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**STUDIES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

*Volume XI*

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## THE COUNTY AGENT

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# THE COUNTY AGENT

By  
GLADYS BAKER



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The writer assumes full responsibility for errors of fact and interpretation.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE rise of the county agent is an interesting and important development in the field of government. He serves at one and the same time as a representative of the federal, state, and county governments. In many states he is also closely allied with a semiprivate farm organization which he has in part built up. His function as an adult itinerant vocational teacher to carry forth and adapt the findings of the state agricultural colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture has been modified to enable him to assist in conducting national programs to meet major agricultural emergencies: the food production campaigns of the World War period, the post-war attempts to solve the surplus problem through co-operative marketing, and the New Deal adjustments to the post-war depression. The latter emergency has brought the county agent to an important turning-point in extension work. Not only has his work been adapted to meet national objectives, but the new agricultural agencies serve as a challenge to his former methods and objectives.

Interest in the study of the county agent was primarily stimulated by the leadership which the county agent assumed in the various commodity programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Since 1933 he has served as a clearing-house of information on the various federal programs available for farmers. In most sections he has also served as a promoter, adviser, semiadministrator, and even as an administrator of some of these programs in many counties. These New Deal activities brought sharply into focus the major problems of county agent work and in addition raised new questions concerning the adaptation of a decentralized educational system to fit national programs of an emergency character. Several of these problems which have been brought into relief by the county agent's recent experiences can be stated.

1. Can the uniformity and speed necessary for a national-action program be secured through a system of government agents under a system of control divided between federal, state, and county governments?

The evidence secured through the field observations made during this study indicates that a government agent who is responsible to the federal, state, and county governments tends to be more responsive to local, state, and regional influences than to the immediate objectives of a national program, although considerable uniformity of action can be secured during a short emergency period. The federal government found it advisable, or necessary, to allow wide variations in the leadership which county agents assumed in the commodity programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The county agent's primary responsibility to local and state interests makes the present system unadaptable to administrative work in national-action programs except for a short emergency period.

2. Do government agents under such a system of control conform chiefly to local rather than to state or national influences?

In most states the county governing-board (or the county farm-bureau board acting in lieu of the county governing-board) can bring about the county agent's dismissal and the discontinuance of county extension work by withdrawing county funds. Although the State Extension Office can bring about the county agent's dismissal by withholding state and federal funds, this power is rarely used since the success of county extension work is dependent upon local funds and co-operation. Observations from this county agent study indicate that government agents responsible to federal, state, and county governments find themselves more directly and personally responsible to the local unit and are consequently disproportionately influenced by this unit of government.

3. Can a government agent be controlled partially by private agencies without compromising his public status?

The control of the county farm bureau over county agent

work in some states has resulted in monopolization of the county agent's services by a minority group of taxpayers. At the same time it has tended to lend government support to a private pressure organization. Thus it seems evident that a government agent cannot be controlled partially by a private agency without compromising his public status.

4. Should government agents associated with a national program be subjected to county control through selection, dismissal, and payment of salary?

County groups given the authority to select, to dismiss, and to pay the salary of government agents tend to exercise a disproportionate influence over county agent work. The county agent may be forced to favor certain political or economic groups if he wishes to retain his position. Payment of salary by local groups results in inferior service to the poorer economic counties which are most in need of government assistance. The fact that a county agent may be dismissed because of factional or personal jealousies and that his salary is more an index of the county's ability to pay for and enthusiasm for extension work than of his ability or training is an obstacle to securing and retaining competent personnel in county extension work. Government agents associated with national programs cannot wisely be subjected to local control through selection, dismissal, and payment of salary.

5. Is it likely that an agent representing county, state, and federal governments will primarily serve dominant economic and political groups within his county?

The necessity of pleasing the dominant economic and political leaders because of dependence upon county appropriations as well as the natural tendency to conform to social and economic patterns has resulted in service by the county agent primarily for the more prosperous farmers. The neglect of the "lower third" of farm people has also been due partially to the indifference as well as to the inability of this class to follow the county agent's advice. Government agents receiving substantial funds and direction from the county government tend to be

responsive to the dominant economic and political groups within the county.

6. Even though the county agent should become an administrative rather than an educational official, is it best that he remain associated with the state college of agriculture to avoid partisan political influence?

County extension work has been, on the whole, remarkably free from partisan politics. Although county agents are at times dismissed because of partisan or factional politics, the rule that county agents cannot serve in their home counties and the fact that they must be college graduates approved by the state agricultural college have kept the system remarkably free from political appointments and political domination. County agent appointments have not been used as patronage for state political parties. The county agent study indicates that government programs conducted through state agricultural colleges are less subject to political manipulation than those conducted through regular state governmental agencies. If the county agent should become primarily an administrative officer with only a few functions of an educational nature, it is questionable whether the state agricultural college should compromise its objective academic status by continuing to assume responsibility for county agent work.

7. Is a county agent trained for scientific agricultural education best fitted to assume administrative functions?

The county agent's experience in conducting the commodity programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration as well as other national agricultural programs shows the need for training in broader social and economic fields as well as special training in extension methods. If the county agent is to continue to assume administrative functions, he will need a different type of training than his present background in scientific agricultural subject matter.

8. With the present diffusion of agricultural knowledge through Smith-Hughes vocational teachers, agricultural journals, bulletins, and the radio, accompanied by the present sur-

plus in the production of agricultural commodities, can the continuance of a tax-supported adult educational program for farmers to promote efficiency in agricultural production be justified? Is there a need for reorienting county agent work to accord better with long-time national objectives?

The present diffusion of agricultural information and methods in addition to the present surplus problem demands a change in the emphasis of county agent work from scientific agricultural production to longer-range social and economic objectives.

The available published material views the county agent simply as an itinerant adult vocational teacher and therefore does not offer adequate answers to the present problems involving major policy as to the future of county agent work. Dr. Alfred C. True has given a very thorough and detailed account of the development of county extension work up to 1923 in his book, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work, 1785-1923*.<sup>1</sup> The book is, however, too detailed for the general reader and does not contain an analysis of the major problems and relationships arising in county extension work. Dr. C. B. Smith and M. C. Wilson in their *Agricultural Extension System of the United States*<sup>2</sup> have given a good generalized description of county agent work up to 1930 as a system of adult vocational education. They have not treated the state and regional variations in extension work or analyzed the problems arising from the county agent's relationships to the federal, state, and county governments. M. C. Burritt in his *The County Agent and the Farm Bureau*<sup>3</sup> describes the special relationship between the county agent and the county farm bureau up to 1922. This book gives a fairly accurate description of county agent work as it is still carried on in New York State, but it does not treat the different type of work and local extension organizations in

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928).

<sup>2</sup> New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922.



other sections. It was written too soon after the federation of county farm bureaus to provide an analysis of many problems which the organization of federations have brought about for county, state, and federal extension workers. O. B. Martin's *The Demonstration Work: Dr. Seaman A. Knapp's Contribution to Civilization*<sup>4</sup> gives a good description of the early development of county agent work in the southern states.

No previous study has been made of the county agent as a semiadministrative and governmental officer representing not only the educational-service aspects of government but also serving as an effective co-ordinator for different governmental levels and for many and varied agricultural programs. Most of the data here presented, therefore, were obtained from interviews and observations in the field. These field studies were made possible in the spring and summer of 1935 by a grant from the Special Fund for Training and Research in Public Administration of the University of Chicago and, later, by a Social Science Research Council Field Fellowship in 1936-37. Since it was originally intended to confine the study to the Iowa county agent, approximately six months' time was spent in that state in 1935 interviewing county agents, farmers, county officials, and officials of farm organizations and of federal agricultural programs in thirty-five counties. State leaders of the extension service and of the federal agricultural programs were also interviewed. This study was supplemented in 1936-37 by a similar field study for a period of two months in Alabama, two months in New York, one month in Tennessee, and one month in Illinois. In addition, extension leaders at the state agricultural colleges of Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, and South Carolina were interviewed. Approximately four and one-half months were spent in Washington, D.C., securing information concerning the Federal Extension Office and its relation to other federal agencies in the agricultural field.

The three states selected for special study—Iowa, New

<sup>4</sup> Boston: Stratford Co., 1921.

York, and Alabama—were chosen partly because of their geographical position in different farming areas and partly because of special conditions in these particular states. Iowa was selected in the Corn Belt because it is the home state of the writer, who is consequently more familiar with the economic, social, and political background of the work. It was also of particular interest because it served as the center of early “farm revolt” leadership which was extremely critical of the county agents and their relationship to the county farm bureaus and the federal agricultural programs. New York was chosen because it has been credited with inaugurating the county farm-bureau organizations. These county farm bureaus were reported to have retained their original educational function without adding commercial and legislative activities. Alabama was chosen because of its cotton economy and its race and tenancy problems. The field work in particular states was supplemented by information from federal regional extension agents, by reports, and by correspondence, as well as by attendance at several meetings of extension and land-grant college officials.

The following study is an attempt to describe and analyze the development and functions of the county agricultural agent movement from its inception through the New Deal period of work. The first part of the study is concerned with a description of the development and functions of the county agent. Then follows an analysis of his relationship to the federal, state, and county governments and to the semiofficial farm-bureau organization. The factors forming this relationship arise from the county agent's administrative responsibility, his financial support, and the various influences bearing on his selection, training, and length of service. A special chapter is devoted to the Negro county agent, who supplements the work of the white county agent in the southern states. In conclusion, an attempt is made to analyze the trends, special problems, and dilemmas in county agent work. Throughout the study particular emphasis is given to the county agent's changing

function and to the need for adjustment in his responsibilities and directions which has come about as a result of the changing national agricultural policy.

Although this book is devoted to a study of the development and present status of the county agent in his relationship to the federal, state, and county government, it throws some light on the possibility of eliminating duplication, waste, and overlapping between units of government through the federal grant-in-aid supplemented by local finance and responsibility. This system has possibilities for effective co-ordination of various government programs in the function of education, information, and promotion. The present intense localism and the lack of effective administrative control on the part of the federal government in the case of county agents raise serious questions concerning the application of the county agent system to an administrative position where national programs are involved and the need for quick and co-ordinated action is imperative.

An official with advisory educational functions similar to the county agricultural agent might be used in a number of general educational programs where the problems are national in character but do not require immediate and unified action. Such an official might be used effectively in a national public health program to carry on educational advisory work in rural sanitation and hygiene as well as in maternal and infant welfare. An educational-service agent representing federal, state, and local governments might conceivably be used in a program of advisory education for consumers' counsels. A land-use planner representing national, state, and county governments may be needed to assist local people in the formulation of plans and at the same time to keep the technical planners aware of the practical problems in the application of their blueprints. The county agent may, of course, assume the role, or he may be provided with an assistant to carry on this activity.

Other examples of the possible application of the grant-in-aid combined with local finance for the employment of a joint

agent representing various governmental levels could be given. It is beyond the scope of this study to judge whether such possible services justify the necessary expenditures involved or to decide to which activity the pattern might be applied most effectively. Some practical limitations, however, seem apparent. The advisability of applying the county agent pattern to an administrative position in a national program or to any program involving the distribution of large grants of federal funds for relief or rehabilitation seems questionable. Such an official directly responsible to the local government would find it difficult to resist local political and economic pressure.

In this study the term "county agent" is used to refer to the county agricultural agent as distinguished from the county home-demonstration agent and the county club agent. Although these agents are also county agents, the shorter term is usually applied to the county agricultural agent and the full terms used for the home-demonstration and club agents. The term "assistant agent" is likewise used to refer to the assistant agent in agriculture. Although the county agent represents the ultimate field unit of the Co-operative Extension Service which is composed of the federal, state, and county offices, the term "extension leader" is used to refer to the federal and state administrative and supervisory personnel rather than to the county agents. State subject-matter specialists, who have headquarters at the state agricultural college but whose main function is to keep the county agents up to date in specialized fields, are often referred to as extension specialists.

Any attempt to generalize on the work and functions of the county agent, whose responsibilities vary considerably from state to state and particularly from one agricultural region to another, must necessarily reveal inaccuracies if the generalizations be applied to any particular state. An attempt has been made to indicate some of these regional and state variations, but the conclusions are undoubtedly somewhat affected by the county agent's functions and responsibilities in the states personally visited.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

#### A. THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**T**HE county agricultural agent movement developed as a result of the changing conditions of American Agriculture and of American education. The closing of the frontier with its resulting train of high land values, more distant markets, crop specialization, and dependence upon credit for farming operations made the farmer and the urban consumer aware of the need for the development of scientific knowledge and better management methods in agricultural production. This need was answered by the organization of scientific agricultural societies and by the establishment of the United States Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges and universities. The county agricultural agent movement originated to extend the accumulated knowledge of these scientific institutions to the individual farmer. It is significant that the first general adult-education movement at public expense in the United States was of the newly developed vocational type as distinguished from the classical and liberal-arts education and that it was extended first to the formerly self-sufficing American farmer.

The demand for this new type of vocational education was expressed through the organization of agricultural societies and of general farm organizations. The county agent movement was immediately preceded by the general appearance of farmers' institutes, of "movable schools," of young peoples' contests, and of other popular ways of circulating information concerning more efficient methods of agricultural production. The development of county agent work in the northern and western states was accompanied by the rapid growth of county farm

bureaus. These farm bureaus, first organized to supplement the financial support of the county agent and to provide local leadership for his educational work, soon federated into state and national organizations. They have played a significant role in the promotion of county agent work.

The groundwork for the county agricultural agent was laid by two basic federal laws passed at a time when the Civil War emphasized the need for greater efficiency in agricultural production: the act establishing the United States Department of Agriculture and the Morrill Land-Grant College Act. The act creating the Department of Agriculture was a compromise measure raising the Department, which had formerly been a minor division of the Patent Office, to the status of an independent establishment with a commissioner at its head in 1862. It was not until 1889 that Congress, under pressure from the Grange, made it an executive department.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

The Morrill Act of 1862 marks the beginning of systematic agricultural and vocational education in the United States and serves as a landmark in the development of scientific as distinguished from classical and liberal-arts education.<sup>2</sup> Only three states—Maryland, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—had agricultural colleges in operation when the Morrill Act was passed, although agitation for agricultural education had been general and several states had passed favorable legislation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. C. True, "A History of the Act of Congress Elevating the United States Department of Agriculture to Cabinet Rank," in *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1927), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the first land-grant college measure was vetoed by President Buchanan on the ground that the bill was unconstitutional and that the government was too poor to give up its sources of income for this purpose (see Edward Weist, "The Relation of the State to Agriculture," *Readings in the Economic History of American Agriculture*, ed. Louis B. Schmidt and Earle D. Ross [New York: Macmillan Co., 1925], p. 489).

<sup>3</sup> The Yale Scientific School offered a course in agriculture in 1862 (A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States, 1785-1925*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 36 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929], p. 116).

State agricultural college leaders, discovering that an insufficient body of agricultural knowledge existed for the development of work on the college level, turned their attention to experimental work. The first agricultural experiment station was established in connection with Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1875. Some eighteen experiment stations followed from 1875 to 1885, but only eleven of these were established as a part of the agricultural colleges.<sup>4</sup> Since these experiment stations were seriously in need of additional funds for operation, attention was turned to securing federal aid for further development.

Federal aid for state experiment stations and the establishment of the Federal Office of Experiment Stations were both the result of close co-operation between the state agricultural colleges and the Department of Agriculture. Commissioner Colman of the Department of Agriculture initiated action by calling a convention of state leaders in 1885 "to consider co-operation with the department in the work of the experiment stations, the best means for bringing about congressional action, and other cognate questions."<sup>5</sup> This convention recommended that federal aid for state experiment stations should be secured and that the Department of Agriculture should "create a division of intercommunication and exchange between the colleges and the stations, which would have charge of the details of cooperation." Both objectives were soon realized: the Hatch Act appropriating federal funds to the state experiment stations was passed in 1887, and the Office of Experiment Stations was established as a part of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1888. This experimental work in agriculture later served as the basis for the county agents' adult-education program.

1. *The Land-Grant College Association (the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations)*.—To

<sup>4</sup> The other seven were established under separate state laws (see *ibid.*, pp. 201-2).

<sup>5</sup> Some twenty-eight states and three territories were represented (see *ibid.*, p. 206).

provide a common means of consultation and action on the many administrative problems which the Hatch Act involved, the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations was formally organized in October, 1887. The objectives of the Association as stated in the constitution were "the consideration and discussion of all questions pertaining to the successful program and administration of the colleges and stations included in the Association."<sup>6</sup> The first annual conventions of the Association were chiefly concerned with the work of the experiment stations and their relation to the Federal Office, but some time was given to general college questions. A separate section on college work was set up in 1890.<sup>7</sup>

Extension leaders in the state agricultural colleges who had been appointed to assist in farmers' institutes and other early forms of extension work attended the meetings of the college section, but as their numbers and influence increased in the early 1900's, it became necessary to give them recognition by appointing a special extension committee in 1905 and by creating a separate extension division in the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations in 1908.<sup>8</sup>

The standing committee on extension work, later called the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy, was instrumental in the promotion of legislation for a federal appropriation for extension work. The first bill for federal aid was drafted by members of this committee and introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman McLaughlin in De-

<sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of the Second Convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Bull. 1 (Washington, 1889), p. 13. The Association was reorganized into the Land-Grant College Association in 1919.

<sup>7</sup> True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States*, p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Departments of agricultural extension work had been organized in some of the state agricultural colleges in the early nineties. By 1907 state agricultural colleges in thirty-nine states were carrying on some form of agricultural extension work (see p. 12 of this chapter; also see A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928], p. 49).



ember, 1909.<sup>9</sup> The Committee on Extension Organization and Policy, working closely with the Executive Committee of the Land-Grant College Association, has played an important part in drafting and promoting all extension legislation and in shaping the administrative policies of the Department of Agriculture. Supported by the American Farm Bureau Federation and often by the Grange, state extension leaders become a powerful political pressure group whenever their interests are seriously threatened.

2. *Early extension work of the agricultural colleges.*—The agricultural colleges early assumed considerable leadership in the widespread movement for popular adult education on agricultural subjects. College professors, who participated in the meetings, fairs, and institutes sponsored by agricultural societies and state boards of agriculture, took the initiative in sponsoring their own farmers' institutes. Kansas Agricultural College led the movement when, in 1868, its board of regents required the president and professors to make known the character and aims of the institution in the more populous settlements of the state and to establish a system of lecturing in the college and the counties in order to disseminate "correct agricultural principles."<sup>10</sup> In 1869 Illinois followed the example of the Kansas Agricultural College by inviting practical farmers to attend a two weeks' course of "lectures and discussions" at the Illinois Industrial University. The following year Iowa State Agricultural College initiated a series of five-day institutes consisting of lectures "on stock breeding and management, fruit culture, farm accounts, and kindred topics." The Alabama Agricultural College encouraged farmers' meetings to discuss agricultural problems and a professor of the institution proposed an "agricultural revival" to be achieved through a series of camp meetings. In July, 1884, the Barbour County (Ala.) Agricultural Association invited professors to participate in agricultural camp meetings.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 100-103.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11, and 14.

Several state agricultural colleges established departments of agricultural extension in the 1890's. Rutgers began extension work in 1891 by offering a course of six lectures on soils and crops, feeding plants, and animal nutrition. The University of California organized a department of university extension in agriculture in 1897, and Illinois employed a superintendent of agricultural extension in 1902.<sup>12</sup> Extension departments of the colleges were chiefly concerned with the promotion of farmers' institutes. These institutes, supported by agricultural colleges and other organizations, received general public approval. By 1891 fourteen states had supported them by special appropriations.<sup>13</sup> In 1899 approximately two thousand institutes were held in forty-seven states, with an estimated attendance of five hundred thousand farmers and an expenditure of approximately \$150,000 of public funds. Although institutes in only nineteen of the forty-seven states were directly connected with the agricultural colleges and experiment stations, the colleges co-operated in the other states where institutes were conducted under the auspices of state departments of agriculture, county organizations, farmers' clubs, and agricultural associations.<sup>14</sup>

Partially as a result of a suggestion made by the American Association of Farmers' Institute Workers the secretary of agriculture requested an appropriation in 1902 to enable the Office of Experiment Stations to aid in the promotion of farmers' institutes. An appropriation of \$2,000 was made for the fiscal year 1902. It was followed by an appropriation of \$5,000 for the fiscal year 1903, and a farmers' institute specialist was added to the staff of the Office of Experiment Stations. A similar provision was included in subsequent appropriation

<sup>12</sup> See C. B. Smith and M. C. Wilson, *The Agricultural Extension System of the United States* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1930), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> The institutes were connected with state departments of agriculture in sixteen states and with miscellaneous organizations in the remaining twelve states (see *ibid.*, pp. 20 and 21).

acts for the Department of Agriculture. The appropriation amounted to \$10,000 in 1912.<sup>15</sup>

Another form of early extension work—"movable schools" or "agricultural trains"—was jointly sponsored by the agricultural colleges and the railroads. Agricultural trains for demonstration purposes were furnished by the railroads and equipped by the colleges with lecturers, bulletins, and demonstration materials. They stopped at railroad stations, where crowds of farmers gathered to inspect them, listen to the lectures, and secure bulletins. Iowa State College initiated the movement in co-operation with two Iowa railroads by sending out "Seed Corn Gospel Trains" in 1904. The trains proved so popular that seventy-one were run in twenty-one different states in 1911 with a reported attendance of more than nine hundred and ninety-five thousand people.<sup>16</sup>

Special work for farm boys, first sponsored by the Macoupin County (Ill.) Institute, was actively sponsored as boys' club work by agricultural colleges and farmers' institute organizations. The first club in connection with an agricultural college was organized in Winnebago County, Illinois, in 1902. Boys' and girls' club work was organized in an Ohio county in the same year by A. B. Graham, superintendent of township schools, who arranged to exhibit the work at farmers' institutes.<sup>17</sup>

The many forms of extension work carried on by the agricultural colleges were indicated in a special report of the committee on extension work of the American Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations made in 1910. These included giving instructions in rural schools and at farmers' institutes, agricultural trains, school gardening, demonstration plots, movable schools, exhibits at fairs, young peoples' contest work, reading courses, and peripatetic advisory work.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> See *Proceedings of 25th Annual Convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations* (Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, 1910), p. 92.

Although county agent work developed from (and eventually replaced) most of these earlier forms of adult education sponsored by the agricultural colleges, it differed from them in a number of important respects, particularly after it became stabilized following the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. The county agent, as contrasted with these earlier extension leaders who traveled out from the colleges, was a permanent field agent assigned to a definite geographical and administrative unit. His sources of financial support and his responsibility were divided between the state colleges of agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the county to which he was assigned. His methods of teaching were more practicably applicable to the immediate and concrete farm problems of the individual farmers in his community than were those of the earlier adult-education agencies.

#### C. STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE

State departments or state boards of agriculture, created in some states before the agricultural colleges were established, were also active in the promotion of farmers' institutes.<sup>19</sup> Farmers' institutes in sixteen states were connected with state departments of agriculture in 1899.<sup>20</sup> In 1915 the management of the institutes was evenly divided between the state departments of agriculture and the agricultural colleges.

Before passage of the Hatch Act in 1887 approximately seven of the eighteen state experiment stations were connected with the state departments of agriculture. Four of these were located at or near the state agricultural colleges.<sup>21</sup> Following the passage of the Hatch Act, state experiment stations were organized as a part of the agricultural colleges, but in some states branch experimental stations and state experimental

<sup>19</sup> Ohio established a state board of agriculture as early as 1846.

<sup>20</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States*, pp. 200-201.

farms continued under the control of state departments of agriculture.

Duplication of work, particularly in the promotion of farmers' institutes, led to conferences between the committees of the Land-Grant College Association and representatives of the National Association of Commissioners of Agriculture. As a result of these conferences an agreement was reached in 1919 that the colleges should be responsible for research and extension work and the state departments for regulatory work and law enforcement. The state departments agreed to transfer farmers' institute work to the colleges except in a few instances where the institute work had been in the hands of some particular leader for so many years that immediate transfer was difficult. The colleges, in turn, agreed to transfer regulatory work to the state departments.<sup>22</sup>

In 1928 the division of functions between the agricultural colleges and the state departments of agriculture was formally accepted by the United States Department of Agriculture as a basis for its co-operative relations with the states. After conferences with land-grant college officials, Secretary Henry C. Wallace outlined the policy of the Department in its co-operative relations with the colleges and the state departments in a letter to all state governors in 1923.

In all regulatory work and matters of law enforcement, we cooperate with the State department of agriculture, or such law enforcement agencies as the State may have created.

Our research work, if done in cooperation with the States, is carried on with the experiment stations of the land-grant colleges.

Our extension work in agriculture and home economics is carried on with the extension divisions of the agricultural colleges. . . .

I am informed that the National Association of Commissioners, Secretaries and Departments of Agriculture and the Association of Land-Grant Colleges have endorsed and recommended the general plan of adminis-

<sup>22</sup> See *Proceedings of 32nd Annual Convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1919), p. 107.

tration and that it is spreading rapidly. General development along this line, it appears, will enable the Federal government to cooperate with the different State agencies without confusion of functions.<sup>23</sup>

Extension services and state departments of agriculture have continued some co-operative relations in livestock-disease control work, insect control, seed testing, and the collection of statistics. They also co-operate in preparing state fair exhibits and contests. State extension leaders in thirty-nine of forty-three states replying to a survey made by the United States Office of Education expressed "complete satisfaction" with co-operative relations in 1930.<sup>24</sup>

#### D. STATE AND COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION

State and county boards of education often gave financial assistance to extension work before the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. In some states support from county boards of education continued after that date. The aid of the state board of education in Tennessee was withdrawn in 1916, but county high-school boards and county boards of education continued to lend financial assistance for some time.<sup>25</sup> County education funds are still used in Georgia, West Virginia, and Indiana for county extension work. A close relationship between county extension agents and county boards of education is maintained in Indiana and West Virginia, where county boards of education co-operate with the college in selecting the county agent and in directing his work.<sup>26</sup>

In many states the state board of education approves the appointment of the state director of the extension service, but

<sup>23</sup> Letter quoted in *Proceedings of 37th Annual Convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1924), p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> See U.S. Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), II, Part VIII, 499.

<sup>25</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, *Report on Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), pp. 123-24.

<sup>26</sup> Information from interview with W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Co-operative Extension Service.

in most cases this is only a perfunctory process. The approval assumes a more important role in three states—Idaho, Iowa, and Montana—where the state board of education is the governing-board of the college or university.<sup>27</sup>

E. AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS  
BEFORE 1914

The development of state departments of agriculture, of agricultural colleges, of the United States Department of Agriculture, of farmers' institutes, and of other early forms of extension work came as a result of popular interest in agricultural development expressed in the organization of numerous agricultural societies and in the educational programs sponsored by these organizations.

Dating from the "Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture," organized in March, 1785, the movement for the organization of agricultural societies spread until approximately three hundred active local and county societies were organized in thirty-one states and three territories by 1852. By 1860 nine hundred and forty-one agricultural organizations were on the records of the United States Agricultural Society.<sup>28</sup> In that year the United States Agricultural Society was organized at a convention called by twelve state agricultural associations. The Society published a journal and held exhibitions in various states. In 1853 it adopted a resolution favoring a department of agriculture with a cabinet officer at its head.<sup>29</sup>

The American Association of Farmers' Institute Workers, first organized in 1896 as an association of farmers' institute managers, was active in the promotion of institute extension

<sup>27</sup> In twenty-three others the state superintendent of education is ex officio a member of the governing-board of the agricultural college, and in this capacity he may assume an active role in the selection of the state extension director (U.S. Office of Education, *Land-Grant College Survey*, I, 39). Extension leaders often report no relations with the state board of education, but when questioned further they mention the process of approval, which they feel has no real significance.

<sup>28</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

work. The Office of Experiment Stations of the Department of Agriculture co-operated with the Association, its farmers' institute specialist served as secretary of the Association, and the Office of Experiment Stations published the proceedings of the Association from 1901 through 1912. Following the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, farmers' institutes were rapidly replaced in most states by the work of the county agricultural agents and the Association dissolved in 1919.<sup>30</sup>

The general unrest in the southern states following the Civil War prompted President Johnson and United States Commissioner of Agriculture Isaac Newton to send Oliver Kelly, a clerk in the Department of Agriculture, to study agricultural and social conditions in the South. Mr. Kelly conceived the idea of a fraternal farmers' organization patterned after the Masonic order, and the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry was formally organized in Washington, D.C., in 1867 with Oliver Kelly as secretary. Mr. Kelly declared the object of the organization to be "to encourage and advance education in all branches of agriculture." As early as 1871, however, the national Grange sanctioned co-operative effort on the part of a state organization. In addition to co-operative buying and selling the Grange made futile attempts at co-operative manufacturing and at the management of banks and life insurance companies. Although the constitution forbade the discussion of religion and politics, the organization played an important political role in promoting public control of the railroads and reforms in state taxation and in agricultural education. It was instrumental in securing legislation to make the Department of Agriculture an executive department in

<sup>30</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 22-24. President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, appointed in August, 1908, encouraged the development of extension work through a formal recommendation that a system of agricultural extension work be established through the land-grant colleges (see C. W. Warburton, "Interpretations of the Smith-Lever Act," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 87 [Washington, 1928], p. 2). (Mimeographed.)



1889.<sup>31</sup> The Grange has consistently backed the Land-Grant College Association in its appeals for additional federal appropriations for colleges, experiment stations, and extension services.

In 1875 the Grange reached its largest membership of approximately eight hundred and fifty-eight thousand. Soon after that date it began a rapid decline because of business failures and dissension regarding its legislative work. By 1899 its membership had dropped to about one hundred thousand.<sup>32</sup>

With the decline in its membership the Grange returned chiefly to fraternal and educational functions. It retained a relatively strong organization in the northeastern states and in Ohio. New York State led in Grange membership in 1937. During the last agricultural depression the Grange became more active. In the struggle for farm relief legislation it supported the export debenture plan and later, with other farm organizations, endorsed the McNary-Haugen bill. It supports the present agricultural conservation program but disapproves of the reduction control programs of the Roosevelt administration. In 1937 it had approximately eight thousand local granges with eight hundred thousand members. Although thirty-five states sent delegates to the 1935 convention, few states outside the northeastern group and Ohio have large organizations.<sup>33</sup>

Another farm organization which co-operated with early extension work, and to some extent with county agricultural agents, is the National Farmers' Educational Co-operative

<sup>31</sup> True, "History of the Act of Congress Elevating the United States Department of Agriculture to Cabinet Rank," in *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> See O. M. Kile, *The Farm Bureau Movement* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921), pp. 7-23, and S. J. Buck, *Harvard Historical Studies*, Vol. XIX: *The Granger Movement, 1870-1880* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913).

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Fred Freestone, chairman of the executive committee of the national Grange (see *Grange Blue Book* [Springfield, Mass.: National Grange Publicity Bureau, 1937], p. 19). The membership cannot be compared with adult membership in other farm organizations since children of fourteen are admitted to membership.

Union organized in Rains County, Texas, in 1902. The objects of the Union were declared to be "to promote cooperative marketing, to secure better prices, and to promote fraternal objects of society." Union members early used aggressive methods in their attempts to secure better prices for farm products. For example, they attempted to limit the supply of cotton on the market by plowing under a few acres in some instances, by building warehouses for storage, and by selling directly to the consumers independently of the cotton exchanges. The organization spread to the midwestern states in 1915 or 1916. In 1920 it turned to legislative activity and began its as yet unsuccessful campaign for "cost of production." During the period of its greatest strength—from 1920 to about 1925—its membership was estimated variously at two to four million.<sup>34</sup> The national membership in 1935 was estimated at two hundred thousand.

The Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union organizations in some states and communities have taken an aggressive stand against extension work since the early 1920's. They have strongly opposed the rival farm-bureau organizations sponsored by extension leaders.<sup>35</sup> The Union's offspring, the Farmers' Holiday Organization, first organized in May, 1932,

<sup>34</sup> The organization is so loose that no accurate statistics are available.

<sup>35</sup> The attitude of some Farmers' Union leaders may be illustrated by the following quotation selected from Dale Kramer's *Truth about the Farm Bureau* (Minneapolis: Farmers' Book Store, 1937), pp. 6 and 8. (Mr. Kramer was associated with Milo Reno in the Iowa Farmers' Union and Farmers' Holiday Organizations when the first edition of his book was published.) "As long as Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover were in charge of the government the agriculture department was run by the packers. All the packers had to do was send their ideas down through the county agents and the Farm Bureau to the farmers. It was a great weapon, one worth millions of dollars to exploiters of the farmers, and they were smart enough to put most of the expense on the public. No one objects to the educational work of the county agents, home demonstrations, 4-H Clubs and the like, as long as it is confined to educational work. The objection is to its use by big business and a group of selfish Farm Bureau leaders who use it against the farmers."

attempted to prevent county appropriations for extension work in many Iowa counties.<sup>36</sup>

#### F. COUNTY, STATE, AND NATIONAL FARM-BUREAU ORGANIZATIONS

The farm organization which has had the closest working relationship with the county agent and the most influence in shaping his work is the farm bureau. The county units of this organization were first sponsored as local organizations to provide leadership and additional funds for county agent work. These units have remained semiofficial in many states, though their formal relationship has been severed in some others. Since the farm bureau is so closely interwoven with county agent work in many central states, its development is sketched here although it developed along with county agent work.

The first farm bureau began as a division of the Binghamton (N.Y.) Chamber of Commerce, which, with the Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad and the Office of Farm Management of the Bureau of Plant Industry, employed Mr. John H. Barron in 1911 as county agricultural agent to work in Broome and adjacent counties. The New York State College of Agriculture could furnish no funds but agreed to act as a general adviser. In 1912 Mr. Barron's work was confined to Broome County, and the county made an appropriation of \$1,000 for his work. The farmers were suspicious of the motives of the railroads and businessmen and remained indifferent to the work for some time. In 1914 the Broome County Farm Improvement Associ-

<sup>36</sup> The opposition of Farmers' Union and Farmers' Holiday leaders was probably strongest in Iowa under the leadership of Milo Reno. Mr. Reno's attitude toward county agents is shown in a quotation from an editorial in the *Iowa Union Farmer*, January 3, 1934: "When we warned the farmers, a few years ago that the county agent system was established for this very purpose, to force the final enslavement of the farmer, we were considered agitators, objectors, etc. Today any well-informed farmer knows the truth of this statement."

For the early history of the Farmers' Union see Kile, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30. Other material is based on interviews with state and local Farmers' Union and Holiday members in Iowa and on editorials in the *Iowa Union Farmer* and the *National Holiday News*.

ation, organized in 1913, voted to take over the farm-bureau work from the chamber of commerce.<sup>37</sup>

Because of its connection with the chamber of commerce, the Broome County, New York, organization is not considered to have been a real farm-bureau organization. Probably the first real farmer organization similar to later farm bureaus was organized in Pettis County, Missouri, in 1912, and began financial co-operation with the Missouri College of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture in 1913. Similar county organizations under various names were developed to provide a nucleus of leaders to assist the county agent in carrying out extension projects and to supplement his financial support in many of the northern and western states. These organizations usually charged a nominal membership fee of one dollar. In 1916 the name "county farm bureau" was adopted for all these county co-operating organizations at a meeting of state county agent leaders of northern and western states.<sup>38</sup> The Smith-Lever Extension Act, providing federal funds for county agent work, specifically recognized contributions from private individuals as a legitimate part of state matching funds.

The organization of county farm bureaus was enthusiastically promoted by federal and state extension leaders and by county agents in the northern and western states. It was made a prerequisite condition before the installation of a county agent in many states.<sup>39</sup> By 1918 twenty-nine of the thirty-three northern and western states recognized the farm bureau as a part of their extension organization and the number of county farm bureaus had increased to 732 with a membership

<sup>37</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>38</sup> W. A. Lloyd, *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act, 1914-1924*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Circ. 59 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), p. 14; see also True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, and Kile, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report on Receipts, Expenditures, and Results of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in Northern and Western States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 153.

of more than 290,000.<sup>40</sup> By 1919 the number of county farm bureaus had increased to 800 and twenty-two state federations had been organized.<sup>41</sup>

1. *Organization of state and national federations.*—The organization of state federations of county farm bureaus developed from the practice of inviting county farm-bureau representatives to attend meetings of county agricultural agents at the state agricultural colleges. These meetings were often held in connection with farmers' week. Missouri organized the first federation in March, 1915. It was followed by Massachusetts in May, 1915. The stated purpose of the Massachusetts federation was "to promote the efficiency of the respective farm bureaus and county leagues by means of conferences and cooperation to determine a concerted program and policy of the leagues and farm bureaus and in general to further through them the welfare of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."<sup>42</sup>

State and federal extension leaders in the northern and western states encouraged the organization of state federations on the assumption that the state organizations would promote and strengthen the objectives and programs of the county organizations. W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Office suggested that the state federations would have somewhat the same relationship to the state extension services that the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations had to the United States Department of Agriculture.<sup>43</sup> The movement to federate county farm bureaus into state and national

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Northern and Western States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Northern and Western States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>43</sup> See *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations* (Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, 1919), p. 72; see also True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*.

organizations was also sponsored by the National County Agents Association at a meeting in December, 1918. The Association passed a resolution stating that the time was ripe for establishing federations of county farm bureaus to serve the farmer more effectively.<sup>44</sup>

The Illinois Agricultural Association (the Illinois federation of county agricultural associations), organized in 1916, deviated from the extension pattern of educational federations by including business activities and legislation among its primary functions. The constitution listed its objectives as follows: "To promote the general interests of agriculture by studying the methods of production and distribution of farm products with the view of working out a system of greater economy and efficiency in handling and marketing the same—to cooperate where necessary in the purchase of seed, fertilizers, and such other commodities as may from time to time seem necessary and advisable; to make a thorough study of wise legislature matters and use our influence in securing the enactment of wise legislation and the defeat of unwise legislation." Dr. True remarks that "it is significant that when the next meeting was held June 19, 1916, legislative matters were the principal business."<sup>45</sup>

2. *Organization of American Farm Bureau Federation.*—In March, 1919, the Indiana Federation of Farmers' Associations became the ninth state federation, and agitation for the organization of a national federation began to take form in a definite movement. Organization meetings were held in Ithaca, New York, and in Chicago, Illinois, in 1919. These were attended by extension leaders of the Department of Agriculture as well as by representatives of the state federations. Federal extension leaders for the northern and western states used their influence to keep the national federation an educational organi-

<sup>44</sup> See Alice M. Christensen, "Agricultural Pressure and Government Response in the United States: 1919-1929" (unpub. Ph.D. diss., department of history, University of California, 1930), p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 155 and 156.

zation in line with the objectives of the county organization. They submitted a constitution to the committee on organization.<sup>46</sup> Leaders from the northeastern states desired that the national organization should have promotion of education as its primary objective, while representatives from the middle western states were insistent that promotion of legislation and commercial activities should be among the primary functions and that the dues should be of sufficient size to insure a strong federation.<sup>47</sup> A compromise was eventually reached and a temporary organization formed. The objectives were declared to be "to correlate and strengthen the state farm bureaus and similar state organizations of the several states in the national federation; to promote, protect, and represent the business, economic, social, and educational interests of the farmers of the nation, and to develop agriculture."<sup>48</sup>

The organization of the American Farm Bureau Federation was made permanent in 1920, when twenty-eight states ratified the constitution. The latter was amended to make it mandatory for each state federation to pay annual dues of fifty cents to the national federation for each individual member. Provisions were made for a legislative office at Washington and for setting up departments of transportation, trade relations, distribution, statistics, legislation, and co-operation.<sup>49</sup>

3. *Change in nature of state federations reflected in county programs of work.*—With the organization of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the use of professional organizers by the state and national organizations, emphasis in the program of the Farm Bureau was changed from education to legislative and business activities in many states. Nominal dues of one

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>47</sup> See Kile, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> "Articles of Incorporation of American Farm Bureau Federation," Art. II (copy on file in Chicago Office of the American Farm Bureau Federation).

<sup>49</sup> For further discussion of the early organization see Kile, *op. cit.*; M. C. Burritt, *The County Agent and the Farm Bureau* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922); and True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 154-71.

dollar, common to most states, were changed to five dollars, ten dollars, and even reached a maximum of fifteen dollars in one state. Some state extension leaders refused to support the new movement. Extension Director M. S. McDowell of Pennsylvania organized advisory committees of farmers to take the place of farm-bureau organizations in extension work.<sup>50</sup> Extension leaders in other northeastern states attempted to influence the state federations to remain educational organizations with objectives in common with the extension service. New York, the northeastern state with the largest membership at the present time, maintains that its Farm Bureau Federation is still basically an extension organization. Except in Alabama and Tennessee, the organization of county farm bureaus in southern states was not encouraged by state extension leaders and did not gain much strength until artificially stimulated by the New Deal. Some state extension leaders in the southern states still firmly maintain that extension sponsorship of farm bureaus is undesirable.<sup>51</sup>

In the northern and western states, however, the state and even county farm bureaus became class conscious and turned their attention to legislative and business remedies for the post-war depression. The county agent frequently found himself drafted to act as purchasing agent or as manager of cooperative organizations. Thus, he frequently engaged in numerous service activities, such as managing soybean and fertilizer pools, despite the insistence of the state and federal extension service leaders that he should not participate in such enterprises. O. M. Kile makes the following observation concerning the change in the character of the county units:

It is not too much to say that the entire structure, nature, and purpose of the county farm bureau changed at this point [1919 in Illinois]—the

<sup>50</sup> It is significant to note that the Farm Bureau movement did not gain much strength in Pennsylvania after severance of the relationship with the extension service.

<sup>51</sup> One leader went so far as to say that he would resign from extension work if a legal tie-up such as is common in some central states should be made in his state.



date varying in the different states. From that time forward the farm bureau rather than the county agent was to be the dominant factor.<sup>52</sup>

W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Extension Service made the following statement concerning the nature of county units following the organization of state and national federations:

The basic character of the membership was fundamentally changed. To all intents and purposes in many sections of the country the county farm bureau became a new organization with an old name.

