

Extension

Takes Research

to the Farmers

J. W. Pou

Back in 1895, green fields surrounded the newly established capital of the young Territory of Arizona. Nearly 100,000 acres of the vast Salt River Valley were then watered by irrigation. The more enterprising people in both agriculture and business perceived the need for information that would guide farmers in improving their methods of production.

Agricultural Talkfest in 1895

This idea culminated in an agricultural convention in Phoenix October 18-19, 1895, sponsored by the Phoenix Board of Trade. Here members of the staff of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Arizona exchanged ideas and experiences with farmers.

This meeting of scientists and producers of agricultural commodities might be considered the beginning of a formative program in Agricultural extension work by the College of Agriculture of the University of Arizona.

Farmer's institutes were started by the College of Agriculture in 1896. These were in the forms of schools varying in length from one to several days in a community. Institute meetings were held in the more important agricultural areas of the state. So popular were farmer's institutes that this type of extension work continued for 18 years, until the Agricultural Extension Service was established in 1914.

Extension On Wheels

In 1912, and for the two years following, Farmer's Institutes were supplemented by demonstration trains. These consisted of a train of several railroad baggage cars in which were exhibits of various types and breeds of live farm animals, farm and horticultural crops, and exhibits pertaining to the farm home. The demonstration train has been identi-



IN THE EARLY DAYS new ideas in agriculture and homemaking went to Arizona farmers via the demonstration train, shown here at a siding stop in 1913.

fied as the placing of the College of Agriculture on wheels and taking it to the people of the state.

Under the provisions of the federal Smith-Lever Act, the Agricultural Extension Service became one of the three divisions of the College of Agriculture July 1, 1914. In its first year the extension staff consisted of a superintendent (later changed to director), a leader of boys and girls club work, a livestock specialist and two agricultural agents, one in Cochise and the other in Maricopa county.

Today the staff includes an administrative staff of six, a specialist staff of 23, 35 agricultural agents and 17 home agents. All 14 counties of the state are now served by county extension offices.

Teaching On a Wide Scale

Although operating largely off the campus, extension is teaching in the

broadest sense of the word. It involves work with people who differ in age, educational status, interest, levels of living and culture. It converts research results into farming and homemaking practices.

Its principal objective is extending the welfare and happiness of rural people through local leadership by means of doing, showing and demonstrating. The philosophy of extension is based on helping people to help themselves.

In 1914-15 there were only 450,000 acres of cultivated land in Arizona. In 1960 there are 1,259,000 acres cultivated, an increase of over 180 per cent since the Cooperative Extension Service was established. As a result of the combination of agricultural science and the art of farming, the annual increase per acre from Arizona farms has been considerably greater relatively than the increase in the area of cultivated land.

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