The Challenge of the Range Researcher

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MOST people, upon reading or hearing the subject of this talk, immediately visualize it as a dissertation on the scientific job ahead of the researcher. As a matter of fact, the officer of the American Society of Range Management who invited me to appear on your program here in San Antonio had that in mind, I am sure.

However, far be it from me to attempt to tell you men what you need to do in a scientific way. That is your job. You have a long-time program upon which you have spent years of planning and study. You know your work and know it well. I have spent hours and weeks reading your reports trying to keep up with you. I would be worse than foolish were I to attempt to tell you what to do from a scientific standpoint.

So—I am not going to talk scientific programs at all.

As you all know, I am here because of my connection with the American National Live Stock Association, an organization of practical range users. I hope and sincerely believe that I will speak from their viewpoint. These men have been under serious attack during recent years as despoilers of the range. Some reaction from that charge may creep into this talk, but not too much I hope, for if I were to permit it to do so it would completely destroy the usefulness of my appearing on your program.

The real challenge to the range researcher, as I see it, is now SALESMANSHIP.

Perhaps many of you are surprised, as salesmanship is certainly not elected as one of the courses leading to a scientific degree nor is it generally regarded as a requisite for a successful scientific career. However, your profession is in a somewhat different position than any other science of which I know. Most scientific researchers pass their findings on to other trained technicians who, in turn, transpose them to practical use in everyday life. For example, medical researchers have absolutely no contact with the patients who receive the benefits of their discoveries. New techniques perfected in the research laboratory are passed on to the trained doctors and often the patient who benefits from the researchers' findings has no knowledge whatever of them nor of their being put to use on him.

Not so in your profession. You must do the contact job directly. For that reason you need a qualification not required of most researchers—Salesmanship.

I am sure that some among you will say that many of the things I am going to mention are nigh onto impossible of attainment. That is why they present such a challenge to your group to do something about them, for no matter how successful you are as researchers it will all go for naught if you do not get it sold.

Now it has not taken me very long to tell you what the challenge is. It will take me a little longer to suggest some of the "angles" to be used in getting the job done.

As you are scientists and not accustomed to the vernacular of the salesman that word "angles" may be strange to you. It is a term frequently used by salesmen, particularly high-pressure, to

mean the various approaches used in clinching a sale.

There are so many angles to the selling job ahead of you that I hardly know which to bring up first. I am not going to attempt to mention all of them. In fact I don't know all of them but I will attempt to point out a few of the most obvious and most important.

Facts and figures mean practically nothing in an economic way so long as they are related only to small areas and few animals involved in experimental projects. Obviously, to be of any real worth the conclusions of research must be translated into actual volume production by thousands of range users both large and small, and therein lies your task of salesmanship.

I am going to mention some do's and some don'ts. If some of the don'ts seem critical, please be assured that they are offered in a friendly manner and are generally directed at only a few persons and are not general.

A Practical, Logical Program

First, in order to do a good job of selling to the range man, I believe you need to have a practical, logical program. You must combine the experience of the range user down thru the years with the experiments of your work. Notice the similarity of those two words—experience and experiments—almost the same, aren't they? Both in sound and meaning. Yet we often hear of experiments which end with findings at considerable variance with the experience of the range user. Such findings should be checked very carefully for error, and if and when advanced to the users should be put forth very skillfully.

There is a story that is widely circulated that two researchers made a study of the amount of forage taken off a certain range by rodents. After an extensive survey of the number of rodents on the range and the consumption of each rodent the surprising results were that the rodents ate more forage than was produced on this range. Obviously some mistake was made, but such startling and unbelieveable results do untold harm to the general acceptance of accurate and worthwhile progressive research.

Sensationalism will get you headlines but logic will get you results on the range. This will also apply to sentimentalism and emotionalism. These should be divorced from your approach to the user. These approaches, sensationalism, sentimentalism and emotionalism are of benefit in publicizing the range problems to organizations of do-gooders in the East, but of little avail to putting a range program over with the range man. Included in this category should be the blind worship of trees and nature in the raw. The fact should be recognized and acknowledged that many of our trees are water wasters and not water conservers and serve no economic purpose whatever. It should be recognized that many of our forests are composed largely of weed trees and are of no more value than any other weed.

One college professor, in telling about the Mongolian desert, described it as a lush tropical swamp many centuries ago and blamed over-grazing for its transition to the desert it is now. When asked by a businessman if change in climate wasn't largely responsible for the difference, he replied that that was a factor, but that over-grazing was the real culprit. Such statements only infuriate the users of the land and make it harder for you gentlemen to get your selling job done. Such statements harm your cause and should be discouraged.