There followed a year or two of great confusion both in the minds of leaders of the new movement and in the minds of the extension forces. The new organization had a period of rapid growth. Extension forces found the new membership, which predominated in most of the counties interested primarily in legislative remedies for the correction of bad economic conditions rather than in extension or educational effort.<sup>53</sup>

4. *Strength of county, state, and national organizations dependent upon county agent leadership.*—Despite the change in the nature of the county organizations with increased dues and larger memberships, the county units were still very dependent upon the leadership of the county agent. This dependence was clearly recognized by both extension and farm-bureau leaders. W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Office for the northern and western states recognized and commended this relationship in a New Year's message to county agents in 1921:

The county agent and the county farm bureau are the Broome County twins. The two ideas—or are they only one—were born and grew up together. The county agent has been the John the Baptist of the farm bureau movement. Without him it would never have existed and without him it is doubtful if it could longer endure. The agents have done many things to commend themselves to public esteem, but nothing probably greater than the unselfish devotion they have given to their brother, the county farm bureau. For years it was doubtful if it would live, for it was a sickly and rather unpromising infant, but the brotherly love of the county agent pulled it through and to this more than all else is due its present lusty growth and the promise of a vigorous and useful life.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Farm Organizations* (hearing before the Committee on Banking and Currency, U.S. House of Representatives, 67th Cong. [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922]), pp. 91-92.

President Howard of the American Farm Bureau Federation was also aware of the Federation's dependence upon county agricultural agents, as shown by his "New Year's Message to County Agents" of the same year:

The county agent is the keystone of the federation. The architects of a great and enduring farmers' organization builded to the eternal glory of America will never forget the importance of that keystone.

The American Farm Bureau Federation is exactly what the individual county farm bureaus make it. And the county farm bureau, I have found again and again, is just what the county agent makes it. Show me a weak, listless, ineffective county farm bureau and I will show you behind it a weak, listless, ineffective county agent—one of these harmless, meek, milk-and-water fellows forever reiterating that "this is your bureau, members, and I am your agent; please tell me what to do so that you will continue to pay my salary." I would urge every county agent in America to assume a position of real leadership in his county and to stand or to fall on his record as an organizer of farmers into a strong and effective county farm bureau. With strong county bureaus fired with a burning zeal for agricultural justice our movement will challenge the admiration of the world.<sup>55</sup>

The Department of Agriculture attempted to keep the county agent's relationship to the county farm bureau confined to activities of an impartial educational nature. The States' Relations Service of the Department of Agriculture and the American Farm Bureau Federation signed a formal memorandum defining proper relationships between the county agent and the county farm bureau in 1921. In 1922 this memorandum was followed by a statement of Secretary Henry C. Wallace concerning proper activities of county agents relative to farm-organization work.<sup>56</sup>

The individual membership in the American Farm Bureau Federation suffered a sharp decline during the latter part of the post-war depression, but it has made a spectacular revival since 1933. Table 1 gives the memberships which are on a family basis from the period 1921 through 1937. It is significant to note that in the southern states where enthusiasm for the Agricultural Adjustment programs was highest, the Farm Bureau Federations reached their largest total membership in 1936.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> See chap. v.

Extension services in these states, which formerly had not encouraged farm-bureau organizations, became co-operative and often assisted materially in the organization.

The political strength of the American Farm Bureau Federation is largely dependent upon the number of individual memberships it can claim as well as upon the number of these members who will respond to "S.O.S." calls to communicate with their congressmen on particular questions. In 1921 it assumed leadership in the organization of the "farmers' bloc" in Con-

TABLE 1\*  
AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION MEMBERSHIP

| Year      | Members | Year      | Members |
|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| 1921..... | 466,421 | 1930..... | 321,195 |
| 1922..... | 363,481 | 1931..... | 276,052 |
| 1923..... | 392,580 | 1932..... | 205,347 |
| 1924..... | 301,747 | 1933..... | 163,246 |
| 1925..... | 314,473 | 1934..... | 222,178 |
| 1926..... | 278,759 | 1935..... | 280,917 |
| 1927..... | 272,049 | 1936..... | 356,564 |
| 1928..... | 301,699 | 1937..... | 409,766 |
| 1929..... | 301,932 |           |         |

\* This table was secured from American Farm Bureau Federation Office in Chicago. The total number of memberships cannot be fairly compared with the total Grange membership since the Grange has an individual membership basis open to children of fourteen years of age and over as well as women, while the Farm Bureau membership is on a family basis. Farm Bureau memberships have sometimes been estimated on an individual basis; e.g., it was testified that the organization had about a million and a half members in 1921 when the official records showed a membership of less than five hundred thousand (U.S. Congress, *Farm Organizations* [1922], p. 219).

gress.<sup>57</sup> Its legislative strength declined with its membership during the depression period, but the fact of its spectacular revival since 1933 was clearly demonstrated by its success in shaping and in securing the enactment by a reluctant Congress of the 1938 Agricultural Adjustment Act.

Thus the Farm Bureau which developed along with the county agent movement became a more important factor in its later development than the farm organizations which preceded the county agent movement. The various farm organizations which played a part in developing county extension work and the date of their organization are shown in Table 2.

The formation of general farm organizations as well as the

<sup>57</sup> See Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

establishment of the scientific institutions and voluntary societies for the promotion of agriculture significantly marked the end of the "free and independent pioneer farmer" who, with an abundance of free and rich virgin soil, was relatively self-sufficing. With the closing of the frontier, the rise in land prices, the dependence upon urban and foreign markets, and the necessity for capital and credit the American farmer became conscious of his need for scientific knowledge and improved methods. This need was answered by numerous voluntary educational associations, by the establishment of the United States

TABLE 2  
FARM ORGANIZATIONS

| National Organization                   | State and Local Organizations                  | Date of Organization |
|---|--|----------------------|
|   | Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture | 1785                 |
| United States Agricultural Society..... | .....  | 1852                 |
| National Grange.....                    | .....  | 1867                 |
| Farmers' Institute Workers.....         | .....  | 1896                 |
| Farmers' Union.....                     | .....  | 1902                 |
|   | Broome County Farm Bureau                      | 1911                 |
|   | Mo. State F. B. Federation                     | 1915                 |
| American Farm Bureau Federation.....    | .....  | 1920                 |

Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges, and by general farm organizations with both educational and business functions.

These early voluntary organizations and public institutions laid the groundwork for the development of the county agent with his semiofficial county farm-bureau organization. The county agent movement developed as a more personal and direct manifestation of the new relationship between the farmer and the state and federal governments. It brought in also a new relationship of the farmer to the county government. Thus the county agent emerged as an educational agent uniting the services of the federal, state, and county governments.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENT TO POST-WAR PERIOD

#### A. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT TO 1914

COUNTY demonstration work was inaugurated by the United States Department of Agriculture to combat the invasion of the Mexican boll weevil in the southern states. The work was highly centralized under the personal direction of Dr. Seaman A. Knapp who taught better methods of farming through demonstrations of co-operating farmers. County agent work in the northern states developed more slowly and on a less uniform basis. It differed from county demonstration work in the southern states in several respects: (1) it was based on farm-management surveys to discover the practices of successful farmers rather than on methods advocated by the Department of Agriculture; (2) co-operation with the state colleges and with farm organizations was established from the beginning; (3) the county agents in the northern states were college-trained men in contrast with the successful farmer type of county agent first used in the southern states. The Smith-Lever law of 1914 provided more stable financial support and more uniform administration of county agent work in all states. The World War provided a tremendous stimulus to county agent work and supplied common objectives for all county agents. Although started as an emergency measure, the county demonstration movement continued as one of the most significant developments in the field of adult and vocational education.

County agricultural agent work developed as a natural result of the widespread interest in agricultural education, but credit for originating and first applying the demonstration method of

teaching through agents located in the field is given to Dr. Seaman A. Knapp of the Bureau of Plant Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture. Dr. Knapp had had valuable experience in agricultural education as a rural editor, professor of agriculture, and president of Iowa State College. He had gained practical experience in agriculture through supervising the development of a large tract of land for rice-growing in Louisiana before he became associated with the Department of Agriculture. In 1898 and again in 1901 Dr. Knapp was sent by the United States Department of Agriculture to investigate rice production in Japan, China, and the Philippines. Participation in setting up government experiment farms in the gulf states to show the advantages of diversified farming convinced him that such farms established at public expense did not influence farmers to change their own methods of farming. He believed that farmers who would not apply the methods successfully used on a government demonstration farm would readily follow the successful operations of a neighboring farmer. In 1903 Dr. Knapp solicited contributions from businessmen and farmers to provide an indemnity fund to protect a volunteer farmer who would follow his plan of diversification. This experiment attracted much public attention, because the co-operating farmer at Terrell, Texas, made a substantial profit despite the invasion of the boll weevil.<sup>2</sup>

The cotton farmers in the South were alarmed at the widespread devastation caused by the Mexican boll weevil, which had crossed the border into Texas around the year 1892. Upon the recommendation of the secretary of agriculture, who had personally inspected the demonstration farm at Terrell, Texas, Congress made an appropriation to the United States Department of Agriculture "to meet the emergency caused by the continued spread of the Mexican boll weevil in the southern states." Dr. Knapp was assigned \$40,000 of this appropriation

<sup>2</sup> See A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), pp. 59-60.

to teach the farmers how to grow a sufficient crop of cotton despite the boll weevil.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Knapp's plan was to encourage the planting of earlier varieties and to demonstrate the use of better farming methods which would increase the production of cotton so that a sufficient crop would remain despite the boll weevil. He also encouraged the diversification of agriculture to improve the soil and to make the farmers less dependent upon cotton. Dr. Knapp established headquarters in Houston, Texas, in 1904 and solicited contributions from farmers, railroads, bankers, and businessmen. The movement was inaugurated by two weeks of lectures on an agricultural train. After the lectures had awakened sufficient interest, demonstration farms were established along railroad lines and business centers. To carry on this work a number of district demonstration agents were employed to set up demonstrations in districts which included from ten to twenty counties. In 1904 twenty district agents were located in Texas, three in Louisiana, and one in Arkansas.<sup>3</sup>

Demonstration work was expanded to cover more general teaching and was extended into non-boll-weevil territory with

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 58-60. The authority of the Department of Agriculture to undertake demonstration work in the states was questioned by Dean Davenport of Illinois at the 1913 convention of agricultural colleges: "The whole demonstration movement seems to date from a \$15,000 appropriation in 1904 for the breeding of cotton resistant to the boll weevil. Dr. Galloway, at that time Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, declared that the meaning of the act was so ambiguous that under its terms the Secretary could, if he so desired, 'go down there and breed mushrooms.'"

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 60. At approximately the same time an interesting development of county demonstration work in connection with county poor farms was taking place in Iowa under the direction of P. G. Holden, professor of agronomy at Iowa State College. This work was started first on the county farm in Sioux County in 1903. It was expanded to include five counties in 1904, ten in 1906, fourteen in 1908, and sixteen in 1910. The poor farms were chosen because of their central location and because they were common property. Simple experiments and field demonstrations were carried on with oats, alfalfa, corn, and the eradication of quack grass. Professor Holden considered this county farm demonstration work the beginning of county agricultural agent work (Barton Morgan, *A History of the Extension Service of Iowa State College* [Ames, Iowa: Collegiate Press, 1934], pp. 24-30).

the assistance of the General Education Board of New York City, which had become interested in promoting better economic conditions in rural areas of the South. In 1906 the Board agreed to supplement government funds for the employment of field agents under the direction of Dr. Knapp. A separate administrative unit of the Department of Agriculture was given complete control of the work of the agents, who were made collaborators of the Department at a nominal salary of one dollar a year. With these funds the work was extended into Mississippi, Alabama, and Virginia; and the appointment of two Negro agents was made possible in co-operation with Tuskegee and Hampton institutes. In 1908 eighty-five of the one hundred and fifty-seven district and county agents in the eleven southern states were paid from funds contributed by the General Education Board.<sup>4</sup> By July, 1914, the Board's total contributions amounted to \$863,250. These contributions, however, were discontinued with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of that year.<sup>5</sup>

The early practice of assigning government agents to set up demonstration farms in districts covering from ten to twenty counties did not prove adequate to arouse sufficient sentiment for change in long-established agricultural practices. The demand to confine an agent's services to one county, so that sufficient work could be done on a community basis to stimulate changes in practice of a large number of farmers, first came from Smith County, Texas. Farmers and businessmen in Smith County made local contributions to supplement the government funds and requested that an agent be assigned to spend his entire time in their county. As a result of this organized

<sup>4</sup>In 1911 the General Education Board was contributing \$113,000; the Federal Government, \$259,075; and local farmers, businessmen, and bankers were contributing \$76,622 (*House Hearings* [66th Cong.], Part XV [1921], p. 47). For a more general account of the General Education Board's contributions see True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Cooperative Extension Work in Agricultural and Home Economics in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 16.



demand, W. C. Stallings began work in Smith County in 1906 as the first county agricultural agent. His work differed in two important respects from that of the earlier government agents: first, it was confined to the county unit; and, second, it was supported in part by local finances. Both were important contributions to the demonstration movement.

Businessmen and farmers in other counties followed the example of leaders in Smith County and offered contributions to pay part of the salaries and expenses of county agents. With increased local interest and support the county agent movement spread rapidly in the southern states. In 1910 approximately four hundred and fifty county agents were employed in twelve different states. In 1914 more than seven hundred counties in the southern states had county agricultural agents.<sup>6</sup>

The demonstration method, or object lesson, used by Dr. Knapp and by the county agents working under his supervision was based on the assumption that there were known methods of improved agricultural production which could be explained and illustrated in a simple way to the individual farmer. He was convinced that practical farm background was the most important qualification for the county agents selected to demonstrate these simple principles and practices. That Dr. Knapp was skeptical concerning the success of "book farmers" in such an undertaking is shown by the following quotation taken from one of his speeches:

The men who act as field agents must be practical farmers; no use in sending a carpenter to tell a tailor how to make a coat, even if he is pretty well read up on coats. The tailor won't follow. The farmer must be a recognized leader, progressive, influential, and able to carry public opinion with him.<sup>7</sup>

The early county agent in the southern states was an agricultural missionary preaching the gospel of good farming which

<sup>6</sup> True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> "Selected Sayings of Seaman A. Knapp" (from a speech given at the ninth conference for education in the South, at Lexington, Ky., May 4, 1906). (Mimeographed copy on file in Co-operative Extension Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

was based on a few well-established methods of farming.<sup>8</sup> These methods would have improved production at any time, but with the invasion of the boll weevil the use of some of them at least became essential for crop production.

These early county agents received instructions directly from Washington or from Washington representatives stationed in the field. They made their own program of work, selected their own demonstrators, and personally inspected the work every month. This close personal contact was necessary because of the ignorance and skepticism of the farmers who had long devoted themselves to the one-crop system and because of the careless methods of farming. Locals of the Farmers' Union were sometimes used for group contact, but the agent and his program were not well enough accepted for effective use of the campaign method later used to persuade groups of farmers to change their practices. One of the most effective methods of reaching the adult farmers was found to be through the demonstrations of their sons. Boys' corn clubs were organized in the southern states in 1907 and 1908. Girls' canning clubs followed in 1910. Home demonstration work for farm women followed as a natural outgrowth of these girls' clubs. Several

<sup>8</sup> These methods have been summarized and called Knapp's "ten commandments":

1. Prepare a deep and thoroughly pulverized seed bed, well drained; break in the fall to a depth of 8, 10, and 12 inches, according to the soil, with implements that will not bring too much of the subsoil to the surface. The foregoing depths should be reached gradually.
2. Use seed of the best variety, intelligently selected and carefully stored.
3. In cultivated crops give the plants in the rows a space suited to the plant, the soil, and the climate.
4. Use intensive tillage during the period of the crops.
5. Secure high content of humus in the soil by the use of legumes, barnyard manure, farm refuse, and commercial fertilizers.
6. Carry out a systematic crop rotation with a winter cover crop.
7. Accomplish more work in a day by using more horse power and better implements.
8. Increase the farm stock to the extent of utilizing all the waste products and idle lands of the farm.
9. Produce all the food required for men and animals on the farm.
10. Keep an account of each farm product, in order to know from which the gain or loss arises.

From O. B. Martin, *The Demonstration Work: Dr. Seaman A. Knapp's Contribution to Civilization*, quoted in True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 64.

home demonstration agents were appointed before the passage of the Smith-Lever Act.

Mr. W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Extension Office has given a good description of the early county agricultural agent:

He was a mature man about 40 years old, who frequently lived on his own farm, and who devoted about 10 months out of each year to the work. His office was in his own home. He had no stenographer, no typewriter and wrote his letters and reports in long hand.

He traveled about his county by horse and buggy, on horseback, or even on foot. He left his home on Monday morning and returned again Saturday night. During the week he followed the road, visiting and talking to farmers, inspecting demonstrations, and arranging for new ones. He lived with the farmers, staying overnight where night overtook him. Often he managed his trip so as to stay with his "key men," or those whose support he desired to win. His day was the farmer's day plus. He helped the farmer to do the evening chores, and after hours he talked with the farmer, long after the children had been put to bed and while the farm wife dozed by the fire. Often there would be company and a home meeting would be held.

The agent carried improved seed and demonstration equipment with him. He was truly an itinerant teacher. He was an outstanding man in the community in which he lived, with the qualities of leadership, broad human sympathy, and the spirit of an apostle. By modern standards his work seems crude and ineffective, but he was a pioneer and like the pioneer farmer, he met conditions as he found them and under these conditions, and with these handicaps he did a great work, and did it well.<sup>9</sup>

County agent work was highly centralized under the personal direction of Dr. Knapp. Some informal contacts were made with the state agricultural colleges, but Dr. Knapp feared that too close contact would interfere with the practical and personal methods of the demonstrations. College professors were somewhat skeptical of the crude methods of demonstration used by the individual farmers. They favored setting up demonstration farms where the conditions and practices could be better controlled. Dr. Knapp's thesis was that a demonstration even though imperfectly carried out by the indi-

<sup>9</sup> *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act, 1914-1924*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Circ. 59 (Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1926), pp. 5-6.

vidual farmer was of much more practical teaching value than a well-controlled scientific demonstration set up by specialists at public expense. He was convinced that poor farming was more a matter of bad practice than of lack of science and was to be corrected by simple practices rather than scientific theories.

Long-time customs cannot be overcome by writing a book. One might as well write a book to teach better sewing. Poor farming is the natural result of a lot of bad practice and must be treated rather as a defect in art than a lack of intelligence. It is not assumed, nor is it the intention to assert, that agriculture is not one of the greatest sciences, but at the beginning it must be treated as an art and the best methods adopted.<sup>10</sup>

The agricultural colleges were not always friendly to this invasion of their territory by Washington agents who taught agricultural methods without seeking the advice of their specialists. In 1909, however, Alabama Polytechnic Institute and the Bureau of Plant Industry co-operated to employ a "demonstration expert" with headquarters at the college. In that year an agreement was made with the North Carolina College of Agriculture, but the college received the Washington co-operative agent so coolly that he established headquarters in another town.

An important landmark in the development of county agent work in the southern states was made in 1912 when Clemson College in South Carolina made an agreement with the Bureau of Plant Industry to carry on all its county demonstration work on a co-operative basis. In Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Texas, and Georgia agricultural colleges made similar agreements the same year.<sup>11</sup> Bradford Knapp, who was placed in charge of demonstration work in the southern states after his father's death in 1911, was convinced of the need for closer co-operation with the state agricultural colleges. These agreements of 1912 to carry on the demonstration work of the agri-

<sup>10</sup> "Selected Sayings of Seaman A. Knapp." (Mimeographed copy on file in Co-operative Extension Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

<sup>11</sup> True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 72.

cultural colleges and the Bureau of Plant Industry jointly paved the way for more formal co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and the agricultural colleges under the Smith-Lever Act of 1914.

Since county agent work in the northern states had no immediate impetus of an emergency character, it developed more slowly and under a somewhat different plan of work. It was developed by the Office of Farm Management of the Bureau of Plant Industry, which was given the authority "to investigate and encourage the adoption of improved methods of farm management and farm practice." Agents were placed in charge of districts comprising two or more states to investigate problems of farm management and to study types of farming.<sup>12</sup> In March, 1910, the Office employed Mr. A. B. Ross in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, to carry on demonstration tests of corn, legumes, and other crops. The following year it co-operated with the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce and the Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad to employ an agent to carry on demonstrations in Broome and other counties adjacent to Binghamton, New York. This agent, a college graduate, proceeded to teach the farmers better methods of production. The New York State College of Agriculture gave general advice to the agent but could give no financial assistance.<sup>13</sup> Congress authorized the development of farm demonstration work in the Office of Farm Management of the Department of Agriculture in 1912, and an allotment of approximately \$160,000 was provided for further development of county demonstration work.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>13</sup> See chap. I for a discussion of the development of the Farm Bureau movement. Some dispute has arisen concerning the beginning of the county agent movement in the northern states; some consider the assignment of Mr. Ross to work in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, as the beginning; others consider the assignment of Mr. Barron to Broome County, New York, in 1911 to mark the real inauguration of the work; Mr. W. A. Lloyd, in his article in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (VI, 33), dates the movement from the appointment of an agent to serve in Uintah County, Utah, in March, 1911, which he claims was earlier in the month than the appointment of Mr. Barron in Broome County, New York.

These funds were expended to employ county agricultural agents and club agents in co-operation with the state agricultural colleges. The funds were often supplemented by contributions within the counties.<sup>14</sup>

In 1911 Julius Rosenwald, through the Council of North American Grain Exchanges (organized by chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and similar organizations), offered \$1,000 to each of one hundred counties organizing for agricultural improvement and for the employment of a county agent. The Crop Improvement Committee of the Council was later instrumental in conducting propaganda for the employment of county agricultural agents.<sup>15</sup>

In 1912 the Better Farming Association of North Dakota, promoted by the Great Northern Railway, raised a fund of more than \$52,000 in contributions from counties, railroads, the North Dakota Bankers' Association, and businessmen for the employment of county agents. With the aid of this financial support county agents were employed in twelve counties in North Dakota and eighteen in Minnesota.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to large grants of funds from philanthropic organizations and large business concerns, contributions from

<sup>14</sup> True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> Although the funds were ostensibly, at least, given to encourage agricultural improvement, some farmers considered the real motive to be private advertising and the funds thereby tainted. An interesting case of disagreement over the ethics of accepting these funds was related in the *Wallace's Farmer* for August 9, 1912, in an article describing the state-wide meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, to discuss and promote the county agent movement: "There was but one point on which any great difference of opinion was manifested. One of the delegates from Dubuque County told how they had rejected the offer of a thousand dollars from Mr. Rosenwald, representing a Chicago mail order house, because they believed it was tainted money and that this hundred thousand dollar grant for the development of agriculture was purely for the advertising of the company. . . . The general sentiment seemed to be that this money having originally come from the farmers, was not at all tainted and that they were only getting back their own when they accepted the proposed gift" (quoted in Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 36 and 37).

<sup>16</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 74-77.

local chambers of commerce, local businessmen, and local bankers were common sources of support. With the organization of farm bureaus in 1912 membership dues became one of the most important sources of financial support. By 1914 county agents in the northern states were receiving about half their salaries from sources within the counties. A number of states had passed laws authorizing county appropriations for county agent work.

From the beginning the Office of Farm Management of the Department of Agriculture co-operated closely with the state agricultural colleges in the development of county agent work. In the North and West, if the colleges could furnish no financial support, they were requested to serve in an advisory capacity. In 1912 co-operative arrangements were made with the colleges in twenty states for the employment of one hundred and thirteen agents. The number of agents co-operatively employed had increased to two hundred and three by June, 1914.<sup>17</sup>

County agents in the northern and western states were generally college-trained men, and many were college graduates. Their task was in many ways more difficult than that of the agents in the southern states who had a common objective and common methods which were relatively easy to demonstrate. The agents in the North and West had neither a commonly accepted objective nor common methods. This was in part due to the fact that they were working in a more diversified farming region where many of the farmers' major problems were the result of improper management rather than backward methods. It was also due to a somewhat different philosophy of extension work held by the leaders in the northern states. Dr. W. J. Spillman, chief of the Office of Farm Management of the Bureau of Plant Industry, believed that it was more important for the farmers to work out their own solutions than for the Department of Agriculture to distribute ready-made solutions. Consequently, the county agents' programs of work were based on farm-management surveys which were carried on to dis-

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 74.

cover the methods and practices of the more successful farmers. These methods and practices of the more advanced farmers served as the basis for the county agents' teaching. They also served as "country doctors" or "prescription pharmacists" who were called out to give advice and technical assistance in such problems of agricultural production as the testing of soils, culling of chickens, testing of seed corn, the spraying of fruit trees, and the fighting of various diseases, insects, and pests threatening crop production.

County agricultural agents were sponsored by many different groups and organizations before the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. Some, particularly in the southern states, were agents of the Department of Agriculture; some were primarily agents of the state agricultural colleges; some were employed by state departments of agriculture; and others were sponsored by county farm bureaus and by various forms of private philanthropy. Many were employed jointly by several different organizations and groups. Many were receiving part of their support from county appropriating boards. In 1914 approximately nine hundred and twenty-eight counties had agents, of whom seven hundred and eighteen were located in the fifteen southern states. More than half the counties in these states had agents, and two southern states had an agent in every county.<sup>18</sup>

#### B. THE SMITH-LEVER CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION ACT

With so many different organizations sponsoring county agent work it is not surprising that agitation for federal aid was widespread. The first bill, drafted by the agricultural college association and introduced by Congressman J. C. McLaughlin in 1908, was followed soon by many others. A bill drafted by the Illinois Bankers' Association was introduced in 1911. The National Soil Fertility League, a group of bankers and businessmen organized to promote extension legislation,

<sup>18</sup> See Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



had a hand in drafting the first copy of the Smith bill.<sup>19</sup> In 1912 some sixteen different bills for federal aid for extension work were pending in the House of Representatives.<sup>20</sup>

The chief arguments for federal legislation as summarized by Dr. True were:

(1) That the maintenance of the national food supply was presenting a serious problem of great importance to all our people; (2) that the movement of population away from the farm was increasing, partly because of lack of educational and social advantages, and the movement tended to leave in the country the people who needed most the information and assistance which the extension services of the land-grant colleges might give if their financial support were more adequate; and (3) the federal government through its system of indirect taxation was in a good position to aid the States in financing the work.<sup>21</sup>

The Smith and Lever bills were indorsed by the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations and were approved by Secretary Houston of the United States Department of Agriculture. During the hearings on the bills Secretary Houston was instrumental in preventing an amendment to give the state departments of agriculture some of the federal extension funds. He stated that it was the policy of the Department to co-operate with the state colleges of agriculture in extension work and that the proper field of the state department was limited to administrative work.<sup>22</sup>

The Smith-Lever Act for co-operative extension work was approved May 8, 1914. It is distinguished from earlier grant-in-aid laws by its provision for state matching of federal funds and by the number of limitations and safeguards to insure that

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Gross of the National Soil Fertility League reported at the twenty-sixth convention of the Association of Agricultural Colleges in 1912 that the League had the backing of 500 chambers of commerce and other organizations, of 1,088 leading newspapers, and of 7 of the largest banks (see *Proceedings of 26th Annual Convention of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, pp. 102-3).

<sup>20</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 112.

these funds are spent for the purposes which Congress intended.<sup>23</sup>

The Act, which provides for co-operative administration by the United States Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural colleges, states as its purpose: "To aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same." Agricultural extension work is broadly defined by the statement that it "shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting to such persons information on said subjects through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise. . . ." The Act makes provision for the payment of \$10,000 of federal funds annually to each state which fulfils the sole provision of giving legislative assent to the Act. The payment of an additional fund, beginning at \$600,000 and increasing to \$4,100,000, apportioned on the ratio of state's rural population to the total rural population, is to be paid to the state upon the condition that the state match the federal grant.<sup>24</sup>

To clarify the nature of co-operative relations of the Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural colleges the States' Relations Service of the Department<sup>25</sup> prepared a memorandum of understanding, later known as the "1914 Agreement," which was approved by the executive committee of the

<sup>23</sup> The Weeks Act of 1911 had set the precedent of imposing conditions for the grant of federal funds and requiring state matching for federal grants (see V. O. Key, Jr., *The Administration of Federal Grants to States* [Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1937], and L. D. White, *Trends in Public Administration* [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933], chap. iv).

<sup>24</sup> See chap. v for a discussion of the secretary's authority under the Act and the limitations imposed upon the state colleges.

<sup>25</sup> The States' Relations Service was established July 1, 1915. It included the Office of Experiment Stations (except the irrigation and drainage investigations transferred to the Office of Public Roads) and the farmers' co-operative demonstration work transferred from the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. Copies were sent to the state colleges and accepted by all states except Arizona and California in 1914. The University of Arizona accepted later, but the University of Illinois withdrew.<sup>26</sup>

These "Agreements" were generous to the state colleges by providing that not only Smith-Lever extension work but all extension work undertaken by the Department in the states should be carried on through the state colleges of agriculture. It provided that agents appointed for co-operative extension work who received Department funds should be joint employees of the Department and the colleges, but it contained no requirement that agents employed by Smith-Lever funds should be subject to departmental approval. The secretary agreed to set up an Office of Extension Work to represent him in the supervision of extension work. The colleges agreed in turn to set up a separate extension division with a leader satisfactory to the secretary of agriculture to administer all state and federal extension funds, and to co-operate with the Department in all extension work in agriculture and home economics which it should be authorized to conduct. These memorandums are, of course, only gentlemen's agreements which can be abrogated by either party.

The Smith-Lever law placed extension work on a stable financial basis, provided for federal-state co-operation, and provided for more uniform administration of the work in the states. It also greatly increased the number of county agents, particularly in the northern and western states. It began uniting the two divisions of extension work, the Office of Extension Work, North and West, and the Office of Extension Work, South, through a States' Relations' Committee in 1914 and by a States' Relations' Service in 1915. The two extension offices were not actually combined until 1921 partly because of dif-

<sup>26</sup> These states feared federal domination of extension work. Both California and Illinois have maintained co-operative relations with the Department in the same manner as the other states.

ferent philosophies of extension work and partly because of personality differences of the leaders. Contributions from large private organizations were discontinued, but smaller contributions from businessmen and from Farm Bureau membership dues continued.

The Smith-Lever law marked the end of the old type of successful farmer-agent common to the southern states during the early development of the work. Bradford Knapp, who succeeded his father in 1911, observed that the successful farmer type of agent, while valuable in introducing extension work, could not stay far enough in advance of the other farmers in the county to remain a competent teacher. He began to replace this type of county agent with agents who had had both farm experience and college training.<sup>27</sup>

The Smith-Lever Act and the supplementary agreements decentralized the work in the southern states by centering the direction in the state agricultural colleges in lieu of the Department of Agriculture. The type of county agent, as well as his work, was not greatly changed in the northern and western states where close co-operation with the colleges was established from the beginning. The work still varied greatly from county to county with the personality of the county agent and the initiative assumed by the local farmers. County agents began groping for community programs of work, but they were chiefly concerned with the demonstration of methods and practices on an individual farm basis.

#### C. WORLD WAR DEVELOPMENT

The World War brought a common objective to the 1,436-county agricultural agents and transformed their diffuse local programs into a unified national program. Although the methods used in obtaining the common objective were often contrary to good farming practices (and have since been blamed for much of the apparent surplus problem), at the time the war

<sup>27</sup> Some agents were still employed without college training, particularly during the World War when the demand for agents often exceeded available men with college training.

provided a tremendous stimulus for county agent work. The war expanded the number of county agents from 1,436 to 2,435, raised their financial support by approximately 130 per cent, and generally increased their prestige.<sup>28</sup> The "book farmer," and the "agricultural missionary" of 1914, found himself the patriotic leader of numerous war campaigns, a service agent for many branches of the federal government, and a propagandist of a high order. The county agent's war work had no official legal sanction except that section 4 of the Food Production Act provided an emergency appropriation of \$4,348,400 (increased to \$6,100,000 in 1918) for "the further development of the Extension Service."<sup>29</sup>

To meet the war exigency county agents virtually abandoned the demonstration method of teaching and turned to numerous campaigns and service activities for the federal government.

The major part of the county agent's war work was concerned with campaigns to increase production with major emphasis upon increased production of wheat for that "last sack of flour" that was to win the war. The county agricultural agent was instrumental in organizing and often served as chairman of the food-production committee of the county council of defense. In those states which made allotments of wheat acreage on a county basis county agents made farm-to-farm visits to secure pledges from farmers to increase their wheat acreage to the amount necessary to fill the county quota. To increase interest additional acres were pledged as "liberty acres." In Ringgold County, Iowa, for example, where the average amount of winter wheat sown had ranged from 5,000 to 8,000 acres and the apportionment set by the state was 24,000 acres, the agent reallocated the additional acres to townships and se-

<sup>28</sup> Increase in personnel force given in Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Increase in funds represents increase in total funds for extension work in 1918 over 1916. In addition to the large increase in federal funds, a smaller increase was made in state and local funds (figures from U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report on Co-operative Agricultural Extension Work in the United States* [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918]).

<sup>29</sup> See True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States*, pp. 134-38.

cured the assistance of school district co-operators to secure pledges from individual farmers. The county increased its winter-wheat acreage to 24,600 acres, more than three times the annual average.<sup>30</sup> With the aid of these intense county campaigns Iowa's spring wheat acreage of 250,000 was increased to 750,000 acres.<sup>31</sup> Similar campaigns were carried on to increase the production of corn, oats, barley, and rye. Pork, mutton, and poultry production campaigns were also sponsored by county agents in co-operation with the Food Administration.

To meet the acute farm-labor shortage, county agents organized labor committees and exchanges and conducted labor surveys. They co-operated with the "Women's Land Army" and the "Boys' Working Reserve" and helped organize businessmen into "Shock Troops" and "Twilight Crews" to aid farmers during the harvest season. Negro agents in Alabama organized rural Negroes into the "United States Saturday Service League." This organization spread to other southern states, and pins, badges, and other rewards were given to the members. Members of 4-H clubs were enlisted in the food-production campaigns, pledging themselves to increase production. More than five hundred special club agents were added to assist the county agricultural agents in this work. Under stimulus of war demand and the organized effort of county agents and other governmental organizations, farmers of the United States increased the acreage of tilled crops 11 per cent, on the average of six acres per farm, or in the aggregate more than 235 square miles of additional crop land. The actual production was increased about 5 per cent.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "Annual Report of Ringgold County Agent, 1918." (Copy on file in Office of Co-operative Extension Work, U.S. Department of Agriculture, mimeographed.)

<sup>31</sup> In the fall of 1918, 4,100,000 additional acres of wheat were planted in the northern and western states, resulting in an increased yield of 45,000,000 bushels (U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States* [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918], p. 15).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Second, in importance to increased production was the conservation and preservation of food and the raising of additional food for home use through individual and community gardens. Farm boys and girls were urged to join garden clubs, and many farm families were encouraged to plant larger gardens. Home demonstration agents, assisting the county agricultural agents, served as county leaders in this phase of the work. More than eleven hundred additional home demonstration agents were located in the rural counties and leading cities to promote this work.<sup>33</sup> In connection with the county agents' "wheat-production campaign," home demonstration agents carried on a "save-the-wheat campaign" with both farm and urban housewives. They gave demonstrations on wheat conservation and encouraged women to stay within their wheat allowances. They sponsored similar campaigns to save sugar, meat, and wool. With county agricultural agents they encouraged farmers to plant sugar beets and sorghum to assist in the "sugar-saving campaign" and to increase the use of milk and cheese as meat substitutes. Much of the work was centered around practical demonstrations on food preservation. Numerous canning centers were established where farm women were taught how to cold pack meat and vegetables.

In addition to conducting campaigns and giving demonstrations on food production, conservation, and preservation, county agricultural agents, home demonstration agents, and club agents functioned as service agents for numerous governmental and private agencies. They took an active part in soliciting for Liberty Loans, War Saving Stamps, and Red Cross drives. They assisted the War Department in locating horses and mules for direct purchase for the Army and aided in securing hay and straw. Draft boards were advised by the county agents concerning deferred classification of persons engaged in agriculture and the approval of applications for temporary furlough to engage in agricultural production. The county agent's office served as an information center for govern-

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*

ment agencies and bureaus on questions concerning agricultural conditions and outlook. The county agents conducted numerous surveys to furnish statistical and other types of information to these agencies. Crop and labor surveys were most numerous.<sup>34</sup>

County agricultural agents also proved their ability to serve as effective propaganda agents for the federal government during the war period. In addition to participating in numerous drives and campaigns, they held thousands of mass meetings to explain the issues of the war and to enlist support. They distributed numerous circulars, posters, and other propaganda material. W. A. Loyd, speaking of this war work, said:

No encomium is necessary on the war work of the American farmers. They did all and more than was asked of them and they did it with less noise and spectacularism than pertained to any other war activity. No kind of propaganda was more difficult or more successful than that carried on by county agents and other extension workers through the farm bureaus and none has received less recognition on the part of the public or the government.<sup>35</sup>

The effect of the World War on the extension service is difficult to evaluate apart from the physical aspects of increased financial support and increased personnel. It increased the influence of the federal government in county agent work; it supplied a common objective to the diverse aims and programs; it increased greatly the contacts of the county agents; it added much to their prestige; and through the organization of county farm bureaus it laid the framework for that anomalous, powerful, semipublic organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Thus the county agricultural agent, first employed in 1904 as an itinerant adult teacher in the southern states to show the

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "What Should Be the Relationship of a College of Agriculture to a State Federation of Farm Bureaus? What Should Be the Relationship of the County Agents to the Farm Bureaus?" *Proceedings of 33rd Annual Convention of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations* (Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, November 12-14, 1919), p. 298.



farmers by simple object lessons and demonstrations how to combat the invasion of the boll weevil, soon became accepted as general farm adviser in the northern and western states where the problems of more general farming were not so clearly defined. His work, first sponsored federally by the Bureau of Plant Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture, soon was receiving the support of state departments of agriculture, of state colleges of agriculture, of private philanthropy, of state and county boards of education, of chambers of commerce, of private businessmen and bankers, of farmers, and of county governing boards. Co-operation between the Bureau of Plant Industry and the agricultural colleges in the northern states, where most county agents employed were college-trained men, was close from the beginning of the work. In the southern states, the work of the Bureau and the agricultural colleges was separate until 1912, when Clemson College of South Carolina and the United States Department of Agriculture entered into an agreement to carry on all demonstration work jointly. This example was soon followed by the other southern agricultural colleges.

Under the Smith-Lever law county agents became, with few exceptions, joint agents of the United States Department of Agriculture and of the state agricultural colleges. Since the colleges needed local financial support and wanted to make use of local leadership, they in turn redivided their authority with county boards, governing advisory committees, and farm-bureau organizations. Thus the county agent became the joint representative of the United States Department of Agriculture, the state agricultural college, and his individual county.

During the World War the county agent turned from the demonstration method of teaching to the promotion of numerous war campaigns and service activities for the national government. The county agents' effective work during the World War greatly enhanced their prestige and increased their morale. The post-war depression, however, was to bring new and still more difficult problems which would demand much readjustment in county agent work.

## CHAPTER III

### POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTY AGENT WORK

#### A. PROMOTION OF FARM-MARKETING AND FARM-MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

**T**HE post-war depression turned the attention of county agents and farmers to the business side of farming. Farm surveys, which had served as a basic part of extension work in the northern and western states since the beginning of county agent work, were increased. In addition, the county agent stressed the keeping of farm records and accounts. More than twenty-three thousand farmers were estimated to have modified their practices during the years between 1915 and 1923 as a result of information secured through these accounts and records.<sup>1</sup> Dairy Herd Improvement Associations were organized to encourage records of dairy production so that "boarder cows" could be discovered and eliminated.

Beginning in 1923, the United States Department of Agriculture began to prepare outlook material on the trends in production and the demand for the principal agricultural commodities. This material was revised by the state colleges to fit particular states and presented to the farmers by the county agricultural agents.

County agents assisted in the organization and promotion of co-operative marketing associations. In addition to organizing the large number of local wool pools, poultry marketing associations, truck marketing associations, livestock shipping associations, creameries, seed associations, and fertilizer associations, the county agents were instrumental in the formation of

<sup>1</sup> More than 351,000 farm account-books were distributed during this period (see W. A. Lloyd, *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act, 1914-1924*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Circ. 59 [Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1926], p. 46).

such large marketing associations as the Dairymen's League of New York State and the large cotton associations in the southern states. In 1923 county agents assisted more than nine hundred and twenty-six thousand farm families and six thousand co-operative associations with their marketing problems, according to a report of the Co-operative Extension Service.<sup>2</sup>

The county agents sometimes served as local managers for these co-operatives, contrary to the advice of federal and state extension leaders. This was sometimes done because the co-operatives were so small that their volume of business did not justify a full-time salaried manager. Thus the county agent acted as purchasing agent for binding twine, fertilizer, and other common products, to eliminate the profits of the middleman.

The promotion of co-operative marketing associations and of pools of various kinds for the collective purchase of materials aroused the protest of business interests as early as 1914. In that year Secretary David F. Houston of the United States Department of Agriculture stated that it was the Department's policy to assist the farmers, giving them information, but not to transact business for the farmer individually or collectively.

It is a legitimate and proper part of the work of this department, in fact its duty, to furnish farmers with information which will enable them to develop greater efficiency in all respects, including the securing of their supplies and marketing their products. We have reached the point where larger crops do not mean necessarily larger net returns to the producer. . . . In no case is any actual business whatever transacted for him individually or collectively. Whenever and wherever farmers through machinery of their own are developing greater agricultural or business efficiency, we shall use the means of education at our disposal with perfect freedom in bringing the methods of such organizations or communities to the attention of others.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See H. W. Gilbertson and C. L. Chambers, "Methods and Results of Co-operative Extension Work Reported through County Agricultural Agents in 1923," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circ. 347 (August, 1925), pp. 1-2. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Lloyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

More official government assistance was given to the co-operative marketing associations by the establishment of the "Hoover Farm Board" in 1929. County agents were responsible for explaining the functions of the Board and for assisting co-operatives to meet the organization requirements which it set up. They also supported the Federal Farm Board in its attempt to persuade farmers to reduce the production of wheat and cotton to meet potential marketing demand. State extension leaders, subject-matter specialists, county agricultural agents, and local farm leaders in many states met to draw up long-time programs of necessary adjustments in farm management and organizations in the light of local situations, general farm management, and marketing data.<sup>4</sup>

County agents continued to assist in the organization of local farm loan associations and to help them in an advisory capacity. They also assisted in the organization of co-operatives to secure loans through the federal intermediate credit banks. Their offices served as information centers for these and other federal farm programs.

