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# SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE EXTENSION SERVICE

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We need to recognize the larger context for a social science in the Extension Service. First, we live in a society which is struggling to synchronize the cadence of human affairs to the cadence of science; second, agriculture is undergoing a technological revolution, which is a part of the technological revolution of the nation; third, the extension system is being subjected to pressures as it emerges from an agrarian past into an industrial future; fourth, we face, with the county agent, the choice of becoming educationally qualified technicians or technically qualified educators. This is the framework within which informal education needs to be developed and within which the directions of social science education are yet to be determined.

## THE MANAGEMENT ORIENTATION

In architecting informal education through extension work, the management orientation is a fundamental consideration. This management orientation is a point of view, and the point of view for extension work includes two elements. The first element is relevancy. The second is application of management to various levels of problem solving.

Every extension worker, though he may not always realize it, is confronted with the question of relevancy. The management orientation will help him recognize the important problems, and thus will safeguard against aimless proliferation of specialties and excessive departmentalization and the forcing of "projectivitis" upon the often dimly felt problems of people. However, the extension system sometimes becomes preoccupied with problems rather than with clientele, and this impedes the selection and achievement of goals. Educational resources often are of no value to others unless applied to specific alternatives foreseen either by teachers, or students, or some combination of both.

In addition, the management orientation fills a critical lack by providing linkage between three levels of extension endeavor and the problem-solving processes associated with them. The first level is the farm family, and we term the process *decision making*. The second is the neighborhood, community, and region, and we term the process *planning*. The third is the governmental level, and we term the process *policy making*. The experience gained by individuals and families in

decision-making processes establishes the setting for experience in community planning, which in turn, serves as the basis for policy making. Each extension of the management orientation enhances capacity and versatility in choice making, from farm to neighborhood land use, from community organization to regional development, from national issues to international policies.

This process may result in income increases for individuals and families and orderly patterns of growth for their community, region, and nation. A popular evaluation of the extension system might naturally be based on these gains. But the evaluation of an extension worker would rest on the development of the choice-making ability and versatility of individuals through broadening experiences. For this is education and education is the extension worker's primary responsibility.

As the extension system builds the required bridges for continuous educational experiences, it must face a task which can no longer be postponed: the combining of educational resources outside the extension jurisdiction with those within; the effective coordination of co-operative extension work and the general extension movement; and the articulation and implementation of the aspirations of public and private agencies outside the university along with those of the extension system.

### **INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY**

The growing interdependence between farmers and the industrial sector widens almost daily the circle of those who have something to say about the issues, policies, and directions of farming. Hopefully, then, agriculture may become more than the tangential interest of everyone. Just as hopefully, these inter-relations may carry the interests and concerns of farmers into the larger realm of human affairs. Informal education related to interdependence is important in three areas of concern to extension work: (1) the economic affairs of agriculture, (2) the ecological and sociological development of communities and regions, and (3) the undergirding of policy making in reference to agricultural industry.

Our modern agricultural industry is a series of vast combines which produce, store, process, and distribute food and fiber. The number of those who do something to agricultural products is increasing, and farmers are turning more and more to the industrial sector for supplies and services. A host of businesses have grown to service the specialized elements of this exchange between industry and agriculture. As a result of technological advances and economic growth, manpower is shifting from farms to factories and market places. In the process the farming

function continues to grow both narrower in the specialized sense and deeper in the technical sense.

From this interplay have come complex and distressing problems for farmers, and the social and dollar costs for their solution loom no less. Farmers and consumers are tied together by almost a common anguish at the problem level. But the agricultural industry is also challenging, especially in the rich range of alternative combinations which the dispersion of agricultural functions permits. Huge technical, organizational, and cooperative resources are available for problem solving and policy making, and countless employment alternatives are open to those with the necessary agricultural skills.

There is no escape nor excuse from attempting to comprehend the vastness of the framework. This comprehension converts the tasks of extension workers and vocations of farmers alike into professions. For both, this understanding can best be achieved through marketing education and public affairs education.

We shift now from the economic consideration of the agricultural industry to the sociologic considerations of the community and the region. Both forcefully emphasize interdependence. Experientially I have grown suspicious of the usefulness of the words, rural and urban. Stereotypes associated with the two words impede our recognizing the increasingly complete fusion of the two. Even, as Louis Wirth states, "urbanism is no longer synonymous with industrialism, and ruralism is no longer identified with unmechanized labor." I do not mean to decry the desirable features of life in the countryside, or for that matter, of life in the city. But we must question forcing thought and data into convenient and conventional pockets when the pockets no longer appear to exist.