I have been highly pleased by the recent denouncements by a high-up member of your profession of the fear tactics which have been used so successfully by a

few writers and journalists to turn the spotlight on themselves and to reap profits from the sale of their writings. I believe this man and his methods are doing much to instill faith on the part of the range users in scientific soil practices, a faith which pseudo-scientists were destroying. He is practicing salesmanship—he is instilling confidence in the land user toward the soil scientist. On the other hand a few writers harking back to the Maltheusian theory of a century ago have done untold damage to your cause.

Simple and Direct Approach

It is important that the techniques and methods you devise should be simple and direct. Do not allow your scientific and technical training to cause you to lose sight of the simple methods.

To illustrate, I might repeat a tale I heard several years ago. According to the story a large truck carrying a high steel drum came to a bridge across a river over which it had to cross. Before proceeding the truck and load were compared with the super structure of the bridge. The load proved to be a couple of inches higher than the clearance. Several experts were called in including a structural engineer, a hydraulic engineer and a carpenter. The structural engineer immediately started laying plans to raise the top of the bridge, the carpenter suggested lowering the wooden floor and the hydraulic engineer wanted to unload the drum, float it across the river and then reload it. While the experts were discussing the subject, a truck driver came along and said, "Let some air out of your tires and go on thru." In order to sell, your methods must be direct and simple.

On the other hand, while avoiding sensationalism I believe you can well use more showmanship. The two are closely related but greatly different. You should dramatize your findings in terms that are readily understood by the layman. Many a splendid, successfully carried out research program lies buried under a mountain of mimeographed technical phrases. Scientific names, complicated formulas and endless tables can often be supplanted by a few well chosen, few-syllabled words that will convey the method and purpose of a range improvement technique.

Reports to the range-using public need to be stated in concise, concrete, readily understandable language. Put the basic thought across so we common people can catch on quick.

Treat your range improvement program as you would a debutante at a coming-out party. Avoid the cheap and gaudy garb that will attract attention, but cast a reflection on her character. In other words, avoid the sensational, emotional writings of the headline grabber, but also avoid the dull, drab garb of a Mother Hubbard as represented by a verbosity of words and statistics that will completely cover and shield from view the charm of your program in the debutante stage. In other words, dress her (your program) in the attractive, revealing way that men go for most, bring out the attractive high points, but let your customers seek out the details after you have aroused their interest.

Violent arguments have no place in this selling job that is ahead of you. Selling was my first real job and I still remember well one of the instructions given me by the man who was my tutor. It is so true. "Rad," he said, "never argue with a prospect. A salesman cannot possibly profit from an argument. He may win the argument but the prospect will be so irritated at losing that he will still refuse to buy." Your job of selling is definitely to convince. To win

over by showing definite advantages to accrue to the land-user. Nothing can be gained by running down past methods or their proponents and users.

The same is also true of ridicule only to a greater extent. Only harm to your real program can result from any form of ridicule, you must have the cooperation of the man on the soil, and ridicule and argument certainly will not get it.

Avoid the "There ought to be a law" attitude, for to resort to this is to openly admit that you have failed to sell your program. You have failed to convince the user of the wisdom of your methods. The "pass a law" method is the device of the dictator. Cooperation is what you need and you cannot legislate cooperation.

Go easy on the stewardship theory. The idea so frequently expressed now that "we hold this land in trust for future generations." It is true, perhaps, but few land owners like to hear it and it comes perilously close to the socialistic law of England that provides for the confiscation of land not used according to the government's ideas of its proper use.

And now the most effective angle of all which is at your disposal in selling your program—The profit motive.

Show the average American—or any other person for that matter, where he can make more money and he will immediately adopt your method. Look at the way hybrid corn and other improved varieties of grains were adopted by farmers. Note the rapidly expanding areas of irrigated pasture, and the cotton to grass movement in the South. The dollars incentive is what made America great and it is the best tool you have to put your improved management programs into operation on the ranches.

RESEARCH

Research is a gamble. It cannot be conducted according to the rules of efficiency engineering. . . . Research must be lavish of ideas, money and time. The best advice that I can give is don't quit easily, don't trust anybody's judgment but your own; especially don't take any advice from any commercial person or financial expert, and, finally, if you really don't know what to do, match for it. . . . The best person to decide what research work shall be done is the man who is doing the research. The next best is the head of the department. After that you leave the field of best persons and meet increasingly worse groups. The first of these is the research director, who is probably wrong more than half the time. Then comes a committee, which is wrong most of the time. Finally there is the committee of company vice presidents, which is wrong all the time.

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