To encourage extension work in agricultural economics an item was inserted in the appropriation act for the Department of Agriculture in 1930. This appropriation of \$1,000,000 was continued annually but is to be eliminated by 1940 as an economy measure of the Bureau of the Budget.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the obvious need for comprehensive farm-management work related to state, regional, and even international demand and production, the work developed slowly and was limited largely to the individual farm or to community, or county, problems of management. This is natural since the county agent's program at this time was based upon the results of the research carried on by the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges and, consequently, was chiefly con-

<sup>4</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States, 1931* (Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1932), pp. 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> See chap. v.

cerned with improvement in the process of production and with the eradication of insects and diseases. Other factors limiting the development of the work were the difficulty of demonstrating principles of farm management and the large financial risks involved. It is relatively easy to demonstrate improved farm practices and methods—to teach the farmer how to spray his fruit trees, to test his soil, to vaccinate his hogs—but difficult to convince him that his established plan of farming is uneconomical. The results from improvements in individual practices are relatively immediate and tangible, but the rewards from a reorganized farming system are intangible and risky since profits are dependent upon the system of farming in larger areas. Really effective farm-management work must be integrated with regional and national planning, although small profits may result from more efficient management limited to an individual farm. Thus the county agents assisted in drawing up farm-management plans chiefly on an individual-farm basis, assisted in the organization of co-operatives, and at times served as a business agent for local farmers. Major emphasis, however, still remained on improvement of methods of production.

The South, by nature of its boll-weevil problem and its one-crop system, had developed what W. A. Lloyd has termed a “subconscious” regional program.<sup>6</sup> The far western states, however, took the lead in developing regional extension planning conferences based on state fact-finding conferences and on the information available from the United States Department of Agriculture. Several far western states began holding county and state fact organization conferences as a basis for developing extension programs as early as 1920. In 1923 the far western states decided to call together regional conferences to consider their mutual problems and to draw up common plans for county agents to promote. They appointed standing committees on range livestock, dairying, and human nutrition and

<sup>6</sup> *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act*, pp. 16-17.

provided for annual reviews of these programs in the various states.<sup>7</sup>

The extension program was broadened to include some work in rural sociology, recreation, drama, music, child development, landscaping, and home beautification. These projects were especially used in home demonstration and 4-H Club work. New York State emphasized particularly work in child development and in rural sociology. County agricultural agents concerned with more immediately practical problems of production and farm income were slower to promote these newer projects which some of them have been inclined to consider unnecessary.

The project which attracted the most widespread and favorable public attention was the 4-H Club work started in both northern and southern states before the enactment of the Smith-Lever law. Pig clubs were organized in the southern states in 1907 and 1908. Corn, cotton, dairy, and other production clubs as well as canning and gardening clubs soon became popular. In this period club work was broadened to include farm and home management, home beautification, and other projects in addition to the production projects first stressed. The 4-H insignia, first used as a brand name for canned tomatoes by club girls, was soon adopted as a symbol for standard clubs in the United States, and the 4-H's were incorporated in the national pledge:

*I pledge*

my head to clearer thinking  
my heart to greater loyalty  
my hands to larger service, and  
my health to better living,

*For my club, my community, and my country.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See W. A. Lloyd, "An Extension Program for Range Management and Range Livestock as Adopted at a Regional Extension Conference Held at Spokane, Washington, May 24-27, 1937," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 468 (1938), pp. 2-3. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>8</sup> The 4-H brand was first used as a tomato label in 1913. It was later used as a label for many different club products and eventually became accepted as an insignia for the clubs (see A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928], p. 176).

The 4-H Club work was promoted by an unofficial National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work which was organized as a volunteer committee of "public-spirited citizens" in 1919. Two years later this Committee organized the National Club Congress which it has called the "national show window of the 4-H clubs." It has no official relationship to the Department of Agriculture or the state colleges, but it serves as an intermediary between them and the business firms and private individuals who make large contributions for prizes and awards for 4-H Club winners. In 1936 it handled about \$200,000 in awards and prizes.<sup>9</sup> The Committee, through well-organized newspaper publicity and through personal contact with the donors and the 4-H Club champions, has done much to popularize and publicize 4-H Club work.<sup>10</sup> County extension agents and state extension leaders in three states—Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and California—have refused to allow club members to participate in the much-publicized national, state, and county contests sponsored by the Committee.

Some extension leaders feared that such large rewards accompanied by much publicity were an unhealthy influence and perhaps represented a type of exploitation for private advertising. An equally potent practical reason has been the fear that local businessmen would object to this indirect form of advertising on the part of large business firms. A special subcommittee of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association was appointed to study the relationships of the National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work. As a result of a report of this Committee, Director Warburton of the Federal Extension Service

<sup>9</sup> An additional \$800,000 is estimated as contributed from private sources within the counties and states (interview with G. L. Noble, managing director of the Committee, January 26, 1938; see National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work, 14th Annual Report for Year Ending Dec. 2, 1935 [Chicago, 1935], p. 25). (Mimeographed.)

<sup>10</sup> The Committee publishes a magazine for 4-H clubs, maintains a service department for club paraphernalia and supplies, and has sponsored some research concerning club activities. It is also useful in promoting federal-aid legislation for extension work (interview with G. L. Noble, managing director).

made the following requests of the National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work: (1) that the National Committee co-operate with the Department of Agriculture in a review of all national and interstate contests; (2) that it submit all proposals for contests to the director of the Extension Service along with copies of contracts, memorandums, and other data; (3) that the National Committee eliminate from advertising copy in the *National 4-H Club News* any direct, or indirect, recommendations or testimonials by 4-H Club members or leaders; (4) that the National Committee eliminate from its agreement or contract with contest-sponsoring agencies the clause dealing with name publicity; (5) that the National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work change its name; (6) that the Committee change the name of its publication. The future relationship between the United States Department of Agriculture and the National Committee has not been fully defined, but some change in the immediate future seems probable. In addition to these recommendations, which were presented to the National Committee during a conference on March 5, 1938, a bill has been introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives to prohibit the unauthorized use of the name or insignia of 4-H clubs.<sup>11</sup>

By 1929 extension leaders of the United States Department of Agriculture estimated that county agents were spending more than 25 per cent of their time promoting 4-H Club work, and two hundred and fifty-four special county club agents had been appointed to devote full time to 4-H Club work.<sup>12</sup>

The state agricultural colleges added to the state extension-service staff many subject-matter specialists who promoted particular projects in county extension work. The work was

<sup>11</sup> See "Brief Review of Developments of a Special 4-H Club Committee Appointed by the Chairman of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy" (report prepared by Charles E. Potter), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service (1938). (Mimeographed.)

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, *Report of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929), pp. 11-26.



divided into projects, largely according to the fields of these specialists. Farm-management and farm-organization specialists, rural sociologists, and other types of specialists were added to those specialists in dairy husbandry, agronomy, horticulture, and other phases of agricultural production. The county agent was not obligated to promote county projects in all these various fields, but his work was cut up along special subject-matter lines, and he was often influenced to promote relatively unimportant projects in the county because of the influence of subject-matter specialists.

The original function of these specialists was conceived to be that of keeping the county agent up to date and supplementing his knowledge along specialized lines of technical agriculture. The pressure of the state agricultural colleges and of various commodity organizations in some states was largely responsible for the accumulation of such a large number of subject-matter specialists that they engaged in direct teaching with the farmers. County agents in some of the northern and central states found much of their time taken up with arranging and conducting specialists to meetings of various small groups of farmers. The county agents in some of these states have been aptly labeled "chauffeurs of the state specialists." Despite the fact that the Federal Extension Office has been critical of the top-heavy overhead of specialists in many states, the numbers of these specialists have increased from nine hundred and thirty in 1925 to fourteen hundred and fifty-nine in 1937.<sup>33</sup> The list of projects (Table 3) taken from the director of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service's annual report for 1927 gives a sample of the large number and range of projects promoted by county agents in the southern states where the work is least specialized. The percentage of time spent on various projects by county agents, county home demonstration agents, county club agents, and state extension specialists in the United States for 1930 was estimated as shown in Table 4.

<sup>33</sup> Photostatic copies of statements of Federal Office, "Number of Extension Workers," for 1925 and 1937.

As the work progressed, however, the county agricultural agent was less a dispenser of scientific information, less a promoter of his favorite projects—or those advocated at a particular time by the state college—and more a community ad-

TABLE 3  
TEXAS EXTENSION PROJECTS IN 1927

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Soil improvement.....                     | Fertilizers, green manure,<br>barnyard manure                                       |
| Farm-engineering.....                     | Terracing, contouring, drain-<br>age, irrigation                                    |
| Agronomy.....                             | Pure seed, community cotton<br>standardization, legumes,<br>pasture, insect control |
| Horticulture.....                         | Pruning, spraying, vegetable-<br>marketing  |
| Forestry.....                             | Tree-planting   |
| Rodent control .....                      | Rat campaign, prairie dog,<br>predatory animal control                              |
| Dairying.....                             | Cow Testing Association,<br>feeding, introducing good<br>stock                      |
| Poultry.....                              | Feeding, poultry parasites,<br>marketing  |
| Hogs.....                                 | Feeding, Hog Shipping Asso-<br>ciation  |
| Beef cattle.....                          | Feeding, fly-trapping for<br>screwworm  |
| Sheep and goats.....                      |   |
| Co-operative marketing and<br>buying..... |   |
| Farm accounting.....                      |   |
| Community organizations.....              |   |
| 4-H Club work.....                        |   |
| Home demonstration work.....              | Curb markets  |

viser or counselor. He began to attempt to diagnose the needs of a community in addition to the needs of particular farmers and to set up definite projects and programs of work. It is true that the county program was often only a compilation of individual and community programs, but attempts were made to

set up county programs of work related to the particular needs of the county.

In 1923 county agents were receiving assistance in program-planning from local committees or clubs in more than twenty-one thousand communities. County agents in Iowa, Illinois, and South Dakota began to make use of ballots sent out to a large number of farmers for assistance in selecting desirable projects.<sup>14</sup> County farm-bureau boards and county extension

TABLE 4\*  
PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY AGENTS' AND SPECIALISTS' TIME  
SPENT ON VARIOUS EXTENSION PROJECTS IN  
THE UNITED STATES IN 1930

|                             | Per<br>Cent |                                 | Per<br>Cent |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Farm crops.....             | 15.2        | Community activities.....       | 4.0         |
| Horticulture.....           | 8.7         | Building program.....           | 3.7         |
| Dairy husbandry.....        | 7.7         | Rural engineering.....          | 3.3         |
| Poultry.....                | 7.6         | Home furnishing.....            | 2.6         |
| Miscellaneous.....          | 7.5         | Home management.....            | 2.1         |
| Organization.....           | 7.1         | Rodents and insects.....        | 1.3         |
| Foods.....                  | 7.0         | Home health and sanitation..... | 1.3         |
| Clothing.....               | 6.7         | Forestry.....                   | 0.9         |
| Animal husbandry.....       | 6.5         | Child care and training.....    | 0.6         |
| Agricultural economics..... | 6.2         |                                 |             |

\* M. C. Wilson, "Statistical Results of Cooperative Extension Work, 1930," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 157, p. 3. (Mimeographed.) (Includes county home demonstration agents and county club agents.)

councils were extensively used to aid in drawing up county plans of work in other states during this period. It is true that their help was often limited to checking projects suggested by the state agricultural colleges, but even this amount of participation added to the effectiveness of the work.

County agents began to make use of local community project-leaders who were trained to teach particular methods or practices to groups of local farmers in their communities. The use of local leaders has been most successful in home demonstration work. Women in some states have been organized into community clubs or home-bureau associations which depend,

<sup>14</sup> See True, *op. cit.*, p. 175, and Gilbertson and Chambers, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 and 7.

to a large extent, upon local leaders trained by the home demonstration agents and college specialists to carry on much of their project-teaching. In 1923 more than one thousand county agricultural agents reported an average of fifteen committee meetings to train local project-leaders.<sup>45</sup>

As faith in the soundness of the county agent's advice increased, emphasis changed from the old type of demonstration to campaigns for the planting of more legumes, the producing of a one-community grade of long-fibered cotton, the raising of home feed and foodstuffs, and the discarding of scrubs for pure-bred cattle. Intensive promotional and propaganda campaigns were carried on to make the farmer conscious of his problems and to convince him of the desirability of proposed solutions. Local newspapers, numerous circular letters, meetings, and the radio were used to put across these campaigns. The agent not only worked through farm organizations but also spent considerable time keeping Kiwanis clubs, Rotary clubs, chambers of commerce, and professional organizations in the towns and villages informed concerning agricultural problems.

It is difficult to give any clear-cut picture of the county agent and his work during this period because of the lack of long-time objectives, the local nature of the programs of work, and the numerous organizations and interests which claimed a share of his time. In some states the county agent spent much time and effort organizing farm bureaus, directing the work of co-operatives, and performing personal service for the individual farmers. W. A. Lloyd of the Co-operative Extension Office, writing of the period of work from 1914 to 1924, emphasizes the lack of continuous emphasis and common objectives in extension work:

As has been indicated, except in a few instances, there have not been clear-cut objectives with continuous emphasis over even the ten year period, which is far too short a time to determine if influences are permanent, or to measure them accurately.

<sup>45</sup> See M. C. Wilson, "Methods and Results of Cooperative Extension Work, 1923" U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circ. 347 (August, 1925), p. 7. (Mimeographed.)

Agricultural programs and extension programs have been mostly local, usually on a community basis—an autocratic, overhead program of compulsion, no matter how right it may be, is not possible in Democratic America. The possible, as well as the desirable, must be considered, and if progress is to be made the possible undertaken first. Local programs have been diffuse, promiscuous, and transitory to the point of criticism from a retrospective point of view, but usually they have been the only possible programs from the standpoint of operation.<sup>16</sup>

B. DECLINE IN COUNTY AGENT SUPPORT AND PRESTIGE  
DURING THE LATTER PART OF THE POST-  
WAR DEPRESSION

The methods of many individual farmers became increasingly efficient under the guidance of the county agents, but relative farm income rapidly decreased. The co-operatives sponsored by the Federal Farm Board and the county agents were unable to meet the marketing-surplus problem. As the post-war agriculture depression became increasingly oppressive, the county agent found his prestige diminishing and, in some states, his supporting farm-bureau organization vanishing. Bewildered by the complexities of an economic system which seemed to punish the farmer for his increased efficiency, the county agent found his financial support rapidly decreasing and his work at times discredited by nervous taxpayers.

W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Extension Office described the effect of the depression on extension work in an address before the annual convention of Epsilon Sigma Phi in 1933:

The past year has been a hectic one for all extension workers. We have undergone our first major and organized attack. The deplorable condition of the Nation's business, particularly as it affects agriculture, with mounting tax burdens and mortgage foreclosures, has lent fuel to the fire for the reduction of governmental expenses and the lessening of the tax

<sup>16</sup> *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act*, p. 22. Federal contributions for extension work were substantially increased in 1928 by the Capper-Ketcham Act. These funds are subject to the same conditions and limitations as Smith-Lever funds, with the exception that they may be used for agricultural trains, prohibited in the Smith-Lever law. They also have the additional requirements that at least 80 per cent of the funds must be spent for salaries of extension agents and that these agents must be "men and women in fair and just proportions."

burden. Everyone must agree to the general desirability of such consummation. Selfish opposition outside the farm people has seized upon the unrest and discontent to foment opposition to extension work in state Legislatures, in the National Congress, and among the people. This attack had strong, even if at times, sinister backing. While serious reductions in extension funds have been made in many of the States, the effort to bring about an abandonment of extension work failed whenever it was proposed. For the entire country our extension budget is less by approximately \$3,500,000 for the current fiscal year in comparison with the last, while the total extension personnel is decreased by less than 400 for all classes of workers. . . . It is a fine tribute to the quality of extension workers that in the face of bitter, unwarranted and sinister attack, with salaries reduced and insufficient expense accounts, they have carried on and maintained the morale.<sup>17</sup>

County taxpayers' leagues, organized in some sections to cut down county expense, instead of turning to intelligent reorganization of inefficient township and county governments began making lists of county officers who could be dropped from county pay rolls. The county agent often found his name heading the list. In some counties his supporters confused these amateur economists by arguing that the county agent was a federal official outside the scope of their authority. This argument held more weight in the counties where the office was located in the post office than when located in the county courthouse.

Iowa farmers' holiday organizations urged county supervisors to discontinue county appropriations and to evict the county agent from the courthouse. In some counties large numbers of holiday members descended upon the courthouse forcibly to remove the county agent. They usually found the county agent well supported by sympathetic farmers who were occasionally reinforced by deputy sheriffs. When boards of supervisors convinced holiday leaders of the boards' impotence, since the Iowa statute provides for a mandatory appropriation upon the organization of farm bureaus of sufficient strength, the holiday members demanded farm-bureau membership lists.

<sup>17</sup> "Annual Address of Grand Director," *Epsilon Sigma Phi Yearbook* (Washington: Epsilon Sigma Phi, 1933), p. 9.

In one county they secured authorization to make a house-to-house survey of farmers in the county upon the assumption that the farm bureau's list was not a bona fide one. One county agent was threatened with lynching if he did not turn over the membership list. Where appropriations were withheld, county farm-bureau members sued for a writ of mandamus to force the supervisors to make the appropriation. Opposing farmers brought suit against the constitutionality of the Iowa statute.<sup>18</sup> The Iowa Farmers' Union under the leadership of Milo Reno labeled the Farm Bureau an illegitimate subsidized organization and the county agent a "tool of the International Bankers." County agricultural agents in Iowa made an attempt to meet the emergency situation by sponsoring farm-bureau credit councils to adjust relations between debtors and creditors, but the work of these conservative extra-legal councils was almost completely overshadowed by the work of the more daring United Farmers' organizations and Holiday Councils of Defense. Since these organizations had no official status to shield, they could proceed to talk in forceful and, at times, threatening language.

Opposition in other states and sections was less spectacular. The county agent's work was undermined more often by economy measures of county appropriating boards and by indifference and lethargy on the part of the farmers. A number of counties in states providing for voluntary county appropriations discontinued the work. The dismissal of the county agent resulted. The number of counties discontinuing the work ranged from a small number in the northeastern states to an alarming number in South Dakota, North Dakota, and some other states severely affected by the depression.<sup>19</sup> Under these

<sup>18</sup> The courts upheld the constitutionality of the law (see *Blume et al. v. Crawford County et al.*, 250 N.W. 733). For court ruling that county farm bureaus cannot be forced to turn over their membership lists see No. 30486 Chan. Decision, in the District Court of the State of Iowa in and for Black Hawk County, March term, 1936.

<sup>19</sup> Director R. K. Bliss of the Iowa Extension Service estimated a decrease in state and county funds from 1932-35 amounting to approximately \$6,000,000

circumstances it is not surprising that in many states the county agricultural agent turned eagerly to the New Deal with its positive farm program and its increased financial support.<sup>20</sup>

#### C. DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

We now turn from an account of the development of county agent work to a description of the Co-operative Extension Service which provides the framework for county agent work. Following chapter iv, which describes the county agent's work in the agricultural programs of the Roosevelt administration, attention will be turned to the relationship between the federal, state, and county divisions of the Co-operative Extension Service in the direction and support of county agent work.

1. *The Federal Office.*—Behind the county agricultural agent, who has been called the keystone of the Co-operative Extension Service, is a framework of national and state organizations. The Federal Office is a mere skeleton organization in comparison with the state and county field forces. Only approximately

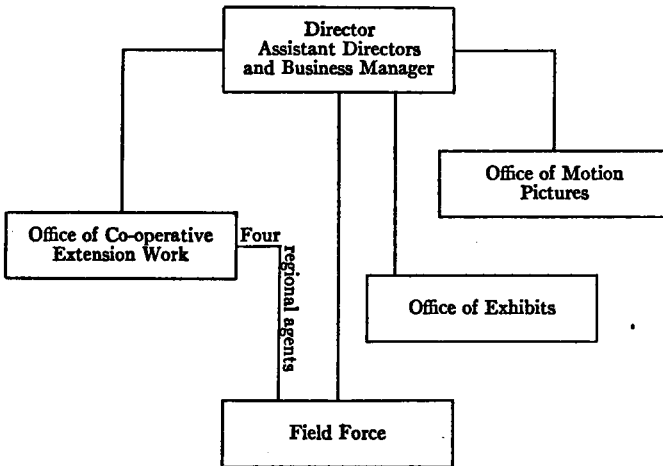
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(U.S. Congress, Senate [hearing before Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on S. 2228, 74th Cong. (Washington: Government Printing Office, March 28 and 29, 1935)], p. 30). Total extension personnel, exclusive of the Washington office, dropped from 6,161 in June 30, 1931, to 5,893 by June 30, 1933. The number of white county agents dropped from 2,382 to 2,222 during this period of time. This loss of personnel was not, of course, evenly distributed. South Dakota's 31 agents for 69 counties in 1931 had declined to 17 by June, 1933. North Dakota's 33 agents for 53 counties in 1930 had decreased to 22; Montana's 33 agents for 56 counties had decreased to 28 by June, 1933 (see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, "Number of Extension Workers," 1931, 1933, Co-operative Extension Office). (Photostatic copies on file.)

<sup>20</sup> The position of the county agents was more secure in the northeastern states where the depression was not so severe and where municipal tax contributions to county budgets made the share apportioned to county agent work seem relatively small. It was also more secure in specialized farming areas, notably fruit regions where the county agent's specialized knowledge and service was almost indispensable. Added to the fact that the A.A.A. did not apply to the types of farming in these regions was the fact that they were Republican strongholds. Consequently the agents were often reluctant to participate in New Deal activities claiming that such participation decreased the popularity of their work.



\$560,000 was spent in 1937 in the operation of the Federal Office in comparison with more than \$17,000,000 of federal funds added to approximately \$12,000,000 of state and county funds spent by the state and county field organizations. The contrast in personnel is equally striking. Compared with a field personnel of more than eighty-four hundred, the Federal Office maintains a staff of approximately sixty-one members.<sup>21</sup>



At the apex of the Federal Extension Service is a director of the Service who administratively is responsible to the secretary of agriculture. He is assisted by an assistant director, a recently added second assistant director, and a business manager. The Service consists of three main offices: Office of Exhibits, Office of Motion Pictures, and Office of Co-operative Extension Work (see diagram). The Office of Exhibits prepares and displays exhibits for the Department of Agriculture at state, interstate, and international fairs. In 1930 it was estimated that it displayed exhibits at approximately seventy fairs

<sup>21</sup> Personnel figures do not include clerical workers. The total number of field workers, including assistants in cotton adjustment, was 9,142 in 1937.

and expositions annually.<sup>22</sup> The Office of Motion Pictures produces pictures illustrating subjects related to the work of the Department of Agriculture which are distributed to colleges and other groups interested in agricultural education. In 1930 it had films on about two hundred and fifty subjects and it was estimated that it sent out about eleven thousand reels annually.<sup>23</sup> The major division of the Federal Extension Service is the Office of Co-operative Extension, headed by a chief of the Co-operative Extension who is also assistant director of the Federal Extension Service.

Directly responsible to the chief are four regional field agents in charge of co-operative relations with the State Extension Services.<sup>24</sup> Regional agents for the eastern and north-central states are assisted by three additional field agents who are assigned to the three special divisions of extension work: county agricultural agent work, home demonstration agent work, and 4-H Club work. The agents in charge of the southern and western regions do not favor making a separate division of club work. Thus, the regional agent for the southern states is assisted by a field agent for home economics and an agent for agricultural work. In addition, he is assisted by two Negro field agents for the supervision of Negro work. The agent in charge of the western states has only one assistant who is assigned to home-economics extension work.<sup>25</sup>

To assist the regional agents and the State Extension Services in setting up and evaluating subject-matter projects, the Co-operative Extension Office has a corps of subject-matter

<sup>22</sup> See M. S. Eisenhower and A. P. Chew, *The United States Department of Agriculture, Its Growth, Structure, and Functions*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 88 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> The agent for the western states is also responsible for co-operative relations with Hawaii and Alaska. The agent for the southern states is in charge of co-operative relations with Puerto Rico.

<sup>25</sup> The agent in charge of the western states formerly had another assistant who was a specialist in agricultural economics. This agent has become one of the federal subject-matter specialists.

specialists who act in an advisory capacity. Eighteen specialists with a supervisor are assigned to the entire national area.<sup>26</sup> The remaining four, who are specialists in dairy husbandry, are assigned to special regions. There are eight extension economists, two of whom work with the Farm Credit Administration, and there are two field agents employed co-operatively with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Another section of the Federal Office consists of four specialists in Extension Studies and Teaching. The Extension Service also has an Editorial and Visual Instruction Section. This staff of sixty-one members is responsible for representing the secretary of agriculture in conducting agricultural extension work in co-operation with the forty-eight states and the territories of Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico.<sup>27</sup>

2. *The state extension offices.*—The size of the state extension staffs, with headquarters located at the state agricultural colleges, is generally more substantial than the size of the federal staff. The number of administrative, supervisory, and specialist members of the state staffs varies from a minimum of eight in Nevada to one hundred and sixteen in New York state. The state, like the federal office, is headed by a director. In thirteen states in 1937 the state director was also dean of the college; in a number of these he was also director of the experiment station.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Figures are for November, 1937. The specialist supervisor, A. Graham, has since retired and the subject-matter specialists have been placed under the direction of H. W. Hochbaum, regional agent for the eastern states.

<sup>27</sup> Since this book was written the Federal Extension Office has been reorganized. It is now headed by a director and an assistant director with a Division of Administration, of Field Coordination, of Subject-Matter, and of Extension Information. The Division of Field Coordination is subdivided into an Organization and Planning Section and a Surveys and Reports Section. The Division of Subject-Matter is subdivided into an Agricultural Section and Home Economics Section. The Division of Extension Information is subdivided into a Motion Picture Section, a Visual Instruction and Editorial Section, and an Agricultural Exhibits Section.

<sup>28</sup> One state extension director in 1936 was also president of the college. A new director has been appointed who does not hold this dual position. Twenty-eight states had assistant or vice-directors in 1933.

The number of state extension specialists averages twenty-seven, with a wide range of from four in Nevada to eighty-nine in New York. The range in specialists to counties served is from one specialist to every seven and one-half counties in Texas to three specialists to every county in Connecticut. Considerable variation in the number of specialists is evident between the different regions. This is partially due to different emphasis in the work, to more specialized types of agriculture in some sections, and to the inequitable proportion of federal funds arising from distribution on the basis of lump-sum appropriations and rural population. There is the additional fac-

TABLE 5\*

PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE OF STATE EXTENSION FUNDS  
BY MAJOR DIVISIONS OF WORK IN 1935-36

|                          | Per<br>Cent |                                   | Per<br>Cent |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Administration . . . . . | 5.6         | Publications . . . . .            | 1.7         |
| Supervision . . . . .    | 12.0        | County extension agents . . . . . | 62.6        |
| Specialists . . . . .    | 18.0        |                                   |             |

\* Table prepared by W. H. Conway of the Federal Extension Office.

tor in the southern states that the two races make it advisable in many counties to support a dual county agent system which limits the funds available for subject-matter specialists. Thus, as compared with the eastern region which averaged a small fraction more than one specialist to a county in 1937 (1.06), the southern region has one specialist to every three and one-third counties. A greater contrast would result if the comparison were made on the basis of the relative proportion of specialists to county agents.

A Negro supervisor, called either a state or a district agent, is located at a Negro college in thirteen states. He is responsible administratively to the state extension director. Four states have Negro state agents for club work and two have Negro specialists.<sup>29</sup>

Some forty-three states have extension editors; two have

<sup>29</sup> See chap. vii (figures for 1937).

office managers; and six have program-planning leaders. Most states have a chief clerk, executive secretary, accountant, or statistician responsible for financial accounts and records.

Table 5 shows the approximate percentage of all funds from county, state, federal, and private sources spent by state extension services for the major divisions of work. The range in state percentages spent for these major projects is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6\*  
RANGE IN STATE PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS  
FOR MAJOR DIVISIONS OF EXTENSION  
WORK IN 1935-36

| Divisions of Extension Work       | State        | Percent-<br>age | State                 | Percent-<br>age |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Administration . . . . .          | Utah         | 21.0            | California            | 1.8             |
| Supervision . . . . .             | Rhode Island | 23.0            | Idaho and<br>New York | 6.0             |
| Specialists . . . . .             | Wisconsin    | 36.0            | Texas                 | 7.5             |
| Publications . . . . .            | New York     | 3.9             | California            | 0.0             |
| County extension agents . . . . . | Illinois     | 79.0            | Connecticut           | 41.2            |

\* State percentages spent for major projects are taken from a table prepared by Mr. W. H. Conway.

3. *County extension offices.*—The third unit of organization consists of county extension offices located with few exceptions in county-seat towns. In a few counties where the county seat is not centrally located another town is selected for extension headquarters. In some states the offices are called county farm-bureau offices. The office is commonly located in the county courthouse, but the recent trend is to secure space in federal buildings. The office space in the federal buildings has proved to be both larger and more desirable; in addition, it is more permanent. Office space in the courthouse may be withdrawn because of crowded conditions or because of opposition to the county agent's work. It is doubtful if the use of federal buildings for county agent's headquarters marks any conscious trend toward more federal control of county agent work. In some

southern states a number of special agricultural buildings have been erected recently with the aid of P.W.A. funds and relief labor. These buildings house county extension agents and county representatives of the national agricultural programs.<sup>30</sup> County agents in Illinois, called "farm advisers," are located frequently in Farm Bureau buildings that house commercial representatives of the organization.

Only five northeastern states (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island) have county agricultural agents, county home demonstration agents, and county club agents in all counties. Only nineteen states have county club agents, and the total number of club agents is only 306 compared with 2,916 county agricultural agents. All states have county home demonstration agents except Idaho, which carries this work on a district basis. The number of home demonstration agents is 1,668.<sup>31</sup> The type of relationship between these agents varies from state to state. The county agricultural agent in about twenty states in 1930 was in general charge of the work of the other agents.<sup>32</sup> In some states, notably New York, the work of these agents is almost entirely separate.

The county agents are assisted in program-planning and, in varying degrees, are directed by local co-operating organizations. These take different forms in different states and regions. The county farm bureau was the local co-operating organization in twenty-nine states in 1930.<sup>33</sup> The co-operating organization in the southern states is generally called a county

<sup>30</sup> North Carolina has approximately forty agricultural buildings (interview with Mr. B. T. Ferguson, district agent of the North Carolina Extension Service, March 27, 1937).

<sup>31</sup> The figures are for 1937 and do not include assistant agents or Negro agents in any line of work. The number of assistant white county agents were 893; Negro county agents, 236; assistant white club agents, 54; 1 Negro club agent; 179 Negro home demonstration agents.

<sup>32</sup> Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, No. 9, Vol. II, Part VII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 446.

<sup>33</sup> This relationship is legally sanctioned in about fifteen states (see *ibid.*, p. 509).

extension committee and is commonly appointed by the county agent but is sometimes appointed by the county governing-board. In some states the co-operating organization is made up of representatives of various farm organizations often supplemented by a member of the board of supervisors, a member of the county school board, or a member of other interested organizations. Still another type is made up of leaders of various commodity committees and other project committees appointed by the county agent or selected by the members of the various commodity groups. These advisory co-operating organizations function with varying degrees of effectiveness in the different states. Some are little more than paper committees; others effectively guide and direct the work of the county agricultural agent as well as aid in his selection.<sup>34</sup>

The county agent in most states is responsible to the county governing-board since its withdrawal of financial co-operation generally results in his dismissal. The influence of this board, however, is diminished greatly in some states where the county farm bureau is the official county extension organization and where mandatory appropriations are provided by state law. The influence of this board is also diminished in ten states that provide for salary payments from state and federal funds.<sup>35</sup>

During the post-war depression the county agents turned to business methods and to the promotion of co-operative marketing and buying associations in an attempt to help the farmer secure a larger portion of the national income. They supported and publicized activities of the Federal Farm Board of 1933 and assisted the farmers in utilizing the credit facilities of the federal farm land banks and the intermediate credit banks. County agents taught the farmers better business methods on an individual farm basis through the keeping of farm records and cost-accounting. Some states, particularly those of the Far

<sup>34</sup> Some states have a separate co-operating organization for each type of activity. In most states, however, the same committee serves for agricultural, home-economics, and club work.

<sup>35</sup> See chap. v for a further discussion of these relationships.

West, attempted to draw up state and even long-time regional plans for agricultural production in accordance with good farm-management principles and marketable demand. Generally speaking, however, the farm-management work of county agents was still placed largely on an individual farm basis. Owing to the difficulty of demonstrating farm management and co-operative marketing work and to the large risks involved, major emphasis still remained in many counties upon improving the processes of production.

In some sections the county agents' work became highly specialized and various projects were promoted with little integration. During the post-war period the county agents' program of work was broadened to include some projects of a general cultural character. The county agents secured the assistance of advisory groups of farmers in planning their annual program of work. Some use was made of local farm leaders trained for the purpose of teaching special projects to organized groups of farmers.

The county agents' local and state financial support in many counties was challenged seriously during the latter part of the post-war depression. This pressure was relieved by the more positive approach and increased financial support of the agricultural programs of the Roosevelt administration. In these programs the county agent assumed an active role.



## CHAPTER IV

### COUNTY AGENT WORK UNDER THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION

**T**HE Agricultural Adjustment Administration of 1933, which had as its major objective the re-establishment of parity prices for farmers by adjustments in the production of basic agricultural commodities, made the county agent a part of a daring and controversial national agricultural program. It added to, and in some sections almost completely replaced, the old type of scientific agricultural projects and readjusted individual farm-management work in accordance with a planned agriculture on a national scale. Much of the county agent's educational work became promotional in nature, and in many states he assumed administrative responsibilities for federal programs which not only provided large benefits for farmer co-operation but also provided definite penalties to insure co-operation.<sup>1</sup> The soil-conservation program which followed the commodity programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration made benefit payments to farmers for special "good farm management practices" which would conserve the soil and thus gave the county agent more tangible rewards to accompany some of his former teachings.

The other federal agricultural programs have not affected the county agent's work so directly, but he has assumed an important educational and advisory role and has served as a county clearing-house of information for the Soil Conservation Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Resettlement and Farm Security administrations, the Farm Credit Administration, and for various agricultural programs of an emergency

<sup>1</sup> Definite penalties were provided in the Bankhead Cotton Control Act and the Smith-Kerr Tobacco Act. It is a debatable question whether the processing taxes served as an indirect means of economic coercion in the other programs.

character. The first and most important change in his work, however, was made to adapt it to the objectives of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

A. WORK OF THE COUNTY AGENT IN CO-OPERATION WITH  
AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ADMINISTRATION

1. *Activities in the commodity programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.*—The Agricultural Adjustment Administration set up by the secretary of agriculture to carry on the “action” commodity programs relied on the county agricultural agents for the early educational and promotional work in inaugurating the adjustment program and for its continued operation. Chester Davis, A.A.A. administrator during the first years of the program, publicly recognized the significance of the county agent’s role in the early days of the work:

. . . . I would be seriously at fault if I did not express the very great appreciation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for the generous support which has been given to us throughout the country by extension workers in the past year and a half. In this effort your county extension agents, specialists, and supervisors were the front line forces. I want to salute you and pay tribute to the extension service and the county agents for the part they have played. . . . As I have said publicly before, the difficult field job could not have been handled efficiently without the trained and experienced personnel of the extension staff.\*

County agents in all states assumed responsibility for the “educational phases” of the program, but the practical interpretation of the limits and scope of education varied greatly even within the same agricultural region. In all states the county agent was responsible for explaining and interpreting both the Act and the constant stream of administrative rules sent from Washington. In most states he held from one to three “educational meetings” in every township or community

\* Address before Land-Grant College Association, Extension Section, Washington, D.C., Monday, November 19, 1934 (*Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* [Washington: Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, November, 1934]).

to explain, with the aid of charts prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture and his state agricultural college, the urgent need for an adjustment program and the benefits to be derived from such a program. In some regions where there was particularly strong producer support, notably in the southern states, these "educational meetings" often took the form of a moral crusade; in others the "economic facts" as prepared by the college and the United States Department of Agriculture were presented without apparent promotional enthusiasm.

Following these educational meetings the county agent set up the local machinery, in the form of county and township or "beat" committees, which assumed responsibility for the administration of the program. In some commodity programs the county agent remained the dominant factor, with the committee serving in an advisory capacity. This local machinery was dispensed with in some programs during the first years, and the county agent served as the local administrator. In other commodity programs the county agent stepped back into an advisory capacity. In spite of the variations which existed within states and regions, it is generally agreed that the county agents' leadership was indispensable in the various commodity programs. A generalized description will be given of the agent's part in setting up and assisting local committees in these programs.

a) *Corn-hog and wheat programs.*—In the corn-hog and wheat programs the early "educational meetings" were followed by the appointment, nominally by a state director or committee but actually by the county agent, of a temporary county committee. This temporary county committee customarily appointed or held election meetings for the selection of township or community committees.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In the appointment of the temporary county committee the county agent was sometimes advised by the Democratic chairman or representative. In some counties the Democratic chairman proceeded to appoint the temporary committee upon his own authority although he sometimes consulted the county agent. In most of these cases new committees were appointed later in the name

These temporary allotment committees under the leadership of the county agent conducted the "sign-up" campaign and held elections for permanent township committeemen. The county agent attended most of these election meetings and was responsible for seeing that they were conducted according to Washington rules which not only provided for election by secret ballot but also for the tedious process of nomination by secret ballot.<sup>4</sup>

The township chairmen generally became automatically members of a county allotment board which selected from three to five of its own members to serve as the county allotment committee. The secretary and treasurer were usually selected from outside the membership of the board. The county agricultural agent was frequently selected to serve in the strategic position of secretary, but this was prevented in a few states by the policy of the state extension service.<sup>5</sup> In some few counties bitter farm-bureau and anti-farm-bureau contests were centered around the selection of the county agent as secretary. A number of factors entered into the selection of county agent as secretary in addition to his natural position of leadership. An important factor was the belief of farmer committeemen that it would result in substantial economy since

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of the state committee. In some counties elaborate procedures were followed to avoid partisan influence. One Iowa county agent followed five successive steps of appointment to set up the temporary county committee. Some counties dispensed with the temporary committees, leaving this preliminary work to the county agent.

<sup>4</sup> So conscientious were the farmers in following these rules that at times as many as three successive rounds of ballots were used to secure the necessary nominations for one member of the township committee.

<sup>5</sup> No data are available giving the percentage of county agents serving as secretary in the corn-hog adjustment program. However, in the ten chief corn- and hog-producing states county agents served as secretaries of the county agricultural conservation committees in approximately 50 per cent of the counties in 1936. (No county agents in Indiana or Illinois served as secretary during this year.) Available state data indicate that the percentage of county agents serving as secretary of these local committees has decreased appreciably since the first years of the commodity program (data from North Central Division of A.A.A., U.S. Department of Agriculture).

some county agents used the franking privilege freely in the commodity programs. In the old A.A.A. this was contrary to post-office rulings since much of the material was not considered educational. Occasionally partisan slates were drawn up, but partisan contests were not frequent. In a number of states political clearance was secured for state clerical and tabulating personnel, but such clearance was not common in the selection of county clerical and tabulating assistants. Contests centering around farm-organization membership were more frequent in states which had competing farm organizations. In these contests it was generally assumed that the county agent was at least morally supporting the side of the county farm bureau.<sup>6</sup> In states where the Farm Bureau had an active program it claimed considerable credit for the enactment of the A.A.A. In these states non-farm-bureau members often felt a moral obligation to become members and promoters of the county farm-bureau organization.

The county allotment committee usually shared the agent's office or occupied an adjoining one. The committee and the agent often co-operated in the use of office secretaries and other assistants. Even when the county agent did not serve as secretary to the committee, it was common for him to attend allotment-committee and county board meetings in an advisory capacity. He assisted in the technical interpretations of the contract and the large number of administrative rulings. The county agent frequently held examinations for county tabulators and clerks and assisted in training them. He assisted less in the adjustment and estimation of individual farmer's "historical bases" (acreage and production in base years) and in the actual completion of the contract, but the amount of assistance varied greatly with the personality of the agent, the attitude of the state administrator or committee, and the independence of

<sup>6</sup> In Iowa, Illinois, and New York it is estimated that approximately 85 per cent of township and county committeemen were members of the farm bureau. This was a natural result in many counties arising from the fact that farm-bureau membership often included the more capable farmers in a community.

the local committee. He took an active part in, and in some states conducted, the referendums held on the commodity programs.

Where an active and competent committee was elected, the agent did not usually assist in the compliance checkup in counties where the corn-hog and wheat programs were major agricultural programs. He sometimes attended meetings held to consider complaint cases.

The amount of responsibility assumed by the agent for the actual administration varied greatly even within states. In Iowa, for example, it varied from a few agents who almost completely carried on the work for the committee with the assistance of tabulators and clerks to a small number of counties where the committee members, jealous of their authority, asserted their independence by moving to an office in another part of town.

In counties where there were only a small number of contracts in any commodity it was common for the county agent to assume almost complete responsibility for all the work even to checking compliance in some counties. When commodity committees were selected for these minor programs, they served chiefly as rubber stamps to approve the agent's work.

b) *Cotton, tobacco, and peanut programs.*—In the cotton, tobacco, and peanut programs of the South county agent participation was much more extensive and uniform. Here the county agent served as an official representative of the secretary of agriculture under the direction of the state extension director, who served as the state administrator. In addition to educational and promotional meetings held by agents in other types of commodity programs, the agents employed farmer committeemen, clerks, and tabulating assistants by means of letters of authorization from the Department of Agriculture. In 1933-34 the agent appointed county and "beat" committeemen to assist him in the administrative work, but in last analysis he was responsible for every contract and his signature or that of his assistant was necessary on every paper sent to Washington. Later in the program committeemen were

elected, but the voting was usually by acclamation or standing vote and often further safeguarded by formal nominations from an appointed nominating committee. An additional controlling device, though seldom used, was the right of the county agent, through the state director of extension, to rule upon the eligibility of elected committeemen.<sup>7</sup>

In a few southern states which were attempting to build up a strong farm-bureau membership, committeemen selected were generally farm-bureau members. Nonmembers elected were made to feel a strong moral obligation to join. When one county agent was questioned concerning the number of A.A.A. committeemen who were farm-bureau members, he replied that they all were; if any were not members, he would certainly do something about it, as committeemen "should be cooperators." In farm-bureau states these county and "beat" committeemen were commonly used to solicit memberships, and in a number of counties memberships were collected at the strategic time when benefit checks were given out. In some instances aggressive county agents sponsored the collection of dues pledged by tenants from the landlord's check in cases where the landlord received the tenant's share of the parity payments. As a result of such practices, farm bureau membership in one county rose from sixty members before the A.A.A. program to fifteen hundred in 1936.

The committeemen elected were with few exceptions members of the planter or landowning class. They were inclined, therefore, to interpret such vague terms as "managing" and

<sup>7</sup> Art. IV of *The Articles of Association of the Cotton Production Control Association for 1933* specifically stated: "The county agent shall be the representative of the Secretary in all matters affecting the Association. All Committeemen shall hold office at the will of the Secretary or his authorized agent" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, *Articles of Association of Cotton Production Control Association*, Form No. Cotton-3 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933]). There were some cases of election by secret ballot in these commodity programs. The same county agent occasionally used different election methods in different communities. One county agent reported that in a suspicious mountain community each elector was required to march up to the front of the room and drop his ballot in a box before the eyes of the assembled farmers.

