

EXTENSION IN THE 80'S

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ESP is an honorary professional fraternity of colleagues who have been in this profession long enough to know this is their lifetime profession.

Perhaps the most significant quality of this profession which brings about the family-like response among us is that it generates in each of us such a deep commitment to people--to helping people to develop and to make decisions--decisions which result in people's personal and financial well-being--decisions which result in positive family relationships and in positive community environments and community economic well-being.

It is that commitment which causes our profession to become for us a way of life rather than a way of making a living. And that is why we take such pride in this profession and professional family fraternity. It can and will be what we individually and collectively want it to be as an enhancement to our profession and its many facets.

We are a biased group--we're not wrong, just biased! We know very well that it is our profession, coupled with research, that has brought to the people on the land productivity, efficiency, pride, hope and an improved quality of life. That efficiency made possible large numbers of people to engage in pursuits other than agriculture, and thus led to a society of variety, abundance and affluence. And we know that the various levels of governments can put food in people's stomachs, invest, loan funds in their enterprises, regulate public and private operations--but none of these functions make a great people, nor a great country. The only lasting influence to help a people improve their lot is sound, practical knowledge and ideas, with understanding, and thus put to use. It has been aptly said, "progress is made by people who dare," and "where there is no vision the people perish." We are a profession with vision and that dares!

It is important that as a public institution we periodically come together and examine together the forest and not just the trees--that we recognize what is happening to people, to families, to communities and governments in the larger sense. I quote an Abraham Lincoln statement, "If we could but know from whence we have come and whither we are tending, we would better know what to do and how to do it!"

Although we think of CE and this land-grant system as the greatest show on earth, there is a vast public out there who don't even know what it is and thus could care less! Constituents and potential constituents who don't know what this system is or does, won't ever do a thing individually or within their organization to send positive messages about it to the places where public decisions are made.

The 80s Committee and report are no big deal--the big deal is how we use this opportunity to enhance a profession and a service to America.

Extension in the 80s

The Extension in the 80s Committee follows a sequence of events and its report may serve a role relative to that sequence and the future.

A simple listing of some of those events may help in placing this Committee effort in perspective.

There were symptoms of a growing problem FORCE showing up in the late 60s and the 70s.

1. "Silent Spring"--a serious attack on the land-grant research and extension system.
2. "Hard Times, Hard Tomatoes"--with a subtitle, "The Failure of the Land-Grant System."
3. The federal executive and legislative branches were demanding greater accountability. Emis-Semis was among activities to help respond. We didn't react well to the growing symptoms. Three golden decades of growth and public response had dulled our alertness. I think the disease was diagnosed as "lethargy."
4. There were no new federal resources of consequence during the 70s--in fact we didn't hold even with inflation.
5. In 1977 the Congress mandated a national evaluation of Extension at a cost of 1.5 million.
6. The Congress established a national Users Advisory Board for R. & E.
7. The SEA was established and the agency status of CES, CSRS and ARS was lost, along with FTE's and t to the agency roles.
8. The GAO conducted a study of CES with their researchers going to 6 states and people in several counties, and with review of their reports.
9. A Congressional Oversight of CES was initiated in 1981 --first since 1914.
10. A weakening of the NASULGC Division of Agriculture well before the 70s ended, the disease was identified, and antibodies were developed in CES and the land-grant system to drive it away.

Action

1. The lay leader movement - Led to NEAC
2. A small professional committee called CARET outside NASULGC - Funds raised and professional consultant help in Washington was employed.
3. NASULGC was strengthened - increased funds from land-grant institutions and additional help.
4. A new CARET was formed - Lay Leaders
5. SEA was changed. Assistant Secretary - Agency status was restored.
6. Extension in 80s Committee was established. So the disease is gone. A transformation is underway. Albeit, we are in some tough times right now - national - states - and counties.

But tough times never last, tough people do! We know it is up to us to control our own destiny--to preserve the heritage that was given to rural America. The current recession reaction will be only a dip in the longer term upward trendline of public support and service to more people. That is because we know we are now functioning in a very different society than in those golden decades of the past.

As Congressman David Obey said in speaking at last year's land-grant convention, you can no longer expect your friends in the Congress to carry the water for you. And the land-grant administrators are no longer that influential--they are viewed as part of the bureaucracy. There are tough decision-making processes, choices the Congress has to make in the midst of many special interest lobbies and public demands. You will survive only if the grass roots public considers your programs of a higher priority than other public needs, and that public is committed to make known that priority! They control YOUR FUTURE--AND SURELY YOU KNOW HOW TO WORK WITH THEM: YOU HAVE THE SYSTEM! It is in this whole climate, then, following the sequence of activities I listed, that the Extension in the 80s Committee was born. Appointed by Secretary Block and Dr. Clodius of NASULGC, this Committee first met last January.

There were similar study committees established jointly by the USDA and the National Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities. Their guidelines, set forth in 1948, 1958 and 1968, did indeed help initiate changes in focus and direction for Cooperative Extension.

The 1980s Committee has a much broader representation than earlier committees and there has been a deliberate attempt both in processes followed and in the report itself to encourage much broader use and more intensive use of the final report. That, after all, is the reason for this effort.

For example, of the 1967-68 Committee (which produced the report, "A People and a Spirit") of 16, 8 or 1/2 of the members were from the USDA in Washington, 5 were

university presidents, vice-presidents or provosts, 1 was an extension director, 1 a church bishop, and 1 was the director of the American Association of University Women headquartered in Washington, D.C.

The 1980s Committee, in contrast, has only 3 of 21 from the USDA in a sense representing the federal partner. It includes a governor representing the state partner, a county governing board member and national officer of the County Boards Association, three lay people representing clientele and selected by NEAC, two others from the private sector, a county extension agent, a dean of home economics, two deans of agriculture and 1 extension administrator from the 1980s and 1 from each of the 4 regions.

