

Extension Opportunities and Challenges of the 80's and 90's

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I have been asked by your conference planners to address the issue of extension philosophy and its future. In attempting to deal with this issue for this important group, I must admit I have had some difficulties.

I am not even an agriculturalist, let alone a food scientist. My training is in the areas of extension education, public relations and public administration.

I am not a futurist, nor am I a prognosticator. However, I have spent my life-time in extension and public service.

I do have some opinions on extension — what it is — what it should be and — where it is going and more importantly — where it should be going.

Therefore, I will leave the technology of your field to you for its treatment and I will approach my assignment from the viewpoint of a public service administrator who deals with budgets and governments and supporting groups and taxpayers. After all, what we do in the accomplishment of our educational mission in food science or any of the many other educational arenas will depend upon the environment in which we must operate.

So, let's take a look at ourselves in this regard. As I discuss it, I would hope you would give some thought to your discipline and how it fits into our scheme of things, and even maybe, how it must change if it is going to fit in at all.

Forty-two years ago, the Editorial Committee for the 1940 Yearbook on Agriculture chose to begin the book with these words:

"There was a small band of men and women on a little ship, journeying toward an unknown future — an unknown land where they dreamed of building a new, freer life. The future for them must have at times looked very dark, and the days through which they were living bitter with uncertainty and hardship.

They did not give up. They did not turn the ship back. They did reach the new land. Their descendants conquered a continent and built a new civilization. This was more than 300 years ago, and the circumstances are different in 1940. Yet, we who inherit what these people won and developed are also on a journey toward an unknown future. We often

also look back longingly to the old familiar way. To us, too, the future sometimes seems dark and the days through which we are living filled with uncertainty and hardship. We, too, have dreams which at times we think we shall never attain."

The yearbook continued;

"Men have been through such experiences uncounted times in human history. It is true that in 1940 the circumstances were different. The circumstances will always be different."

Forty-two years later, today 1982, we still face uncertainty and hardship. We must admit things are different, and we must accept that things will always be different.

Never have Americans looked ahead to a future with more uncertainty than we do in the 80's. Emerging from the 70's is a nation starkly aware of limits on its natural resources, a decline in global security, and its failure, so far, to solve the great worries of chaotic economic conditions — let alone social conflicts at home and rising questions about U.S. leadership abroad.

Such misgivings in any other society might plunge it into apathy, or despair, or even self-destruction. Not so in America — not yet, anyway.

What lies ahead is a decade unlike any in this century: Challenging in its opportunities for constructive change and immense progress — but lacking is the promise of clear answers to the nation's basic concerns.

In past decades, forecasters have relied heavily on the belief that dramatic advances in technology — a university-based American tradition — would shape the years ahead.

To be sure, there will be dramatic technological gains in the years ahead. In fact, information is now doubling every three years — meaning that by the year 2000, we will see six times more information than we now have available.

Still, the next few years and what they bring — peace or war, prosperity or hardship — will be defined less by exploding technology than by changing population patterns and economic, social, and political shifts already so dramatically evidenced by the scream of the silent majority in the last Presidential election — a scream that will reverberate for years or even decades to come.

We must prepare for:

- A larger work force — always on the move.
- A population tilted toward working-age Americans.
- A population becoming more oriented to the minority and to the influence of women.

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- An increasingly questioning society which monitors public service relevance and accountability as it never has before.
- A nation of energy consciousness reflected in smaller homes, less travel and more home-town oriented leisure.
- A more conservative society concerned more with re-establishment of work ethic than social assistance programs.
- A period of readjustment in our priorities on education, especially higher education.
- A less stable family environment.
- A nation dominated by one-issue politics.
- A society against more and more government.
- A time of more and more work with less and less resources to do it.

And, we must expect the certainty of the unexpected, for we cannot be so inflexible as not to adjust to those unforeseen needs of the people we serve in extension work.

We must be prepared to deal with:

- Even tighter cost-benefit squeezes.
- Closely audited extension budgets.
- The pressure to define measurable objectives which make a difference.
- And, the watch-dog syndrome ready to pounce on any tax-supported institution not paying its way.

Now, don't misunderstand. All of these observations, and many more that you could add, are not meant to be negative. In fact, I really feel many — if not all — are matters that can and perhaps do need re-evaluating — in a very positive sense.

Frankly, in my opinion, we are late in expressing our intolerance for those in extension or any other public service agency;

- Who set vague and unmeasurable goals.
- Who select projects because they are faddish rather than because they are needed.
- And who condone employees who confuse efficiency with effectiveness.