“managed share tenant” in favor of the landowner, and in these interpretations they were usually backed up by the county agricultural agent.<sup>8</sup>

The custom of including the “managed share tenant’s” parity payment in the landlord’s check aroused considerable criticism of the administration’s fairness. The amount of injustice resulting from this practice cannot be measured accurately since many illiterate tenants were not aware of their share of the payment and since parity payments were often taken for payment of current debts to the landlord. In some instances in which Negro tenants were involved the Negro county agent reported that his position was too precarious for him to interfere in cases of injustice. The practice of including the tenant’s payment in landlord’s check has been corrected in the present agricultural conservation program and in the 1937 adjustment program.

A more serious matter from the standpoint of the tenant was the tendency in some sections for the landlord to employ day laborers in the place of former tenants. The county agricultural agent cannot be blamed for these Washington rules, but in some sections he was lacking in zealously investigating claims of tenants, and he sometimes sponsored the collection of Farm Bureau membership dues for the tenant from the landlord who was given a check which included the parity payment due to the tenant. Any criticism of the agent in such cases, however, must take cognizance of the tremendous size of his administrative job, the continuous pressure exerted on him for speed, and his dependence upon the dominant political and economic class.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There were a few rare exceptions in which Negroes or even Indians served on township committees. In one community where Negroes, by virtue of their number, could have elected all community committeemen, the agent ruled that they could elect one Negro committeeman.

<sup>9</sup> For further criticism of injustice to the tenant see Charles S. Johnson, Edwin R. Embree, and Will W. Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), and minority report of W. L. Blackstone of the President’s Committee on Farm Tenancy. See also Norman Thomas, *The Plight of the Share Cropper* (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1934).



County committees on cotton, tobacco, and peanut programs usually met at the call of the agent to hear complaint cases and to make decisions on individual allotments. Some committees were active and well informed. In other cases the members merely attached their signatures to papers drawn up by the county agent and clerical assistants. The county agent and his assistants generally conducted the referendums on these commodity programs. Following the Hoosack Mills decision in January, 1936, and the consequent dissolution of county allotment committees in the southern states, the county agent was given responsibility for completing the details of the program, including the distribution of payments.

2. *Work in Agricultural Conservation Program.*—The Agricultural Conservation Program which followed the commodity programs of the A.A.A. required practically the same amount of leadership from county agricultural agents as the invalidated triple-A commodity programs had demanded. In many respects and in many sections the new conservation program was more in line with regular extension programs than its predecessor had been. Its "practice payments" provided federal funds to reward farmers for putting into operation many "good management methods" and principles advocated by the extension service.<sup>20</sup> Its diversion payments, providing benefits for planting soil-conserving crops, were not always regarded so favorably by extension leaders. In the central states, where the committee had assumed substantial responsibility for the administration of the commodity programs, the agent found that fewer requests were made for his assistance. Since the new program was better adapted to the types of agriculture in the northeastern states and since farmers and state extension leaders regarded it more favorably, the county agricul-

<sup>20</sup> "Practice payments" were made for following certain definite soil-improving methods such as the application of lime or terracing. The other type of payment, "diversion payment," was used to promote the planting of "soil conserving crops" in the place of "soil depleting crops."

tural agent accepted more responsibility.<sup>11</sup> In New York, for example, the county agent in most counties served in 1936-37 as executive secretary of the county committee. The committee advised on matters of policy, but since the program was limited to "practice payments," with the exception of a few tobacco counties, questions of policy were not numerous.

In the southern region an attempt was made in 1937 to democratize the program by giving the county agricultural conservation committees more authority. The initial step taken in that direction was to discontinue the payment of the administrative expenses of the county and local committees directly from the Washington A.A.A. office through the state A.A.A. office and to substitute the practice used in the central region of deducting these expenses from the benefit checks. (The benefit checks were made correspondingly higher.) Thus the county committee was given the authority to draw up its own budget within certain limits and consequently to have more control over the local personnel than they had had when it was necessary to adjust its expenses to an allotment set by the state A.A.A. office. These county budgets released the county agricultural agent and state extension office from considerable financial responsibility.<sup>12</sup> In both programs the county agricultural agent has been influential in the selection and retention of county and community committeemen. It is interesting to note that the change from the commodity to the conservation program did not result in a large turnover in the personnel of county committees. There have been gradual shifts from year to year. The trend of selection is toward younger committeemen than were selected during the first years of the A.A.A. A considerable number of committeemen

<sup>11</sup> A number of these states objected to "diversion payments" and made an arrangement with the Federal A.A.A. Office to limit their programs to "practice payments." (Sometimes a few special counties were included in diversion payments.)

<sup>12</sup> This step was not favored by the state extension services in this region. Extension leaders asserted that it would increase administrative expense and decrease general efficiency.

appointed to the first temporary committees in 1933-34, however, are now serving on agricultural conservation committees. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 provides that the county agent, if not selected as secretary of the county committee, shall be an *ex officio* member of that group without a vote.<sup>13</sup>

3. *Contributions of the A.A.A. to increased extension personnel.*—To enable the state extension services to carry on effective educational, promotional, and administrative work for the adjustment programs the A.A.A. made substantial contributions for the employment of agents in counties without agents and for the employment of a large number of assistant county agents. In 1933 emergency county agents and assistants were appointed with federal civil service status. After appointment the emergency agents functioned as regular county agents and assistants, entirely responsible to the state extension services. State directors were generally dissatisfied with this arrangement and maintained that the personnel selected was inferior to those employed through regular extension channels. Some of them protested that the unassembled examination which gave a rating of 50 per cent to candidates' experience did not effectively evaluate the quality of the experience—particularly the type of practical experience needed in county agent work. The civil service tests were discontinued after about six months' trial.

After this initial experiment the A.A.A. transferred funds to the federal extension service which were reallocated to the various state extension services for the employment of additional county agents and assistants, for traveling and other expenses, and for additional clerical assistance in the county extension offices. The southern extension services received funds, in addition, to employ tabulating and clerical assistance for the commodity committees, to pay the salary of state committeemen, of state supervisors, and of county committeemen. Approxi-

<sup>13</sup> See *Public No. 430* (75th Cong., 3d sess., H.R. 8505), chap. xxx.

mately \$20,000,000 was transferred to the state extension services in 1934-35 for these purposes.<sup>14</sup>

Since the accounts of the federal extension service and of the A.A.A. are not set up to show the amount spent in the states for the employment of additional county agents and assistants, it is necessary to resort to estimates. Director Warburton stated that \$5,583,000 was allotted for extension phases of the A.A.A. program in 1934-35. He estimated that approximately \$2,000,000 was spent for additional clerical assistance in county and state offices, leaving more than \$3,000,000 for salaries and traveling expenses of extension personnel.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Thayer, business manager of the extension service, after deducting amounts transferred from the A.A.A. for assistant county drought directors and for assistants in cotton adjustment, estimated that the number of regularly appointed extension personnel was increased by 1,171 from June 30, 1933, to January 30, 1935, at a cost of \$2,473,455, as a result of funds transferred from the A.A.A. More accurate statistics can be secured from some states which have separate records of the amount spent for salaries; other states report that it is too difficult to break down the records to show the amount spent for salaries of extension personnel. The allotments reported by the Mississippi Extension Service are shown in Table 7 and those reported by the Ohio Extension Service in Table 8. The Iowa Extension Service reports transfer of \$124,959.12 in 1933-34 for salary and expenses of state and county extension personnel and assistants, divided as in Table 9.

<sup>14</sup> The total allocation of A.A.A. funds to the extension service during the three years was \$40,680,909, but of this amount \$13,558,248 remained unexpended at the end of the period (see E. G. Nourse, J. S. Davis, and J. D. Black, *Three Years of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration*, Institute of Economics of Brookings Institution, Pub. 73 [Washington: Brookings Institution, 1937], p. 72).

<sup>15</sup> Funds for supplies and mimeographing of material for educational phases of the A.A.A. must also be subtracted from the \$5,583,000 (see U.S. Congress, Senate, *Development of Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work* [Senate hearings before Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on S. 2228, March 28 and 29, 1935] [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935] p. 46).

No comparison can be made between states because the amount of educational work carried on by the states within the same region varied greatly.

TABLE 7\*  
ALLOTMENTS FROM A.A.A. TO MISSISSIPPI EXTENSION SERVICE

| Expenditures   | 1933-34     | 1934-35      | 1935-36      |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Salary, state extension workers..  | \$ 4,694.00 | \$ 17,146.65 | \$ 5,187.50  |
| Salary, county agents.....   | 42,124.84   | 67,000.00    | 10,533.30    |
| Salary, assistant county agents and assistants in cotton adjustment..... | 1,117.49    | 136,426.64   | 132,945.19   |
| Total.....   | \$47,936.33 | \$220,573.29 | \$148,665.99 |

\* Data secured from Director's Office, Mississippi State Extension Service.

TABLE 8\*  
ALLOTMENTS FROM A.A.A. TO OHIO EXTENSION SERVICE

| Expenditures  | 1933-34   | 1934-35   | 1935-36   |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total.....  | \$126,000 | \$163,050 | \$113,540 |
| Salary, county agents and emergency assistants..... | 76,860    | 65,220    | 45,416    |

\* Data secured from Ohio State Extension Service Office.

TABLE 9\*  
ALLOTMENTS TO IOWA EXTENSION SERVICE FROM  
A.A.A. IN 1933-34

\$78,637.74....Paid on salaries of county agents in lieu of travel and other expenses  
38,899.38....Paid on salaries of emergency assistant county agricultural agents  
7,422.00....Travel expense of extension specialists and supervisors on emergency work

\* Iowa State Extension Service, "Expenditure of Funds for the Educational Phases of the Emergency Agricultural Program in Iowa for the Year 1934" (Iowa C.H. 22, January, 1935). (Mimeographed.)

The interpretation of some state extension leaders of the acceptance of funds from the A.A.A. is that these funds were in partial payment for service done for the A.A.A. Director

Bliss of Iowa, for example, states that the total cost of A.A.A. activities to the average Iowa county in 1933-34 was \$3,207.81 and that the amount of A.A.A. funds available per county was only \$2,067.30. Thus, he concludes that an average of \$1,140.51 was expended per county from regular extension funds for A.A.A. work. To arrive at the figure he estimates that three-fifths of the county agent's salary and three-fifths of his travel expense should be rightly charged to the A.A.A. since approximately this amount of time was spent in promoting the work. In addition, he would charge the salary and traveling expense of emergency assistants as well as an estimated amount for stenographic, typist, and clerical help. He estimates that an additional \$50,463.81 was spent for A.A.A. activities by the state extension office above reimbursement by the A.A.A.

Since approximately three-fifths of the county agents' time in Iowa was devoted to A.A.A. activities, it is questionable if the extension service could expect full reimbursement from the A.A.A. for this time and still expect regular extension funds for full-time regular extension activities of the agents. Assumption that the nature of extension work had at least temporarily changed seems more logical and does not result in such delicate financial entanglement.<sup>16</sup>

The assumption that such activities had become a regular part of extension work necessitating increased congressional appropriations for extension work was the basis of arguments for passage of the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935. This Act, granting \$12,000,000 additional funds by 1940, was passed with the tacit understanding that the extension services would carry on educational work for New Deal agencies without request for further transfer of funds from these agencies.<sup>17</sup>

While the total amount of these funds available from the Bankhead-Jones Act more than replaced the previous transfer

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Pennsylvania turned back \$114,452.43 of these funds through failure in use in 1936-37. Eleven other states returned smaller amounts of Bankhead-Jones funds (see chap. vi).

of funds from the A.A.A. for regular extension personnel, the manner of distribution still left some states short of the amount allotted from the A.A.A.<sup>18</sup> Transfer of funds was continued to nine southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee) and to North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

4. *Discussion groups and program-planning committees.*—Developing along with these A.A.A. programs and to some degree as an integral part of them, the Department of Agriculture sponsored the development of discussion groups among farmers. These discussion groups were initiated as a rural adult-education movement to give the farmers the necessary “factual data” to enable them to make intelligent decisions concerning agricultural policy and to assume an active part in directing it. The discussion method was first promoted by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in co-operation with the agricultural extension services. Its promotion was later taken over by a Program Planning Division of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The discussion movement was largely inaugurated to serve as an important foundation for the Administration’s concept of “economic democracy” to encourage intelligent farmer participation in the policy farming as well as the administrative phases of the A.A.A. and other agricultural programs.

a) *Discussion groups.*—The discussion project was initiated in 1934–35 by nine state extension services which carried on a co-operative experimental project with the United States Department of Agriculture promoting forum and discussion groups among rural people. For initial impetus a series of discussions were broadcast over N.B.C. network by Department of Agriculture officials. Material was prepared in the Department and distributed to the state extension leaders who sent

<sup>18</sup> Director Brokaw reported in 1937 that Nebraska funds from the Bankhead-Jones Act were about \$40,000 less than those formerly transferred from the A.A.A. Mississippi was still receiving \$146,500 for extension-service salaries of state and county workers in 1936–37.

it to groups of local farmers through the county agents. Among the subjects prepared for discussion were:

What sort of a co-operative movement do American farmers want?

What kind of land policies should the nation have?

What share of the national income should farmers have?

Is it in the interest of the nation to have more or fewer people living on the land?

The farmer and the consumer of farm products—what, if any, are their obligations to one another?

Secretary Wallace, speaking before a conference of ten land-grant colleges, thus described his conception of the objectives of such discussion and forum groups:

I do not conceive this as in any sense a propaganda movement or a mere handing down of a fact which someone has discovered. I hold with the new method of teaching which has grown up in the last few years . . . that the object is not to impart facts but to get students to think. If this movement toward wider discussion of great public issues is to be worth anything, then, possibly public agencies must supply machinery for discussion, to help it to move along expeditiously. But when it comes to the end that is to be reached, the decisions that are to be made, the discussion leaders should not suggest any particular end or decision. . . . It seems to me that we are in a bit of a race to get certain decisions made that we have needed to make ever since the World War.

A subdivision of the Program Planning Division of the A.A.A. has been set up to promote these discussion groups. The subdivision headed by Dr. Carl Taeusch, a former professor of philosophy at Harvard University, prepares simple pamphlets giving economic data and various viewpoints and approaches to questions of national policy of particular interest to the farmers. In co-operation with the Co-operative Extension Service leaders of this division hold regional conferences of extension leaders to give them special help in techniques and methods of conducting discussion groups. They are also able to meet a limited number of farm groups where emphasis is placed on the techniques and methods of conducting discussion rather than on specific decisions on questions of public policy. State extension services are requested to appoint a



state discussion leader for the project who, in turn, trains county agricultural agents and farmers in the method and furnishes them pamphlets prepared by the Division of Program Planning of the A.A.A.

State extension services responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Some did not appoint state leaders or appointed leaders who gave little attention to the problem. Some of them stated that they were not interested in discussion for the sake of discussion and that they had been using the discussion method in their program-planning and other meetings. A few regarded the discussion material as thinly disguised political propaganda. Some welcomed the material and the training provided in these discussion schools, admitting that insufficient emphasis had been given to this type of adult education in past extension programs. In California the work was turned over to the Farm Bureau Federation.

County agents who were responsible for setting up the discussion groups in communities and counties were not always enthusiastic about this additional project advocated by the Department of Agriculture at a time when they were already burdened with numerous federal programs. The training and experience of the agents did not fit them with the necessary tolerance and objectivity for this task; for they were accustomed to parceling out a continuous supply of "right answers" to immediately pressing farm problems and consequently often found it difficult to see the practical value of philosophical discussion groups. Leaders in some states reported that it was difficult to keep the county agent from monopolizing the discussion and insisting that his viewpoint and judgment be accepted by the group. Although the county agents were at first slow to promote this project, in a number of states they have co-operated wholeheartedly, and county agents in most states are now introducing some of the discussion material into community meetings. County agents in some states have organized rural youth groups whose activities combine discussion and recreational activities.

b) *County planning.*—Beginning in 1935, A.A.A. county planning projects were organized to secure the judgment of local farmers concerning probable production of farm products and desirable changes in production based on estimated demand for these products and good farm management. County agricultural agents considered these county planning projects more in line with their conception of practical extension work. The estimated amount of reduction needed in specific commodities was compared with estimates of state college economists and Department of Agriculture officials as a basis of judgment for the 1936 commodity programs by A.A.A. administrators. Work in the counties was begun by a study of economic background material in a series of outlook meetings conducted by the county agricultural agent. The county agent next appointed a county planning committee to study the economic data available and to make their own estimates as a basis for drawing up a long-time community plan which would fit into a regional and national program.<sup>19</sup>

c) *Experimental counties.*—In a few especially selected counties county-wide plans in accordance with “good farming practices,” drawn up by local farmers assisted by agricultural conservation officials, state college economists, and extension leaders, are being carefully tested by actual application in so-called “experimental counties.” County agricultural agents in these counties are responsible for much additional educational work to inform farmers concerning the purposes of the proposed project, the immediate economic benefits in the form of special payments, and estimated long-time benefits to be derived from the experiment. After the project is fully explained a referendum is held. If the project is accepted, the county agent is responsible for aiding in the selection and training of a special county planning committee which replaces the former agri-

<sup>19</sup> In some sections agents who considered themselves too busy or who were not in sympathy with the project did not set up a committee but substituted their own judgments. In at least one state the extension service did not consider the plan practicable and refused to use it for an extension project.

cultural conservation committee. The agent serves in an advisory capacity to the committee in its work of making crop plans and fitting them to individual farms as well as in the distribution of payments and general compliance work.<sup>20</sup>

**B. SOIL-CONSERVATION WORK IN CO-OPERATION WITH  
UNITED STATES SOIL CONSERVATION  
SERVICE**

Another major agricultural agency with which the county agent has co-operated is the Soil Conservation Service. This Service has as its objectives to develop soil-erosion-control methods, to conduct research and surveys relating to soil erosion, and to conduct demonstration projects in areas subject to water and wind erosion.

The county agricultural agent has held educational meetings and otherwise assisted in explaining the objectives and specific projects of the Soil Conservation Service. He has advised the Service in the selection of soil-conservation demonstration areas and has assisted in selecting farmer-leaders and in enlisting the support of farmers in these areas.<sup>21</sup>

The county agent has also assisted the Soil Conservation Service by giving advice concerning the selection of personnel for erosion-control-work camps which are conducted by the Service in co-operation with the Civilian Conservation Camps Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. County agents in camp areas have often assisted in drawing up soil-conservation projects for the camps. In some states— notably Alabama—where the state extension service was already carrying on rather extensive terracing programs, there was particularly close co-operation. It is anticipated that the county agent will have an important function in setting up and in some measure directing the work of committees in soil-con-

<sup>20</sup> A few state extension services, notably Pennsylvania and Illinois, have not encouraged setting up experimental counties. They feel that it involves the extension service in work which is beyond the scope of extension education.

<sup>21</sup> There were approximately one hundred and seventy watershed-demonstration areas on October 11, 1937.

servations districts to be formed for future soil-conservation work.<sup>22</sup>

The Soil Conservation Service has employed some county and state agents co-operatively with the state extension services to give special assistance in this work. These agents are technically responsible to the extension service. Seventy-one co-operative agents were employed on July 20, 1937.<sup>23</sup> In July, 1937, the Soil Conservation Service was also contributing approximately \$125,000 for its share in the salaries of state specialists and of a limited number of assistant agents in twenty-eight different states. The agents were administratively responsible to the state extension services but technically responsible to the Soil Conservation Service.<sup>24</sup>

#### C. WORK IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Agricultural development is given as one of the major objectives of the Tennessee Valley Authority Act. The Agricultural Division of the Authority has relied to a large extent upon the state extension services and the state experiment stations for assistance in the development of its soil-conservation work in the Tennessee Valley states. The Authority's contacts with practical farmers have been made almost entirely through county agricultural agents and their special assistants appointed to carry on this work.

The county agricultural agent has co-operated in the project to develop and distribute fertilizer by using Tennessee Valley

<sup>22</sup> Twenty-six states had passed the necessary legislation to allow local farmers to set up districts by July, 1938, and thirty-two districts had been set up in nine different states (interview with J. Phil Campbell, chief of the Division of Co-operative Relations and Planning, Soil Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture).

<sup>23</sup> Recent policy of the Soil Conservation Service has been to discontinue these co-operative agents.

<sup>24</sup> Co-operative relations between the Soil Conservation Service and the state extension services are based on a co-operative agreement which provides among other things that the state extension director and the state experiment-station director are to be members of an advisory committee.

Authority fertilizer in numerous pasture demonstrations. More intensive work is done by the county in watershed areas of the Tennessee Valley states with unit demonstrations in farm and home management. The owner or operator of the selected demonstration farm makes an agreement with a local association of farmers to carry out an approved five-year farming program as a community service. The farm is appraised and mapped preliminary to drawing up a detailed farm program. The work is closely supervised by the county agricultural agent or assistant, who assists in drawing up a detailed plan for operation of the entire farm as a unit enterprise and requires that a budget be set up and detailed records kept.

County agricultural agents have also carried on terracing demonstrations to prevent washing of the land in the Tennessee Valley Authority area and have secured the assistance of farmers in planting lespedeza furnished by the Authority for use in watershed areas. Educational campaigns are carried on for the rural electrification project of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Still another type of assistance is given in the relocation of families displaced by T.V.A. projects and the supervision of their farming operations.

The T.V.A. work of the county agents and assistants is based on project agreements between the state agricultural colleges and the Authority. These projects are submitted by the colleges for the Authority's approval before co-operative work is begun. After estimated budgets for the projects are approved by the Authority, the agricultural colleges advance funds for the necessary expenditures to carry on the projects. They are, however, reimbursed monthly by the T.V.A. after submitting certified invoices and receipted vouchers in support of the work.

On the basis of this agreement assistant county agents are employed by the state extension service to carry on the work with the farm people in the T.V.A. area. Some of these assistants are employed to assist in terracing operations, others in soil conservation, and still others in the watershed area to assist

in the relocation of farm families displaced by the T.V.A. project. Practically every county agent in the watershed area is supplied with one assistant financed indirectly by T.V.A. funds, and two county agents are supplied with four such assistants. These assistants are administratively responsible to the state extension services, but the personnel division of the T.V.A. gives perfunctory approval to their selection.<sup>25</sup>

The T.V.A. does not supervise the work of these assistants but receives copies of their monthly and annual reports. Members of the agricultural division of the T.V.A. reported that they would not be concerned to learn that an assistant was

TABLE 10\*  
T.V.A. FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO THE STATE EXTENSION  
SERVICES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF ASSISTANT  
COUNTY AGENTS IN 1937

|                     |           |               |           |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Tennessee.....      | \$152,520 | Georgia.....  | \$ 18,360 |
| Alabama.....        | 69,300    | Virginia..... | 19,440    |
| North Carolina..... | 32,175    | Kentucky..... | 14,004    |
| Mississippi.....    | 16,100    |               |           |

\* Data supplied by Tennessee Valley Authority.

spending most of his time in 4-H Club work. In such a case they would assume that the county agent would have more time to devote to T.V.A. projects. Each extension service determines the salary of its assistants employed on project agreements with the T.V.A. The average salary in 1937 varied from \$2,145 for soil-conservation assistants in North Carolina to \$3,090 for relocation assistants in Tennessee.

The T.V.A. was providing \$321,899 in 1937 to co-operate in the employment of assistant county agents. It was divided between the states as shown in Table 10.

State extension services are entirely satisfied with Tennes-

<sup>25</sup> The personnel division of the T.V.A. reserves the right to question the appointment of unqualified men, but it sets no minimum standards and had questioned only two appointments by March, 1937. Some states have a policy of employing local men for T.V.A. assistants. Most of the states employ college graduates, but one state has employed a number of assistants in relocation who have had no college education but are merely prominent local men.

see Valley Authority relationships. They consider the co-operative work with the T.V.A. to be a model of a properly coordinated program. The Agricultural Division of the T.V.A. also reports complete satisfaction with existing relationships.

#### D. WORK IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE RESETTLEMENT AND FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATIONS

The county agent has occasionally assisted the Land Use Division of the former Resettlement Administration in its land-purchase program, but his closest contact has been with the Rural Rehabilitation Division.<sup>26</sup> The Rehabilitation Division extends loans and a limited number of subsistence grants to farmers who cannot secure credit from other sources to purchase the necessary food, feedstuffs, clothing, seeds, and equipment, and sometimes for the renting of land for farm operations. These loans are made on an annual basis and are based on an estimate of the client's ability to repay the loan as measured by his crop prospects. The county agent gives technical advice on farm plans, refers prospective clients, and gives advice concerning the character and ability of the applicants. The county agent is usually a member and often serves as chairman of the County Rural Rehabilitation Committee, which serves as an advisory body to the county or district rural rehabilitation supervisor who selects the clients and supervises their farm operations. He is assisted by a home supervisor who makes detailed plans for the home work of the clients and estimates the necessary amount to be loaned for food and clothing. The relationship between the county agent and the county rehabilitation supervisor in Alabama has been particularly close. The county agent has almost without exception recommended the county supervisor who occupies an adjoining office and depends upon the agent for technical advice. In this state, for all practical purposes, the rehabilitation supervisor has functioned in the capacity of an assistant county agent.

<sup>26</sup> The Land Use Division is now a division of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Rehabilitation work has extended contact with a class of farmers with whom the county agents have not customarily worked. The relationship has not been so close in regions with a small number of clients where district rehabilitation supervisors are used in place of county supervisors. There are some exceptions: in Nevada, for example, home supervision in rehabilitation work has been carried on by the home demonstration agents. County agents in Maryland have been responsible for carrying on farm supervision in rehabilitation work. In a number of states where the case load is light and the state extension service critical of rehabilitation work, the county agent's co-operative work is limited to giving out information concerning the program to interested farmers.

The county agent is asked to assume considerable responsibility in the new farm-tenancy phases of the Farm Security Program. With the county rehabilitation supervisor he is to recommend members to serve on a county tenancy and farm-adjustment committee. He will be requested to give special supervision and assistance to selected tenant-clients in their farming operations.<sup>27</sup>

#### E. WORK IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION

The county agricultural agent assisted the Farm Credit Administration by giving out information concerning the different types of credit agencies and their functions. He assisted in the organization of district production credit associations by interesting local farmers and taking them to the district meetings. The county agent usually recommended members for the feed-and-seed-loan committee, provided office space for the clerk of this committee, and often directed the clerk's work. The county agent also made recommendations for members of the county debt-adjustment committee. These committees have performed valuable service persuading farm

<sup>27</sup> Owing to limited finances, only approximately three hundred counties are to receive funds for a tenancy program in 1937-38.



debtors and their creditors to readjust their relationships. In some cases creditors were willing to scale down the debts contracted in a period of high prices and land values to conform with the change in farm purchasing power and land values. He often extended his office facilities for their meetings and served in an advisory capacity. In some counties the county agent helped organize groups of farmers to obtain funds through the Bank of Co-operatives. The Farm Credit Administration has co-operated closely with the extension service in several states in conducting training schools for county leaders of farm-management work to discuss sound use of credit. They have also co-operated with the extension leaders in holding farm-record summary schools in some states.

#### F. MISCELLANEOUS RELIEF AND DROUGHT ACTIVITIES

In some states in the primary drought area the county agent served as county drought director. In this capacity he made feed and seed surveys, assisted in locating roughage, supervised government purchase of drought cattle, and issued drought-rate certificates. In many counties outside the drought area the agent assisted in locating feed to be shipped to the drought area and assisted in locating pasture areas for drought cattle. He assisted needy farmers to secure feed and seed loans and to conserve silage through construction of temporary trench silos. This work was carried on in co-operation with the Emergency Relief Administration.

Instructions for the cultivation of subsistence relief gardens were given by county agents in some sections. Home demonstration agents gave instructions on the conservation and preservation of foods for relief families. In Iowa "can-a-cow" campaigns were carried on by county home demonstration agents to insure meat for home use. Home demonstration agents and state extension specialists in South Carolina trained assistants financed by Works Progress Administration funds to carry on special nutrition work with needy families. These workers were called W.P.A. aides. In North Carolina emergency home

demonstration agents were financed by relief funds to give special assistance to relief families.

The county agent assisted in making Federal Emergency Relief Administration feed and seed loans which were extended to farmers who could not qualify for Farm Credit Administration feed and seed loans. Federal Emergency Relief Administration labor was used by county agents to construct club barns, for assistance in drought cattle sales, and occasionally for additional office assistance. Local employment bureaus for farm labor were frequently maintained for farm labor. In some states county agents in selected counties assisted in making rural housing surveys.

#### G. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The amount of responsibility assumed by county agents in the various federal agricultural programs varied considerably in different states and in different agricultural regions. The southern state extension leaders and county agents were generally more willing to assume a position of substantial responsibility in these programs than extension leaders in other states. County agents in the northeastern states were least willing to assume responsibility lest they lose their educational status and become mere service arms of the federal government, administering programs which they did not always wholeheartedly approve. The issues were more pronounced in the activities assumed in co-operation with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.<sup>28</sup>

Although general approval was given to extension service co-operation in A.A.A. activities by the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association at its annual meeting in the fall of 1933, the work was not considered a project agreement with the federal extension

<sup>28</sup> The commodity programs were not as well adapted to the type of agriculture in the northeastern states and were not regarded as favorably by the farmers. County agents in some of these states carried on educational work for these programs despite the disapproval of local farmers. Some reported that disapproval was sufficiently great so that they risked the loss of the county appropriation for extension work.

service which the states were obligated to carry out beyond a minimum amount of activity in disseminating information.<sup>29</sup> Federal extension service could recommend and otherwise attempt to persuade the state extension services to co-operate, but it could not force them to carry out specific activities for the A.A.A. The attitude of the county agents toward the Adjustment program varied with the political and economic background, the attitude of their local farmers, and with the attitude of state extension leaders. Two extremes in attitudes between the enthusiastic southern extension leaders and the skeptical northeastern leaders can be illustrated by quotations selected from the annual state extension reports of North Carolina and New York. Director Schaub of North Carolina wrote in his 1933 annual report:

The beginning of the A.A.A. program set in motion revolutionary changes in farming and agricultural extension work in North Carolina. For the first time a concerted drive was made to adjust crop production to consumption through the co-operation of farmers with other farmers and their government. This departure from the practice of producing as much as possible could be accomplished only by informing farmers in full detail of the new conception of agriculture. This was no small task. Members of the extension service, including county and home demonstration agents, turned practically their entire attention during the last half of the year to crop reduction programs and work incidental to these programs.

This statement may be contrasted with a statement from the New York report for 1934:

The attitude of the directors of farm-bureau work was that it would be less confusing to offer the facilities of county extension organization for the educational work on adjustment programs and emergency credit

<sup>29</sup> "The Federal Government has wisely adopted the policy of carrying out these measures for the aid of agriculture largely through the existing agencies and organizations and in relying chiefly upon the extension services in the various states, with county farm agents, county home demonstration agents, assistant agents and clerks in the various counties. The extension service welcomes this opportunity for rendering an enlarged service to agriculture and to rural life by aiding to the fullest possible extent in carrying out the plans of the Federal Government" (see *Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* [1933], p. 194).

work than to have parallel organizations set up that would be unfamiliar with local situations and that would require additional financing. It seemed best to bring all information directly to farmers, where requested, on adjustment programs so that farmers could decide whether they were interested in cooperating.<sup>30</sup>

In the northeastern region Pennsylvania county agents are reported to have participated less in A.A.A. activities than agents of the other states. They refused to participate in promotional and semiadministrative activities. They gave out information concerning the programs to inquiring farmers but felt that doing more would not be in accordance with their educational function. They have been accused of general sabotage of the Administration's program, but their stand on this issue was consistent with their general extension policy which has been based on a literal interpretation of the Smith-Lever Act. They did not continue administrative relations with county farm bureaus after the state federation was organized because they believed that such a relationship would interfere with the educational nature of their work. For the same reason they have not participated in the national 4-H Club contests sponsored by commercial interests. They have been secure in their position from federal pressure because such pressure applied to an "educational service" could be severely criticized. The Department of Agriculture attempted to persuade them to assume more responsibility. The Farm Bureau attempted to swing them into line but to no avail. Director McDowell remained firm even when suggestions were made that his policy might necessitate setting up a parallel agency which might eventually replace the extension service.

Participation of county agents in the northeastern states including Pennsylvania was greater in the agricultural conservation program. Leaders in these states and in the states which had actively participated in promotional and advisory work in the invalidated A.A.A. commodity programs were placed in a

<sup>30</sup> New York State College of Agriculture, "New York Report on Extension Work: Forty-seventh Annual Report of the New York State College of Agriculture, 1934," pp. 23-24. (Mimeographed.)

dilemma by the terms of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, which provided that after 1938 the agricultural conservation program should be administered through grants to states. They feared that a new state agency set up to administer the program in co-operation with the secretary would duplicate their educational function. The southern extension leaders were generally agreed that the college or the state extension service should be designated as the state agency, and seven southern states had passed legislation by September, 1937, designating the college or the extension service as the state agency.<sup>31</sup> Extension leaders in several of the northeastern states felt that they must assume the responsibility because they were afraid that another agency would conduct education and research and thus endanger the status of extension work. Extension leaders in New York, New Jersey, and Delaware favored designation of the college as the state agency.

The date of administering the agricultural conservation programs through state grants has now been postponed to 1942, and the probability that the program will actually be administered through state grants is so small that little concern is expressed over state acceptance and over designation of a state administrative agency.

Wide variation is likewise apparent in the attitude of county agents and state extension leaders to other agricultural programs. Some southern extension leaders advocate that all the agencies be co-ordinated under the administrative direction of the extension service. Some would even be willing to assume responsibility for the banking functions of the Farm Security Administration. Others disapprove of the program and want no part in it.

The county agricultural agent works along specialized production lines, and his promotion of business methods and co-

<sup>31</sup> Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana—Alabama designated the extension service as the state agency. It is questionable whether this act would have been accepted by the secretary since the extension service has no independent legal status but is only an administrative division of the college.

operative organizations has temporarily, at least, been largely replaced by participation in the various agricultural programs of the Roosevelt administration. The county agent has served as an information center for the A.A.A., the Resettlement and present Farm Security Administration, the Soil Conservation Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Farm Credit Administration, and for various relief and drought agencies. In many of these programs county agents have assumed more active promotional and semiadministrative functions.

In addition to the co-operative work carried on by county agents and state extension workers, it is interesting to note that a large number of former extension employees now occupy responsible positions in the new agricultural programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Soil Conservation Service have drawn 463 employees from extension ranks. In 1938 the Soil Conservation Service was reported to have 159 former extension employees; the Farm Security Administration had 154 and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration reported 97. The T.V.A. reported 5 former extension employees at the Knoxville headquarters, 1 at Norris, and 59 in the field.<sup>32</sup> In some respects these programs have provided facilities and incentives for farmers to follow principles and methods long advocated by county agents. In other respects they present new approaches to the farmers' problems and a broader social and economic philosophy.

These new government agencies serve as a challenge to the state extension services to re-examine and re-evaluate the functions of their county agricultural agents. The new agencies go to the counties with more personal and direct services and with funds in some instances to reward the farmers for following their advice. They need not request local appropriations or even state funds in many cases. Some of them have disregarded the "leadership theory" of extension teaching—that

<sup>32</sup> In some cases they are co-operatively employed by the extension service and the new agency (see C. W. Warburton, "Extension Trains Leaders," *Extension Service Review*, IX [July, 1938], 99).

farmers should learn for themselves by watching demonstration leaders—and they criticize county agricultural agents for failure to reach the lower economic classes.

The rehabilitation program, in particular, was an additional challenge to the "leadership theory." It may have been a good theory in the beginning when more or less simple individual practices were taught, but as the work broadened to more general and intangible principles of farm management and planning it became more difficult for the less progressive farmers to grasp and apply extension teaching. This breach between leaders and followers also became more apparent as extension work was increasingly specialized. Of what value would it be to farmer Jones who had only a family-sized flock of chickens to learn that farmer Smith had been advised to buy a brooder house for his commercial flock of five hundred? What good would it do a Negro sharecropper's wife, who could scarcely keep her family supplied with the cheapest and coarsest food and who had only a few vegetables to can, to learn that Mrs. White was canning with a pressure cooker? One of the leaders in the Indian extension work, speaking of the possibility of using the regular extension setup for Indian work, said that the county agricultural agents could no longer speak a simple language to the unspecialized and uneducated Indian farmer. He complained that the state extension service had no bulletins available for farmers who still used setting hens for hatching their chickens. He said if something should go wrong with an Indian's fruit tree it would require about five specialists to diagnose the trouble, and the poor Indian would only be left in a state of bewilderment. Some of the Negro agents in the southern states complain that the report forms prepared by the federal extension office almost force them to work with the few Negro landowners so that they can "make a showing" in their statistical reports.<sup>33</sup> The secretary of agriculture has thrown out a challenge to extension workers to readapt their programs to reach more directly the "lower third" of the farming class.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion of the work of the Negro county agent see chap. vii.

The southern Tenant Farmers' Union, in its minority report of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy, was critical of both the Department of Agriculture and the county agents on this problem:

We note with interest and hope recent speeches of Secretary Wallace in which he states that the Department of Agriculture has heretofore throughout its history been concerned primarily with the top-third of farmers in this country and that it must turn its attention to the others from now on. But our experience has been such that we cannot believe the Department of Agriculture will be able in any near future to remove itself from domination by the rich and landowning class of farmers and their political-pressure lobbies. The county agricultural agent, often paid in part by chambers of commerce of the Farm Bureau Federation, is a symbol of such domination.

Some thoughtful extension leaders have begun to re-examine their program in the light of these criticisms and to realize that, if farming is to be considered a "way of life" as well as a business or even if farming is to be considered an integrated business with common objectives, more attention will need to be given to the marginal and submarginal farmer.<sup>34</sup>

Some extension leaders of the federal service have given special attention to the problem of readapting extension work to meet the needs of the lower income groups and to more effective methods to raise the general farm income. Mr. Hochbaum, regional agent for the eastern states, has pointed out that analysis of specialized fields of agriculture by county agents and state extension leaders is not enough—that "more

<sup>34</sup> The South Carolina Extension Service gave special attention to raising the living standards of a limited number of tenants by encouraging the landlords to plant land released from cotton by the A.A.A. to produce food and feedstuffs needed on the farm in 1933. The state home demonstration leader, assisted by the extension nutritionist and the production specialist, prepared a minimum food and feed budget and invited a limited number of landlords to participate in working out a planting plan for each tenant which would include enough feed for the family and livestock on the farm as a complete unit. The work has been continued. In 1936 records were received from twenty-five white and eighty-two Negro tenants on nineteen plantations in seven counties (see Lonny I. Landrum, "Landlord Tenant of Plantation Project," February, 1937 [typewritten report on file at the Office of the South Carolina Extension Service, Clemson College, South Carolina]).



ground must be covered, more factors considered, greater aims accepted." He suggests that the larger aims of raising farm incomes generally and of lifting vast numbers of rural people above the poverty level should be the long-time objectives of the county, state, and federal extension services. He advises as a primary step a reduction of the number of highly specialized activities and concentration on fewer and large problems based on an analysis of economic data.<sup>35</sup>

Thus extension leaders challenged by the social and economic philosophy of the new agricultural programs find themselves at an important turning-point in extension work. They have long been giving help of a specialized nature on specific agricultural problems; they have been carrying on a certain amount of farm-management and farm-marketing work for farmers on an individual and community basis; but they are now challenged to integrate these services with long-time policies of planning and soil conservation. In addition to more effective work to raise general farm income they are challenged to reach below the progressive and educated farmers who readily assimilate new methods and principles to the marginal and submarginal farmers who need the help badly but are either unaware of this source of help or are skeptical of its benefits.

The depression experience of the county agent and the new national agricultural policy seem to require a reorientation of his work.

<sup>35</sup> See H. W. Hochbaum, "What Are the Aims in Rural Living?" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 237, March, 1936). (Mimeographed.)

## CHAPTER V

### THE SYSTEM OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENT

**T**HE county agricultural agent is unique as a government official in the United States because he represents at once three levels of government—county, state, and federal—and in many states a private farm organization as well. By the terms of the Smith-Lever extension law he is in a measure responsible to the secretary of agriculture, who, in co-operation with the state colleges of agriculture, carries on co-operative agricultural extension work. To secure additional funds and to keep the service in close contact with the local farmers, the state agricultural college shares its authority with county governing-boards and in many states with county farm-bureau organizations. Despite the county agent's official status and his dependence upon government funds local farmers claim him as their own farm agent.

#### A. FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY

The county agent's responsibilities to the secretary of agriculture are not of a direct nature, since they arise out of the secretary's authority to approve state plans of work, state-extension-service budgets, and in a general way to supervise the work of the state extension service. The authority given to the secretary over the state extension services by the Smith-Lever law is substantially limited by practical and political considerations. It did, however, provide the secretary with an opportunity to exercise considerable discretion by its general terms that the work should be carried on "in cooperation with" the state college and "in a manner mutually agreed upon" as well as by its broad definition of extension work. Opportunity to direct the work is given to the secretary by the provision that before federal funds are available in any year the college

must submit plans of work for the year and secure the secretary's approval of those plans. The secretary is given a check on expenditure of Smith-Lever funds by the requirement that the states make detailed reports on forms which he prescribes concerning the amount of funds and disbursements. A further safeguard is added in the provision that if the funds are "diminished, lost, or misapplied" the state must replace them before it is eligible for further federal funds; and a few specific restrictions are made on the use of Smith-Lever funds. The secretary is to be given a "full and detailed report" annually of extension work in each state. Finally the Smith-Lever law adds a sanction to the secretary's authority. It gives him the legal power to withhold funds from a "state not entitled to receive its share of the annual appropriation." It states:

That on or before the first day of July in each year after the passage of this act the Secretary of Agriculture shall ascertain and certify to the Secretary of the Treasury as to each state, whether it is entitled to receive its share of the annual appropriation for cooperative agricultural extension work under this act and the amount which it is entitled to receive. If the Secretary of Agriculture shall withhold a certificate from any state of its appropriation, the facts and reasons therefore shall be reported to the President, and the amount involved shall be kept separate in the Treasury until the expiration of the Congress next succeeding a session of the legislature of any state from which a certificate has been withheld, in order that the state may, if it should so desire, appeal to Congress from the determination of the Secretary of Agriculture. If the next Congress shall not direct the sum to be paid, it shall be covered into the Treasury.

