

Extension Should Not Carry a Club

ONE AFTERNOON I sat in the stuffy second floor office of a French county agent in Rouen. I had some difficulty finding the office because of bombed out streets now being rebuilt. Whole blocks of Rouen were reduced to rubble during the invasion of Normandy. You probably remember the city as a place famous in history, for here Joan d'Arc was burned at the stake.

Peering at me from behind heavy, dark-rimmed glasses, the county agent told me about farming in Normandy. Rouen is the principal agricultural extension office for the province of Seine-Inferieure. France's county agricultural agents are very well trained for their jobs, and have much larger territories than ours. Frequently one agent may work with six to seven thousand farmers.

Devoting much of his time to herdbook keeping, seed certification, and other supervisory work, the French agent frequently finds himself contacting only the better farmers. There are no free bulletins on farming similar to those given out by our own extension service. He attempts to contact the small farmer by writing short articles or notes on

farming for the local and agricultural papers. In the larger cities he may have a radio program.

Here and there, as I drove along the straight French highways, I saw signs pointing out different plots of grain. They were demonstration plots set up through co-operating farmers.

Nowhere in the world will you find an agricultural extension service as effective as ours in America. Only in Scandinavia and Great Britain has it reached anywhere near the same level. In many countries of Europe the extension specialist has been greatly handicapped because he has lost contact with the small farmers and there has been little, if any, agricultural training among the youth.

I think some of our agricultural greatness, and our country's agricultural future, depends upon keeping a virile, helpful extension service. European and the Mediterranean countries can teach us much about how to keep extension effective.

Lack of a good extension service explains some of the sharp contrast between the primitive agriculture of Egypt and her ministry of agriculture. With her up-to-date experimental stations and highly trained specialists, many of whom have studied in Europe and America, Egypt has built one of the best departments of agriculture in the Middle East.

Egyptian experiment stations have developed important varieties of cotton, sugar cane, rice, wheat, and other grains.

The big drawback has been the lack of an American-type extension service and an elementary educational system to equip the farmers with the knowledge learned in the experimental stations. So far, the work of the Egyptian agricultural department has been largely directed at control and regulation, or "government knows best" directives.

Two agricultural colleges, one in Cairo and another in Alexandria, are staffed by well-trained people. Agricultural vocational training, however, as we know it in this country, simply doesn't exist in Egypt. Most of the village children never even attend elementary school. Modern scientific findings just don't get out to the peasant farmer.

Greek Extension Work

Today in Greece, under ECA, American experts are helping to build an American-type extension service. In the past, Greek extension men have been regulatory officials. The new plan is already paying off.

Let me tell you of one project.

Last fall, near the ancient city of Anthele in central Greece, Greek farmers harvested a heavy crop of rice in fields that only a few months before had been nothing but a dead salt flat with deep cracks crisscrossing the heavy alkali mud. Over a thousand years before Christ, Anthele was an important seaport on the Greek coastline. For the last 3,000 years, the Sperchios River has carried silt from the sloping fields and dumped the soil into

the gulf. Mixed with the salt water of the sea, the rich silt built up a huge delta of useless flats, leaving the port town of Anthele miles from the sea.

Today, Anthele is a typical farm village with about 300 families who farm the 6,000 acres of cropland nearby. Before reclamation, almost two-thirds of their land, 9,000 acres, lay in the useless barren salt flats.

Reclamation began under the direction of Walter E. Packard, drainage specialist for the ECA mission. On the job to help with the project were American and Greek agricultural experts. Packard told the farmers gathered in the village square that much of the land could be reclaimed if they grew rice on it for a few years. "The land is not too salty to grow rice, and after a few years of flooding you will be able to grow other crops, since the flooding will take the salt out of the soil," Packard told the skeptical farmers.

He explained that the Greek government, aided by ECA, would furnish the money and trained men to help drain the land and provide for flooding the rice fields. He suggested to them that they try 100 acres of rice.

Perhaps with the thought that they had a chance to gain, and nothing to lose, the Anthele farmers agreed to try rice, even though many of them doubted that anything could be made to grow on the worthless flats.

First the land had to be drained, irrigation canals dug, the course of the river changed, and even sea walls built to keep the sea from flooding

the land at high tide. The first year about 100 acres were planted. The land belonged to 40 villagers, each with his own plot. Within a week the work of ditching and ground-leveling began. The seedbeds were flooded and villagers broadcast the rice by hand.

The first year, rice yielded 82 bushels per acre, a return of \$440 an acre. The farmers now want to plant all their acres to rice. Says Farmer Tangoules, a hard-headed dollar-and-cents thinker, "If I plant wheat, I can get only 1,500 drachma per oke of land. Cotton brings about 4,000 drachma, but my rice fetches me about 6,500 drachma." Many farmers agree with Tangoules.

The lack of irrigation now prevents the farmers from putting all the bad land and most of the good land into haphazard rice plantings. Individual farmers just don't have enough money to pay the high cost of digging ditches and constructing rice plots. In the meantime, the Greek government with money from ECA plans to increase the reclaimed acreage.

"It's just like the miracles in the Bible," says George Rokas, a 57-year-old farmer, who once lived in America and returned to Greece in 1912. "If we hadn't seen it happen on our own land, we would never believe it. Now we understand what scientific farming can do." Rokas' knowledge of the United States makes him somewhat of a local authority among the villagers when America is discussed.