It's high time we examine our programs for the criticalness of doing the right things — not just doing things right.

Extension leadership must be aware and prepared to deal with the fact there is nothing so useless as doing things with great efficiency which should not be done at all.

I often tell my Georgia extension colleagues that there is nothing that should be more quickly rejected than an extension professional who is ignorant of society's needs and aspirations, and who attempts to sell his body of knowledge or impose his selfish or special interests on those who have no need, or whose needs are not addressed with the interests being imposed. In other words, there is no fool like the fool in education who is,

- Trying to sell democracy to the starving, or
- Trying to teach livestock production to the high-rise city dweller, or
- Attempting to teach advanced clothing construction to the disadvantaged homemaker who does not have access to a sewing machine, or
- Teach the food processor the outmoded way when a better way is available.

Now, I beg that you not misunderstand me. There is nothing wrong with asking academia and its brilliant scholars

how we can better serve the farmer or the housewife or the teenager or the businessman — unless, and this is a big unless — we have in our asking of academia and its scholars forgotten that we should also ask — in the greatest of empathy and reverence — the farmer, the mother, the teenager, the businessman, and the food processor — what can we do to help you?

Let's not be found guilty of only having our ears tuned to the so-called influentials in the academic or political or social arena. Let's always be found with our ear of sensitivity finely tuned to the people with a need and who pay our way.

Programs can no longer be considered and instituted because they conform to "the way we have always done them." Each and every thrust must be put on trial for its very life.

The 80's is the time to discontinue the outmoded, the irrelevant, the wasteful, and the ineffective. We cannot afford the element — be that element people or program — that dissipates effectiveness, and our limited and possibly declining resources.

Our efforts must address the critical criterion — "Where will the effort make a damn for the betterment of the people who pay our way and who have such critical needs?"

We must adopt an unyielding attitude of intolerance for the extension faculty members who major on the number of hours logged, for if that is the measurement of their worth — they have lost their reason for being.

We must accept as our responsibility to rid ourselves of the suicidal tendencies to plan our programs around what we want to do, or what we enjoy doing rather than what the people and the industries we serve need us to do.

And — we must be more alert to our teaching opportunities. Why do we all too often look for our opportunities of service to come floating to us as effortless as a multi-colored butterfly ready for the capture? Rather, worthy, real life opportunities come to us more often in the form of lowly and ugly larvae and most of us in our obsolescent or traditional approach or ignorance crush them underfoot.

These factors I point out to you today are opportunities — if we accept them that way. They give us real reason to look at ourselves. They force us to examine our motives, to question our directions and to prove ourselves worthy of support.

They give us the opportunity to re-establish ourselves as relevant, successful, equally important partners with our research and teaching colleagues of the academic community.

Extension professionals of the 80's who see the relevant opportunities will ask questions such as these:

- Where and what are the real needs of today, of our people, of our industrial community, of our institution, of our environment?
- What is going on around here that prevents us from doing our job as it should be done?
- Where must we limit or channel our efforts for performance improvement?
- What efforts or programs should be eliminated because they are simply popular, but not making a difference?
- Are we current in our understanding and use of the applied behavioral sciences?
- Are we still using outmoded knowledges when there is a new body of knowledge on the horizon?

These are tough questions, but they must have answers.

The opportunities of the 80's will not be addressed unless they receive our attention and we face the answers to these questions.

Should we not have the courage in extension to face these questions, and deal with them effectively, I can safely predict there will be a graveyard full of dead extension leaders who by suicide earned their place among the fallen. And, I would suggest to one and all that should we not believe what I am saying, and go ahead in our blindness to a changing environment, there will not be enough taxpayers who care to shed enough tears to keep one petunia alive on our grave.

The bottom line of extension's worth is the simple realization that today's Extension Service cannot live safely in the land of academia and still sell our technology. We must get off of the campus and get out there with the people and get inside of them where they are and as they are —

With their problems
 With their prejudices
 With their hurts
 With their evils
 and even with their warts.

Carl Sandburg gets credit for the coining of the 11th Commandment which says "Thou shalt not commit nincompoopery." So, with the realization that you probably feel I have already violated this point of great wisdom, let me speak directly now to my specific assignment of the "Extension Philosophy And Its Future".

First, our opportunities are impossible to delineate, for they are inextricably linked to the needs of our people. Obviously, many of these needs will surface in crisis, emotionalism, the unexpected or even the ill-conceived. Thus, our attempt at looking at our opportunities is, at best, only a "guesstimate" based on where we think our current environment will lead.

There are several substantive "givens". Obviously, we must start with them.