The authority to withhold funds, the general elastic phrases, and the use of the word "cooperative" aroused much fear among state college leaders both before and immediately following the passage of the Act. Dean Davenport of Illinois expressed some of the strongest protests to the proposed "cooperative extension act" when he said:

Under the proposed system of cooperation what shall be done with a man who is teaching unsound practice? Who shall discipline him and by what standards shall his teachings be judged as either sound or unsound?

Here is clearly a case of a man serving two masters besides his local constituency, in which rests his real responsibility. Moreover, the masters often disagree as to what is sound doctrine and what is safe practice. When the Department and state institution differ for example in soil treatment—and they do differ at this very point—who is to issue final orders to the adviser? Or is the whole enterprise to break down and the man to be left to do as he pleases?

It may be said that this will be a matter for adjustment and for co-operation. Very well. Will the Department consent to federal money being used to teach one doctrine and practice on one side of a state boundary and a different doctrine and practice on the other side, in order to please the people of both states?

Last of all, the inevitable result of the Department's concerning itself intimately with local conditions is to attract the attention of unscrupulous politicians, who will find therein a powerful means of advancing their own personal interests. Given 4,000 or 5,000 local agents scattered among the farmers of all the Congressional districts and under the practical control of a department which depends for its very life upon annual appropriations by Congress, all operating under the inter-locking scheme of the new Lever bill, and we should have constructed and at work the most gigantic political machine ever devised. That it would be used, there is abundant evidence already at hand.<sup>2</sup>

The fears of Dean Davenport and other land-grant-college leaders that the Department of Agriculture would dominate state and county extension work and introduce unscrupulous politicians were never realized in practice. The management of personnel problems has been left almost entirely to the state services and the Federal Extension Office has actually helped to protect the state services from political interference.<sup>3</sup>

The question of how much real legal authority the Smith-Lever Act gave the secretary in this co-operative program is still a debatable one. Although much discretion is left to the secretary in his policy of co-operative relations with the states, the practical exercise of his legal authority to withhold funds from a state extension service is substantially limited by the

<sup>2</sup> Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, *Proceedings of 27th Annual Convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, November 12-14, 1913* (Montpelier, Vt.: Capital City Press, 1914), p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. vi.

danger of political entanglements which would almost inevitably arise if a state should appeal to Congress over his authority and by the probability that he would be overruled in such a situation unless it involved a clear-cut and gross misuse of funds. This power serves as a useful deterrent to state extension services since an appeal to Congress would necessitate costly delay and embarrassment, but it has not proved valuable in stimulating a sometimes inefficient and mediocre service or in securing more complete co-operation with projects sponsored by the Department of Agriculture.

The authority to withhold funds actually has been used only once—in the case of the territory of Puerto Rico. Funds were withheld for two years (from July 1, 1932, to July 1, 1934) because the legislature designated the commissioner of agriculture, a political official, as custodian of the extension-service funds. The funds were granted in July, 1934, when a more suitable custodian was designated. No appeal was made to Congress.<sup>3</sup> Funds have never been withheld from any state, but the Federal Office threatened to withhold funds from Mississippi in 1930 because of the appointment of an unqualified state extension director following wholesale dismissal of agricultural college officials by Governor Bilbo. The Federal Office did not secure reinstatement of the discharged director, but its suggestion that a director be appointed from members of the state extension staff on the basis of seniority was followed by the board of trustees.<sup>4</sup> These two cases, one of them involving a territory and the other offering support to the state service against an unscrupulous governor, are not fair tests of the secretary's authority over an un-co-operative state service. Its practical usefulness against a united state service, par-

<sup>3</sup> Interview with W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Co-operative Extension Service.

<sup>4</sup> The first man eligible on the basis of seniority who was approved by the board of trustees refused the position, but the second man in order of seniority accepted (information from interview with W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Co-operative Extension Service, October 22, 1936, and from W. H. Elliott, assistant editor of Mississippi Extension Service).

ticularly if it were backed up by the Farm Bureau organization or firmly entrenched in state politics, is doubtful.<sup>5</sup> The authority is more apparent than real. Some federal extension leaders have said that the real power is limited to moral force and persuasion.<sup>6</sup>

The supplementary 1914 agreements, drawn up by the Department of Agriculture, definitely placed the initiative for development of extension work in the hands of the state extension services. Although some extension leaders objected to the agreements in the beginning, they now generally champion them as guaranties of states' rights and vehemently protest against any suggestions that they need revision.<sup>7</sup>

The policy of the Co-operative Extension Office of the Department of Agriculture has been to attempt to persuade the state extension services to accept the federal viewpoint, but if persuasion fails, to accept state plans of work not in accordance with this viewpoint if they are not entirely unsatisfactory. The initiative for drawing up plans of work lies with the state extension service. Except for a limited number of projects involving major policy of the Department, its views concerning particular projects are not generally known to the state extension services when annual plans of work are presented. Dr. C. B. Smith and M. C. Wilson of the Federal Extension Office have stated the

<sup>5</sup> The authority was not used to force unwilling state extension services to assume leadership in the A.A.A. programs. Department of Agriculture officials generally agree that this authority could not be used for such a purpose.

<sup>6</sup> V. O. Key, Jr., has pointed out the practical limitations of the authority to withhold federal funds. "There is often ascribed to the power to withhold federal funds a potency which it does not in reality possess. Its use is practically limited to a narrow range of situations, although legally it may be exercised when the state agency deviates even slightly from the federal act. . . . It is primarily the large political issues—the failure of the legislature to grant powers or adequate appropriations to the state agency, the machinations of a corrupt political machine, the spoils raids of the ordinary political organization—that bring about the exercise of the power. Drastic measures can be justified only when the transgressions have been gross" (*The Administration of Federal Grants to States* [Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1937], I, 173 and 174).

<sup>7</sup> See chap. iii.

position of the Co-operative Extension Office in approving state plans of work :

Rarely, if ever, is pressure exerted by the federal government on the state to adopt the federal viewpoint on extension work. Rather the federal government aims to persuade by presentation of the facts. If it cannot so persuade, it waits, provided, of course, the plans presented are reasonably satisfactory. . . . It is believed better that a state learn its mistakes than for the federal government to insist on a piece of work or a method that the state does not believe in. . . . At present the Federal Department of Agriculture is going on the assumption that it has fulfilled its part when it presents these improved methods to a state and leaves the matter to the state's discretion to adopt.<sup>8</sup>

The limited amount of supervision of the Federal Extension Office is carried on by four regional agents who are assisted by nine field agents and at times by federal subject-matter specialists. These regional agents are responsible for approving state plans of work, approving state budgets, and for auditing accounts and expenditures to make certain that they comply with the regulations of the federal statutes. In the evaluation of state projects of work, state administrative organization, and techniques of work the regional agents act more in the capacity of advisers than of inspectors.

The regional agents do not ordinarily have direct contacts with the county agents in their regions. They may meet a limited number in their occasional brief excursions into particular counties or at meetings of the National County Agricultural Agents' Association or at special summer-school sessions for county agents. County agricultural agents do not usually attend the meetings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities or the regional meetings of extension officials where problems of extension policy and methods are discussed by federal and state extension leaders. County agents who are members of special committees of the National County Agents' Association and the executive officers of this association may come to Washington once or twice a year to confer

<sup>8</sup> See *The Agricultural Extension System in the United States* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1930), p. 115.

with Director Warburton and other officials of the Department of Agriculture. The annual meeting of the association was held in Washington in 1937 to give county agents an opportunity to tour Washington and to confer with officials of the Department of Agriculture. Except for contacts through the National County Agricultural Agents' Association, through special conferences or graduate summer-school sessions, individual county agents do not make direct contacts with the Washington office. A Maryland county agent, for example, who makes frequent trips to Washington reported that no contacts had been made with federal extension leaders in charge of the Eastern Division of the Co-operative Extension Service.

Another type of supervision arises out of the authority of the Federal Extension Office to disapprove county agent appointments. Little direct use is made of this authority although the fact that approval is even perfunctorily given is probably useful in discouraging local political appointments. The Department does not ordinarily refuse the appointment of more than two or three county agents a year.<sup>9</sup>

The regional agents and other extension officials make direct contacts with state extension personnel at the annual meetings of the Land-Grant College Association and at regional conferences of various types. In addition to the customary regional conference of state extension directors and assistants, regional meetings of state-extension-service specialists in particular fields are sometimes called. Regional meetings are jointly called by the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association and by the Federal Extension Office. Programs for these meetings are jointly planned by federal extension leaders and by state extension directors.

1. *Responsibility of the state extension service to the United States Department of Agriculture for state plans of work.*—The annual programs of work submitted by the state extension services to the Federal Extension Office for approval consist

<sup>9</sup> See chap. vii for further discussion of county agent appointments.



of (1) a general plan of work submitted by the state extension director, (2) a plan of supervision submitted by each district agent, and (3) separate projects drawn up by the specialists for each subject-matter field. These state plans of work are not broken down into separate county plans of work, but the district agents are familiar with the plans drawn up by the county agents and their extension advisory agency in the various counties. His plan of supervision may include references to specific counties. The plans submitted by the state extension services vary from generalized skeleton outlines, giving minimum information to comply with federal requirements, to detailed and clear-cut analysis of particular problems in each field with proposed solutions.<sup>10</sup>

State plans are first reviewed by the federal subject-matter specialists who make suggestions for improvement in their particular field of work. They are then sent to the regional agent for evaluation of both the state plans and the suggestions of the federal subject-matter specialists. These recommendations are returned to the state extension directors. Federal leaders estimate that from 5 to 10 per cent of the state plans are changed as a result of federal review. These changes come about as a result of suggestion and persuasion rather than through the use of federal authority granted in the Smith-Lever Act. The exercise of federal authority is limited almost entirely to making sure that the state keeps within the letter of the law and that its projects are justifiable extension projects rather than research or classroom teaching. The United States Department of Agriculture, however, definitely stated that it was contrary to its policy for county agents to manage farm business organizations, to collect dues for farm organizations, and to edit organization publications. This policy was defined in a statement of Secretary Henry C. Wallace issued August 25, 1922:

As they are public teachers, it is not a part of the official duties of extension agents to perform for individual farmers or for organizations

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion see Key, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

the actual operations of production, marketing, or the various activities necessary to the proper conduct of business or social organizations. They may not properly act as organizers for farmers' associations; conduct membership campaigns; solicit membership; edit organization publications; manage cooperative business enterprises; engage in commercial activities; act as financial or business agents, nor take part in any of the work of farmers' organizations, or of any individual farmer, which is outside of their duties as defined by the law and by the approved projects governing their work. They are expected, however, to make available to organizations such information as will be helpful to them and contribute to the success of their work. . . .<sup>11</sup>

The regional agents would not approve state extension plans of work which provided that county agents should carry on the activities mentioned as contrary to the Department's policy in Secretary Wallace's statement of August 25, 1922.

2. *Approval of state extension budgets.*—Along with state plans of work which must be submitted to the Federal Extension Office before federal funds are available, each state submits a budget covering major phases of extension work including subject-matter projects, administration, publications, supervision, and county agent work. The budget not only specifies the total amount to be spent for these projects, but it also indicates the source of funds, stating in the case of federal funds from which federal act or appropriation the funds are derived. The budgets are reviewed by the federal regional agent, who may request the assistance of other federal extension officials.<sup>12</sup>

Conformance with specific legal provisions and prohibitions is the major concern of the regional agent in his inspection of

<sup>11</sup> This statement followed a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the States' Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the American Farm Bureau Federation signed in 1921 relative to the proper relationship between the county agent and the county farm bureau. This agreement and quotations from the statement of Secretary Henry C. Wallace are given in A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), pp. 168-71.

<sup>12</sup> The United States Budget Bureau, of course, takes no part in this procedure, since the amount of funds available are fixed by statute.

state extension budgets. The Smith-Lever Act prohibits the use of such funds for the "purchase, erection, preservation, or repair of any building or buildings, or the purchase or rental of land, or in college-course teaching, lectures in colleges, promoting agricultural trains, or for any other purpose not specified in the act." It provides that not more than 5 per cent shall be spent for publications. Capper-Ketcham funds may be used for agricultural trains, but 80 per cent of these funds is to be spent for salaries of county extension agents, who must be "men and women in fair and just proportions." Supplementary Smith-Lever appropriations have also carried the provision that 82 per cent of such funds must be used for salaries of personnel in the counties. To interpret further the intent of Congress, a number of federal rulings have been made regarding the use of funds; for example, they may not be used for feeding and caring for animals belonging to 4-H Club members, for circulating libraries, or for equipment in county offices.<sup>13</sup>

For a number of years after the passage of the Smith-Lever Act it was necessary for federal agents to be on the alert for attempts of the colleges to secure a considerable amount of the salary of the college faculty from extension funds by allowing these faculty members to do some extension lecturing. The states are allowed a 5 per cent increase in the amount spent for any extension project by transferring funds from other extension projects; more drastic changes may be made by securing the advance approval of the federal office.<sup>14</sup>

3. *Methods and techniques used by federal regional agents in their contacts with state-extension-service leaders.*—The regional agents must be skilled in the techniques of persuasion and of indirect influence. One regional agent reports that his own

<sup>13</sup> For additional federal rules see "Federal Legislation: Regulations and Rulings Affecting Co-operative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics," Miscellaneous Pub. 285 (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, September, 1937).

<sup>14</sup> This is generally a simple procedure if adequate reasons are given for the budget revision. For a more detailed discussion see Key, *op. cit.*, chap. ii.

ideas are better received when they do not bear a Washington label but are mixed with suggestions from state extension leaders. In making up a program or plan to present to his states for a regional extension conference, he first requests suggestions from all the states concerned and in the process slips in a few of his own. The states more readily accept the latter than if they came directly from the Washington office. Another technique frequently used is to request certain states which are closely following approved federal plans or techniques of work to discuss the success of this work at regional or national conferences or to ask others which are not following an approved program of work to present plans for such a program at these conferences. For example, in the process of working out plans for co-ordinating the soil-conservation program with the regular extension program a state leader may convince himself of the advisability of such co-ordination and get a better view of the weakness of his un-co-ordinated projects. Much progress may be made in co-ordinating state programs of work and in putting across new ideas and methods by carefully planned regional meetings and conferences. The western states have recognized their common problems and have held annual regional conferences to draw up common projects since 1923.<sup>25</sup> The federal agent uses the fraternal spirit of these conferences, where he appears not as a government inspector but as only another extension worker, to lay the basis for friendly relationships with the various state leaders and to use his influence for higher standards of state extension work.

Much difference is apparent in the attitudes of state leaders in the different regions toward the Federal Office as well as in different states in the same region. A regional agent whose secretary of agriculture is not of the political faith of his region finds a new barrier raised against him and his suggestions are critically scrutinized for possible political implications. States hostile to particular programs of the administration sometimes

<sup>25</sup> Annual conferences were temporarily discontinued during the depression period.

excuse persuasive efforts of federal extension leaders on the ground that the leaders must take such action but are probably doing it "with their fingers crossed."

Regional agents are assisted by field agents varying from one to three for each region, who are able to spend more time than the regional agent interviewing state workers and to make more frequent excursions into the counties. Field agents in the eastern section where distances are small may visit a number of counties during the course of the year; one field agent in this section visits from ninety to one hundred counties a year. They are also assisted by federal subject-matter specialists, who confere with state specialists and report their findings and recommendations back to the regional agent. The regional agent incorporates these suggestions into recommendations to the state extension director.

The regional agent is able to visit each state only about twice a year; approximately one-third of his time is necessarily taken up with the routine financial inspection. His annual inspection report to the federal office, however, includes in addition to a report on expenditures, a report on state organization of the work, state personnel, the report of the county agent leader (who may be the extension director, assistant director, or state agent in charge of county agents), a brief report on each of the subject-matter fields, and his own recommendations.

On the occasion of this annual inspection the federal regional agent meets with members of the State Extension Office staff and reviews in some detail the progress and problems of the year's work. He may visit a few selected counties where a special project or an unusually good piece of work is being done. These brief excursions into the counties are planned by the director and the district agents, at least one of whom accompanies the federal regional agent. The state leaders are jealous of their authority over the county workers and tend to view direct contacts between federal and county workers which have not been first routed and approved through their

office as encroaching on state authority. As early as 1915 the Executive Committee of the Land-Grant College Association discussed allegations that such direct contacts had been made by the States Relations Committee of the Department of Agriculture. The Committee assured them that such incidents had occurred "without the knowledge and the approval of the department."<sup>16</sup> A further pledge of the Department to deal only through the state extension officials was made at the Land-Grant College Convention in 1921 by C. W. Pugsley, assistant secretary of agriculture.

In closing let me repeat that the Department recognizes only the extension director or other authorized agent of the land-grant college in carrying out its extension work. All our dealings and correspondence will be with him, unless otherwise instructed.

No specialist either in subject-matter or extension methods is to come to your state except upon request of, or agreement with, the extension director.

Upon his arrival in the state he is to report first to the extension director and only to do the work agreed to by the extension director, and to do it under his direction and in cooperation with his forces.

No reports will be demanded by us except those which come through the extension director.

We will impose no uniform plan of organization upon any state, for we recognize fully that conditions vary and that a plan is only a means to an end.<sup>17</sup>

4. *Annual audit of state extension service's accounts.*—The major part of the regional agent's time during the annual inspection visit is taken up with an examination of the state extension service's accounts to determine whether expenditures have been made according to the terms of the acts and the federal regulations. The solicitor has ruled that state matching-funds are subject to the conditions imposed by Congress upon

<sup>16</sup> *Proceedings of 29th Annual Convention of Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations*, August 11-13, 1915 (Montpelier, Vt.: Capital City Press, 1915), p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> See *Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1921), p. 59.

the federal funds with the exception that salary limitations do not apply to state Capper-Ketcham and supplementary Smith-Lever funds. The four regional agents may be assisted by additional members of the Washington extension service staff.<sup>18</sup>

The federal agent must verify local accounts which are used for state matching-funds. He inspects the original vouchers or certified copies which must have the approval of the state extension director and of a county officer and which must be signed by the payee. Certificates of payment from the local treasurer or other local officer should be on file at the State Extension Office and correspondingly canceled checks must be available for examination.<sup>19</sup> Every voucher should indicate the fund from which the expenditure was made and the project to which it relates. County funds used for matching must be identified as "county matching-funds," or "farmers' organization matching-funds." The district or state agent checks county accounts to make sure that the form is proper and that the necessary evidence is sent to the state office for all county funds used to match federal grants.<sup>20</sup>

The Smith-Lever law provides that misapplied funds as well as those which may have been lost by any state extension service must actually be replaced by the state before it can receive further federal funds. Soon after passage of the law Georgia was required to return about \$26,000 because of misuse

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the advisability of using federal regional agents for examining accounts in preference to professional accountants see Key, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>19</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, "Federal Rules and Regulations for Expenditure of Extension Funds," p. 26. (Mimeographed.) See also Key, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>20</sup> The comptroller-general passes only on the lump-sum payments to the states; he does not have, and cannot demand, the necessary information to question item expenditures by the states since the certificate of the Department of Agriculture that the state is entitled to the grant is considered final and binding on the comptroller-general. A few southern states reported that an agent from the General Accounting Office inspected their accounts in 1935, but the states were few in number and the practice was not continued.

for building purposes.<sup>21</sup> Smaller amounts have occasionally been returned by other states. The regional agents are inclined to be lenient in their interpretation of the legality of expenditures. Border-line cases may be approved for the current year with the understanding that the practice will be changed during the following year. Funds are, of course, sometimes withheld because of failure of the state to match the federal appropriation. In 1933-34 a total of \$107,679.81 of federal funds was returned by five states (Missouri, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota) and by the territory of Hawaii because of failure to match with state funds. No states returned funds because of failure to match in 1936-37.

5. *Examination of county agents' reports.*—From one or two visits a year the federal regional agents, with the help of field agents and federal subject-matter specialists, get a fairly good idea of the general state program of work, but they must rely to a large extent on reports of county agricultural agents for the evaluation of work in the various counties. Each county agent writes a narrative report on the major work project and in addition must fill out a very detailed statistical report. Some forty-two questions must be answered on general extension activities, including total number of different farm families influenced by some phase of the extension program; number of farm homes with 4-H Club members enrolled; number of farm homes in which changes in practice have definitely resulted from the agricultural extension program; number of bulletins distributed; total number of farm visits or home visits made in conducting extension work; and total days in office.<sup>22</sup> An additional 424 blanks provide for special projects, including cereals; legumes and forage crops; potatoes, cotton, tobacco, and special crops; fruits, vegetables, and beautification of home grounds; forestry and agricultural engineering; poultry and bees; dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, swine, and horses; agri-

<sup>21</sup> Interview with W. H. Conway of Federal Extension Office.

<sup>22</sup> Special supplement for national programs bring the total number of questions up to 498.



cultural economics; foods and nutrition; child development and parent education; clothing; home management and house furnishings; home health and sanitation; extension organization and community activities; other activities.

A master index is prepared for these reports, which are used as the basis of evaluating county work by state and federal extension supervisors. The combined statistics and unusual projects and accomplishments, described in separate reports, serve as the basis for state reports to the state governor and to the secretary of agriculture and for the secretary's report to Congress. They are also used for reports to congressional committees and other interested groups. From Extension Service Circular 266 we may learn, for example, that in 1936, 18.6 per cent of county agents' and specialists' time was devoted to farm crops, that 881,208 adult result demonstrations<sup>23</sup> were held, that 1,432,846 4-H Club projects were completed; that county agricultural agents received 18,850,228 office calls; and that county agents devoted 44,024 days to corn, 25,683 days to wheat, and 8,942 days to soy beans. On the basis of these reports regional agents make comparisons between regions as to the relative percentage of farm homes influenced. For example, Mr. Sheffield, field agent for the southern section of the Co-operative Extension Service, points out that in 1935, 35.1 per cent of farm homes were reached in the eastern region of the United States, 49.1 per cent in the southern, 43.6 per cent in the central, and 37.1 per cent in the western region.

Considerable information may be derived from these reports, but their use for comparative evaluation is based on the assumption that each county agricultural agent keeps an accurate and detailed record of each day's work. Judging from the furor and confusion evident in the county agent's office the week preceding the dead line for these reports, it is doubtful if the typical county agent keeps such an accurate

<sup>23</sup> Demonstrations are divided into two general classes: method demonstrations which illustrate a better way of carrying out certain practices and result demonstrations which illustrate the effect of better methods applied over a period of time.

record. One county agent reported that it was "all bunk" and said that he just made rough estimates but that his estimates compared favorably with the statistics of the previous agent. Some few agents delight in making long narrative reports supplemented by pictures of the work in progress, as, for example, the county judge surveying his terraced field, members of the board of supervisors observing special work they have sponsored, or special projects sponsored by the local Kiwanis Club. Such reports have obvious promotional value, but it is doubtful whether their size and care furnish real evidence of superior work. The more zealously active agent is often too busy to organize a voluminous report.

The detailed statistical nature of the reports is particularly difficult for the Negro county agent who rarely has stenographic or clerical assistance. Added to this difficulty is the fact that many of the questions are based on the assumption of farm ownership or of operators provided with capital necessary to put into practice improved methods. The Negro agent is embarrassed by the poverty of his people, which makes it almost impossible for him to make a "good showing" in these reports. For supervisory purposes the accuracy and soundness of the reports could undoubtedly be improved by simplifying the form and eliminating a number of the detailed questions. The value of so many detailed statistical measurements may be seriously questioned even for promotional purposes.

No accurate measure has yet been devised for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of extension work. Some detailed surveys have been made in selected areas in twenty-seven counties of thirteen states, which provide helpful evaluation of extension methods, but as V. O. Key has commented: "The methods of measurement, however, are so costly and the findings so open to question that no effective supervisory use may be made of them in the way, for example, that a test of concrete may be used in checking highway construction."<sup>24</sup> Until

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 97. For the measurements of effectiveness see M. C. Wilson, *Extension Methods and Their Relative Effectiveness*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Technical Bull. 106 (Washington: Government Printing Office, September, 1929).

a more feasible method of measuring quality and effectiveness of the work can be devised, however, much reliance must be placed on the quantitative measurements based on county statistical reports. They furnish useful information concerning trends in extension work for the Washington staff and are of some help in evaluation of the work in various states and regions, but they cannot be substituted for first-hand observation of actual work in the field. They are, of course, helpful to the individual county agent in planning and evaluating his own work.

In addition to the field visits of the regional agents and the contact at state, regional, and national conferences, state directors of extension work occasionally come to the Washington office to talk over problems and work projects. The frequency of such visits depends largely upon the distance of the state from Washington, D.C.

Relationships between the federal and the state extension services in supervision and program-planning are harmonious. State directors are generally agreed that the federal service makes no attempt to dictate to the state services or to dominate the state work. Considerable criticism is made of the effectiveness of federal extension specialists, and extension leaders in some sections complain about the nature of educational work connected with New Deal programs. These leaders often, however, excuse the role of the federal service, which they feel is largely dictated by political expediency, and place the blame on the secretary's office and the particular agencies concerned.

The credit for the harmonious relationship may be attributed to the tactfulness and sympathy of the federal agents as well as to their lenient supervision of the states. Thus the responsibility of the individual county agent to the Department of Agriculture is only an indirect one, which comes through the Department's authority to supervise state extension work in order to make certain that it complies with the provisions of the laws and the supplementary regulations. Federal regional agents examine county accounts of county funds used for state matching purposes. Copies of the annual reports of the county

agents are sent to the Washington office, but the Federal Office does not exert direct authority on individual county agents. Its supervision of the work of the state extension service is chiefly limited to financial inspection, but its influence is used to raise the general standards of state extension work and thus to raise the standards of the individual county agent. Its influence has been an important factor in keeping the state extension services remarkably free from politics. This influence was heightened during the World War period and during the present New Deal period of work.

#### B. STATE RESPONSIBILITY

The county agent's responsibility to the State Extension Office is of a much more personal and direct nature. The State Extension Office has several forms of direct control over the county agricultural agent. County agents cannot be selected without its approval and it can bring about their dismissal by withholding state and federal funds any time it considers the work unsatisfactory. The State Extension Office approves the county agent's plans of work as well as the budget of the county extension organization. State extension officials responsible for supervising the work of the county agents are called state leaders or district agents in most states. The number of these special supervisors varies from fourteen in Texas to none in three states where the director and assistants are responsible for county agent supervision. The average number of these supervisors for a state is three. Most states also have supervisors for home demonstration work; many have special supervisors for club work; some have special supervisors for agricultural conservation work; and some have one or more Negro supervisors for Negro extension work.<sup>25</sup>

The state extension services which secure the entire salary of county agents from state and federal funds could assume almost complete control over the personnel and field work of county agents providing the work was consistent with the

<sup>25</sup> See chap. viii for supervision of Negro county agents.

broad federal standards. To secure additional funds from local sources and to give the local farmers a feeling of responsibility for the work of the county agent, however, most state extension directors and supervisors have shared their authority with county governing-boards and county extension organizations. Thus, state extension officials have substantially limited their authority by administrative agreements or contracts with county organizations and by a general policy of encouraging local initiative in extension work.<sup>26</sup>

1. *Financial relations between county and state extension offices.*—Annual contracts or agreements commonly serve as the basis for state-county financial relationships. Generally the county appropriating-board or the county farm bureau agrees to contribute a specified amount to the salary of the county agricultural agent and to supply the necessary traveling expense, office assistance, and office equipment. In return the State Extension Office agrees to pay a specified amount on the salary of the county agent and to provide supervision and subject-matter assistance.<sup>27</sup> The agreements generally provide that the county governing-board or other organization shall select a county agent from candidates recommended or approved by the state extension director. In some cases the state extension supervisors select the county agent with the approval of the local board or committee. In one or two states where the salary is provided largely from state and federal sources, the county board is not always consulted concerning the appointment or dismissal of the county agent.<sup>28</sup>

County budgets are based on these agreements or contracts between the state and county extension offices. These are checked with varying degrees of regularity and care by district

<sup>26</sup> Some of the limitations are based upon the state laws to authorize county appropriations for extension work. See below, pp. 128-29.

<sup>27</sup> It has been customary in Iowa for the county farm bureau to pay the expenses of state subject-matter specialists who hold special meetings in the counties.

<sup>28</sup> For further discussion of the type of responsibility arising out of personnel relationships see chap. vi.

## THE COUNTY AGENT

or state agents. The county is obligated to supply the agreed amount on the salary of county agents but may vary other items of the budget. Salary and travel expenses of Iowa county agents from 1920-30 averaged approximately 55 per cent of county funds. Table 11 gives the average county budget during this period. The average Iowa expenditure is not given as

TABLE 11\*

AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF COUNTY  
EXTENSION FUNDS IN IOWA, 1920-30

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Salary of county agent.....     | \$2,138†        |
| Salary of office assistant..... | 952             |
| Travel expense.....             | 793             |
| Expenses of extension help..... | 178             |
| 4-H Club expense.....           | 86              |
| Visual instruction.....         | 51              |
| Rent, heat, light, etc.....     | 187             |
| Telephone and telegraph.....    | 154             |
| Printing.....                   | 224             |
| Postage.....                    | 182             |
| Supplies.....                   | 237             |
| Equipment and repairs.....      | 105             |
| <b>Total.....</b>               | <b>\$5,287‡</b> |

\* Iowa State Extension Service, "Financing County Extension Work," Corn-Hog B-443, January, 1932. (Mimeographed copy on file with the Iowa State Extension Service.)

† Does not include state and federal funds of \$600.

‡ Total includes county agent alone. Expenditures would be higher in counties employing home demonstration or club agents.

typical for the United States but only as a sample to show the various items included.

Some states pay the entire salary from state and federal funds, requesting county funds only for traveling expense, office help, and equipment. This is the practice advocated by the federal office. Approximately ten states actually have achieved this objective. Six additional states are approaching it. A minimum sum is generally made conditional by the state extension service for county-state co-operation in the employment of county agents. Some states do not set a rigid minimum but tend to bargain with the individual counties in accordance

with their financial capacity and their enthusiasm for extension work.

The state extension service may, of course, withhold funds from any county which does not abide by the rules set by the state service. This power is seldom used, however, except in cases when the county does not provide the minimum amount of funds which the state service considers to be necessary for the work. State and federal funds have been withheld by some states when a deadlock occurred over the selection of a candidate and the county refused to select an approved applicant. The Illinois Extension Service withheld funds for two years from a county which persisted in employing an agent who spent most of his time promoting commercial activities. This power to withhold state and federal funds has been used sparingly by most state services, but its use, accompanied by the fact that the agent is both a state and federal employee, undoubtedly serves to deter political pressure.

2. *State supervision of the work of county agents.*—State supervision is carried on by state agents, county agent leaders, and to some extent by directors and assistant directors of the extension service. The amount and type of supervision varies greatly from state to state. Illinois, for example, has a minimum of supervision. In this state assistant state leaders—who object to the use of the term “supervisor” for their work—average approximately one visit a year to the various counties in their section. Tennessee, by contrast, has four district agents who average from eight to twelve visits a year to each county.

A major function of district agents and state county agent leaders is to assist the local extension organization in selecting and maintaining county personnel. They are generally responsible for recommending prospective county agents to county boards and for bargaining with these boards concerning county contributions to the county agent’s salary and expense account. These district agents must be on the alert for any signs of local dissatisfaction. They must arrange for the transfer of capable county agents who do not fit into a particular county,

and, if possible, defend them against political and unfair personal attacks. A capable district agent must be on friendly terms with county boards and other county leaders.

District agents and state county agent leaders in co-operation with local extension organizations are responsible for securing and insuring the maintenance of county appropriations. The district agents or state leaders usually contact the county boards annually by letter or in person to request sufficient funds to maintain the local personnel. Sometimes this work is done by the county extension organization without help from the district agent except when special emergencies arise. The amount of the district agent's time required for maintaining personnel varies from almost zero in some states where only expense money is requested to more than 25 per cent in other states. The district agents may be seriously concerned with farm-bureau membership in states where county appropriations are dependent upon a sufficiently large farm-bureau membership. Iowa county agents who were interviewed considered this among the most important duties of district supervisors.

Another major task of district agents and state leaders is to assist in formulating and evaluating county programs of work. The district agent attends as many county program-planning meetings as possible and arranges conferences of agents to discuss basic agricultural problems to be met in extension work. He conducts surveys during the year of various projects in his district. Supervisors in those states which are not dependent upon the county for salary appropriations for county agent work are able to spend most of their time in program-planning activities and in making surveys of work carried on by the county agents.

District agents are also responsible for introducing and supervising state-wide projects sponsored by the state extension service. In the southern states particularly they were responsible for supervising the various A.A.A. commodity programs and for conducting training schools for local agents.



State supervisors listed their duties in the following order of importance for the 1930 survey:

1. Maintain county personnel.
2. Assist in formulating county programs.
3. Check progress of county programs.
4. Interpret administrative policies to the counties.
5. Assist in maintaining county finances.
6. Make contacts between agents and central office.
7. Present extension problems to local committees.
8. Adjust county troubles and difficulties.
9. Make contacts with organization leaders.
10. Arrange district conference programs.
11. Present salary needs of agents to local committees.
12. Assist specialists in formulating programs of work.
13. Assist in carrying out county programs.
14. Assist specialists to make contacts with county workers.
15. Assist in training local leaders.
16. Bring back problems for research.<sup>29</sup>

County agents in the states visited in the course of this study were requested to describe the function of district agents. They emphasized the function of maintaining county finances and general relationships with county boards and organizations more than the general supervisory functions given by the district agents in the list above. A county agent in one state said that the assistant state leaders were "trouble shooters"; they exercised no real supervision in his opinion. He said that their authority in his state was so limited that they had to wait for an unsatisfactory agent "to die off." A county agricultural agent in another state said that agents were their "own bosses." The district agents were so busy maintaining appropriations that they had little time to learn what kind of work the agent was doing in the county. An agent in a third state wrote the following evaluation of the work of district agents:

The supervision of the district agents consists of checking projects and also checking finances and membership of the farm bureaus, as well as urging the agents to push membership. A large per cent of their time

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior: Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), II, 455.

is devoted to membership and organization work. In checking projects they merely check the progress made and have very little to offer as far as suggestions on methods. There is a great possibility for these supervisors to become specialists in their lines and they could be of considerable assistance to the agent on methods of presentation and methods of organization of projects and suggestions as to how to improve ourselves. They have, however, merely developed into a routine position of checking on forms on which they ask questions and they have a report blank which is stereotyped and if we meet their approval they place an O.K. on this blank and mail it to the president of the farm bureau instead of analyzing the individual and the organization in the county as well as the person and help us as agents to improve ourselves and to strengthen the adult education work, the work of the rural young people, and that of the junior clubs in the county.<sup>30</sup>

District agents in some states carry on most of their work through county agent conferences. They do not pretend to spend much time checking on the quality of the work done in the various counties. District agents in some states are more aware of discontent that may arise among influential farmers and county officials than of the real quality of the county agent's work. This discontent may be a symptom of inferior work, but it may also be stimulated by the dissatisfaction of a small number of influential farmers or politicians who are not receiving special services or favors. Supervision has sometimes taken the aspect of counting the number of demonstrations held, the number of farm visits, and the number of farm bureaus rather than of evaluating directly the quality of the county agent's work. Evaluation of the quality of the county agent's work based on more direct supervision would require a larger staff of supervisors than is found in most states and in many cases supervisors with more adequate training. It is evident that many of the supervisory staff are not so well trained as the county agricultural agents whose work they are selected to evaluate. In 1930, 29 per cent of the assistant state leaders and 18 per cent of the state leaders had less than a B.S. degree, and 1 per cent of assistant leaders had no college

<sup>30</sup> Personal letter from the county agent.

training. Only 17 per cent of the county agents had less than a B.S. degree.<sup>22</sup>

Administrative duties in A.A.A. and agricultural conservation programs have left little time for direct supervision of scientific educational projects in many sections. The new and complex duties undertaken by county agents in most states and the necessity of directing additional county personnel responsible for particular types of work would seem to demand more adequate supervision and guidance from the state staff if county extension work is not to result in a heterogeneous collection of confused practices. The county agent has a more direct responsibility to the State Extension Office than to the Federal Office, since the State Office either recommends or approves his selection and maintains a staff of district agents or state leaders to maintain direct county contacts and to evaluate the county agent's work. In a number of states, however, state supervision of county work is quite limited and much variation in the quality of county agent work is apparent.

### C. COUNTY RESPONSIBILITY

The county agent's responsibility to the county governing-board or to the county farm-bureau organization is based upon state laws which authorize county appropriations for extension work and upon administrative agreements between the county organization and the State Extension Office. Some of these laws specifically state that the county governing-board, county farm-bureau board, or other county extension committee shall assist in selecting the county agent and in directing his work. Others simply authorize the counties to make appropriations for extension work. Approximately twenty of the present laws are enabling acts giving the boards adequate authority to make an appropriation. The Mississippi statute, for example, provides that the board of supervisors "may establish a County Extension Department in Agriculture and Home Economics" and that the County Extension Department shall

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Interior: Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, 479.

be in charge of such employees as the board of supervisors "may deem adequate to the need of the county" but restricts the number of agricultural agents and home economics agents to two. The law states that the county agents "shall be appointed by the board of supervisors upon recommendation of the Extension Department of the Mississippi State College and with the approval of the United States Department of Agriculture." It provides for joint supervision of the work by the board of supervisors, the Extension Department of Mississippi State College, and the United States Department of Agriculture.<sup>32</sup>

Approximately fifteen of the state laws designate (or mention) the county farm bureau as the local co-operating organization for the county. In these cases the county governing-board may be given discretionary authority to appropriate for extension work, but seven of these laws provide for a mandatory appropriation dependent upon requirements that the county farm-bureau organization obtain a certain minimum number of members or minimum amount of funds from membership dues. In these states the county farm bureau serves in place of the county governing-board since the county governing-board has discretion but must appropriate its funds to the farm-bureau board. In cases where the appropriation is optional but the county farm bureau is mentioned as the official extension organization, the county agent is in a measure responsible to both organizations. In addition to the states where the farm bureau is mentioned in the law authorizing extension appropriations, several other states have designated the farm bureau as the local extension organization by an administrative ruling or through mutual agreements of the farm bureaus and the state extension service without formal administrative or legal authority. The 1930 survey of land-grant colleges by the Office of Education estimates the number of states in which the farm bureau is the chief co-operating organization at twenty-nine and further states that in nineteen

<sup>32</sup> *Mississippi Code Annotated*, 1933 Supplement, chap. ix, 278-81.

of the states the "public does not differentiate between the term 'farm bureau work' and 'extension work.'"<sup>33</sup>

Six states provide for a mandatory county appropriation upon the approval of a majority of the county voters in a referendum vote; a number of states provide for a petition and referendum in initiating and discontinuing the work. Some state laws provide that the state will duplicate funds raised within the county up to certain limits or provide that a minimum sum must be raised by the county before co-operative relations will be established. The state extension service, of course, has the right to withhold federal funds from any county which does not comply with its regulations. In most states co-operative financial and personnel relationships between the college and the counties are left to administrative rulings and agreements rather than to statutory requirements.

Some regional patterns in state laws authorizing extension work is apparent. Simple forms of enabling acts are common in the southern states where county farm bureaus are not well developed. Although these types of laws are not common in the western states, enabling acts are most common in that section. State laws in the central states commonly provide for some relationship with the county farm bureau. Laws in the eastern states are complex; some provide for relationship with the county farm bureau, but no standard form of relationship has appeared. These state extension laws, all providing some form of relationship between the state agricultural college and the county governing-board or county extension agency serve as the foundation for state-county relationships.

The county agent's responsibility to the county governing-board arises from his dependence upon the county appropriation. The state extension service, in most states, requires a minimum county appropriation before it will co-operate in the employment of an agent. With few exceptions the discontin-

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Interior: Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, 499. For further discussion of laws designating the farm bureau as the extension organization see Sec. D of this chapter.

uance of a county appropriation results in the immediate discontinuance of county agent work. Thus the county governing-board is given much more power over the county agent than its comparatively small contribution of funds would seem to justify, except in approximately eight states where a mandatory appropriation is required by law upon the satisfaction of certain conditions by the county farm-bureau organizations (see Sec. D).<sup>34</sup> In ten states where the county appropriation is used only for traveling and miscellaneous expenses the county has less authority, but in most of these states a county agent who is in disfavor with a majority of the governing-board is not retained.

The board's power is also considerably tempered in farm-bureau states which do not provide for a mandatory appropriation but have sufficient organized support to exert pressure on the commissioners. For example, members of boards of supervisors in New York State, which provides for an optional appropriation to the farm-bureau board, generally reported that they would not even consider withdrawing the county appropriation, since such action would invariably be political suicide. Likewise, if a county agent is sufficiently popular with influential local farmers, members of the county governing-board may feel compelled to support his work for their own security.

In a few cases the county agent gains such popularity and organized support that he actually becomes the county political boss for a limited length of time, but this dangerous activity must be carried on *sub rosa* and is contrary to the policy of the State Extension Office. State extension leaders in two different states reported that they knew of one agent in their state who virtually controlled the county political setup, but they disapproved of such extra-official activity. Political activity on the part of county agents is more common in the southern states, where mandatory appropriations are not provided and

<sup>34</sup> Six additional states receive less than \$4,000 for salary payments from county sources. Two territories pay the entire salary from federal and territorial funds (interview with W. H. Conway, July, 1938).

the Farm Bureau is not strong enough to serve effectively as an intermediary pressure group in the county. The county agent is sometimes requested to contribute to the campaign expenses of the faction in power and to use his influence for farmer support. He is in a difficult position when requested for contributions to campaign expenses, since his district supervisor and extension director will advise him against making such contributions; but they are not always able to support him when the board later decides that he is incompetent and requests his dismissal on threat of withdrawing county appropriations. Thus, a clever county agent needs to be at least adroit in his relations with the county governing-board. Leaders in one county in Alabama commented that they had the best county agent they had ever had and that he was also the most astute politician.

The clever county agent may show his deference to members of the county governing-board in many ways besides making county contributions. He may also show his regard by consulting them in some cases concerning appointments for various committeemen, by performing work of a personal-service nature for them, by giving special publicity to their improved farm practices, and by social contacts of various kinds. The amount of favoritism shown varies greatly with the general popularity of county agent work in the county, the financial condition of the county, the rural or urban character of the population, the presence and strength of supporting farm organizations, and the integrity of the members of the county governing-board and the county agent. In an urban county, for example, the governing-board may appoint a special committee to have charge of county agent work. This group may handle the work so completely that a number of members may be scarcely aware of the county agent's existence. It is interesting to note here the absence of a county officer or department of agriculture to have charge of regulatory and statistical work to which the county agent might have some responsibility. The increase in county personnel concerned with federal agri-

cultural programs, such as the rehabilitation supervisor, A.A.A. officials, soil-conservation district officials, raises a serious problem of co-ordination. Many extension leaders feel that these programs should be co-ordinated through the county agents. If the county agent should become a general manager of all these various programs, he might eventually function more in the capacity of a county director of agricultural work than of an educational agent.

