

THE COUNTY AGENT IMAGE

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My life has not included professional experience as a county agent. Yet I have been so closely associated with the Cooperative Extension program throughout my career that I feel that I have a good understanding of the place and function of the county agent in the total College of Agriculture program under the land-grant college and university system.

I have participated in county extension meetings, farm test demonstrations, educational tours, farm visits, county agent training schools, 4-H meetings and other county agent teaching activities, all in cooperation with agents and extension specialists. Many of my former students are, or were, county agents. I know many successful county workers.

More recently I have had the responsibility for supporting and justifying budgets for the Cooperative Extension Service on the county, state, and national levels. Also, it has been my pleasure to assist with extension public relations problems usually involving county personnel, both agricultural and home agents.

Has Important Place

My concern for the county agents is much more than a perfunctory interest. It is based on the belief, developed through experience, that the county agent is a very important part of the total structure of the College of Agriculture in the land-grant college or university and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A successful agent contributes much to the standing of the land-grant college or university in the eyes of the public serviced by him. In each county he is the local "show window" of the land-grant university.

This is first portion of an address by the Dean of Agriculture of this university, delivered before the annual meeting of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. This presentation will be continued and concluded in our next issue.

I address my remarks mostly to the place of the county agent in the land-grant system and his responsibility as a member of the faculty.

The centennial anniversaries of the act creating the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Morrill Act authorizing the land-grant colleges, were observed in 1962. These two historic acts permitted the simultaneous development of two organizations which have fostered the evolution of an agricultural production system not surpassed anywhere in the world.

The Morrill Act authorized the establishment of at least one institution of higher education in each state which would provide instruction in agriculture and mechanic arts, but not to the exclusion of other cultural subjects. All states and territories accepted the provisions of the Morrill Act and established at least one college or university of the type envisioned by the sponsors of the act.

No special provision was made in the act to promote the development of knowledge, or the dissemination of existing knowledge beyond the college campus. To the credit of the early faculty members of the land-grant institutions, there was a genuine effort made to acquire new knowledge through research, and to carry the instructional program to farmers and others through personal contacts, letters, reports, farmer institutes, and demonstrations. The same very small group of faculty members carried the entire program.

Came the Hatch Act

The success of the early faculty research, plus a recognition of the paucity of factual agricultural information for classroom instruction, led to the passage of the Hatch Act of 1887, authorizing the State Agricultural Experiment Stations and providing an appropriation of funds. The State Agricultural Experiment Stations were made a part of the land-grant college with some notable exceptions. Usually the Dean of Agriculture was made the Director of the Experiment Station. The college teachers also become experiment station workers under a system of joint appointments. The joint

appointment, where it existed, gave the experiment station worker an academic title and thus made him a fully recognized member of the college faculty. The qualifications for the appointment of the experiment station personnel were exactly the same as those established for the teaching positions.

Since most faculty members do both teaching and experiment station work, the problem of conflict of interest between the teacher and the investigator within the college is relatively minor. The chief problem has been for the College of Agriculture faculty member to maintain an academic stature equal to that in other colleges, and to match his university colleagues in educational background, scholarship, teaching ability, scientific productivity, leadership, and professional decorum.

The teacher - experiment station worker prior to 1914 also attempted to bridge the gap between the college and the public by performing, in a very limited manner, many of the functions now associated with cooperative extension work. This type of work, together with similar activities by the U.S.D.A. research personnel, provided the basis for the program envisioned under the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. This law tied the Cooperative Extension Service to the land-grant college.

The Smith-Lever Act authorizing the Cooperative Extension Service completed the basic federal legislation under which the land-grant colleges and universities function. Thus, Congress has recognized and supported a multi-purpose national system of colleges and universities whose basic functions are resident teaching, research, and extension as spelled out in the Morrill, Hatch, and Smith-Lever Acts, respectively.