Four other similar projects, under guidance of

ECA specialist Packard, are now growing rice in Greece. Today, Greece spends nearly two million dollars a year of its foreign exchange to buy rice. Rationed rice costs the housewife 22 cents a pound. It brings 80 cents to a dollar on the black market. "Soon," says Packard, "Greece hopes to produce enough rice to provide its needs."

Less spectacular, but just as important, are other ECA-assisted agricultural projects, many of them still on the drawing board. What helps Greek agriculture vitally helps Greece, for Greece is an agricultural country. Two-thirds of its seven and a half million people live on the nearly one million Greek farms. With an average yearly income of \$260 per farm, the Greek peasant farmer stands among the poorest in Europe. Even so, its nine million acres of farm land have never furnished enough food to feed the people. Farmers still use crude wooden plows hitched to slow-moving oxen. Many of the vineyards are dug up by hand. Even though Greece has a lack of water for the soil, its rivers, with plenty of water, flow untapped to the sea. Even though Greek hills have eroded for centuries, farmers still plow up and down the slope.

Problems in German Agriculture

Some countries, with highly developed scientific agriculture, have sacrificed extension work to government police work. Germany is a case in point.

I spent some time in Bavaria in the heart of the American zone. I wanted to see what recovery western German agriculture has made. Germans told me that the most recovery is in the American zone, the least in the French zone. My base of operation was the Stachet farm, a country *gast haus*, some miles east of Munich. In addition to the guest house, widely known for its good food, the typical Bavarian farm keeps a dairy herd of large tan and white milk cows. These *Simmenthalers* are a Swiss breed used by the German farmers for milk, meat, and work.

Outstanding in Bavaria are the dense pine and spruce forests, and the lush permanent meadows, some of them 100 years old — about 30 per cent of the land is in meadows. The Bavarian farmers told me that not only do the forests bring in a nice income, but they maintain a high water table and attract an evenly distributed rainfall.

Prewar industrial Germany, with 80 per cent of the people in cities, imported much of its food from surrounding countries. Now, with much of the farm land of Germany in the Russian zone, agriculture has taken on greater importance than ever before.

To see what was being done to speed up food production, I visited the nearby town of Ebersberg where an "intensified" extension program has been set up under the guidance of the American occupational government.

The equivalent of a county agent and six field-

men make soil tests, teach intensified land use, improved pasture management, forest management, and home demonstration for the farm women. The knottiest problem tackled by the service is land consolidation. With land continually divided by inheritance, many a farmer finds his farm scattered, in garden-sized patches, over the entire community. I was told of one farmer who would have to travel nearly 500 miles to visit all his plots.

On the wall of the extension office I saw before and after pictures of large blocks of land made from haphazardly scattered plots. Such undertakings are not easy. Many farmers are reluctant to give up patches of land that may have been in their families for three or four hundred years. Thrifty individuals may hesitate to trade plots that have been heavily fertilized for poorly kept plots, even though they may be closer home.

Greatest help in building democratic farm leadership would be an aggressive 4-H club program. German farm youth organizations do exist, but they are hardly farm leadership factories like our own 4-H clubs. Such organizations must spring from the bottom up. Germany has always had too much "from the top down."

Perhaps the greatest disadvantage in Germany's present agricultural extension service stems from the days of the Nazi regime. After the first world war, the service managed to build back most of the confidence of farmers lost during the war. Even in the early Nazi days the extension service



Fig. 1—Dairying is important to the Norwegian farmer. To protect the price, milk is sold under a public utility monopoly (Chap. 5).



Fig. 2—Ahmed levels his field for irrigation. Life for the Egyptian fellah goes on as it has for centuries, little changed from the days of the Pharaohs (Chap. 1).

was able to accomplish much. Once a project was started the entire force of government was put behind it. Then came German rearmament and the "guns or butter" program, along with strict controls. Saddled down with directives and police work, the extension department was no longer a friendly adviser to the farmer, but a farm gestapo. Completely dictatorial, the extension service operated independently of farmers' wishes and received its instructions in a chain-of-command right down from the top. It is not easy to gain back the lost confidence of the farmer even though the extension service no longer carries a stick.

I am certain that a good agricultural extension service should be completely divorced from all regulatory work, regardless of what efficiency experts may say to the contrary. Time and time again, in country after country, I have seen farmers' stay away in droves from agricultural advisers because the advisers were also policemen or "government knows best" men. They had lost, or had never gained, the confidence of the farmers they were supposed to help.

I am certain that in America, county agents should stay on the opposite side of the block from the Production and Marketing Administration office, whose duty it is to enforce government regulations. That may be pretty important to watch out for in the years ahead.

One isn't very apt to ask advice this week from a man who next week will be out checking up on

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the number of acres you have in wheat or corn, or whether you have marketed all your pigs.

Even in highly democratic England where extension and controls are combined in the same office, it is a very doubtful marriage, although the British through years of training have become much more regulation minded than we.

The future effectiveness of our own extension service depends upon our keeping it an independent, educational organization that works with — and I would like to repeat that word, with — farmers and farm leaders.