The county governing-board may occasionally be interested in the promotion of a special project or in work of a personal-service nature, but generally it is little concerned with program-planning or actual supervision of the county agent's work. It receives monthly and annual reports of the work, a copy of the budget, and a financial account. County governing-boards do not commonly exercise executive functions and consequently do not plan and check the work of other county officials. The fact that a budget and the reports for county agent work are generally submitted to the county governing-board is a definite improvement over the general relationship of the board to other county officials. In some states the board appoints an extension advisory committee which takes part in program-planning activities, although the committee is sometimes passive or entirely inactive. The board is concerned primarily with the county agent's popularity with influential farm leaders, his general popularity, and with special deference which may be shown to members of the board. It is not generally concerned with program-planning, but it may make itself vocal if the county agent in some sections does not conform to social customs and show the proper respect for influential farm leaders in the county, particularly in the selection of leaders and general policy in the promotion and administration of federal programs. County agents have lost their jobs in some counties because of dissatisfaction with the distribution of A.A.A. payments.

Another type of responsibility occasionally arises in counties where the county agent has organized active commodity com-



mittees which actually assist in the direction of his work along specialized commodity lines. County agents in New York State, for example, report that it is sometimes difficult to satisfy the different commodity groups which are jealous over the division of the county agent's time along commodity lines. This type of responsibility to specialized commodity groups would not arise, of course, in a general farming section or in a one-crop region.

Actually, in a large number of states supervision by extension officials from the state college is loose enough and the local advisory groups are sufficiently passive so that the county agent is left to his own initiative in varying the emphasis upon particular projects within the general plan of work carried on in his state. Particularly in the southern states county agents can generally engineer the selection of advisory committeemen as well as committeemen selected to conduct the various government programs. One county agent admitted that he generally engineered the selection of innocuous figureheads for these positions so that he could be sure to retain control. It is not uncommon in the southern states to find that the selected officials in such groups as the farm bureau, the A.A.A., and the farm-debt advisory committee have only a hazy idea of their functions and depend almost entirely upon the county agent.

Some county agents secure the concentration of authority for various programs in one or two closely trusted friends. For example, in one Alabama county in 1936 a large landowner living in the county seat was chairman of the Agricultural Conservation Committee (formerly chairman of the Cotton Committee), chairman of the Farm-Debt Advisory Committee, chairman of the County Resettlement Committee, and chairman of the Farm-Bureau Legislative Committee. He had formerly served as state representative and as a member of the court of county commissioners. In a Tennessee county the farm-bureau president was a practicing lawyer who owned farm land; the farm-bureau secretary was a bank cashier; and the

chairman of the Agricultural Conservation Committee, who had held the same position in the old cotton program, was a domineering landowner with an education limited to about the sixth grade—he made no pretense of reading the papers prepared by the county agent's secretary.

Since no one is responsible for the day-to-day work of the county agent but only for its general broad aspects and the way it fits into the general political and social pattern, individual county agents, while following a general state plan of work, vary the application and emphasis greatly from county to county. Despite the fact that both state and federal extension leaders have frequently insisted that work of a personal-service nature is not really extension work, most states have a few agents who devote a major portion of their time to such service. As long as no organized protest arises from within the county, agents carrying on their work by such unapproved methods are generally allowed to remain in their counties. Such work must, of course, satisfy the farm leaders in the counties.<sup>35</sup> Thus, under the present system of loose federal and state supervision an agent who satisfies the local people, whether it be through courting the favor of a few dominant and influential farmers and political leaders or by really effective extension work which reaches a large percentage of the farmers, is allowed to remain in the county and pursue his work along certain broad lines.

Many types of variations arise from state to state in the amount of state and county responsibility assumed by the county agent. For example, Pennsylvania, which is much concerned about federal domination of the state extension service, also has one of the most highly centralized state systems of extension work, the state office exercising a maximum amount

<sup>35</sup> It is, of course, a tenable viewpoint that the satisfaction of farm leaders is the primary criterion for judging county agent work whether this satisfaction results from personal-service work given to a small number of influential farmers or whether it is of a broader educational nature reaching a large number of farm families. It is only fair to note that favoritism to dominant economic and political leaders is generally practiced by governmental agencies.

of control at the state college and leaving little initiative to the county agent and the local people. Illinois probably represents the other extreme, since a minimum amount of state control is exercised and the work is left largely to the initiative of the county agent and the county farm bureau. Where farmers in the county have been well organized along farm-bureau, or producer, lines, they may assume considerable direction of the work; but in a large number of such counties these farmers are sufficiently passive so that the county agent, by showing proper deference to a few key leaders, has a relatively free hand in developing his own program and methods within the broad work program of the state extension service. County agents in counties having optional county appropriations in states which do not provide sufficient state and federal funds for their salaries must be somewhat responsive to dominant economic and political groups. The county farm bureau may serve as a buffer in this relationship and furnish more local initiative in directing the work, but close relationship to it raises new problems in many ways as serious as the relationship to the more unstable political board.

#### D. PRIVATE RESPONSIBILITY

The county agent in about fifteen states is legally responsible to the county farm-bureau organization. In approximately eight states, where the county appropriation is mandatory, responsibility to the farm bureau almost entirely replaces responsibility to the county governing-board.<sup>36</sup>

County agents in states which provide for legal relationship to the farm bureau but for optional county appropriations feel more responsibility to the farm-bureau board than to the county governing-board depend upon the farm bureau to serve as the intermediary organization to insure the continuance of the appropriation. In New York State one or more members of the board of supervisors are appointed as a farm-

<sup>36</sup> Legal relationship to the county farm bureau with a mandatory appropriation was recommended by the Federal Office in 1917 in a "Model Extension Act."

bureau committee of the board to meet regularly with the county farm-bureau board, and in many cases they receive mileage and compensation from the county for attendance at these meetings. The degree of responsibility varies considerably even within strongly organized Farm Bureau states. The amount of authority which the farm bureau exercises cannot always be measured by the terms of the state extension laws, since in Illinois—where county farm bureaus most completely control extension work—state law does not even mention the farm bureau. Some state laws, however, make close working relationship between the county farm bureau and the county agent imperative. This relationship can be illustrated by reference to some specific state laws and the resulting relationship to the county farm bureau.

1. *Responsibility of county agent to county farm bureau in Iowa.*—In Iowa county appropriation for extension work is dependent upon the organization of a farm-aid association with two hundred members and pledges paying a minimum of \$1,000 dues. The county board of supervisors must then pay double the amount of farm-bureau dues up to limits of \$3,000 and \$5,000, depending upon the population of the county. The county farm-bureau board, within certain broad limits, is given discretion in the expenditure of this mandatory county appropriation for county agent, home demonstration, and club work.<sup>37</sup> Thus the county farm-bureau board determines the amount of the county agent's salary beyond a minimum of state and federal funds contributed by the college and can bring about the agent's dismissal by withholding county funds at any time. It seems almost inevitable under such a legal framework that the county agent should be unduly concerned with courting the favor of farm-bureau board members and with the problem of keeping the minimum number of members necessary for a county appropriation. He would also be interested in swelling the number of members to bring about an increase in his salary and prestige. As a result of this relation-

<sup>37</sup> *Code of Iowa, 1935*, chap. 138, §§ 2051-2938.

ship, the work of the agent in Iowa is chiefly evaluated on the basis of the number of farm-bureau members. Not only the size of his salary but also his job depends upon keeping a minimum number of farm-bureau members to qualify for the mandatory county appropriation. By providing personal services and otherwise courting the favor of this board, a clever agent may remain in a county almost indefinitely. A five- or ten-dollar membership fee serves to keep serious internal dissension from arising within the organization, since minority elements dissatisfied with leadership and policy are not generally sufficiently hostile to pay a five- or ten-dollar membership fee for the length of time necessary to secure a change in leadership.<sup>38</sup> The provision in the Iowa law that the county board of supervisors must appropriate double the amount of farm-bureau dues within certain limits is not a common one. The more general provision is that the budget of the county farm bureau shall be submitted to the board of supervisors and by them "spread on the county tax rolls." Some limitation as to maximum amount is generally made.

2. *Responsibility in Kansas.*—The Kansas law provides for a similar relationship between the county agent and the farm bureau. It specifically provides that "the county agricultural agent shall be selected by the executive board of the county farm bureau," but it also states that "his work shall be under the general direction and supervision of the Kansas State Agricultural College" and that a certified statement of the deposit of \$800 from the county farm bureau must be placed in a local county bank. The county board of commissioners bases its farm bureau appropriations upon the budget presented by the executive committee of the farm bureau.<sup>39</sup>

3. *Responsibility in New York.*—Although the New York

<sup>38</sup> The State Extension Service could secure a dismissal by withholding state and federal funds but this is rarely done.

<sup>39</sup> *The General Statutes of Kansas, 1935*, chap. ii. The Kansas Court held in the case of *Cloud County Farm Bureau v. Cloud County Commissioners* that it was the duty of the county commissioners to make an appropriation and not a matter of discretion (Kansas: 126 [1938], p. 362).

extension law does not provide for a mandatory appropriation from the county boards of supervisors, it sets up an unusually close relationship. In practice the organization has been sufficiently strong so that with few exceptions the county boards of supervisors consider an appropriation a political necessity. The farm- and home-bureau association is recognized by law as a public county association to co-operate with the state college of agriculture on agricultural extension work. The county board of supervisors is authorized to appropriate and pay out such sums of money to the county farm bureaus as it may deem proper. A minimum appropriation of \$2,500 for county agent work (and also an additional \$2,500 for home-bureau work and \$2,500 for junior work) is required before the state will contribute \$900 to the employment of the county agent.<sup>40</sup>

County farm bureaus function actively as extension organizations. They are subdivided into active commodity committees which assist the county agent in drawing up projects for their particular commodities. These commodity committees are helpful in serving the county agent in an advisory capacity, in drawing up plans of work, and in providing local leaders to assist in promoting the work. The county farm-bureau board selects the county agent with the approval of the state extension service, determines the amount of his salary, and initiates proceedings for his dismissal.

The county agent, who is generally called the county farm-bureau manager, works chiefly with farm-bureau members. He will, of course, give advice to nonmembers who request it, but nonmembers do not feel free to request such advice. Farm-

<sup>40</sup> See *Laws of New York*, chap. 769. The courts have ruled that the county farm bureau is a public association entitled to receive such funds: *State Bank of Commerce of Brackport, New York v. Howard G. Stone, Farm Bureau Department of Monroe County Farm and Home Bureau*, July 22, 1932 (New York Supplement: 258, pp. 717-18 [July 22, 1932]). The size of appropriations varies from the minimum of \$2,500 for county agent work to \$13,000 in one of the city counties. An additional \$10,000 is appropriated for home-bureau work and \$5,000 for junior work in this county.

bureau members reported that their nonmember friends would sometimes request them to serve as intermediaries in securing information. Nonmembers who requested much service would undoubtedly be well canvassed for membership and embarrassed if they did not join. Farms selected for demonstration by the agent are almost invariably farms of farm-bureau members. Service letters prepared by extension specialists and sent out from the state agricultural college are limited to farm-bureau members. The spraying service, which gives detailed and timely spraying information and directions, is also limited to farm-bureau members. Thus the county agent's primary responsibility on the county level in New York State is to the farm-bureau members who believe that, since they pay dues varying from two to five dollars in different communities, his service should be largely restricted to them. They take an active part in planning his program of work along commodity lines. Farm-bureau members of the boards of county supervisors are generally appointed by the board to sit with the executive committee in its requests for annual appropriations from the county board of supervisors.

4. *Responsibility in Illinois.*—While a close relationship exists between the county agent and the county farm bureau in these states where there is an official designation of the county farm bureau as the county extension organization, an even closer relationship is found in Illinois where the extension law does not mention the farm bureau. Administrative agreements between the Illinois state extension service and the county farm-bureau board are the basis for recognition of the county farm bureaus as the local organizations to assist in the employment of county agents and in the direction of their work. The county farm bureaus provided more than 50 per cent of total state extension funds in 1935-36 and approximately 38 per cent in 1936-37. In all except four counties these farm-bureau contributions have replaced county contributions for the employment of county agricultural agents—called "farm ad-

visers."<sup>41</sup> The total sum from county appropriations in 1935-36 only amounted to \$4,676.82 as compared with \$31,282.41 in 1928. The county farm bureau furnishes an office in most counties and a farm-bureau car in more than half of the counties for the use of the county farm adviser.

The county farm-bureau board selects and dismisses the county agent with the approval of the state extension service. At one time the agents were extensively used in developing commercial activities, but the majority of counties now have a county director for the local supply company and a county insurance agent who takes charge of most of the commercial work. The agents do not need to solicit farm-bureau memberships, since practically every county has a membership director who receives a commission varying from \$2.00 to \$5.00 for each membership. Detailed reports are sent to the state office every week on membership work.<sup>42</sup>

Since the county farm bureaus in most counties make large contributions to the salary of the county agent and in addition furnish him with a farm-bureau car, it is natural that the agent feels primary responsibility to farm-bureau members who contribute membership dues of \$15. He will, of course, give advice to nonmembers who call at his office, but he cannot well go to their farms in a farm-bureau car. In some counties he will test the soil of a nonmember, for example, if the nonmember brings a sample to the office; in others he refuses to extend this personal service commonly given to members. In one county nonmembers are not allowed to attend educational meetings of the farm bureau unless they come as the guest of a particular member. Since the Illinois Extension Service exercises a minimum of supervision over county agent work, the county farm bureau exercises the major authority. The fact

<sup>41</sup> Thirteen counties provide support for home advisers ("Annual Report of Illinois Extension Service," 1935-36, p. 25). (Mimeographed copies on file at Co-operative Extension Service Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

<sup>42</sup> The size of the commission is larger in the case of a new member. It is also larger if the membership quota for the county is reached.



must not be overlooked that in many counties the county agent is the leader of the farm bureau and thus may himself largely direct the work and formulate the policies of the county organization. In Illinois, however, the Illinois Agricultural Association has sufficient strength (a membership of 74,000) to play a large part in formulating the policies of the county units.

5. *Relationship between the farm bureau and the county agent in Alabama.*—The farm bureau in some of the southern states has tended to be a tool of the county agent rather than a sponsoring organization. In Alabama, which has the largest farm-bureau membership of the southern states, the county farm bureaus have no legal relationship to the county agent and no part in his selection and dismissal. A few small contributions (totaling only \$340 in 1937) are made to the salaries of some Alabama county agents.

The county farm bureaus in Alabama do not hold regular meetings or have any definite county programs. Even the officers of the county association seem much confused concerning the function of the organization. The most general answer given to the questions, "What is the farm bureau? What does it do?" was that the farm bureau was organized for "influence in Washington so that the farmer can be heard in Washington," and that "it had something to do with the government programs." Some members were convinced that they could not receive government A.A.A. checks if they did not belong to the farm bureau. The few county meetings held actually were called by the county agent, through the county agent's secretary who would perhaps nominally call them for the farm-bureau president. County agents and their assistants often took an active part in membership campaigns. It was generally agreed by both county officers and the county agent that the farm bureau could not continue without constant activity on the part of the county agent.

The assistant county agent in charge of agricultural conservation work in one county managed the membership work.

He reported that he had no difficulty talking people out of two-dollar membership fees since he had experience as an insurance salesman, but he didn't know what to do with the association now that it was organized. He had written to the state and national organizations for suggested programs for meetings but had received no help. He was hoping to get some help from other states where the county farm bureaus had been organized for some time.

A farm-bureau president in another Alabama county reported that the county farm bureau took an active part in county politics but that it had not drawn up a slate of candidates yet. He reported that the president or other leaders would go around to the individual members "to tell them what to do." They followed Extension Director Duncan's advice on state legislative matters and the selection of desirable candidates.

Another county farm-bureau president apologized for his lack of information about the farm bureau and suggested that the county agent be consulted about its functions. He said that the county agent had stopped at his house that morning to tell him to be ready to go to Montgomery (where the legislature was in session). He did not know why they were going, but it had "something to do with helping with the work."

County officers questioned about the use made of fifty cents retained by the county from individual membership dues usually replied that the dues were used to send telegrams or to hire buses to take farmers to the state legislature. Some use was also made of them to send delegates to the state and national farm-bureau conventions, and some counties used them for expenses of 4-H Club delegates. In contrast to the strong county farm-bureau organizations in Illinois, Iowa, and New York, the Alabama county farm bureaus exercise no real control over the county agents. The farm bureaus are used by the county agents and state extension leaders to bolster up the legislative program favored by the state extension service.

In addition to the responsibility to the county farm bureau

county agents in some states have felt a responsibility to the state federation of county farm bureaus. In some few states the state federation has advocated a different type of farm management or farm-marketing work than that advocated by the state agricultural colleges. Situations have developed in which county agents in one part of a state have followed the practices advocated by the Farm Bureau Federation while those in another have followed the practices advocated by the college. In one state at least the Farm Bureau Federation has occasionally attempted to use its influence to stir up dissatisfaction with a county agent who was not aggressively backing the organization.

It is particularly difficult to generalize concerning the county agent's responsibility to the county farm bureau as is shown by the particular cases which have been described. Much more uniformity is apparent, however, in the county agent's indirect relationship to the federal government. This indirect responsibility to the federal government through the Department of Agriculture arises out of the secretary's responsibility to check the expenditure of federal funds used in co-operative extension work. In practice, the exercise of this authority has not resulted in direct supervision of county agent work but only in the approval of general projects and the checking of budgets and expenditures of the state extension service. Federal approval is given in a perfunctory manner to county agent appointments. The influence of the Department of Agriculture cannot be adequately measured by its exercise of direct supervision. Its policy has been to persuade the states to accept federal methods and projects rather than to exercise its authority.

The county agent's responsibility to the State Extension Office varies from state to state. The State Extension Office exercises a certain amount of direct supervision in all states. Generally speaking, however, a county agent who is popular with the local leaders is not removed even though the State

Extension Office may not always approve of the methods or the quality of his work.

The county agent's responsibility to the county governing-board arises from its power in most states to withdraw local funds. It is more interested in his popularity with influential farm leaders and the amount of deference shown to its members than with the method and quality of the work.<sup>43</sup> The county agent's responsibility to the county governing-board in many states is much more personal and direct. The responsibility varies greatly with the initiativeness and aggressiveness of the farm-bureau leaders. As local leader the county agent may direct the activities of this organization; in some counties he dominates it. Despite his responsibilities to the Department of Agriculture, the state college of agriculture, the county governing-board, and in some sections the county farm bureau, the county agent within a certain broad work program is often his "own boss."

Compared with the freedom from supervision and responsibility of other county officials who are in the main responsible only to the electorate, the county agent is accountable to a remarkable degree to the county and state governmental agencies. He is, however, less responsible than a state or federal official to direct administrative controls.

<sup>43</sup> This is, of course, not an indictment of county agent work. The county governing-board does not customarily supervise the work of the other county officials.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

**T**HE county agricultural agent's financial support is derived, as is his responsibility, from four main sources: the federal government, the state government, the county government, and in some states the county farm bureau. The available financial statements provide financial data for all funds spent by the state extension services and do not give separate analysis of funds spent for the work of county agricultural agents. An average of approximately 62.6 per cent of these state-extension-service funds was spent for the work of county agricultural agents, county club agents, and county home demonstration agents in 1935-36. The percentage of funds spent for these county agents varied from 41.2 per cent in Connecticut to 79 per cent in Illinois.<sup>1</sup> With this rough indication of the proportion of funds spent for county agricultural agents it is necessary to use financial statements for expenditure of funds for extension work in the forty-eight states and the territories of Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico without analyzing the separate portions spent for county agricultural agent work.<sup>2</sup>

The total funds expended for extension work in the forty-eight states and the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico increased from \$3,597,236 in 1914-15 to \$29,714,855 in

<sup>1</sup> Data from a table prepared by W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Co-operative Extension Service (copy on file in the Office of the Co-operative Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture).

<sup>2</sup> The financial statements which are used in this chapter do not include funds spent for the Federal Extension Office which are provided by a special "item appropriation" included in the appropriation act for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These funds totaled \$528,167 in 1936 (statement from the office of M. M. Thayer, business manager of the Federal Extension Service).

1936-37.<sup>3</sup> Table 12 shows the increase in extension funds from all sources spent by the state and county extension offices in the forty-eight states and in the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico from 1914-15 to 1936-37. The spectacular increase in funds from 1914-15 to 1919-20 is the result of a special war-time appropriation for stimulation of extension work. The decrease beginning in 1931-32 and still reflected in 1934-35 is

TABLE 12\*

| FUNDS SPENT FOR CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE<br>AND HOME ECONOMICS IN THE FORTY-EIGHT STATES<br>ALASKA, HAWAII, AND PUERTO RICO |              |         |              |
|---|--------------|---------|--------------|
| 1914-15   | \$ 3,597,236 | 1930-31 | \$25,448,859 |
| 1916-17   | 6,149,620    | 1931-32 | 24,298,649   |
| 1917-18   | 11,302,765   | 1932-33 | 21,976,841   |
| 1918-19   | 14,661,561   | 1933-34 | 19,844,167   |
| 1919-20   | 14,658,079   | 1934-35 | 20,440,902   |
| 1924-25   | 19,332,372   | 1935-36 | 28,299,905   |
| 1928-29   | 22,870,028   | 1936-37 | 29,714,855   |
| 1929-30   | 24,266,065   |         |              |

\* See annual *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office) and "Source of Funds Allotted for Co-operative Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1937." (Photostatic copy on file in Co-operative Extension Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

chiefly the result of the large decrease in state and county funds during the depression period. The actual amount of funds spent in extension work was somewhat higher due to unrecorded emergency funds transferred primarily from the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Additional federal funds made available by the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935 are largely responsible for the increase in total funds in 1935-36.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> These data do not include expenditure for the Federal Extension Office. They do include expenditures of \$376,511.95 for Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico in 1936-37. The statement for 1936-37 is for allotments of extension funds. Expenditure would be slightly less because of funds turned back because of "failure to use" by twelve states in 1936-37 (see below, n. 8).

<sup>4</sup> For special contributions from the A.A.A., T.V.A., and Soil Conservation Service to enable the extension service to carry on special work in co-operation with these services, see chap. iv.

## A. SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL SOURCES

The largest percentage of the increase in financial support during the period was from federal funds which increased from approximately \$1,485,855 in 1914-15 to \$17,256,204 in 1936-37, a more than tenfold increase.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Source of federal funds.*—These federal funds, which were 58 per cent of the total extension funds in 1936-37, are derived from three major legislative authorizations, from special appropriations inserted in the appropriation acts for the United States Department of Agriculture, and from special funds allotted by the Secretary. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided for an increasing increment of federal funds which matured in 1923. Authorizations were made for supplementary funds by the Capper-Ketcham Act of 1928 and the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935.

In addition to these substantive authorizations for annual appropriations, two special appropriations have been included annually in the general appropriation act of the Department of Agriculture and have been considered a regular source of federal funds by the state extension services. The first of these—called “Supplementary Smith-Lever” funds—has been included in the United States Department of Agriculture appropriation acts since the World War period. The second special appropriation—called “Additional Cooperative Extension Work”—has been included since 1930 to encourage special work in marketing and home economics.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The 1936-37 figure includes \$230,793.76 for territories and \$19,350 unallotted funds (see U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics for 1915* [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915] and “Federal Funds Allotted for Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for Fiscal Year 1936-37” [statement from Federal Extension Office]. The 1936-37 figures are for allotted funds. They do include allotments of \$230,793.76 to Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico, but do not include \$19,350 of “additional cooperative” funds unallotted at the time the statement was made.)

<sup>6</sup> In 1936-37 these two appropriations were diminished by 25 per cent upon recommendation of the Bureau of the Budget, which further recommended that they be reduced an additional 25 per cent in 1937-38. It was assumed that there

Another source of funds for the state extension services has been small allotments from a Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Fund appropriated directly to the Department of Agriculture for use by the Federal Extension Office. A portion of these funds was applied to the salaries of county and state extension workers to give them federal status entitling them to the use of the franking privilege. Recently, however, county agents and state extension supervisors and specialists have been appointed collaborators of the Department of Agriculture without compensation. Owing to increase of federal funds through the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935 and to need for economy, the proportion of this appropriation formerly used for state allotments was not included in the 1938 budget estimate for the Department of Agriculture.

Still a seventh source of federal funds has been the allotments of funds authorized for the Department of Agriculture under Section V of the Clarke-McNary Act which provided funds "for co-operation with the states to assist farm owners in establishing wood lots, shelter belts, wind breaks, and other valuable forest growth, and in growing and renewing useful timber crops." The extension services have been designated as the agencies to administer these funds. Under this appropriation co-operative relations were carried on with thirty-two states in 1936-37.

Table 13 shows the amount of federal funds available to the states, the manner of distribution, and the matching requirements.

2. *Allocation of federal funds to state extension services.*—The question of a fair manner of allocating federal funds to the individual states is a debatable one and charged with political

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would be further annual reductions until completely discontinued during 1940. An unsuccessful attempt was made on the part of the state college and extension leaders supported by the Grange and the Farm Bureau to secure substantive authorization for \$2,580,000 in another Bankhead-Jones bill to replace these item appropriations. The bill was passed by the 75th Congress but was vetoed by President Roosevelt (see S. 1052).



TABLE 13\*

## FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM FEDERAL SOURCES FOR THE FORTY-EIGHT STATES, ALASKA, HAWAII, AND PUERTO RICO

| Acts and Item Appropriations        | Year Authorized                                    | Total Appropriation at Maturity | Lump Sum Grants—No Matching | Funds with State Matching—Rural Population Basis                        | Funds with No Matching—Farm Population Basis | Funds Allotted at Secretary's Discretion          | Amount Available 1936-37† |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------|
| Smith-Lever . . . . .               | 1914   | \$ 4,580,000                    | \$10,000                    | \$600,000 (1915); \$500,000 each succeeding year until maturity in 1923 |  |   | \$ 4,710,000‡             |
| Supplementary Smith-Lever . . . . . | Unauthorized annual begun in 1918                  |                                 |                             | Ranged from \$1,300,000 to \$1,580,000 to be eliminated by 1940§        |  |   | 1,185,000                 |
| Clark-McNary . . . . .              | Authorized for U.S. Department of Agriculture 1924 |                                 |                             |   |  | Amount authorized up to \$100,000 must be matched | 50,540                    |
| Capper-Ketcham . . . . .            | 1928   | 1,460,000¶                      | 20,000                      | \$500,000 in 1929-30 and subsequently                                   |  |   | 1,480,000                 |

\* Table compiled from various federal statutes, from statement of Federal Office, "Federal Funds Allotted for Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for Fiscal Year, 1936-37," and from annual appropriation acts for U.S. Department of Agriculture.

† Statement from Federal Office of Federal Funds allotted for extension work (statement of total includes \$19,350 unallotted "Additional Co-operative Funds").

‡ Additional funds authorized for Hawaii in 1928; for Alaska in 1929; for Puerto Rico in 1931.

§ Available for Hawaii.

¶ Available for Puerto Rico.

|| Capper-Ketcham funds available for Hawaii.

TABLE 13—Continued

| Acts and Item Appropriations             | Year Authorized  | Total Appropriation at Maturity | Lump Sum Grants—No Matching | Funds with State Matching—Rural Population Basis | Funds with No Matching—Farm Population Basis                                      | Funds Allotted at Secretary's Discretion  | Amount Available 1936-37† |
|--|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| Additional Co-operative.....             | Unauthorized annual begun in 1930                                    | .....                           | .....                       | .....  | .....   | Until 1936-37 amounted to \$1,000,000 reduced by 25 per cent in 1937, no offset | 750,000                   |
| Bankhead-Jones.....                      | 1935   | 12,000,000**                    | 20,000                      | .....  | \$8,000,000 the first year; annual increase of \$1,000,000 until maturity in 1940 | .....   | 9,000,000                 |
| Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Fund | Appropriation to U.S. Department of Agriculture allotments to states | .....                           | .....                       | .....  | .....   | Amount left to Secretary's discretion discontinued in 1938 budget††             | 100,000                   |
| Total.....                               | .....  | .....                           | .....                       | .....  | .....   | .....   | \$17,275,540              |

\*\* Benefits extended to Hawaii.

†† Funds distributed to Alaska and Puerto Rico.

dynamite. The lump-sum appropriations totaling \$50,000 for each state favors the smaller and sparsely populated states. The distribution of the remaining funds provided by the Smith-Lever Act, Capper-Ketcham Act, and by the Supplementary Smith-Lever "appropriations," based on the state's proportion of rural population, offsets this advantage to some extent, but operates in favor of states having numerous small villages. It is now generally agreed that distribution on the basis of farm population, as provided in the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935, is a fairer method of apportionment, since the work is carried on primarily in the interest of farm people. This method of distribution, however, does not take into account the need for additional travel funds in the sparsely settled western states.<sup>7</sup>

This method of apportionment was provided in the recently vetoed Bankhead-Jones bill of 1937, which was promoted to give authorization for appropriations to replace the Supplementary Smith-Lever and Additional Cooperative Funds now being reduced with the object of elimination by 1940 upon recommendation of the Bureau of the Budget. If this method of apportionment were used in the Smith-Lever and Capper-Ketcham Acts it would cut Pennsylvania's present federal funds approximately in half.<sup>8</sup> This revision in apportionment, however, unless some flat grants were continued would not satisfy the comparatively greater need for funds in far western

<sup>7</sup> Some leaders feel that home economics extension work should be provided for people in villages and even in cities. New York State has three city home bureaus providing such help for city women. A considerable number of village children participate in 4-H Club work.

<sup>8</sup> See V. O. Key, Jr., *The Administration of Federal Grants to States* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1937), I, 323. In 1935-36 a total of \$764,134.61 of Bankhead-Jones funds was turned back by twenty-three states and Hawaii through failure to make use of them. In 1936-37 twelve states turned back Bankhead-Jones funds ranging from \$114,452.43 in Pennsylvania to 20 cents in Kansas. These funds returned because of failure to use totaled \$231,576.36 (interview with W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Cooperative Extension Service).

states where the distances add tremendously to traveling expenses.

These inequities have been made up to some extent by Additional Cooperative Funds and Farmers' Co-operative Demonstration Funds which have been distributed at the discretion of the secretary of agriculture. The recent policy of discontinuing these discretionary funds, unless they are replaced by an additional appropriation or unless some of the earlier acts are amended to provide a different basis of distribution, will increase the present inequities between the various states.<sup>9</sup> With the discontinuance of the "Additional Cooperative" and "Supplementary Smith-Lever" funds by 1940, twenty-one states will receive less federal money than they did during 1937, while at the same time total federal funds available will have increased by \$3,000,000 owing to increasing increments provided by the Bankhead-Jones Act for the forty-eight states and Hawaii.<sup>10</sup>

In 1937 the total amount of federal funds apportioned to the various states ranged from \$59,907.83 in Rhode Island to \$1,082,935.61 in Texas. The average per state was approximately \$354,696.

#### B. SUPPORT FROM STATE FUNDS: DIRECT STATE APPROPRIATIONS AND AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE FUNDS

Contrasted with the more than tenfold increase in federal funds in the period from 1914-15 to 1936-37, the amount of funds contributed by direct appropriations from the state legis-

<sup>9</sup> Measuring distribution of funds by farm capita, V. O. Key, Jr., points out the inequities of present distribution: "The total allotments (flat grants and the amounts apportioned according to population) for the year 1936 gave less than \$0.45 per capita farm population for Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas. Figures for some others were Utah \$0.88; Connecticut \$0.91; Vermont \$0.93; Arizona \$1.16; New Hampshire \$1.24; Wyoming \$1.47; Delaware \$1.52; Rhode Island \$2.76; Nevada \$4.74" (*ibid.*, p. 322).

<sup>10</sup> See "Development of Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work," *Hearings before Committee on Agriculture and Forestry* (U.S. Senate, 75th Cong., 1st sess., on S. 1052, April 15, 1937) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937), pp. 5-7.

lature and allotted from the state-college appropriations increased from \$1,044,270.38 to \$5,639,585.46 in the forty-eight states—an increase of approximately fivefold.<sup>11</sup>

Federal funds apportioned to the states are combined with state and college funds and are then allotted to the counties by state extension authorities. The general practice is to require that the counties contribute a certain minimum before co-operative relations are established, thus making state and federal funds available. In some states a flat sum of state and federal funds is contributed to each co-operating county. In other states the amount is varied somewhat in an attempt to equalize the total funds available for extension work in the counties. The states which are attempting to pay all salaries from state and federal funds vary the amounts according to educational qualifications, experience, size of county, and other factors.<sup>12</sup>

#### C. SUPPORT FROM COUNTY APPROPRIATIONS

The percentage increase in funds from county appropriations of more than sixfold was somewhat higher than the fivefold increase in state funds but was far below the more than tenfold increase in federal funds from 1914-15 to 1936-37. The county funds increased from \$780,331.79 in 1914-15 to \$5,837,489.81 in 1936-37.<sup>13</sup> These funds are, of course, all expended for county agent, home demonstration, and club work.

The manner of disbursing these funds varies. In 1930 these

<sup>11</sup> An additional \$145,718.19 was allotted for the territories (U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States, 1931* [Washington: Government Printing Office], p. 150 and statement from Federal Office, "Source of Funds Allotted for Cooperative Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for 1936-37").

<sup>12</sup> See chap. vii, p. 172. Illinois receives no direct state appropriation, but allotment is made directly for salaries to county agents from appropriation to the state Department of Agriculture.

<sup>13</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in the United States, 1931* (Washington: Government Printing Office), p. 130, and "Sources of Funds Allotted for Cooperative Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for 1936-37" (Federal Office statement).

county funds in seven states were sent directly to the colleges to be disbursed in the same way state and federal funds were handled. In twenty-two states local county authorities disbursed them by order of the state agricultural college administrators, while in sixteen the payments were made directly to the county personnel or, as in some cases, to the county farm bureau.<sup>14</sup>

#### D. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PRIVATE SOURCES

The percentage increase from private sources from 1914-15 to 1936-37 was less than twofold compared with a more than tenfold increase in federal funds, of approximately fivefold in state funds, and of a sixfold increase in county funds. Private funds contributed to extension work increased from \$286,748.55 in 1914-15 to \$835,858 in 1936-37.<sup>15</sup> Private funds were available only in twenty of the forty-eight states in 1937; 67 per cent of such funds being concentrated in two states, Illinois and Iowa, where farm-bureau contributions are widely used. In Illinois, funds from farm-bureau contributions in 1935-36 amounted to 54.5 per cent of the total expenditures.<sup>16</sup> Reported private funds allotted for the United States in 1936-37 amounted to only 2.84 per cent of the total extension funds. It is probable that actual contributions from private sources considerably exceed this amount. The states are only under obligation to report the use of private funds which are used for state matching-funds. Private funds, other than farm-bureau contributions, must be handled through the official county or

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior: Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), II, 471.

<sup>15</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, 1931* (Washington: Government Printing Office), p. 130, and "Source of Funds Allotted for Cooperative Extension Work in States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico for 1936-37" (Federal Office statement).

<sup>16</sup> One state, New York, having considerable farm-bureau contributions, recorded them as county funds or did not find it necessary to record a large portion of them for state matching purposes.

state agencies or through county farm-bureau organizations.<sup>17</sup> Thus when contributions are made by private organizations or individuals, they are usually given to the county appropriating-board or to the county farm-bureau board. Their original source may not be accounted for to the state and federal office.<sup>18</sup>

Accusations are sometimes made by opposition organizations and by individuals who are critical of the extension service that chambers of commerce, southern planters, or private individuals or agencies through large contributions frequently dominate the work of the county agent.<sup>19</sup> It is practically impossible to make an accurate check upon such allegations as these practices are frequently not recorded in the state office. Such contributions are probably more common in the Negro work where counties often fail to make an appropriation and funds are inadequate. These contributions often come from Negro farmers themselves and are sometimes supplemented with funds from sympathetic white farmers or by the farm-bureau organization. Private funds are contributed for county extension for white farmers in some counties, but they are usually discouraged by the state-extension-service leaders. Neither the amount nor the frequency of such contributions need cause alarm over private influence in extension work.

The relationship to farm bureaus in some sections and to county appropriating-boards is more likely to result in a greater degree of co-operation with more economically secure farm

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Federal Legislation, Regulations and Rulings Affecting Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics* (reprinted with Amendments from Department Circ. 251) (Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1933), p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> The contributions of a state power company to the salary of an assistant agent and of subscriptions from farmers to the salary of another agent were not recorded in personnel records of federal office where source of funds on salary are separately recorded. The state extension director of this state reported no private contributions other than farm-bureau membership dues.

<sup>19</sup> Such allegations were made by members of Farmers' Union at the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy Hearings held at Montgomery, Ala., in January, 1937.

groups with resulting neglect of the tenant and marginal farmer. This is a matter for reform within the official extension organization with regard to changing the emphasis in objectives and methods of extension work rather than for alarm over unofficial private contributions. The contention that large private contributions from business corporations for 4-H Club prizes exploit club work for private advertising is probably better founded.<sup>20</sup>

#### E. PERCENTAGE OF FUNDS DERIVED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

The percentage which funds from these various sources have been of total funds expended for the state and county extension workers has varied considerably since the official inauguration of co-operative extension work in 1914. Although the percentage of federal funds reached its peak during the World War period in 1918-19 and declined considerably during the next few years, the present trend since 1933 has been toward an increased percentage of federal funds, reaching 58 per cent of the total in 1936-37. The percentage of state funds has decreased from 29 per cent in 1914-15 to 10 per cent in 1936-37; the percentage of county funds has decreased from 22 per cent in 1914-15 to 19.6 per cent in 1936-37; and funds from private sources have decreased from a high figure of 8 per cent in 1914 to 2.8 per cent in 1936-37. Table 14 shows the percentage increase in funds from these sources.

Despite the large and increasing percentage of federal funds used for co-operative extension work, state extension leaders generally agree that the amount of federal control of extension work on the part of the Federal Extension Office has not increased to any appreciable extent. Neither the amount of federal funds expended in the Washington office nor the number of federal supervisors has increased to any significant extent. It is true that a greater percentage of the county agent's time has been spent in the promotion of federal programs and that, as

<sup>20</sup> See chap. iii.



secretary or executive officer in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in many states, he has either been incorporated in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration's administrative organization or has had some contact with its administrative personnel. However, this activity has been considered voluntary work on the part of the state extension services and has

TABLE 14\*

SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR EXTENSION WORK IN THE FORTY-EIGHT STATES  
ALASKA, HAWAII, AND PUERTO RICO BY PERCENTAGE

| Years      | Per Cent<br>Total<br>Federal | Per Cent<br>Regular<br>Federal | Per Cent<br>Emer-<br>gency<br>Federal | Total<br>Per Cent<br>within<br>State | Per Cent<br>State and<br>College | Per Cent<br>County | Per Cent<br>Farm<br>Bureau<br>and Other<br>Private<br>Sources |
|------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1914-15... | 41.0                         | 41.0                           | .....                                 | 59.0                                 | 29.0                             | 22.0               | 8.0   |
| 1917-18... | 57.25                        | 22.75                          | 34.5                                  | 42.75                                | 19.4                             | 18.39              | 4.9   |
| 1918-19... | 61.61                        | 30.03                          | 31.3                                  | 38.1                                 | 16.9                             | 17.7               | 3.5   |
| 1919-20... | 40.2                         | 40.2                           | .....                                 | 59.8                                 | 26.4                             | 27.0               | 6.2   |
| 1926-27... | 34.7                         | 34.7                           | .....                                 | 64.9                                 | 29.0                             | 30.0               | 5.9   |
| 1927-28... | 34.0                         | 34.0                           | .....                                 | 65.8                                 | 30.0                             | 30.1               | 5.7   |
| 1928-29... | 36.78                        | 36.78                          | .....                                 | 63.1                                 | 28.56                            | 29.4               | 5.2   |
| 1931-32... | 39.7                         | 39.7                           | .....                                 | 60.3                                 | 28.5                             | 27.2               | 4.5   |
| 1933-34... | 46.4                         | 46.4                           | †                                     | 53.6                                 | 24.0                             | 25.4               | 4.1   |
| 1934-35... | 43.7                         | 43.7                           | †                                     | 56.2                                 | 24.8                             | 26.6               | 4.6   |
| 1935-36... | 57.28                        | 57.28                          | †                                     | 42.7                                 | 18.66                            | 20.58              | 3.57  |
| 1936-37... | 58.0                         | 58.0                           | .....                                 | 42.0                                 | 19.0                             | 19.6               | 2.8   |

\* Data from U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Report of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics" (percentages for 1915, 1920, and 1927) taken from U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), II, 459.

† A.A.A. and other emergency appropriations are roughly estimated for 1934-35 at 14 per cent. They are not included in estimates for other years and would be almost negligible in 1936-37, owing to replacement of Bankhead-Jones regular extension funds (see chap. iii).

not entailed an attempt to control state extension work by the Federal Extension Office.

Whether this lack of direct federal control constitutes a challenge to the commonly accepted theory that administrative control follows funds or whether it is merely a lag in the transition of the county agent from an itinerant teacher to a county planner, promoter, and administrator with more substantial federal responsibility is still a matter of conjecture. It is doubtful if the present anomalous position of large federal financial

support, work of a promotional, semiadministrative and administrative character in national agricultural programs, can continue long without more substantial administrative responsibility to the federal government.

Where "national action" programs are involved, it is doubtful if the federal government can continue to rely on prestige, persuasion, and other intangible forms of indirect administrative control. It is apparent that unified and immediate action is often imperative in national action programs since failure to co-operate on the part of a few states may invalidate the entire program. By contrast, an educational program or even a program of road-building may proceed largely on a state basis without being seriously affected by lack of co-operation on the part of a few states for a limited length of time. But time and unanimity are essential for the success of a "national action" program similar to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

## CHAPTER VII

### PERSONNEL

**T**HE county agent is a young man in his middle thirties. He is generally farm reared and serves in his home state but not in his home county. He is usually an agricultural college graduate and has had some previous experience in agricultural work. Often he has been a Smith-Hughes teacher of vocational agriculture. He is active in community affairs, belonging to business as well as to agricultural organizations. In most sections he attends Sunday school and church, refrains from alcoholic drinks, and in some counties from Sunday baseball games and moving pictures.