1. There is the opportunity of dealing with exploding new technology. Your discipline is an excellent case in point.
2. The fundamental need of a doubled food supply in 20 years — just to keep pace with population growth is a "front burner" item for all of mankind.
3. The survival of the family farm and the small business can be correlated to the survival of our nation. The fallacy of the continuous national debate on guns versus butter illustrates our opportunity to put things in perspective. The defense of our country is not one of deciding between guns or butter. The only secure defense of our nation must be addressed as guns and butter.
4. There is a larger work force which has allowed the erosion of the basic work ethic and self motivation values of our past. This must be corrected, and fast.
5. And the inadequacy of research to help find the answers to all of these exciting but difficult issues is a need our supporting society must be made to understand.

Perhaps our biggest opportunity in extension in the years ahead deals with the challenges in the arena of public policy education. True — you operate in a highly technical field that itself needs answers. But, your work is impacted continuously by issues beyond the processing plant or the foods laboratory.

Consider the issues of

- Land use

- Land use compatibility
- Water management
- Water quality
- Environmental quality and its preservation

These are simple examples of complex issues of our times. They do affect your work — every day. Sober minds, filled with knowledge and an ability to focus education on these issues will be needed if our people are to deal forcefully with the decisions they are facing.

I ask you — who better than the State Land Grant University and its Extension Service to lead people —

- To see these issues in proper perspective
- To help them identify the options
- And to assist them in the formulation of programs to handle the issues successfully.

Now, I realize there is always some among us who feel that it is inappropriate for the modern University Extension Service to attempt to be all of these things for everybody. I am not numbered among this group. It is the mission of our kind of an organization to promote both democracy and elitism — to strengthen society as well as to criticize it — to offer both skills and values — to serve both our day-to-day user and the public, to nourish old truths and also create new knowledge. The Extension Service defeats itself when it compromises between alternatives, for it must embrace almost infinite alternatives, exerting itself to the utmost, sometimes toward seemingly different goals. Our major challenge is that we must embrace the contradictions we face in the pressing problems of our supporting society, yet still remain united and confident in ourselves as a needed public service organization.

The multiple missions of our kind of an organization, then, seem to resolve themselves into a problem of excellence. For the modern Extension Service is defined — and distinguished I might add — not so much by what it does, since it does so many things, but rather how well it performs in doing these things.

So, in the face of these and what I hope are your own identified challenges, our united extension challenge is to —

Tool up

Train up

And plan up

To meet the issues head on

with relevance and an effectiveness never before seen in our institution.

Now, one piece of advice. I just cannot quit without saying this. We must remember our game is *education* and not politics. I say it again — we must remember our game is *education* and not politics.

I will admit that the extension faculty has just a bit of tendency to seek out the political solution for too many of our opportunities. We do have an advantage realized fully by everyone of you. Our access to political influence and to political ears is closer than that enjoyed by our teaching and research colleagues. And, I would never blame a single one of you for using it — if you feel that somehow relative to others you are not getting a fair and equitable deal.

On the other hand, we must soberly remember that without the full-time pumping of our knowledge generating power station — that being our teaching and research colleagues — our delivery system does not amount to a thing.

And the politicians and the public — (bless them, we work for them) are very insensitive to the subtleties of our games and sometimes in-fightings. When they wield a sledge hammer, it hits everything in sight. Frankly, not only is it extremely dangerous, it's suicidal, for one wing of this great educational system to take on another in the political arena. It is just not the way for us to go — even though I must admit again that, personally, the temptation sometimes is enormous and hard to resist. In fact, extension and public service is now the growth component of higher education, and one of our primary responsibilities now becomes the matter of sustaining and gaining new support for teaching and research.

As a part of this great system, our best advantage is that we are a part of the answers to the world's problems. The agenda of problems of our world is awesome and the solutions to these problems will challenge us to the outer limits of our personal and organizational limits.

Our very best advantage is that history clearly shows that no country, no industry, no agriculture and no people can develop and progress without a major commitment to research and its practical application through education.

Finally, we must remember always to keep our priorities in proper perspective. The tendency in our kind of education is to get the cart before the horse — or to major on our message and its delivery to the extent that we forget that our mission is ultimately better people. Again, I often tell extension workers — it's not the pantry or freezer filled with preserved food that counts — it's the better life of a family or a food processor, who learned through our efforts.

- It's not the apron on the 4-Her that counts, it's the little girl behind it
- It's not the record keeping system of the farmer or the food processor that counts, it's the survival and growth of the farmer or food processor
- It's not the calf on one end of the rope that counts, it's the boy on the other end.