Then, too, the concept of an individually styled and autonomous community is disintegrating. Hence, we add "region" to recognize the always larger setting which shapes first the family then the community. Region is used variously to mean the metropolitan complex, the industrial-agricultural combine, and the emerging supercities and areas termed by some as "inter-urbia."

Our work in this area is given direction by the management orientation cast in the planning process. The process requires models of economic, sociological, and political planning. These models must be amenable to flexible adaptation, ease of teaching, and continued use. They are essentially means for detecting, collecting, sorting, using, and evaluating the data on resources, goals, and alternatives. Extension workers must assist in their development and confidently work with them. This is again a matter of competence. Extensive convening

of groups about particular issues and gimmicks for trapping people into community participation cannot possibly replace this competence; they provide only an escape.

We turn now to a brief reflection on the political consequences of interdependence with special attention to agriculture. An important consideration is the apparent decline in the political power of agriculture: a persistent transfer, by the mass of voters, from agricultural to consumer orientations; the equally persistent reapportionments in political representation; and thus, the lengthening cracks in the historic political strategy of agriculture. More and more the signs indicate a constriction of the traditional entries of agriculture into politics: historic entries built outside the machinery of political parties through regional alliance in the legislative branch and ready access to administrative agencies of the executive branch.

To a still new nation, accustomed to an infinite expanse of landscape and natural resources and the historic importance of agriculture, this analysis is not easy to accept. What such a position means will depend to a considerable degree on the willingness of farm people and their organizations to increase popular understanding of the farm problem as a basic and fundamental issue in American society; on the states of national emergencies in relation to the aggregate demand for food and fiber; and on the directions of the political party system and its relationship to agriculture. Beyond this, however, farmers and their organizations will have to acquire the skill of effectively and meaningfully participating in political affairs from a minority position. No less important, farmers and consumers will need to look together at the agricultural industry and the national requirements for food and fiber to determine the optimal allocation of resources for national economic growth.

Education in this area is, of course, not for the purpose of making such policies but for the preparation of those who will. My observations call for a multitude of farm leaders at the community and perhaps the state levels, with fewer in agricultural statesmanship at the national level. By statesmanship I mean insight into the interdependence of agriculture and the divisive effects of its political affairs; and then, the tools of analysis, the foresight, and the fortitude to develop, in the face of myriad inconsistencies, the necessary policies for agriculture. The educational prerequisites to agricultural statesmanship (from on and off the farm) are not satisfactorily being met today. The reason is too many superficial discussions of present and past farm policies with temporary audiences and instructors with their collective minds made up. This puts us in the wake of history, not ahead.

Education as a background to policy making should have sharp and continuing focus over time; and, necessarily, selected participants must be provided with longer-run and deeper educational experiences. Indeed, such educational antecedents may not deal with agricultural policies, as such, at all. Instead, we might partially displace these with competency in history, literature, political science, economics, international trade, and philosophy; with the skills of debate and logical inquiry; and with the disciplines of leadership and responsible follow-ership.

### RELATION OF SERVICES TO EDUCATION

Informal education with people at home and at work demands a balanced perspective. Lofty ideals of education must be reconciled with reality. Although our educational aspirations are scarcely humble, informal education may usually begin in humble and rudimentary ways.

Adults engaged with rearing families and earning livelihoods are never captive to classrooms and curricula. Indeed, the demands of the real world may shift their interests and weaken the staying power of learning. This is especially true of cooperative extension work. The charter refers to "disseminating useful and practical information in subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and encouraging the application of the same." Without the objective of encouraging application we might persistently place ourselves in service to others. But fortunately, I believe, this phrase transforms extension workers into educators, and the considerable placement of extension workers in the academic community makes the transformation complete. Unless extension work is educational in conception and reception, there is no logical reason (except that it is already there) why tomorrow's extension system should spring in part from university life; it might more logically be a service of government or the agricultural industry.

I enthusiastically commend the extension worker with figurative and literal dust on his shoes. Representatives of universities with skill in the practical arts provide reassurance, especially as their competence becomes positive and acknowledged. If one art of leadership is a sense of reality, skill with the crafts of others starts a leader on his way. In addition, the vocational form of the farm and the life of the rural family have traditionally emphasized tools and the skills for their use. Extension workers have dealt with people who practice specific arts, and have provided specific services to match these arts. But needless to say, the relation of modern scientific agriculture to the practical arts is different.