The number of counties which the county agent has served has grown from 928 in 1914 to 2,869 in 1937. During this year county agents were reinforced by 893 assistant agents in agricultural work, 315 club agents and assistants, 1,688 home demonstration agents, 236 Negro county agents, 179 Negro home demonstration agents, and 1 Negro club agent.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. SELECTION

The county agricultural agents are jointly selected by the state extension office and the county co-operating group. In some states the county co-operating group is the board of supervisors; in others the county farm-bureau board; and in others an advisory committee of farmers. Generally they are recommended by the state extension service and selected by a local co-operating organization. As a matter of procedure prospective agents usually file applications with the state extension service giving age, marital status, church affiliation, college major and degree, and farming experience and experience

<sup>1</sup> Annual statements of U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Number of Extension Workers" (copy on file in the office of the Co-operative Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture).

after graduation from college. These applications are kept on file at the state office. When a vacancy occurs, applicants are interviewed—generally by the district agent or an assistant state agent. In some states the prospective agents are interviewed also by the extension director, and in at least one state they are interviewed by the college president.

In addition to the interview the state leaders secure the college record of the applicant and recommendations from former employers or friends. The South Carolina Extension Service makes some use of a personal-record card compiled by the registrar's office of Clemson College from individual ratings made by all the student's professors. The faculty members are required to rate the student as average, above average, or below average on ten traits (Table 15). The ratings are summarized for each student and are available for prospective employers.

TABLE 15  
CHARACTERISTICS USED AS BASIS FOR PERSONAL-  
RECORD CARD IN SOUTH CAROLINA

1. Character (sense of honor, reliability, dependability)
2. Energy (enterprise, industry, initiative)
3. Native ability (mental caliber, mental alertness, capability)
4. Earnestness (perseverance, seriousness of purpose)
5. Technical ability in major subject
6. Comparative standing in class work
7. Personal appearance (neatness, care of person and dress)
8. Manner (attractiveness, bearing, good impression)
9. Disposition (courteous, tactful, respectful)
10. Leadership (executive ability)

After examining the various records and recommendations of the candidates and paying special attention to the interview and to their farm experience, the state extension service customarily recommends from one to three men to the county governing-board, farm-bureau board, or advisory committee. In making these recommendations state extension leaders do not usually consider scholastic standards to be so important as

farm experience and the personality of the candidate. Some state leaders shy from "A" men because they feel that an "A" record is almost inevitably accompanied by personality defects. If the county board is not satisfied after an interview with the suggested applicants, it may request that the state service recommend more candidates. Usually the county board trusts the judgment of the state leader and accepts one of the first two or three applicants recommended. Occasional deadlocks occur if the county wants to employ a local man whom the college considers unqualified. County agents and state agents in the states visited reported that county boards do not ask the political affiliation of a prospective agent. They question him concerning marital status, farm background, farm experience, and college work, and sometimes concerning church affiliation, particularly if he is to have charge of 4-H Club work. Most state services will not approve the selection of a local man, but sometimes they will approve popular Smith-Hughes teachers who have served several years in the county. A few agents may be employed in neighboring states, though it is not common to find county agents from one agricultural region serving in another.<sup>2</sup>

Occasionally this procedure is reversed and the county board on its own initiative establishes contacts with county agents in neighboring counties, offering them higher salaries or other inducements, and then requests the college to accept their selection. As a rule more initiative is taken by a county farm-bureau board than by a board of supervisors or by an advisory committee. The procedure of allowing local choice among certified applicants is followed still in South Carolina and Ohio where salaries are paid almost entirely from state and federal

<sup>2</sup> In some of the southern states it is considered best to send agents reared in a Piedmont section to another Piedmont section rather than to a Black Belt or Delta county. This is particularly important in the case of Negro agents, who would find the color line more pronounced in a Delta section. E.g., a Negro county agent from a Piedmont section lost his job because of offering to shake hands with a white commissioner in a plantation section where he was employed.

funds, but the Pennsylvania and California state offices which use no county funds for salary control the appointment of county agents.<sup>3</sup>

The Federal Extension Office does not take any part in the selection and recommendation of the county agricultural agents. It reserves the right to approve the appointment, but it has seldom disapproved appointments requested. It has refused to approve a few appointment requests in cases where local politicians were attempting to force through the appointment of a local man. In some of these cases disapproval has been requested by the State Extension Office which wished to shift the responsibility to the more remote Federal Office.<sup>4</sup> Prestige of the federal connection has, however, been instrumental in discouraging state and local politicians from meddling with extension appointments.

If a state did not desire a federal commission for its county agents, it could appoint them without requesting federal approval. This has rarely been done; for the commission carries the advantages of the use of official "penalty or franked envelopes" of the United States laws granting compensation in case of injury on duty and the less tangible lure of federal prestige advantages which have not been offset by federal interference with state appointments.<sup>5</sup>

An experiment in federal selection was made in 1933 when some six hundred emergency county agents and assistants were appointed under federal civil service status to assist in in-

<sup>3</sup> County agents are not classified competitive civil service employees in any state. They are included on the "unclassified" list of state employees in New Jersey (letter of May 17, 1938, from Director H. J. Baker of the New Jersey Extension Service).

<sup>4</sup> Director Warburton stated that one or two appointment requests were ordinarily refused each year (interview, July 19, 1938).

<sup>5</sup> Federal approval could probably be made a condition of federal grants since the Smith-Lever Act states that the work shall be "carried on" in a manner mutually agreed upon. The college, of course, would be obligated to secure federal approval of agents who receive direct federal pay, since the 1914 memorandums state that such agents "shall be joint representatives" of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the state college of agriculture.

augurating A.A.A. work. The Civil Service Commission gave them an unassembled examination based on experience and education. Some state extension directors expressed disapproval of this method of selection which they claimed often resulted in the employment of unacceptable assistants. They complained that proper evaluation of the quality of experience related to county agent work was not given. A change in policy brought about a discontinuance of the tests after a six months' period. The protests of state extension directors against the civil service appointments were probably partially responsible for the change in policy. After this six months' period A.A.A. funds were transferred to the federal extension service which reallocated them to the state services. The state extension services used these funds to recruit their own emergency agents and assistants according to regular extension procedure.<sup>6</sup>

Since the qualities which make for successful county agent work include subjective as well as objective elements and one of the chief qualifications is that the agent be satisfactory to the local farmers, it is likely that the personal interview will remain the major basis for selection. Although much weight must be given to the factor of personality, the quality of the work could be improved greatly by raising the standards for selection to improve the quality of training for prospective agents.

#### B. QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

The Federal Extension Office has not set any minimum qualifications for county agricultural agents. It has used its influence consistently for higher standards but has left final judg-

<sup>6</sup> Some states absorbed a few of these emergency assistants appointed through civil service in the regular extension setup. North Dakota still had two agents in 1936 who had been first employed as emergency assistants in 1933. Nebraska absorbed several of the civil service appointments into the regular extension service. Six hundred and nine emergency agents and assistants were employed in October, 1933. The number assigned to an individual state varied from none in many states to fifty in South Dakota (interviews with W. M. Thayer, business manager of the Cooperative Extension Service; C. W. Warburton, director of the Cooperative Extension Service; H. W. Gilbertson, federal regional agent for the central states; and several state directors).

ment to the discretion of the state extension services. Most state services now require that county agents shall be four-year graduates of an approved agricultural college and shall have had a farm background. A majority also require experience in agricultural work.<sup>7</sup> Infrequently, an agent may be employed who does not have a college degree or who lacks other qualifications. A number are still serving, particularly in the southern states, who were selected before these qualifications were made.<sup>8</sup> In 1930, at the time of the survey of land-grant colleges by the Office of Education, approximately 17 per cent of the county agents employed did not have college degrees.<sup>9</sup>

Most states refuse to approve the employment of a candidate in his home county. This standard, which the Federal Office has frequently advocated, generally is followed, but no provision is made that an agent cannot purchase land or acquire other vested interests in the county once he is appointed. Agents sometimes become landlords in the county after employment.<sup>10</sup>

Some state leaders set up lists of somewhat intangible qualifications as guideposts in selecting candidates for recommendation to the county boards. These may be of some value as a

<sup>7</sup> In 1930, according to Land-Grant College Survey, one-third of state services did not require a four-year college degree and one-half did not require practical farm experience. In 1930 75 per cent of all extension workers were reared on farms, and 98 per cent of county agents had had farm experience. Standards have improved since that time, but some states are still lax in their requirements (U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930], II, 477 and 540).

<sup>8</sup> In 1937, 11 of the 156 county agents in Georgia were not college graduates.

<sup>9</sup> The inadequate educational qualifications of specialists whose main function is to keep county agents up to date and to supplement their knowledge in subject-matter fields is especially pronounced. In 1930, 8 per cent of the specialists did not have a B.S. degree (U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, 478).

<sup>10</sup> The strictest experience standard is set in Illinois where candidates must have had five years' farming experience following college graduation before they are eligible. Illinois also boasts that it has never employed an agent who was not a college graduate.



basis for judgment in the personal interview. The Iowa list is given as a sample (Table 16). From a study of leadership in county agent work made in 1925 by Dr. H. C. Ramsower of Ohio State University it was discovered that intangible qualities of leadership were important characteristics of superior agents. Dr. Ramsower asked state extension leaders to rate the two best and the two poorest agents in twenty qualities of leadership. His conclusions, based on replies from 34 state

TABLE 16\*

QUALIFICATIONS USED AS A BASIS FOR SELECTION  
OF COUNTY AGENTS IN IOWA

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Experience. . . . .          | Successful in previous work   |
| Training. . . . .            | College training, knowledge of farming                                |
| Leadership ability. . . . .  | Vision, ability to inspire others to work<br>with him toward goal     |
| Character. . . . .           | Honest, dependable, and right influence<br>to boys. Loyal and sincere |
| Good organizer. . . . .      | Co-operates and plans well with others                                |
| Enthusiastic. . . . .        | Optimistic, cheerful, believes in his job                             |
| Good judgment. . . . .       | Thinks clearly, conclusions sound                                     |
| Systematic. . . . .          | Plans to make best use of time and<br>money                           |
| Friendly. . . . .            | Good mixer, tolerant, and wears well                                  |
| Diplomatic. . . . .          | Tactful   |
| Personal appearance. . . . . | Healthy, neat and appropriately dressed                               |
| References. . . . .          | Are references adequate?  |

\* Iowa Extension Service, "Qualifications of County Agents," Iowa State Extension Service Pub. B-165, 1932. (Mimeographed.)

leaders who selected 133 from 1,400 agents and secured ratings for these 133 selected agents from 143 state leaders, indicated that the seven qualities which are found in highest degree in the superior agent are integrity, perseverance, faith, ability to plan, and initiative. The poorest agents compared favorably in technical knowledge with the superior agents, but rated low in the qualities of enthusiasm, vision, ability to plan, and initiative.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Some Aspects of a Study of Leadership" (paper presented at the Land-Grant College Association Meetings, November 18, 1925). (Mimeographed copy on file at the Office of Ohio Extension Service.)

Specific requirements for training in extension methods, education, economics, sociology, psychology, or public speaking are not set by any college, but considerable emphasis is given to training along these lines by leaders in advising prospective agents and in selecting candidates for recommendation. Agricultural colleges at various times have offered a course for prospective agents called "extension methods." Since this course has not been required for employment and most county agents do not decide to enter extension work until after graduation, the registration has usually been small and the college has often discontinued the course after a year or two of trial.<sup>22</sup> Frequently the course has been confined almost entirely to the history and organization of the work rather than to practical problems, methods of teaching, and techniques of administration. Instead of challenging the student to see the problems faced by the extension service due to the changing character of the work, to farm organization relationships, and to relationships to other governmental agencies, it too often has been only a description and a justification for the work as it has been carried on under the particular type of state organization. In one state visited, county agents who had taken the course reported that it had been of little practical value. Some institutions have secured the assistance of federal regional agents and of the Division on Extension Study and Teaching of the Federal Office to give special courses in extension methods during the summer-school period. Many of these summer-school courses prove to be both stimulating and practical, particularly when they are attended by county agents as well as by prospective agents. One regional agent challenged his class concerning the possibility and desirability of reaching the "lower third of the farm population." He challenged them to develop more adequate methods of program-planning by

<sup>22</sup> In 1933 approximately 18 per cent of the agricultural colleges offered an elective course in extension methods. One institution reported that the course was required (see Erwin H. Shinn, "A Survey of Professional Training Offered at Land-Grant Institutions for Prospective Agricultural Extension Workers," *Extension Service Circ.* 218, August, 1935). (Mimeographed.)

pointing out constantly that improvement in individual practices was of no avail if the unit of farming itself remained uneconomic. He insisted that an effective program of work must be based on actual "fact finding," on an analysis of the actual problems of the county rather than on a compilation of projects drawn up by specialists to fit their particular subject-matter fields. This type of course, when supplemented by the experiences of county agents working on actual problems, is quite valuable. It is, of course, better adapted for postentry training of agents already in the field.

A course in extension methods for prospective agents is not of much practical value without some supplementary field training or at least the assignment of practical problems. Some few colleges have worked out an arrangement with the local county agent to take college students with him on some of his practical field work. Georgia worked out a system using the county in which the college is located for a student laboratory and employing the local county agent to teach a course in extension methods. This course promised to be fairly useful but was discontinued in the process of college recognition.

Wisconsin has been developing professional training courses since 1929 on the graduate level with the help of the Division of Extension Studies and Teachings of the federal extension service. It offered courses in extension education during the summer of 1931 in addition to special courses in agricultural journalism and economics. Undergraduate courses offered in 1938 included one in 4-H Club work, in county agent work, in home economics extension work, and in agricultural news writing and psychology.<sup>13</sup> Nine state agricultural colleges and Tuskegee Institute offered special summer courses for extension workers in 1937. The length of these extension courses varied from three to eight weeks. The state agricultural colleges of Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado sponsored some extension courses at Fort Collins as a co-operative enterprise.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from W. W. Clark, associate director of the Wisconsin Extension Service, May 17, 1938.

Courses were offered in the philosophy of extension work, agricultural journalism, and in land-use planning. The enrolment included 104 extension workers from thirteen states and sixteen land-use-planning and soil-conservation employees.<sup>14</sup>

California and New York employ itinerant assistant county agents to replace agents who are given leave for study. Such a system might well be combined with one of practice training for prospective agents who, with more adequate supervision, might take the place of county agents on leave for a limited length of time. A few institutions are offering commendable courses in extension methods, particularly during the summer session; they reach only a small portion of the county agricultural agents.

A few states grant a year's leave to county agricultural agents for advanced study. More states arrange for leave during a short summer school or a "short course" session. Ohio has an unusually high record not only in granting leaves but in encouraging students to take work outside of their home state; the staff has attended fourteen different institutions. In all, sixty-seven Ohio agents have been granted leave of absence for nine months' full pay. (Leaves have been granted at the rate of eight or nine a year.) Agents are encouraged to take graduate courses in education, psychology, economics, and sociology.<sup>15</sup> County agents in New York State are granted sabbatic leave with full pay for a six months' period and half-pay for a twelve months' period, at the rate of one agent per semester.<sup>16</sup> The privilege is granted on a basis of seniority. All county agents who had been given sabbatic leave in 1937 had been in the New York Extension Service for at least sixteen years.<sup>17</sup> Leave is granted to a limited number of agents to

<sup>14</sup> See C. W. Warburton, "Agents Train for Greater Usefulness," *Extension Service Review*, VIII, No. 12 (December, 1937), 181.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Director H. C. Ramsower.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Fred B. Morris, assistant county agent leader, May 17, 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Material collected for "Regents' Inquiry into Character and Cost of Public Education, New York, April 8, 1937." (Mimeographed copy on file at the New York Extension Service Office.)

attend summer school. California, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have some system of sabbatic leave or leave for professional improvement.

District conferences of county agents to discuss program-planning, annual reports, special problems or projects provide a valuable type of in-service training. The number and regularity of these conferences vary from state to state. The number of one-, two-, or three-day training schools of various types has increased greatly along with the New Deal activities undertaken by county agents. Various schools explaining specific phases of the commodity programs were frequently held. In addition, the Program Planning Division of the A.A.A. has held regional and state schools to train extension workers in setting up discussion groups to train extension workers in the technique of conducting discussion and forum groups.<sup>18</sup> Some state extension services gave special lectures on office management to assist the agents in coping with the complexities arising from the deluge of A.A.A. material.

The assistance of subject-matter specialists, whose major function should be to supplement the county agent's knowledge of specialized fields and to keep him up to date on new developments within these fields, provides an effective type of in-service training. The quality of this service could be improved by raising the standards of training for subject-matter specialists. In 1930, 8 per cent of the agricultural specialists and 15 per cent of the home-economic specialists did not have a college degree.<sup>19</sup>

Another type of postentry training is that supplied by various types of service newsletters sent out by the state extension service as well as bulletins of various kinds available from the state college and the United States Department of Agriculture. Postentry professional training of an academic nature for coun-

<sup>18</sup> See chap. iii.

<sup>19</sup> From the standpoint of direct help to the farmer, the academic qualifications are not so important as the ability to simplify the problem. In some cases complaint is made that they are overtechnical in their teaching.

ty agents has not been generally available. That the need for such training is recognized by county agents is indicated in a 1927 survey made by the Office of Co-operative Extension Work of the Department of Agriculture. From a total of three hundred agents reporting, 89.6 per cent considered some sort of professional training necessary for their work. They listed as the most important subjects for undergraduate training courses psychology, public speaking, economics, agricultural journalism, business methods, marketing, extension methods, sociology, rural organization, and rural economics. The agents listed the following subjects as most important for postgraduate work: economics, marketing psychology, and sociology.

The National County Agents' Association has a special committee on professional training. It recommended that agents select one of their major extension problems for special study to serve as the basis for a thesis. This work was to be carried on under the direction of an extension or graduate-school supervisor who would meet classes of interested agents at regular intervals at selected points in the state. They felt that this preliminary work would make it possible for an agent to complete work for an M.S. degree at the institution by a short residence period of a semester or less. The committee proposed further that the association present distinguished-service certificates to agents who should qualify under certain requirements.<sup>20</sup> This program would be helpful, but it is doubtful if the average county agent would find sufficient time, interest, and enthusiasm to complete it. It would prove stimulating to the agent with exceptional initiative.

Future training programs will need to take cognizance of the change in the type of county agent work. If the agent is to continue to serve as an adviser, promoter, and administrator of federal programs, if he must play a large part in agricultural land-use planning, if his programs increasingly must help rural people make more rapid adjustments to constantly changing

<sup>20</sup> "National Association Recommends Professional Training for County Agents," *Extension Service Review*, VII, No. 11 (November, 1936), 162 and 172.

and pressing economic and social situations, then training in scientific agricultural subjects will not be adequate. Work in rural sociology, geography, economics, education, administration, and government should become essential elements in a minimum training program.

Dr. Ramsower concluded from his study of leadership that the important thing in extension work was not so much what to teach but how to teach it:

He [state extension leader] has learned through experience bought at a high price that the limiting factor in extension teaching today is not *what* shall we teach but *how*. With what telling force does this thought come home to me when I analyze a county in which a limestone project, for example, has been carried on for many years and find how discouragingly small is the percentage of the farmers who are using lime. The fact that the soil needs lime, that it can be economically used is beyond question. That agent is the great leader who can successfully solve the problem of getting lime on the land. The teaching problem confronting him is not one of passing out information but one requiring a rich knowledge of the science of teaching, of the tricks of salesmanship, the principles of psychology, the facts of sociology, . . . it's a case of solving problems in human relationships.<sup>21</sup>

#### C. SALARY

Determination of salary is generally a joint procedure of the state extension service and the county board or committee. Some states grant a flat rate from state and federal funds to each county agent and leave the additional amount to vary with financial ability of the county group. Others try to vary state and federal funds to help make up county deficiencies. Ten states and two territories are paying the entire salary of county agents from state and federal funds. One state, Delaware, pays the salary of county agents from federal funds entirely.<sup>22</sup> This objective, the payment of salaries from state and federal funds, is advocated by the Federal Extension Office

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.* Dr. Ramsower is one of the most progressive state extension directors. He proved his personal faith in advanced educational training by taking a leave of absence to secure a Ph.D. degree in education at Harvard.

<sup>22</sup> Six additional states secure less than \$4,000 for salary contributions from county sources (interview with W. H. Conway, July, 1938).

and has many advantages. One of the major advantages is to remove the agent from the influence of local politicians and thus give stability to his work. Another advantage is the ability to equalize services between the poorer and better agricultural counties.<sup>23</sup>

An additional advantage is the possibility of setting up definite salary classifications based on experience and educational qualifications and thus raise personnel standards. Such agents become primarily employees of the university and are more likely to be included in university plans for retirement and sabbatical leave. Director Watkins of South Carolina, where salaries are paid chiefly from state and federal funds, takes into account the factors of experience, training, geographical size of the county, and number of farmers in setting up his salary scale. In practice, however, length of service is given the most weight. The Ohio Extension Service bases its salary scale on the factors mentioned in Table 17. Table 18 shows the general salary scale based on length of service which is also used in Ohio. It varies with the factors spoken of in Table 17. The states which pay salaries without assistance from the counties are able to set higher standards for county extension personnel. An incompetent agent may not take refuge so easily in popularity with members of the county board.

The major obstacle to adopting the practice of paying salaries entirely from state and federal funds is the difficulty of securing sufficient funds from the annual appropriations of the state legislature to make up for the loss of county funds. Ohio found it necessary to make three salary cuts and to reduce the number of personnel during the depression period. South Carolina also found itself in a position of financial embarrassment. When the change to state and federal salaries was made in 1930, the South Carolina legislature voted, in addition to its

<sup>23</sup> Even though salaries are on an equalized scale according to ability and length of service, considerable number of inequalities remain. In Ohio in 1937-38, e.g., the range in "miscellaneous expense" provided by the county was from \$200 to \$4,800 (data secured at Ohio State Extension Office).



regular appropriation of about \$100,000, a sum of \$170,000 to make up for county appropriations and to add the service for counties which were not supporting the work. This total state appropriation of \$270,000 was reduced to \$125,000 in 1934 and to \$115,000 in 1935. These reductions automatically resulted in a loss of federal funds for three years because state funds were insufficient to match federal grants. The loss of federal

TABLE 17  
BASIS OF OHIO SALARY SCALE

| At Time of Appointment                         | After Experience as Agent                      |
|--|--|
| Degree in agriculture or home economics        | Administrative ability                         |
| Farm experience or equivalent                  | Performance                                    |
| Normal I.Q. or above                           | Educational point of view                      |
| Experience in other jobs                       | Tenure   |
| Previous salary                                | Additional training                            |
| Interest in farm people                        | Supply and demand                              |
| Supply and demand                              | Living conditions within county (size of city) |
| Living conditions within county (size of city) | Attitude                                       |

TABLE 18  
OHIO SALARY SCALE

| Length of Service            | Salary Range    |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| End of two years . . . . .   | \$2,000-\$2,400 |
| End of four years . . . . .  | 2,400- 2,500    |
| End of seven years . . . . . | 2,400- 3,200    |
| End of ten years . . . . .   | 3,300- 3,600    |
| Maximum salary . . . . .     | 4,500           |

funds amounted to \$40,000 in 1935-36. These reductions of funds resulted in salary reductions in both states.

Unless permanent authorization for a minimum state appropriation can be secured, the question of unstable financial basis will remain a serious obstacle to the payment of salaries from state and federal funds. Some states which might otherwise try the plan as an experiment refrain because they realize that if the county boards were once released from making salary appropriations and were required only to make appro-

priations for expenses, while the services of the county agent were retained, it would be exceedingly difficult to secure county co-operation again.<sup>24</sup> One extension official in a state which had taken this action when asked if it would be desirable to go back to county appropriations for salary payments to secure more adequate finances replied "the bridges are already burned."<sup>25</sup>

Another objection to releasing the county from sharing the expense is the now somewhat discredited "local-interest theory" which has been widely acclaimed by extension and farm-bureau leaders. This theory is based on the assumption that local interest and responsibility are much stimulated by local contributions. It is still ardently championed by extension and farm-bureau leaders in states where the county farm bureau serves as the county co-operating board. Director Bliss of Iowa feels strongly that the contribution of membership dues with the county farm-bureau board assuming much of the initiative in selection and dismissal of the agents develops rural leadership and that the development of this leadership is the most important objective in extension work. "Large local support should mean large local control and large local control is the essence of democracy."<sup>26</sup> Others are equally sincere and serious in their protest that the present trend toward state centralization of the work will destroy local initiative and thus eventually defeat the system. Certain federal and state exten-

<sup>24</sup> Some state extension directors are afraid that direct services of the federal government to the county in the case of rehabilitation work without requiring a county appropriation will give the county governing-boards the idea that they need not appropriate for county agent work—that such work could still be retained on federal funds.

<sup>25</sup> Thirty-six out of forty-six state extension directors replying to a questionnaire used in the Land-Grant College Survey of 1930 favored paying salaries from state and federal funds (U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, Part VII, 470).

<sup>26</sup> R. K. Bliss, "Position of the County Agent Relative to Agricultural Affairs in Its County as a Teacher," *Report of National Association of County Agricultural Agents, 22nd Meeting (December 1 and 2, 1937)* (Springfield, Mo.: Elkins S. Wyers Co., 1938), p. 21.

sion leaders who have been securing salary payments from state and federal funds declare that the local-interest theory based on local contributions is not valid. They assert that better-trained personnel who need not court the favor of local appropriating groups can secure more widespread local interest and that farmers co-operate more freely when they do not feel under obligation to contribute membership dues.<sup>27</sup>

The average salary of county agents from the various sources of contributions has increased from approximately \$1,200 in 1914 to \$2,677 in 1938. The average salary for county agricultural agents in the various states in 1937 ranged from \$2,040 in Florida to \$4,140 in New Jersey. The average amount of federal funds applied on the county agent's salary during that year ranged from \$476 in Indiana to \$3,133 in Delaware.<sup>28</sup>

Table 19 gives the approximate average salary for a number of years within the period from 1914 to 1938.

The lack of range in county agents' salaries in many states, in addition to the fact that the higher salaries are often more an index of the financial capacity and enthusiasm of the county for extension work than of the ability or the experience of the agent, contributes to the instability of tenure in county agent work. As compared with agricultural college graduates who were resident teachers at an agricultural college, the Land-Grant College Survey of 1930 found that a large percentage of

<sup>27</sup> A. J. Meyer of the Missouri Extension Service questioned this local-interest theory in connection with private contributions and advocated financing the work entirely from public funds as early as 1925: "But how shall we dispose of the well-established and oft-recited truth that the farmers take more interest in extension work and support it more loyally if they have some of their own money tied up in its support? My answer to the proposition is that in Missouri, we are unable to see any lessening of farmer interest as counties shift from private to public support of extension work. On the contrary, agents appear to get better support from farmers when they [the farmers] no longer feel that they are under moral obligation to pay for the privilege of cooperating with the agent . . ." (see Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, *Proceedings of 39th Annual Convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, November 17-19, 1925 [Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Printing Co., 1926], pp. 224-25).

<sup>28</sup> Data secured from W. H. Conway of the Federal Office.

county agents' salaries are in the range from \$2,000 to \$2,999 and from \$3,000 to \$3,999. A smaller percentage receive more than \$4,000. Approximately 14.9 per cent of the college teachers receive less than \$2,000 while only 4 per cent of the agricultural agents had salaries under \$2,000.<sup>29</sup>

The county agent's salary compares favorably with that of the average county official apart from fee officers. If traveling expense is not included as a part of the salary and if the fees of local officials are taken into account, it is not unusually high. It would seem much wiser to separate the traveling allowance,

TABLE 19\*  
AVERAGE SALARY OF COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENTS, 1914-38

|           |         |              |         |
|-----------|---------|--------------|---------|
| 1914..... | \$1,200 | 1926.....    | \$2,810 |
| 1919..... | 2,450   | 1929-30..... | 2,991   |
| 1922..... | 2,666   | 1934.....    | 2,511   |
| 1923..... | 2,691   | 1937.....    | 2,630   |
| 1924..... | 2,730   | 1938.....    | 2,677   |
| 1925..... | 2,754   |              |         |

\* Data for 1934, 1937, and 1938 secured from the Federal Extension Office; data for 1914 from W. A. Lloyd, *County Agricultural Agent Work under the Smith-Lever Act, 1914-1924*, Miscellaneous Circ. 59 (Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1926); data for other years from U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Reports of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics* (Washington: Government Printing Office).

which ranges from \$400 to \$1,200, from the salary figure, since lumping both together often arouses the jealousy of county officials who feel that the agent is overpaid. In some southern states county officials are suspicious of the policy of the state and county extension leaders to be secretive concerning the amount of state and federal funds applied on the county agent's salary. Rumored estimates of the total salary often reach excessive amounts. The practice of New York State to include the amount of state and federal funds to be received by the agent as a parenthetical statement in the farm-bureau-budget estimate, as well as in the financial statement submitted to the

<sup>29</sup> In making comparisons it must be noted that county agents work for forty-eight or fifty weeks while teachers work nine months a year (U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, Part VII, 489).

county governing-board, appears to have aroused less jealousy on the part of county officials.<sup>30</sup>

#### D. PROMOTION

There is, of course, no systematic plan of promotion for county agricultural agents, but the addition of assistant agents in many states, who will undoubtedly be given preference for county agent vacancies, offers some chance for advancement. Some of the states which are discontinuing the use of county funds for salary have a plan for salary advancement based chiefly on length of service. A type of salary advancement is provided in some states by transferring the more successful agents to counties providing higher salary payments in case of vacancies. This practice tends to make the poorer counties training-ground for the successful agents and places of retention for less efficient agents. Of the four hundred and nineteen changes in county agent personnel in Iowa (including new county agents appointed, county agents transferred, and former county agents reinstated) from 1914 through 1930, sixty-four of these changes were in the nature of transfers. The largest number transferred in any one year was ten in 1924.<sup>31</sup> There is no way to determine in how many cases the agent transferred moved to a better county, but this practice is common in Iowa since the variation in salaries resulting from variation in farm-bureau dues and county appropriations is quite large. Much initiative in Iowa is left to the county agents and county farm bureaus to arrange such transfers and to secure extension service approval after completion of the arrangements. Illinois reported that in the fifteen counties which

<sup>30</sup> Of course, the difficulty of securing county financial support in many of the poorer southern states cannot be compared with New York State where city taxes and general economic conditions provide larger revenue and where the specialized type of agriculture makes the benefits of extension work more apparent. It is probable, however, that the harmful effects more than offset any advantages to be derived from secrecy.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Barton Morgan, *A History of the Extension Service of Iowa State College* (Ames, Iowa: Collegiate Press, Inc., 1934), p. 107.

changed farm advisers in 1935 four changes were in the nature of employing an experienced farm adviser (county agent) from some other county but that changes made in the other counties resulted in the employment of new farm advisers.<sup>32</sup> Director Watkins of South Carolina reported that he did not favor using the "Methodist preacher" system of transfers but that he preferred to advance the salary of a good man in his particular county instead of transferring him to a larger or wealthier county. It is only natural, however, in states with large variations in salaries for an ambitious agent to watch for vacancies in better counties and for better counties to prefer employing a successful agent in a neighboring county to breaking in a new and inexperienced county agent. The extension service in most states approves such transfers and takes some part in recommending the more successful agents to the better financial counties.

Development of a systematic promotion plan as a part of a hierarchical system is necessarily dependent upon administrative consolidation of the county units. Were it possible to eliminate county and state lines it would be possible to construct a regional and national system which would give adequate chance for promotion and classification. The application of such a plan is impracticable in the near future—since the present system is founded on the state grant-in-aid basis and extension leaders both state and federal are among the most ardent champions of state and local rights.

#### E. TERM AND RETIREMENT

The average period of service for county agents employed in 1926 was five years compared with one year and eleven months in 1918.<sup>33</sup> No recent figures are available for the United States,

<sup>32</sup> Illinois Extension Service, "Annual Report of Illinois Extension Service for December, 1935," p. 14 (copy on file in Office of Co-operative Extension Work, U.S. Department of Agriculture).

<sup>33</sup> W. A. Lloyd, "Some Factors Affecting Tenure in Extension Work," *Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1926*, (Northampton, Mass.: Metcalf Printing and Publishing Co., 1927), p. 223.

but the Washington office reported that the length of service of county agents whose appointments were terminated from December 31, 1926, to December 31, 1936, for two states in each region averaged eight years.<sup>34</sup> The average length of service of agricultural agents in counties visited in Alabama and New York in 1936-37 was approximately six years. It is difficult to secure exact information because only a few state extension services have compiled such data. North Carolina figures for 1935 gave an average length of service of county agents of six years with a range of from one-half year to twenty-four and one-half years. One agent in New York State had completed twenty years of service. The Iowa average for 1935 of county agents in service was six and one-half years. Director White of Mississippi estimated the average length of service of county agents at ten years; Mr. Nichols, assistant director, estimated the average for Tennessee to be eight years. South Carolina had compiled no data but reported that two agents had served in their respective counties for twenty-five years. Average term figures are somewhat deceiving since practically all states still have some county agents on the rolls who have been employed for more than fifteen years. In 1927, 24.4 per cent of the county agents had served one year or less, and 40.3 per cent had served from two to four years; 5.9 per cent had served more than ten years.<sup>35</sup>

Although the length of service of county agents compares favorably with the length of service of city managers and other city officials, county agents, state extension directors, and supervisors consider instability of the work one of the major defects of the extension system. The county agent, since he is farm reared and working with farmers who are relatively immobile compared with city people, tends to expect and de-

<sup>34</sup> Alabama: nine years, seven months; Arkansas: seven years, nine months; Illinois: seven years, nine months; Indiana: seven years, ten months; Arizona: eleven years, seven months; Colorado: six years, seven months; Connecticut: seven years, three months; Maine: five years, six months (data from W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief of the Co-operative Extension Service).

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Education, *op. cit.*, II, 492.

sire a longer tenure than city workers. He sometimes acquires a house, a farm, or other property in which he has a long-time interest. One county agent in Illinois remained in a county for several years during the depression when the county farm bureau could afford to pay him only a small amount above the minimum of state and federal funds because he felt himself rooted there. Since he owned a farm and felt that he belonged in the community, he preferred to remain on a very small salary rather than seek employment in another county. Another factor, of course, is the relatively long time it requires to make any real change in farming operations.

The small opportunity for advancement, the feeling that the work is unstable, and the strenuous nature of the work are responsible for many agents seeking a better job with a commercial firm or with another government agency. Some voluntarily retire to farm for themselves. The New Deal agricultural agencies have absorbed a number of the best agents in recent years. Insurance companies often employ them as managers for their numerous farms accumulated during depression years. Others are employed by commercial fertilizer companies and some are absorbed by the state extension and experiment-station staffs.

Murl McDonald, assistant director of the Iowa State Extension Service, has analyzed the work taken up by 234 men resigning from county agent work in Iowa to November 30, 1931. The largest number of the 234 men had gone back to practical farming; 63 had entered educational work; 36 non-agricultural work; and 6 were deceased. Table 20, compiled by Mr. McDonald, gives the nature of work following resignation.

In most states the county agent is employed on an annual contract (occasionally a verbal one) by the county appropriating body or intermediary committee and the state extension service. This procedure varies. In Iowa it is not uncommon for a county agent to have a two- or three-year contract with the county farm-bureau board or for the term to be extended



indefinitely without formal contract or action on the part of the farm-bureau board.

Technically, dismissal is a joint procedure of the state extension service and the county co-operating organization, but actually, except in those states where salaries are provided by state and federal funds, the county board of commissioners or other appropriating body may virtually cause the county agent's dismissal by discontinuing the appropriation. In most states it must give from thirty to sixty days' notice before discontinuing financial support.<sup>36</sup> In states having a mandatory appropriation the county farm-bureau board can usually withhold the local funds. The county farm-bureau board in Illinois takes the initiative in dismissing the agent since its dues replace county appropriations for the county agent in all but four counties.<sup>37</sup>

The Alabama extension service attempted to free extension work from local political entanglements and jealousy by securing the enactment of a state law to compel the supervisors to appropriate upon vote of a majority of the electorate.<sup>38</sup> The referendum had been used in one case (from June, 1935, to December, 1936), but the extension service did not initiate mandamus proceedings because of fear of arousing political antagonism which would react on the state legislature's willingness to provide state financial support.<sup>39</sup>

In a small number of cases the county's share of contributions is replaced from other local sources. A private vocational

<sup>36</sup> Even in states where salaries are paid entirely from state and federal funds state extension services do not retain an agent who is unsatisfactory to any considerable number of influential farmers or to the county boards which still supply funds for expenses and for office help.

<sup>37</sup> See Illinois Extension Service, Cooperative Extension Work. "Annual Report of Illinois State Extension Service for 1936-37." (Copy on file in office of U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

<sup>38</sup> See H. 314—Hodges (law approved June 21, 1935).

<sup>39</sup> The law was not passed until June, 1935. The agent was retained since salary as manager of the state experimental farm located in that particular county was sufficient to take care of the county's share of contributions.

agricultural school provided funds in one Alabama county for a number of years.

County appropriations for county agent work at times become a political football for ambitious politicians who occasion-

TABLE 20\*  
NATURE OF WORK ENTERED BY 234 MEN FOLLOWING  
RESIGNATION AS COUNTY AGENTS IN IOWA  
(TO NOVEMBER 30, 1931)

| Occupation  | Total | Number |
|---|-------|--------|
| Farming.....  | 83    | 83     |
| Educational work.....   | 63    |        |
| County agent work in other states.....                        |       | 18     |
| Extension service.....  |       | 16     |
| College and experiment station.....                           |       | 14     |
| Government service, United States.....                        |       |        |
| Department of Agriculture, etc.....                           |       | 5      |
| Graduate study.....   |       | 4      |
| Teaching.....   |       | 6      |
| Other agricultural work.....                                  | 46    |        |
| Agricultural organizations and co-operative associations..... |       | 18     |
| Farm journals and newspapers.....                             |       | 8      |
| Farm loans.....   |       | 6      |
| Fertilizer demonstrations.....                                |       | 2      |
| Railroad agricultural agent.....                              |       | 1      |
| Farm implements.....  |       | 1      |
| Livestock commission.....                                     |       | 1      |
| Veterinary medicine.....                                      |       | 1      |
| Hatchery.....   |       | 5      |
| Livestock feeds.....  |       | 1      |
| Canning equipment.....  |       | 1      |
| Livestock extension packers.....                              |       | 1      |
| Non-agricultural work.....                                    | 36    |        |
| Insurance.....  |       | 17     |
| Deceased.....   | 6     |        |

\* Murl McDonald, "Cooperative Extension Work in Iowa with Special Reference to the County Agent" (Iowa Extension Service Pub. B-363, 1932), p. 19. (Mimeographed.)

ally run on a platform to do away with extension work in the county. One county agent in Alabama was believed by local farmers to have been removed because he would not actively support a move of prominent commissioners to change the loca-

tion of the county courthouse.<sup>40</sup> Some were the victims of dissatisfaction with A.A.A. checks or because of too rigid enforcement of federal rules in case of influential landowners. In a few cases an agent who has refused to contribute to the campaign fund of a faction in control may find that later the group expresses general disapproval of his work and requests his removal.

The state extension service attempts to prevent such removals, but if the local politicians are influential it is almost impossible to block such dismissals. An agent is of little value where organized opposition develops against his work. Even in cases where there is an equally active group in support of the agent, the state service often supports the disaffected group on the assumption that the group supporting the county agent is in favor of extension work and will consequently support a new agent but that the opposition group must have its own way before it will give a minimum of co-operation. If the dismissed agent is a competent one, the state service attempts to place him in another county; but the feeling of insecurity is a demoralizing factor as well as a serious obstacle to any sound extension in the county.

The state extension service does not usually attempt to remove an agent who is satisfactory to the local people. In cases where popular old agents are retained who do not measure up to the state standard of training and ability, indirect action is sometimes taken. One method is to place an active young agent in the county "to show up" the ability of the older agent. Another method is to secure a job for the agent in some other type of agricultural work, pasture demonstrations, or other projects. If these methods fail, a propaganda campaign will

<sup>40</sup> Other political and personal factors may have entered in. The appropriation was withdrawn in 1927 or 1928 despite the protest of a group of farmers who took up a collection to make it possible to continue the work with a small appropriation. The next year the board wanted to employ the vocational agricultural teacher, but the state extension service would not approve. The county was without an agent until 1933 when a county agent was employed to conduct the "plow-up campaign" of the A.A.A.

often be gradually introduced by the district agents to local farm leaders. Occasionally appropriations are withdrawn, but this method is only used as a last resort. The amount of initiative taken by the state service in dismissal of county staff varies considerably from state to state. One county agent was of the opinion that the state service could not dismiss a popular agent who was employed in co-operation with the county farm bureau. He said: "It must wait for the agent to die off, I've seen it happen." He was undoubtedly exaggerating the weakness of even that state service, but the state extension service's power of removal is used so seldom that many agents feel their chief problem is "to keep in with the county group." This is more common when the county farm bureau represents the county in co-operative relationships. In some few cases the county farm bureau has retained the agent on its own funds after state and federal financial support has been withdrawn.

Discontinuance because of political friction is more common in the southern states. Some of the southern state services have occasionally used A.A.A. benefits as a weapon against the local politicians, since the county agent was an executive officer of the A.A.A. In one state a county which withdrew appropriations to ease out the county agent found its A.A.A. office closed and hastily took action to renew co-operative arrangements.

Even though cases where the county agent is actually dismissed because of political friction are not large, the possibility that this may happen is a serious obstacle to the establishment of an adequate personnel system in many states.<sup>41</sup>

Approximately fifteen states have a retirement system for state extension workers, but some do not include county agents

<sup>41</sup> Political interference is not common in states where the farm bureau is the intermediary organization, particularly in states which provide for a mandatory appropriation, but county agents in these states must frequently seek the favor of farm-bureau board members by giving them extra service, often resulting in little service for nonmembers.

in the system.<sup>42</sup> Three of the twelve states visited in 1936-37 had some type of retirement system in 1937 for county agents. Retirement provisions are more frequently made in those institutions where county agents are given academic rank at the state agricultural college. Such academic ranking was given in nine states and Hawaii in 1937.<sup>43</sup>

Both the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and the national fraternity for extension workers, Epsilon Sigma Phi, have been working on plans to secure the extension of federal retirement laws for extension workers. The Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association has also appointed a sub-committee to study the problem. This committee, which has been influenced by the conservative Executive Committee of the Land-Grant College Association, has advised the National Association of County Agricultural Agents to proceed cautiously lest extension of federal retirement legislation might lead to further federal control. Some other divisions of the Land-Grant College Association have felt that action should not be taken for extension workers until joint action could be taken for other college workers. A retirement system would contribute materially to the stability of county agent work and relieve the service of a number of older agents who are not as effective as the younger county agents. Federal contributions, however, would be in proportion to the federal funds allotted to the salary of county agents and therefore retirement benefits for county agents in some states would be small.

