both the growing nature of the problem and the value which was placed on it. I believe this work is an example of how changing social values affect Extension work. Through an increased social conscience and an increased recognition of the relation of lagging areas to national goals, greater value has been placed on solving this problem, although history indicates that it has always been with us. Increased efforts are being made to help people understand the public issues and the broad economic forces affecting them. This is being done with both the rural and urban sectors. This effort reflects the increasingly held value that public action, in setting the framework for individual action, should be enlightened action, that it takes full account of the alternatives and consequences of decisions. Increased program efforts have been exerted in a great many states in the area of marketing of agricultural products and informing consumers in "buymanship."

Formal training is providing rapid general upgrading of Extension staffs and many specialized staff members are being placed in field locations.

In the 4-H program increased emphasis is being placed on projects which help young people understand the economy in which they will live, assess available careers and learn more about the demands the economy makes on those employed in it.

The fact that the demarcation between rural and urban areas is not nearly as clear as it was at one time has increased demands on Extension for programs that reach both rural and urban audiences. Resource development work is an example of such a program. Urban people seek to understand the public issues pertaining to resources and agriculture. They want information on areas important to both the town and country, for example, zoning. They also want more chance to participate in both 4-H and home economics programs as well as more ready access to relevant agricultural information.

In our state we feel that a county Extension program should be aimed at the most significant problems facing the people living there. Therefore, in our more urban counties the program tends to be aimed at urban problems. The principal clientele of the Extension Service by far continues to be the farm families of the state. However, more work is being conducted with agricultural service industries, with marketing firms and with professionals who are being employed in greater and greater numbers. By making such adjustments, the Extension Service tries to orient its resources to make the most significant contribution to society's goals through increased understanding and action of individuals.

Though program emphasis changes from time to time, fundamental goals and values have seen relatively little change. In my judgment, Extension in the United States is in a healthy state of development. Extension is making adjustments in both program emphasis and methods to help insure that the people in the various states will make their decisions armed with the very best available facts and knowledge. The input-output data, which is a part of American thinking, is hard to come by when the principal product of an organization is increased knowledge and competence on the part of individuals. Yet the effectiveness of the Extension Service can readily be seen when looking back over longer periods of time. The most significant evidence is the large number of well informed adults who have obtained a great deal of education in subjects relating to home economics and agriculture through participation in the various programs of the Cooperative Extension Service. This is true even though many

adults affected are far removed from the land-grant college campus and from the main road. I am confident that the help of the many local leaders and organizations who take part in the process of determining Extension programs will keep such program emphasis current. With the firm base of fundamental goals and values which has been developed through experience, the Cooperative Extension Service will continue to be a significant factor in national progress and in helping individuals and other organizations to achieve their objectives.