Our government (and we are a part of it) can help put food in people's stomachs, assist them in their business endeavors, or provide playgrounds for their children — but none of these activities in themselves make a great people, nor a great country. The only lasting influence to help people improve their lot is a combination of sound, practical knowledge and an understanding of how to put that knowledge to use. Perhaps Abraham Lincoln said it best when he said; "You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves."

Thus, the fundamental, basic ingredient for a democratic, productive, problem solving, progressive people is research and related education. Research and education is the core to the solution of the problems our people face in the 80's and 90's — and these problems are our educational opportunities.

I have been to a number of national and regional meetings in the last several months and I want to say I've grown very, very weary of the continuous parade of prophets of doom that are hollering that the day of execution for the Extension Service has arrived and that the hangman is at our door.

I, for one, do not hear the knock. Nor, do I hear those who say he is on the way.

We need to recognize —
The good going for us

The good within us

The good within those with whom we work

And the good we can do for them

That's a winning combination — provided our attitude is right.

I'm convinced that somewhere within each of us and the extension organization is something akin to a central recording chamber. And so long as it records our appreciation for the opportunity to serve — and so long as it records our organization's positive attitude and enthusiastic commitment to people — and to the betterment of their lives, so long will extension grow and live and matter as a public agency.

However, when it allows its heart to become cluttered with the ices of pessimism — and covered with the snows of cynicism, and dampened with the rains of gloominess and doom and apathy and uninvolvedness, then extension will have grown old and unproductive and lost its reason for being.

Put simply, we must —

Come up out of the crowd of apathetic public servants;

Come up out of the problem of our own making;

Recognize the greatness of our heritage;

Stand on our own feet;

Develop our talents;

Chart our own course,

And, be a part of the answers —

for ours is an organization of answers.

Let me urge you not to sit around and cry over spilled milk but rather remember where milk comes from. If we would spend half the time we spend crying over the spilled milk of extension funding, caring for the milk cows called extension clientele, we would all be amazed how quickly milking time would come — and how rich the milk would be.

That is my philosophy about extension and I am convinced that our best days are still in front of us. Thank you for this opportunity to share my views with such an important group.

Extension Panel Discussion

Mike Dikeman, Kansas: Dr. DuVall, you indicated that the survival of the family farm, family business, family meat operation, was vital to the survival of America. Yet extension is basically in the game of education, not politics. Where in this scheme do we determine that we should try to help the family farm, the family meat operation, compete and survive maybe at the expense of being objective in our teaching and extension? In other words, are there times when we should become more subjective in our dealings with producers and processors rather than being strictly objective?

T. C. DuVall: Why do you think administrators are all bald-headed? I don't think there is an answer to your question except that somewhere along the line our agency supposedly touches every citizen every day in some way. I think we do that in Georgia with our service program in the water quality and things of that nature. I would not for one moment stand here and suggest that we ignore the Oscar Mayers or the MacDonalds or whatever the case may be. I don't think we can afford to do that, but quite frankly, I guess it is my rural background that pervades my response here perhaps more than any other one thing. One of the reasons for the decline in the work ethic which has been demonstrated over and over

again in study after study is the fact that we are more and more getting the work force away from the ownership or the management force. As a result of that they don't have the pride and the realization of accomplishment that is true in the family farm or the small business as they did in the past. I don't have an answer to your question except to say that we will do the best we can to find the mix of those two. I am not talking, when I say small farm, about the subsistence or marginal farm. I think we put too many resources into those areas in the past; and I see a swing, at least in my thinking, away from that now. The national priorities within USDA have downgraded the importance of our spending resources on the small or the limited resource farmer and spending more of our resources on those that are being productive and in a sense carrying their own weight, doing their own job and becoming taxpaying responsible citizens. How far we go is a simple old pendulum again. I think you know that we probably went too far toward dealing

with this subsistence level or the disadvantaged. We are swinging back now in terms of our national priority. We may swing too far back on this particular point, but I feel that a public service agency, especially a land grant system agency such as this, needs to be concerned about trying to maintain jobs where they are identified with ownership and productivity.

Don Kropf, Kansas: This question is directed toward Dwight or any of the rest of you. Dwight, have you had experiences in computer scoring of your contests and particularly the meat identification component?

Dwight Loveday, Nebraska: We are in the process right now. Hopefully, by the fall, meat identification will be computerized. Hopefully, in 1983 Nebraska will be using computerized meat identification scoring. As to other computer activities, basically all of our carcass activities are on computer programs.