<sup>42</sup> These fifteen states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Maryland. The territories of Hawaii and Puerto Rico also have retirement systems. The records of the Federal Office were not complete (January, 1938, letter from W. H. Conway, assistant to the chief). (Maine, Massachusetts, and New Jersey were not included in federal records.)

<sup>43</sup> These states were Florida, Maryland, Utah, Wisconsin, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Hawaii (*Epsilon Sigma Phi, Tenth Anniversary Yearbook* [Washington: Epsilon Sigma Phi, 1938], p. 30).

F. ORGANIZATIONS OF COUNTY AGENTS  
AND EXTENSION OFFICIALS

The National Association of County Agricultural Agents grew out of an Illinois state association of county agents organized about 1915. The Illinois association held "closed meetings." The movement spread quickly among midwestern states. Many of these early organizations functioned to make recommendations and complaints to the state extension officials and at times to the college board of trustees. In a number of states the Association was primarily a social organization. The National Association of County Agricultural Agents, organized in 1915, has turned its attention within the last eight or ten years to improvement of professional standards. The number of affiliated states has increased from twenty-nine in 1935 to forty-two in 1937.<sup>44</sup> The National Association meets once a year. It has an executive committee and standing committees on retirement, land utilization, and professional improvement. The executive committee for the last four or five years has made an annual trip to the Department of Agriculture to meet and discuss problems with the bureau chiefs and other officials.

The National Association of County Agricultural Agents now has as its chief function the making of recommendations for professional improvement to the state extension directors and to the Land-Grant College Association. Infrequent attempts to engage in direct communication with congressmen in support of extension legislation have been checked by state extension directors who feel that such direct activity on the part of county agents reflects badly on the land-grant colleges.

Since the state extension directors can effectively block activities of the county agents' association and in case of conflict refuse them leave to attend conferences, the National Associa-

<sup>44</sup> States not affiliated are Maine, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, and California (see *Report of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, 22nd Annual Meeting, December 1 and 2, 1937* [Springfield, Mo.: Alkins Symbles Co., 1937], p. 5).

tion of County Agricultural Agents has remained largely subordinate to the advice and initiative of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association. It has never attempted to function as a labor union to force raising of standards by united action, but its influence has been used to raise the general professional standing of extension workers.<sup>45</sup>

Another organization which makes recommendations concerning professional improvement of extension workers to the committee on organization and policy of the Land-Grant College Association is the fraternal society, Epsilon Sigma Phi. The fraternity has chapters in forty-six states, the District of Columbia, and in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Extension workers must have been in extension work for a ten-year period before they are eligible for membership. The membership in December, 1937, was 2,565. County agents comprise about two-thirds of the membership. The fraternity's function is chiefly social, but it maintains standing committees on extension history, academic standing, and retirement of extension workers. The fraternal character of the organization and the conferring of honors and titles lends some prestige to extension work.<sup>46</sup>

A third organization, the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers, which includes extension employees among its membership, was first organized about 1900 as the Association of Southern Commissioners of Agriculture. The Association now includes approximately one hundred member organizations. Agricultural colleges, state extension services, and state experiment stations make up about one-third of the total membership. The Association is composed of a large variety of organizations, business concerns, and governmental agencies, in-

<sup>45</sup> Some extension directors have discouraged the organization since they fear that a strong organization of subordinates may prove embarrassing to the administrative authority of the state leaders.

<sup>46</sup> Information secured from an interview with W. A. Lloyd of the Federal Extension Office and from *Epsilon Sigma Phi, Tenth Anniversary Yearbook*, pp. 3-4.

cluding state divisions of the A.A.A., Farm Security Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Tennessee Valley Authority employees, organizations of vocational teachers, state departments of agriculture, commercial concerns, representatives of the railroads, business agencies, and farm organizations. The presidents of the Association have generally been agricultural college officials, but the secretary has nearly always been a representative of a commercial concern.<sup>47</sup>

The Association patterns its meetings to discuss administrative and professional problems after those of the Land-Grant College Association. However, its general meetings are not on the high level of well-planned discussion of these problems as are the meetings of the Land-Grant College Association. Several extension directors have withdrawn from the Association because commercial concerns too often seem to dominate the meetings. An earnest attempt is being made under the leadership of J. A. Evans of the Georgia Extension Service, formerly of the United States Department of Agriculture, to diminish the influence of these commercial interests and to raise the general level of the meetings to a high plane of scientific and administrative discussion of problems common to the Southern Region. The Association has been active as a pressure group in the southern states and to some extent on a national scale. The close relationship to commercial concerns may throw some discredit on the organization as a professional association. It has little influence on professional standards of county agents.

These various associations in conjunction with the Land-Grant College Association have some influence in raising the professional standards of county agents. The Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities in particular may be given much credit for raising the professional standards for extension work as well as for being instrumental in securing large federal appropriations for extension work.

<sup>47</sup> Information from a letter from J. A. Evans of the Georgia Extension Service who has served as president of the Association.



The number of county agricultural agents has increased from 928 in 1914 to 2,869 in 1937. They are jointly selected by the county governing-board or other local co-operating organization and the State Extension Office. It is customary for the county governing-board or other local organization to select a county agent from a number of approved applicants recommended by the state extension officials. The Federal Extension Office does not take any part in selecting or in recommending county agents, but its approval is necessary for county agent appointments. Although this authority to disapprove appointments is seldom exercised, the fact that the county agent is a federal employee has been instrumental in discouraging state and local politicians from meddling with county agent appointments.

The Federal Extension Office has not set any minimum standards or qualifications for county agricultural agents but it has used its influence consistently to promote higher state personnel standards. Most states require that county agents shall be graduates of an approved agricultural college and that they shall have had farm background. A majority of state extension services require also that county agents shall have had previous experience in some type of agricultural work. Most states refuse to approve the appointment of a candidate to serve as county agent in his home county. No state extension service has set up any specific requirements for training in particular subject matter, but many encourage prospective agents to take courses in education, sociology, economics, and public speaking. Some offer special courses in extension methods for prospective agents. Special extension courses offered during the summer-school session by a number of agricultural colleges provide a valuable type of in-service training for a limited number of county agricultural agents. The assistance of subject-matter specialists, college bulletins, service newsletters, district conferences, and training schools also offer effective types of postentry training.

Determination of the county agent's salary is generally a joint procedure for the state extension service and the county board or local committee. Ten state extension services and two territorial ones, however, pay the entire salary from state and federal funds and one state, Delaware, pays the entire salary of county agents from federal funds. The practice of paying salaries from state and federal funds is recommended by the Federal Extension Office. County agents in 1938 received an average salary of \$2,677 and under normal circumstances could expect to remain in their position for at least a five-year period.

Although no regular system of promotion for county agents is offered, a number work up into positions in the State Extension Office or in the state agricultural college, or resign to enter other types of work in the governmental field or to enter commercial work. Less than one-third of the states have retirement systems or offer sabbatic leave to county agents for advanced study. Professional improvement is promoted by special committees of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and of the national fraternity for extension workers, Epsilon Sigma Phi.

In comparison with other county officials the county agent is remarkably well trained for his position. The challenging nature of his work as well as its changing character, however, seems to demand a broader social-science background and special training in extension methods in addition to his work in scientific agriculture. It also appears advisable that the salaries of county agents be paid from state and federal funds.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEGRO COUNTY AGENT

#### A. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT TO 1914

**A**NY widespread development of extension work among Negroes under the leadership of Negro county agents was largely dependent upon the development of educational institutions for Negroes in order to provide the necessary vocational training. The first Morrill Land-Grant College Act made no provision for a racial division of funds or of students. Thus in most states the proceeds from the sale of these federal grants were used entirely for white institutions, but four southern states, Mississippi, Virginia, South Carolina, and Alabama set aside a portion of the first Morrill funds for a Negro college in 1871. In the same year Virginia gave its portion of funds set aside for Negro education to the privately established Hampton Agricultural and Mechanical Institute. South Carolina gave her portion of funds to the private Caflin University for Negroes in 1872, and about 1875 Alabama organized the Huntsville School for Negroes.<sup>1</sup>

The second Morrill Act of 1890 for "the further endowment of Land-Grant Colleges" made specific provision that "no money shall be paid out under this act to any State or Territory for the support and maintenance of a college where a distinction of race and color is made in the admission of students, but the establishment and maintenance of such colleges separately for white and colored students shall be held to be a compliance with the provisions of this act if the funds received in such State or Territory be equitably divided. . . ." <sup>2</sup> This act

<sup>1</sup> See Erwin H. Shinn, "Status of Organization and Administration of Agricultural Education among Negroes," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 173 (January, 1932), pp. 2-3. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>2</sup> See 26 Stat. L. 417.

providing for racial distribution of funds naturally stimulated the organization of Negro colleges in all southern states.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the encouraging development of Negro land-grant colleges, however, early leadership in Negro extension work was assumed by the privately supported Tuskegee Institute, founded in 1881. Under the leadership of Booker T. Washington this school began holding annual Negro farmers' conferences in 1892, and these conferences are still continued as an important part of the extension program of the Institute.<sup>4</sup>

Booker T. Washington was not satisfied with this limited contact with the more progressive farmers but felt a definite need to reach directly the most backward Negro farmers who were disinterested or afraid to mingle with the "educated people" at the Institute. He succeeded in interesting Morris K. Jesup of New York in his plans for a properly equipped wagon to carry sufficient tools and material for demonstrations of methods of improved farming and living to the very doors of the Negro farmers. In 1906 the Jesup "Agricultural Wagon," fitted with a cream separator, a milk tester, a revolving hand churn, a two-horse steel-beam plow, a spike-toothed harrow, a middleburster, and a set of garden tools, began its educational work under the guidance of a teacher from the agricultural department of the Institute.

By 1906 President Washington had interested Dr. Seaman A. Knapp in the project, and Thomas Monroe Campbell was appointed the first Negro demonstration agent to serve as a collaborator with the United States Department of Agriculture

<sup>3</sup> Within a period of nine years every southern state, including Virginia and Delaware, had planned to organize a Negro land-grant college (see Shinn, *op. cit.*, p. 3).

<sup>4</sup> Five hundred Negro farmers attended the 1892 conference. For an interesting description of these early conferences and of the personal work of Dr. Washington with rural Negroes in Macon County, Alabama, see Thomas M. Campbell, *The Movable School Goes to the Negro Farmer* (Tuskegee: Tuskegee Institute Press, 1936). Some special institutes were set up for Negroes in South Carolina in 1904 (see A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Extension Work in the United States, 1785-1923*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 15 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928], p. 21).

to take charge of the "Farmers' College on Wheels." His salary was derived from funds contributed by the General Education Board of New York City, supplemented by three hundred and forty dollars from Tuskegee Institute and one dollar of Bureau of Plant Industry funds appropriated "to meet the emergency caused by the continued spread of the Mexican Boll Weevil in the southern states."<sup>5</sup>

Campbell, who was working chiefly in Macon County, Alabama, soon discovered that the equipment was too far in advance of the knowledge and status of the Negro farmers and further simplified it. For example, he replaced the milk tester and cream separator with a cow of standard breed, and later he carried a razorback hog and a pure-bred hog in the opposite ends of the truck to impress observers with the necessity of improving farm stock. A portable garden was used in garden-planting time, and the use of walking cultivators and other simple equipment was demonstrated during the planting season. Booker T. Washington continually emphasized the need for improving farm surroundings. Campbell selected farm homes where the white landowner would agree to furnish the necessary material or the home of a Negro landowner for demonstration purposes. Here the neighbors were invited in, organized into different groups, taught how to make safe steps for the house, how to make simple furniture, how to whitewash, how to build a sanitary toilet, and how to clean and improve the interior of the house.

With the organization of Smith-Lever extension work in Alabama in 1914 the state extension service sponsored the "movable school" and added a home demonstration agent to teach farm women better methods of cooking, canning, sewing, and home sanitation. With the purchase of an automobile truck by the Alabama Extension Service in 1918 the work spread into other parts of the state. In 1920 a public health nurse was added to the movable school staff through the cooperation of the Alabama Health Department, which contrib-

<sup>5</sup> See Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 94, 160, and 161.

uted half of her salary.<sup>6</sup> The Mississippi Extension Service followed this example in 1923 by organizing a movable school as part of its extension work among rural Negroes.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime extension demonstration work was developing in other southern states. About a month after the appointment of T. M. Campbell (in November, 1906) as a collaborator of the United States Department of Agriculture in extension work, J. B. Pierce was appointed under a similar arrangement to work in Virginia in co-operation with Hampton Institute.<sup>8</sup> The initiative in securing his appointment was taken by Hampton Institute. By 1909 a total of nine Negro agents were employed in the states of Alabama, Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina.<sup>9</sup> The passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 resulted in the discontinuance of grants from the General Education Board, which had formerly served as the basic support for Negro extension work.

#### B. THE NEGRO COUNTY AGENT AND HIS WORK AFTER THE SMITH-LEVER ACT

Some leaders in Congress attempted to secure specific authorization for Negro work by amending the Smith and Lever bills to make specific provision for Negro extension work as had been done in the Morrill Act of 1890 for agricultural edu-

<sup>6</sup> The "Knapp Agricultural Truck" of 1918 was replaced in 1923 by the "Booker T. Washington School on Wheels," donated by the Negro farmers of Alabama and their friends. It is still in operation and is considered one of the most effective methods of extension work in Alabama. See *ibid.* for more detailed description of this type of extension work.

<sup>7</sup> True, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Both of these men have continued in extension work; they are now federal field agents who assist in the supervision of Negro county agent work in the southern states.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 189. The available statistics are somewhat confusing. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Cooperative Extension Work in the United States, 1904* (Washington: Government Printing Office), states that four Negro agents were employed in South Carolina in 1904; but True, the official historian, does not mention these early agents. Rodney Cline's *Life and Work of Seamen A. Knapp* (Ph.D. thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1937) states that Negro agents were also employed in Oklahoma in 1908.

cation of Negroes on the college level. An amendment that the work should be carried on without race discrimination was adopted in the senate bill but was not continued in the conference bill. The arguments advanced for removing the amendment were: (1) that white agents were carrying on work which benefited the Negro farmer; (2) that it was questionable whether the Negro land-grant colleges were capable of carrying on effective extension work; (3) that it was not desirable to divide responsibility for extension work within a state, as this might result in dissimilar instruction and in race conflict over the administration of the work.<sup>10</sup> Negro extension work, therefore, became a minor branch of the state extension service carried on from the white land-grant colleges. Its continuance and scope are dependent upon the discretion of the state extension director, who may designate Negro institutions to cooperate in carrying on the Negro work.

Formal recognition of the importance of the work of Negro agents was given in 1918 by the appointment of two federal Negro field agents to assist the federal regional agent in charge of the southern states in supervising extension work of the Negro agents. These federal Negro agents were stationed at Tuskegee and Hampton institutes. Campbell at Tuskegee supervised the work of Negro agents in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. Pierce at Hampton supervised the work in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The function of the federal Negro field agents was defined by J. A. Evans, assistant chief of the Co-operative Extension Office, in the United States Department of Agriculture Circular No. 355:

(1) To cooperate with State directors and other white supervisory agents, organizations, and individuals within the States in developing Negro extension work; (2) to assist Negro state supervisory agents in planning work, preparing reports, establishing relationships, and generally in getting more uniform and efficient service from the local agents;

<sup>10</sup> See True, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

and (3) to study the best methods of doing extension work among Negroes, as developed anywhere in their territory, and to take such information to agents in other States.

In addition to these federal Negro field agents, extension directors in thirteen southern states have selected state Negro supervisors, called either state agents or district agents, to assist them in the supervision of Negro extension work.<sup>11</sup> These Negro supervisors are stationed at the Negro agricultural college in all states except Alabama and Virginia, where they are stationed at Tuskegee and Hampton institutes respectively. They are administratively responsible to the state extension director except in North Carolina, which has a special white state agent in charge of Negro work. Twelve states have Negro state or district home demonstration agents who are administratively responsible to the white agent in charge of home demonstration work.<sup>12</sup> Four states have Negro state club leaders, assistant leaders, or district agents to assist in organizing and supervising 4-H Club work.

Negro specialists are found in only two states. Alabama has a part-time Negro poultry specialist and North Carolina has two so-called specialists, although instead of one subject-matter field they are responsible for many. In theory, at least, the white subject-matter specialists are available to assist the Negro county agents, but these specialists are not always generous with their assistance. Some state extension leaders are adopting the policy of requiring the white specialist to notify the Negro agent as well as the white agent when he plans to visit a county so that the Negro county agent can regularly seek his advice. Generally speaking, Negro county agents are not allowed to bring local Negro leaders to meetings where the specialist explains subject matter to local white leaders, but

<sup>11</sup> Maryland and West Virginia have no Negro supervisors. Maryland has only two county agents and three home demonstration agents. West Virginia has only two state agents in charge of club work and one county club agent.

<sup>12</sup> An exception is made in Alabama where supervision of Negro home demonstration work is delegated to the Negro state home demonstration agent.



the Negro county agent is usually allowed to attend such meetings. Only 29 per cent of two hundred Negro agents reported the use of white extension specialists in planning programs of work in 1931.<sup>13</sup>

The amount of federal and state funds apportioned to Negro work and the manner of expending them are left to the discretion of the state extension director, who generally consults the state Negro supervising agent as well as the Negro federal field agent for his region. The number of Negro agents, and thus the expenditure of funds for Negro work, was slightly increased after the passage of the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935. The state extension director also approves plans of work submitted to him by the Negro state or district agent, but he usually delegates supervision of the field work of Negro county agents to the Negro supervisors who submit monthly reports on the work of the county agents to his office.<sup>14</sup>

On June 30, 1937, the county Negro personnel in extension work consisted of 236 county agricultural agents, 179 home demonstration agents, and 1 club agent. Only rarely are these county agents provided with county extension offices. Most agents must rent their own offices unless they are fortunate enough to serve in a county having a Negro vocational school which can accommodate them. North Carolina is an exception; there all Negro agents are furnished with offices and two are provided with a secretary. Some agents, particularly the home demonstration agents, use their homes for offices. National Youth Administration and Public Works Administration labor has been used to some extent for office assistance, but since these workers have had no clerical and office training they have not proved very helpful.

<sup>13</sup> See Erwin H. Shinn, "A Survey of the Manner of Procedure Followed in Developing County Programs of Negro Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Pub. 11 (March, 1933), p. 5. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>14</sup> North Carolina is an exception, since its white state agent for Negro work visits the county offices of Negro county agents.

## C. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR NEGRO EXTENSION WORK

The percentage of total state extension funds spent for Negro personnel, exclusive of the two federal field agents was approximately 2.7 in 1937. Since these funds were only expended in the southern states, it is more relevant to compare the percentage spent for Negro personnel of total extension expenditures with the percentage of Negro population. Table 21 gives this data based on 1930 census figures for the percentage of

TABLE 21  
PERCENTAGE OF EXTENSION FUNDS SPENT IN 1937 FOR  
NEGRO PERSONNEL COMPARED WITH PERCENTAGE  
OF NEGROES IN THE POPULATION

| State               | Percentage of Negroes in Population | Percentage of Extension Funds Spent for Negro Personnel |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Alabama.....        | 35.7                                | 16.59*  |
| Arkansas.....       | 25.8                                | 4.36  |
| Georgia.....        | 36.8                                | 6.36  |
| Louisiana.....      | 36.9                                | 5.10  |
| Mississippi.....    | 50.2                                | 12.01   |
| North Carolina..... | 29.0                                | 8.07  |
| South Carolina..... | 45.6                                | 8.26  |
| Tennessee.....      | 18.3                                | 3.26*   |
| Texas.....          | 14.7                                | 7.89  |

\* Figures for 1936 substituted. Figures are for expenditures for Negro personnel and not for Negro work. Percentage for Negro work would be somewhat higher since a small amount of funds spent for publications, subject-matter specialists, and supervision of white administrators should need to be added to expenditures for personnel. Some work is done for Negroes by white agents in counties having Negro farmers and no Negro agent.

Negro population and data from the Federal Extension Office for 1937 expenditures of extension funds in nine of the southern states having the largest Negro population.

The major portion of funds expended for Negro personnel are derived from federal and state sources. Although some states require a local appropriation or local contributions before a Negro agent is placed in a county, funds from these local sources are very limited, ranging from \$100 or \$150 to about \$600. Some state extension directors consider it advisable to

pay the larger portion of the salary of Negro personnel from federal rather than state funds since state legislatures may not be favorably disposed to Negro extension work. One of the directors reported that salaries of Negro agents were paid almost entirely from federal funds to avoid the necessity of making a report on Negro extension work to the state legislature. In 1931 approximately 69.6 per cent of all funds spent for Negro extension personnel was derived from federal sources.<sup>15</sup>

#### D. PERSONNEL

Despite the small amount of local contributions for Negro extension work (and even in states where no county contribution is required), some initiative must be taken by both white and Negro leaders before a Negro county agent is placed in a county. The Negro district, or state, agent generally follows up requests of the local people for a Negro agent by a visit to the county in order to make certain that the necessary sympathy and co-operation for Negro extension work can be secured from the white county agent and from other white leaders in the county. A candidate may be taken to the county for an interview with the county governing-board or advisory extension committee, particularly if an appropriation is requested. He may also be interviewed by the white county agent and a "courtesy committee" of Negroes set up for the purpose. Candidates to be recommended to these county groups are first interviewed by the Negro district or state agent and occasionally by the president of the Negro college. In North Carolina they are also interviewed by the white state agent for Negro work of the state extension staff. Since Negroes are generally excluded from political activities, extension leaders rarely have difficulty with political groups attempting to force the selection of a local candidate.

The major qualification for a Negro county agent is a "good agricultural college course." Usually the equivalent of a

<sup>15</sup> See Shinn, "Status of Organization and Administration of Agricultural Education among Negroes," Extension Service Circ. 173, p. 10.

junior college course is set up as a minimum qualification, but a few states require a four-year agricultural course. Some agricultural experience is required, and it is desirable that the prospective agent have a farm background. Negroes reared in the North are generally excluded, since they are likely to be too aggressive to fit into the extension work of a county agent. Negroes educated in the North are not necessarily excluded, but they must be willing to adjust themselves to southern traditions. Because of freer relationship between the races in the Piedmont section as contrasted with that in the Black Belt section, a Negro from the Piedmont section is seldom recommended for a position in the Black Belt.

Special training for Negro county agents is seldom available at the Negro agricultural colleges. Tuskegee Institute is an exception. It offers a course in extension methods as well as a two-week short course for county agents. Prospective agents at Tuskegee receive valuable preliminary training as a part of the movable school force before assignment to a county. Negro agents in Louisiana receive from two to six months of practical experience at the Negro experiment stations, and prospective home demonstration agents are apprenticed to assist agents in the counties for a three-month period.<sup>16</sup>

A type of in-service training is secured from the limited assistance of subject-matter specialists and from college bulletins. Regional conferences with extension leaders from the Federal Extension Office and with extension leaders from white and Negro colleges provide valuable training for Negro supervisors, but unfortunately this training is not available for county agents. Some special training for state Negro personnel was also secured from special training schools provided to explain phases of A.A.A. program and to give training in conducting discussion groups. The most helpful type of in-service training was secured through two special grants of \$20,000 and \$27,000 from the Rosenwald Fund for special extension schools for

<sup>16</sup> Information given at Regional Conference on Negro Extension Work held at Tuskegee Institute, January 13-16, 1937.

Negro workers. Three schools of a month's duration were offered in 1930. These schools had a combined enrolment of 300 of the 325 Negro extension workers. Two schools offered in 1931 had a total enrolment of 250 extension workers. The schools were under the direction of J. A. Evans of the Federal Extension Office and received the co-operation of Negro and white land-grant colleges. The courses offered included poultry husbandry, dairying, agricultural economics, agricultural engineering, extension methods, home management, foods, and nutrition. In addition, twenty scholarships were offered to Negro supervisors for a year of advanced study.<sup>17</sup>

Average salaries for Negro county agents approximate \$1,500 or \$1,600, depending upon whether or not a separate travel allowance is given. Negro agents in Alabama in 1935-36 received a slightly higher salary, averaging approximately \$1,800. The salaries in the states of Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Georgia for 1936-37 ranged from a low of \$920 to a high of approximately \$2,300. Negro county agents' salaries within a state do not vary much, since state and federal funds are customarily apportioned on an almost uniform basis and additional contributions from county appropriations or donations are quite small in the states where they are required. Salaries for home demonstration agents are lower, averaging \$1,000 or \$1,100 a year. A few are as high as \$1,460.

Since the salaries of Negro agents are derived chiefly from state and federal funds and since little opportunity exists for the Negro agent to become involved in political entanglements, competent Negro agents who observe racial customs and traditions may, once established, remain in a county for an almost indefinite length of time. A Negro supervising agent reported that only one agent had been removed because of protests from

<sup>17</sup> See U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Cooperative Extension Work in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), pp. 52 and 76, and also M. C. Wilson, "Statistical Results of Cooperative Extension Work, 1931," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service Circ. 176 (January, 1932), p. 10. (Mimeographed.)

the county governing-board during a five-year period. This agent was removed because he offered to shake hands with a county commissioner. No data are available, but it is probable that the average length of service for Negro agents is considerably higher than the length of service for white county agents. A Negro agent in one Alabama county was retained in the county during a number of years when the county had no white agent.<sup>18</sup> The apparent indifference of white political leaders depends upon the close observation of racial customs and traditions. Considerable opposition to the employment of a Negro agent was apparent in a Tennessee county which had a Negro county clerk during carpetbagger days.

#### E. THE WORK OF THE NEGRO COUNTY AGENT

The Negro county agent is not generally considered to be administratively responsible to the white county agent, but since his continued service is usually dependent upon the tolerance and at least mild support of the white county agent and the influential white farmers, he cannot well ignore their advice or suggestions. Thus, in some counties, the Negro county agent may spend a considerable portion of his time vaccinating hogs or performing other personal service work for leading white and Negro farmers under the direction of the white agents. He is especially useful in case of racial difficulties to serve as an intermediary to quiet and dissuade members of his race from creating a serious disturbance. He may be helpful in soliciting farm-bureau members and in rare cases in collecting "campaign-fund contributions" from his own race for politicians in sympathy with extension work in the county.

The white county agent in some states takes the initiative in requesting appropriations for Negro extension work. He may

<sup>18</sup> This was in Morgan County, located in northern Alabama, where race lines are not so sharply drawn as in the southern Black Belt counties. Members of the county appropriating board reported that since no appropriation was made, they had nothing to do with retaining or dismissing the Negro agent. One member replied that he had not been aware that the county had a Negro agent at the time the white county agent's employment was discontinued.

help the Negro agent to draw up his plans of work and to make out his statistical and narrative reports.<sup>19</sup> The white county agent usually serves as judge at the annual "ham show," county fair, or other meetings of Negro farmers. The number and character of the informal contacts varies with the amount of racial tension within the community. Some white home demonstration agents report that they see the Negro home demonstration agent only once a year at the annual exhibit or county fair. The close contact between a white home demonstration agent and a Negro demonstration agent and other Negro women who were taken to the Washington, D.C., Country Women of the World Conference in a bus with a group of white farm women was used as an issue in discontinuing the employment of the white agent in one county.<sup>20</sup>

The task of the county agent in the southern states is complicated by the low farm income, by the low level of education and literacy, by the class stratification, by the fast depleting soil base, by the one-crop system, and by the serious nature of factional and personal politics within the one-party system. The obstacles which confront the Negro county agent, in particular, are tremendous. He must show proper deference and humility to the white leaders and never offend the more ignorant politicians and other leaders in the county. If he is sufficiently adroit in these relationships he may be rewarded with an office or even a car furnished by county appropriations.

A major obstacle to effective extension work among Negroes is the large number of tenants, their dependence, poverty,

<sup>19</sup> Approximately 53.3 per cent of three hundred Negro county agents reported that they received no assistance from the white agent in planning their programs of work in 1931 (see Shinn, "A Survey of the Manner of Procedure Followed in Developing County Programs of Negro Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics," *Miscellaneous Extension Pub.* 11, p. 5).

<sup>20</sup> It is probable that other factors of a political nature were more important in this particular case, but the contact with the Negro women was used as common explanation of the dismissal. The white agent was transferred to another county. The Negro agent was not dismissed. She was receiving no county appropriation.

and lack of permanence. A tenant who is not sure of remaining on the same farm for another year has little incentive to improve the soil or the home surroundings. Moreover, such improvements cannot usually be made without the landlord's consent and financial assistance. The tenant-farmer mortgages not only his own time but that of his family; thus, he cannot attend extension meetings during the busy season of the year. Added to these difficulties is the general indifference and ignorance of many of the tenant-farmers who live from hand to mouth with no hope of anything better. In some cases the landlord is more co-operative than the tenant if he is properly approached, but the fact that the approach is necessary is a barrier to effective work with these lower tenant classes who are most in need of help. As a consequence of this situation the Negro county agent spends the larger portion of his time and effort in assisting the small number of Negro landowners and the tenants who are able to furnish part of their tools and workstock, since these families can better follow his advice. Effective widespread work with this class is dependent upon a fundamental adjustment in the general extension program and organization so that the white agent will have more time and sympathy for the lower economic classes and assist the Negro agent in making contacts with the landlord.

Extension work in the southern states has emphasized a "live-at-home" program since Seaman A. Knapp first started his demonstration work to combat the boll weevil. It has been particularly stressed in the Negro extension program, where major emphasis of both the county agent and the home demonstration agent is placed on raising sufficient food and foodstuffs for home use. Much emphasis has been placed on a year-round garden, hogs for home use, farm poultry, and one dairy cow. A Negro county agent in one of Alabama's Black Belt counties reported that in a survey of 270 farm families in twenty-seven out of forty-three communities he found in 1934 that 70 families had no garden, 40 had no poultry, 130 had no hogs, and 90 had no milk cows. By 1935, as a result of his work, only 21



of the 270 families had no garden, 18 had no poultry, 87 had no hogs, and 53 had no milk cows.<sup>21</sup>

In connection with general home improvement and sanitation, the building of sanitary toilets, proper drainage, the whitewashing of buildings, and the making and repairing of furniture have been stressed. Home demonstration agents, in addition to their regular clothing, cooking, and canning projects, have stressed means of bringing in extra farm income through the organization of curb markets and the sale of quilts. County agents have carried on demonstrations in the growing of cotton and corn and in other common types of extension work to improve agricultural production.

Although the Negro 4-H Club enrolment is much smaller than the white and although no such spectacular contests are organized or large rewards offered for Negro work as for white, the fact that Negro agents are carrying on effective club work is shown by the relatively high percentage of completions. In boys' club work the percentage of completions in Negro club work in 1936 ranged from a high of 82.8 per cent in Virginia to a low of 46.7 per cent in Mississippi. In girls' club work the percentage of completions ranged from 87 per cent in Tennessee to 51.6 per cent in Florida.<sup>22</sup>

New Deal agricultural programs have not changed the character of the Negro county agent's work in the southern states as it has the work of the white county agent. The Negro agent has been used for a limited amount of educational work in explaining the programs to Negro farmers. In a few states he

<sup>21</sup> Interview with A. W. Roper, Negro county agent, December, 1936.

<sup>22</sup> These percentages compare favorably with the percentage of completions of white 4-H Club members, which ranged from a high of 68.45 per cent in Georgia to a low of 39.79 per cent in Mississippi in boys' club work. In girls' club work percentage of completions for white girls ranged from a high of 79.23 per cent in Georgia to a low of 36.56 per cent in Texas (data from Federal Extension Office, "4-H Club Enrollment and Completions, Southern States," 1935 and 1936. [Mimeographed.]) Negro 4-H Club members do not compete in state and national contests with white children. They have a few small contests of their own with small prizes given by local businessmen or by Negro organizations.

has also been used to measure the land, under the direction of the white agent. Except in rare instances, however, he has had no administrative, supervisory, or even advisory authority.<sup>23</sup> Negro agents in some counties stated that they could not report cases of unfairness in the distribution of payments in the A.A.A. program as it "just would not be safe" for them to make any protest. In connection with this program Negroes were sometimes allowed to vote for committeemen (though they were not allowed to make nominations), since their presence and vote were more or less imperative in the referendum to make a "big showing" in favor of the program. The Negro county agent participated in stimulating their attendance at such referendums.

That Negro county agents have made real contributions against such tremendous obstacles is a real tribute to the high caliber of the Negro personnel. Although the financial and more intangible rewards of recognition and prestige seem quite small when compared with the work of white leaders of similar ability and training, the position of county agent ranks high in comparison with other professions open to Negroes in the South. It attracts a high type of nonaggressive and nonmilitant Negro leadership—those who would follow the Booker T. Washington way of slow advancement without active challenge to the dominant order.

<sup>23</sup> One Negro county agent in Florida serves on the advisory Rural Rehabilitation Committee and was actually given charge of Negro applications, which were not approved without his O.K. A Negro agent in north Alabama reported that he had been consulted occasionally regarding prospective Negro rehabilitation clients. Some twenty-five Negro advisers for work with Negro rehabilitation clients were assigned to work under the direction of Negro county agents for about a year's period in Alabama but were discontinued as an economy measure.

## CHAPTER IX

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

**T**HE county agent, who began work as an itinerant teacher, going on foot or horseback from one farm to another to spread the gospel of good farming, has passed through a number of important transitions. The automobile, modern office equipment, the assistance of a secretary, a four-year college education, and the assistance of college subject-matter specialists modernized his work and made him a teacher of scientific agricultural subject matter as it applied to individual farmers' operations. It was natural in the beginning that the county agent should serve as an itinerant teacher of improved production methods applicable to the individual farm since it was assumed that both the consumer and the farmer would be benefited automatically from increased food production. This objective, to increase food production, became a great patriotic drive during the World War period under the slogan "food will win the war," and the county agent became a promotional and propaganda agent as well as a scientific teacher. In the post-war depression when improvements in production on an individual basis proved inadequate for the producer in the midst of the adjustments demanded by changed technological and commercial conditions, the county agent attempted to apply methods of business efficiency to the individual farms and made some attempts to meet the marketing problems. Now he is faced with the problem of aiding large number of individual farmers to adjust their system of farming in accordance with production and demand in larger areas and in accordance with a national policy of soil conservation.

1. *Reorientation of county agent's objectives and methods.*—  
Thus the county agent needs to consider some adjustments

both in his objectives and methods of work because of the changing status of American agriculture and the changing national agricultural policy. The county agent needs to become as effective in his analysis of the large economic and social problems of his county related to the problems of the state, region, and nation as he has been in distributing specialized project solutions in the past.

Reorientation in county agent work seems to demand some changes in personnel training and standards so that the county agent will have a minimum background in the social sciences which might include economics, sociology, education, geography, and government as well as some special extension training. This work might well be combined with practical field training for prospective county agents, who under proper supervision could take the regular county agent's place for a limited length of time. The practice of varying county agents' salaries with the training, experience, and ability of the county agent rather than with the county's ability to pay, would attract more capable personnel. It seems apparent also that both the training and the general standards of selection for district agents and county agent leaders should be raised to provide more adequate supervision for county agent work.

2. *Relationship of the county agent to governmental overhead.*—The county agricultural agent represents an interesting and significant departure from the traditional concept of three separate and independent levels of federal, state, and county government. His responsibility to the county government has in general been much more personal and direct than his responsibility to the more remote state or federal government. It is apparent that this relationship is shifting so that the county agent's responsibility to the State Extension Office is rapidly increasing. In 1930 only four states financed the county agents' salaries from state and federal funds, while ten states in 1937 were depending upon the counties only for travel and office expense. Although the counties in these cases have continued generally to serve in an advisory capacity in the selec-

tion and dismissal of personnel and in a limited amount of program-planning, their former control in some states has been substantially limited. This trend to pay salaries of county agents from state and federal funds should be encouraged as rapidly as possible. The payment of salaries from these sources makes it possible to equalize the service between counties, to remove the county agent from the domination in some counties of local political and economic groups, and to improve personnel standards.

Although a shift in the county agent's relationship to give him more direct responsibility to the state government seems advisable, it does not follow that his relationship to the county should be severed. One of the most valuable phases of extension work has been its close personal relationship to the local farm people, giving farm leaders a real sense of responsibility for extension work and the development of local leadership. Some form of local voluntary farmer organization should confer with state extension officials in the selection of the county agent and should assist in planning his program of work. Advisory councils or committees might be organized which would include, in addition to representative farm members, a representative from each of the farm organizations, a farmer representative from the A.A.A., from Farm Security Administration and County Planning committees, and a member of the county governing-board. The composition of such an advisory group would, of course, vary from county to county. Such an advisory organization might prove useful in reporting dissatisfaction with the work of the county agent, although it should not have the power to cause his dismissal. It seems advisable that the state extension service in last analysis, after conference and advice with county farm leaders and perhaps with federal extension leaders, should exercise the authority to dismiss an incompetent or non-co-operative agent.

The trend has been toward increased federal financial support for the county agent although the administrative control within the Co-operative Extension Service has not shifted to

the Federal Office. If the county agent is to become primarily an executive agent in charge of "national action" programs, further direction of county agent work from the Federal Extension Office appears advisable. In such a case, the secretary of agriculture probably could not rely on the influence and prestige of the Federal Office but would need the authority to take some initiative in bringing about the dismissal of an inefficient, political, or non-co-operative state extension director. This objective might be accomplished by more positive administrative direction on the part of the Federal Office without revision of the "1914 Agreements." The large increase in federal funds provides a strong argument in support of further federal direction within the Co-operative Extension Service.

If, on the other hand, the county agent should return to the function of vocational teaching, with only minor advisory functions in the "national action" programs, additional federal direction would not seem necessary. A major difficulty in this case would be to ascertain when an advisory educational function actually assumes the form of policy-making and administration. If the county agent should return to functions of vocational adult education, it is debatable whether the county and state appropriations for county extension work would be continued in many states in view of the fact that the federal government would be providing in many cases more personal and direct services through the so-called action agencies without requiring state and local financial support. It appears probable that the present trend toward increased responsibility in programs of a national character will continue, and thus it seems advisable that the Federal Extension Office assume more positive administrative direction of county agent work.

3. *Relationship of county agent to the county farm bureau.*—An interesting development in connection with the trend toward increased public support from the federal and state governments is the release of the formal claim of the county farm bureau upon the county agent in some states. At the same time the informal and extra-official relationships between

the county agent and the farm bureau have increased in many states with farm-bureau sponsorship of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Particularly in the South, the A.A.A. commodity programs and the agricultural conservation program frequently have been used either to inaugurate Farm Bureau Federations or to swell the membership. In some states, the Farm Bureau Federation serves merely as a legislative wing of the state extension service. The tendency of the Farm Bureau Federations in some states to capitalize on the national agricultural programs and the protests of the Farmers' Union and National Grange organizations have brought the problems arising from the county agent's relationship to this semiprivate farm organization more sharply into focus.

The county farm bureau as an educational organization with small or nominal dues provided a valuable source of leadership for county agent work. The federation of these county organizations into state and national organizations with business and legislative functions has made the advisability of this relationship questionable, because the present tendency to raise farm bureau dues in some states tends to exclude the lower-income group of farmers from membership. At the same time the increase in membership dues has resulted in increased pressure upon the county agent to differentiate between services given to members and to nonmembers. In some states the policy of the farm bureau to capitalize on the national agricultural programs to increase memberships would seem further to discredit close relationship between the county agent and county units of the farm bureau. Furthermore, the position of the county agent is being compromised by the continuation of this relationship. The county farm bureau is usurping his time for membership and personal-service work, thereby tending to limit his service to a minority group of farmers least in need of government assistance. Since official relationship between the county agent and county farm bureau results in lending government aid to a private pressure organization, it appears

advisable that the relationship be discontinued. These objections, however, would not arise in the case of unofficial cooperation with this organization and other farmers' organizations if no partiality were evident.

4. *The county agent and the submerged third.*—The county agent is confronted also with the problem of the large number of marginal and submarginal farmers whose present economic plight constitutes a challenge to the Jeffersonian conception of a nation of free and independent landowners. Leaders of this class of farm people in the South consider the county agent a "symbol of domination of the rich and landowning class of farmers" and would turn from the educational service aspects of the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Labor for protection of their human rights—for a guaranty of a minimum standard of living and the right as a class organization to collective bargaining.

Attention of some extension leaders and county agents has been centered on the problem of more effectively reaching the lower-farm-income groups by the challenge of the rural rehabilitation and farm-tenancy programs. Some federal extension leaders in particular have accepted the challenge of these new agencies and are beginning now to readjust extension work so that it will reach this lower-income group more directly and effectively. Some fundamental readjustments in extension work may be necessary to accomplish this objective. The county agent has been a technical teacher who has been more concerned with the immediate and apparent results of his advice than with its social implications. He has not had the facilities to provide the lower-income groups of farm people with the financial assistance necessary to follow his advice. Some progress has been made to reach this so-called "lower third" and much attention has been focused on the problem.

A readjustment of extension work to reach the so-called "lower third" should take into consideration the comparatively small number of Negro county agents and the limited nature of their work. Although there has been a numerical increase



in the number of Negro County agents, this increase has not been in proportion to the total increase in extension funds. The number of Negro agents has never been great enough to serve adequately the larger number of Negro farmers. The Negro county agent should be given more clerical assistance and encouraged to develop a program of his own adapted to the economic needs of his race, instead of attempting to fit his work into the pattern of white extension work.

5. *Administrative changes.*—If the lower-income group of farmers is to be reached and if attention of county agents is to be focused on the few large problems rather than on many minor projects, it seems advisable that a larger proportion of state and federal funds in many states be used for county agents and a smaller proportion be expended for state subject-matter specialists.

It appears advisable that the Smith-Lever and Capper-Ketcham acts be amended to provide a more equitable distribution of extension funds with more emphasis on farm population. Some provision also should be made for discretionary funds to be distributed on the basis of need, taking into consideration the size of farms, the use of a dual system of county agents in the South, and other factors.

These suggested changes in personnel and organization would prove of little value unless they laid the groundwork for a change of emphasis in county agent work from specialized methods and processes of production to larger economic and social objectives. The county agent in the past has proved himself free of the general charges of inflexibility and unadaptability of government bureaucrats; he has proven himself capable of adapting his work to many minor emergencies and to two major crises in American agriculture. The future test of the county agent system with its co-ordination of government levels will be whether the county agent can keep this adaptability and this local responsibility and yet combine them with a larger and more objective national viewpoint.

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