Through the state directors/administrators, a questionnaire survey was sent to every professional extension employee in America. 14,000 of the 17,000 were returned. Now we all knew that with a random sample essentially the same data could have been gathered with only a few hundred respondents. However, the rationale was to involve every single staff member in the study to create an awareness and interest to be capitalized on after the report is completed. Further, the data for each state has been taken off the computer and will be given to the administration of each state for individual state analysis. Directors also sent the survey questionnaire to some 10,000 non-extension people--media people, other agency people, organizational leaders, university leaders, political leaders, etc., in their states. 4,500 returned those questionnaires and that data is available to compare with extension provided data. Those data will be of high interest within states.

The committee process included review of summaries of the evaluations, ECOP subcommittee recommendations, legislation, congressional hearings and reports, and numerous other studies, an extensive survey, face-to-face meetings with organizational leaders, and letters.

The Report

Obviously, since the report likely is two drafts from being finalized, I can only review the tenor of the report and some of what it might say..

For those who may be looking for something dramatic or revolutionary, you will be disappointed. If, indeed the CES has been a dynamic institution then it has been making adjustments in its mission, its programs, clientele and in its formats for operation, and dramatic change should not be required. The Committee will set forth numerous conclusions which simply reinforce certain basic tenets and will endorse changes that have been made. In other cases there will be recommendations for changes. To some it may seem unimportant to confirm some of what is. But much of what is, is being challenged by one group or another, and reports, public testimony, sessions with organizational leaders, and in writing. Reaffirmation of basic features may serve a major purpose.

Questions, Criticisms

To give you a flavor of the nature of some criticisms and questions to be addressed by the Committee, I will simply list a very few:

1. The county agent system is outdated.
2. CES should be redirected to exclusively serve rural America--particularly those in less affluent areas.
3. Why should 4-H be tax supported?
4. You should get back to production agriculture!
5. CES can't be all things to all people.
6. Shouldn't user fees be charged to partially or fully cover costs of certain programs?
7. Should the basic federal formula for allocation of t to states be changed?
8. Why are you into social programs?
9. Don't urban people have a right to information from CES?
10. You should get out of CRD.
11. Your programs go beyond your research base.
12. Too much of your budget is in personnel.
13. You need to improve your accountability to public and funding sources.

There were numerous others, and you saw the many questions on the survey--questions about mission, scope, clientele, partnerships and accountability.

There will not be a large substantive report including background data and situation analyses, and then a separate executive summary as was done in the 1968 report. It was concluded that:

1. Few people read the detailed substantive report.
2. Numerous in-depth studies and reports made in the past few years are all available.

Therefore, this report will consist only of a summary of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, with just enough copy to orient the reader to them. The many reports and documents as source information will be listed in the appendix for people who are interested in them.

The early section of the report will orient the reader to the CES, its initial charge, and its adjustments to changes in society, the knowledge base and institutional changes.

Included within the various sections of the report will be recommendations pertaining to strengthening: ES-USDA roles

Research linkages

The 3-way legal partnership and the partnership with the private sector research agencies

The educational role and enlarging the land-grant concept

The report will reinforce such items as the county agent system, the preservation of program and clientele flexibility at state and county levels, and of agriculture remaining the largest single thrust of CES.

It will suggest such actions as reaching more people, increases in research in home economics, agricultural marketing and community development. It will suggest focus of programs on those areas where there is a research base, suggest all youth have access to 4-H, and that resource allocations change within states--a higher percent on resources on media and other program support services.

Final conclusions in the report will suggest that the land-grant college system with its USDA linkages has been a major asset to America, to her people, and to the world. Indeed, that system with its resident instruction, research and extension functions, linked together with three levels of government and local people, is the envy of the world.

The Cooperative Extension Service, with its staff in literally every county in America, is the connective tissue that fuses this partnership between the people, the land-grant universities and USDA, and their governments. There is no question in contemporary society but that continuing life-long learning is the foundation for human development and achievement, for a sound agricultural system for a permanently healthy environment, and for prosperous and desirable communities.

The Committee has studied legislation, many reports, and extensive surveys. Out of it all, it is that the concept for a Cooperative Extension Service, handed down as a legacy from early government leaders and educators, is as sound for tomorrow as it was for yesterday.

However, while the concept must endure, time and technology have resulted in a situation that does, indeed, need to change if Cooperative Extension is to fulfill its promise in the larger setting of tomorrow.

It is expected--hoped--that once the report is completed and published early in the new year--that at national, state and county levels it will provide a basis for opening the door to discussions about Cooperative Extension with both external and internal groups for the enhancement of this profession and its service to the public.

ESP members within each state can assist in professional leadership in developing attitudes of all CES staff toward change and adjustments in their own states and counties. The state survey data and this 80s report can simply be tools or serve as catalysts in this larger job of adjustments appropriate to each state and county. If there is to be change, that is where it must happen!

Administrators and program supervisors can find the Extension in the 80s report a vehicle to open many doors for communication within the university settings and with support groups and public decision-makers.

Like each of you, I am proud to be a part of this profession and this professional fraternity. I cannot adequately express my appreciation to my Wisconsin colleagues for their dedication and support; to my associates as administrators and directors in all of the 77 land-grant institutions for the help to me from their association and friendships over the past 12 years. And to the many leaders and administrators among the federal extension staff in the vineyards--the specialists and the county extension agents--who over the years have made our profession what it is and who will help to insure that the legacy we have had will remain vital to America and this profession.

Again, I thank you sincerely for the honor accorded me and for allowing me to address you.