However, the most positive aspect of performing services is that the process brings experts and those who are not together at a point of

common interest. This, in part, is why extension work has progressed to where it is today. Providing a service is possibly the best way of initiating informal education. But we should not allow the process to continue ending on the same note, for then we have a service, rather than an educational, agency. Especially is this position strengthened when we consider that in the days of the first county agents few others performed services for farmers, while today many others provide the needed services.

In brief, I am accepting the performance of services as basic to initiating an architecture of informal education. But this is only the beginning, and the educational design is incomplete, for education concerns what happens to the people with whom extension workers cooperate. The diverse and decentralized nature of the extension enterprise, the pressures of the extension organizational commitment, the very scope of extension work all complicate the definition of educational goals. Most extension workers are easily disenchanted with such definitions anyway, for they inevitably embody all over again the proverbial change in knowledge, skills, and attitudes. However, I believe that one definition from the classic 1919 Report of the Adult Education Committee of the British Ministry of Reconstruction is worth noting:

By education we mean all the deliberate efforts by which men and women attempt to satisfy their search for knowledge, to equip themselves for their responsibilities as citizens and members of society or to find opportunities for self-expression.

The hierarchical goals implied here suggest that extension workers must discover and apply the procedures which help people move toward these goals. The management orientation should lead eventually from the farm into national and international arenas. Along the main journey, the profession of farming, endless side excursions will suggest themselves; some will take the excursions and be better for it.

Programs of home economics which focus on the physical artifacts of the house cannot be educational without including the family which lives there. And no family can be understood without awareness of the cultural settings by which that family is shaped. Since such cultural settings are anything but accidental and spurious, discovering their antecedents is sometimes adventurous and always educational. The boy and his 4-H Club calf, if education is on the job, may explore the standards of judging and husbandry. These, in turn may slip into the dynamics of buying and selling, and lead on to the discovery of the rich alternatives in the world of work.

The most practical fruit of extension education is helping people to adjust to the challenging and hazardous circumstances of change in the modern world and, in the words of Ortega, "live at the level of their time."

## THE ISSUES FOR INFORMAL EDUCATION

Searching out issues both relative to our time and to extension work is an additional step. Anticipating these issues also suggests, beyond requisite content, that the informal education of extension work may encompass the future within it. If not, informal education will trail after the future, and not assist in leading it.

The first relevant issue is the tendency toward disparity between technological innovation and non-technological innovation. This is an issue for the family, the farm, the market place, the community, and national and international life. The reality of this issue is that non-technological innovation is scarcely ever found on a single institutional base. Indeed, no longer is invention uniquely social or economic or political. It is more frequently an equilibrium of all these (and others sometimes, like religious invention). Today, for example, the international trade of agricultural products takes place in the choice-making arena of economic advantage and location, the social welfare of underdeveloped countries, and the political security of sovereign nations. To a considerable degree each farm and the enterprises there are reflections of such circumstances. So, in the long run at least, technological innovation goes unrewarded unless accompanied by non-technological innovation. In planning the substance of informal education some consideration should be given to appropriate balances in types of innovation.

Another relevant issue is the mediations and regulations of government. Effective informal education depends on straight and impartial thinking. Yet, the rise and fall of agrarian democracy has often rested on both fact and myth about the mediations of government. Even today, we find in the extension system an "ideational" attitude that the mediations of government are only temporary and an "overt" attitude of acceptance. These attitudes need to be squared away by a view which regards government not only as a possible necessity and a probable certainty in agricultural affairs, but also as an expression of ourselves. Such a squaring away may lead to development of agricultural policy through attention to the processes by which we decide who is to participate and the metes and bounds of the participants (with particular reference to government). Informal education in this area will require the broadest content related to the disciplines of government and the best agricultural statesmanship.

The third relevant issue is the increasing necessity of understanding the farm, the family, the community, and the region as an inter-related whole. I neither deny that each stands alone nor suggest that the distinctive individuality of each should be categorized into something else. I only maintain that preserving the individuality of farms and



families and communities depends on the awareness of the forces which shape them. Study of this inter-related whole permits unified planning of divisional programs in extension work and broadens the horizons for continuous educational experience for people.

Such a program is directly concerned with the constant shift of human resources within and out of agriculture and the subsequent relationship to national economic growth. Since the transfers and the investments for these transfers begin at one point and end at another, the proper orientation for studying the problem is the larger setting which includes both points. The opportunities for investments to flow into farms or communities and regions, and the necessity of resources to flow out both are, in one sense, measured by knowledge of the actual interplay and judgments of the possible interplay between farms, families, communities, and regions. One aim of modern informal education is preparation for such judgments. Other aims are to teach how individual and family dislocations may be minimized and how the social and economic costs may be reduced.