

## EXTENSION'S RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION

*C. O. Youngstrom, Director  
Agricultural Extension Service  
University of Idaho*

You have had at earlier conferences excellent presentations which have brought clearly to our attention the responsibility which Extension has in public affairs. The very fact that we hold such a conference as this with strong support from the land-grant colleges is direct evidence that we accept responsibility for a major role in developing educational programs in public affairs.

The role of educator in public affairs is indeed delicate. It is a role in which objectivity is highly important. Nevertheless, we should let our philosophy show through. I am sure this does no damage to the objective approach. It is consistent, I believe, with good teaching procedure and may point further to the need for training in the behavioral sciences in addition to our economic training, if we are to be as successful as we wish as educational leaders.

The privilege of appearing on your program is related to a special activity in which several of us have been engaged this summer.

Two years ago, as a result of its discussions, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy decided to conduct a self-examination of the extension services and their programs. The decision to proceed with this evaluation was stimulated by discussions with farm organization leaders and particularly through conferences with Assistant Secretary of Agriculture E. L. Peterson. Earlier examinations have been made. Those conducted since World War II resulted in the Kepner report (1946) and the Joint Committee Report on Extension Programs, Policies, and Goals (1948). The current effort, under a special committee headed by Director Paul Miller of Michigan, has resulted in a published statement on "The Scope and Responsibilities of Extension," popularly called the Scope Report. This excellent report not only can be used to gain an understanding and explanation of Extension and how it operates, but also can serve as a guide to those of us within Extension in program development.

The report describes the unique character of Extension in its proper setting of the rapid changes, adjustments, and complex relationships of today. It offers for consideration nine areas of major program emphasis. These are efficiency in agricultural production; efficiency in

marketing, distribution, and utilization; conservation, development, and wise use of natural resources; management on the farm and in the home; family living; youth development; leadership development; community improvement and resource development; and public affairs.

Separate task forces were appointed to expand each of the brief statements pertaining to the nine program areas into a more complete statement on the scope of the program area, the objectives with which Extension is concerned in each area, what Extension is presently doing, and what it should be doing.

The major points covered in the report of the Task Force on Public Affairs, which will soon be made available by the Extension Service, are:

### **Scope**

1. Public affairs education is education for citizenship. Its scope is determined by the education people need in order to participate as intelligent citizens in any activity involving any level of government.
2. The program will serve rural people and others.

### **Objectives**

1. To develop a more active interest in public affairs problems.
2. To develop a better understanding of the issues and principles involved.
3. To provide facts necessary for arriving at intelligent decisions.
4. To promote a desire to participate effectively in the solution of public affairs problems.

### **How to Do the Job**

1. Administrators need to implement a public affairs education program through decisions to: (a) give vigorous administrative leadership, (b) permit a flexible program to develop, (c) arrange for orientation and training for total staff, and (d) provide an organizational structure for the following to play appropriate roles: state staff coordinating committee, state program execution leader, all specialists, university staff, county agents, and lay leaders.
2. Procedures for program determination include: (a) utilize usual extension program determining procedures, (b) provide for blending of thinking of local people and extension workers, (c) let the people determine the problems and set the priorities with the assistance of extension personnel, and (d) survey resources available and develop a plan of work.

3. Steps to follow in program execution are: (a) study the nature of the program to determine resources and materials needed and methods, (b) develop appropriate materials, (c) train state and county staff, (d) involve people, and (e) evaluate.

**Personnel Needed**

1. Size of public affairs staff should vary from state to state.
2. Some states will need to redirect emphasis in Extension to provide more resources for this area.
3. Staff members working in this area must be well trained and be able to work with others.
4. Present specialist and county staffs should be trained in public affairs.