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DEVELOPING EXTENSION PROGRAMS USING FOREIGN STUDY MATERIAL

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Foreign study materials can be used at two levels of intensity for developing extension programs.

One is the first burst of effort when we return from a study trip. Our recent experiences occupy our minds, and we want to demonstrate to the Foreign Agricultural Service and to our own institutions that the time and funds to send us on the trip was a good investment. Also, immediately after we return, people who are looking for a speaker to discuss foreign trade, foreign policy, or foreign markets are most likely to ask us to speak.

As we get a little farther from the trip experience and as the sober responsibility of leadership in a total public affairs program, with very limited resources, begins to press upon us, the way we use the experience inevitably begins to change. For one thing, people soon forget that we made the trip and gradually cease to ask us to make speeches about it. But much more important, we are forced to consider all the alternative demands for public affairs subject matter, and the place of the trip experience and the materials that grew out of it in this total picture. However, because of the experience, our views on the development of our public affairs program will never be quite the same again.

Our public affairs program in the traditional extension pattern of adult education is a result of our leadership and the interest expressed by the public through county program requests. As subject matter specialists, we must try to see the big problems, establish priority, and decide in what areas we should try to stimulate the people's interest.

What issues rise to the surface toward which we should direct our subject matter leadership? America's responsibility for leadership in the cold war is a fairly obvious concern. But additional anxiety grows out of the realization that the challenge goes beyond the responsibility for strong United States leadership in the cold war. Current affairs in Africa have sharpened our sensitivity to the problems that face us all over the world. We have an uneasy feeling that failure to exercise strong leadership may bring other serious threats to national security in addition to the cold war.

Even if these problems were not a threat to national security, we would be concerned from a humanitarian point of view.

Actually little public concern with these issues is expressed in county program requests. This is probably not because the people fail to share the anxiety, but because they do not generally recognize extension's responsibility to deal with this subject matter as part of our adult education program. The public concern expressed in county extension programs centers mainly around the farm problem and agricultural adjustment. Foreign disposal programs and foreign trade are looked upon as a sort of desperate hope that might bail us out of the farm problem. Our sense of concern for educational leadership in the direction of foreign policy, and especially a consistent foreign agricultural policy, combined with the farm public's keen interest in farm policy at home naturally leads us to try to develop a program in this area.

If American foreign policy, particularly American foreign economic policy, is to succeed in achieving our goal of economic progress with freedom and peace, a consistent foreign agricultural policy may be necessary. Almost all of the developed countries of the Western world have a domestic agricultural price policy that conflicts with the West's policies toward trade and economic assistance. Our surplus disposal problems are an example of our conflicts in this area. If these conflicts are to be resolved, we will probably need to find some simultaneous solutions to our current farm problems. Certainly the Extension Service has a vital and unique educational role to perform in resolving the farm problem. This is not an easy task, but it may turn out to be essential to national security.

This is not the place to spell out the details of such an educational program. In very broad outline it will require education for understanding by farm people of the dynamic world situation and the commitments that the United States has made in foreign policy. Farm people as well as nonfarm people need to understand the nature of the farm problem and the relation of our foreign agricultural policy to our foreign economic policy. They need to understand the political reality which may make it necessary to find some solution to the farm problem before it will be possible to have a consistent foreign agricultural policy.

If the Extension Service in the United States really accepts the challenge of this kind of educational program, all of us, whether we have been a member of a foreign study team or not, will have a role in the program. If we have been a member of a study

team, our experience will be useful in helping us with "on the spot" analysis and illustrative material. But the trip reports can provide the same kind of assistance to those of us who have not been members of a study team.

These, then, are the two levels of intensity of using the foreign study experience for developing materials for an extension public affairs program. The first level of intensity is available only to those who had the experience of going on the trip and who can make speeches as a result of the trip. But all agricultural extension specialists can participate in the second level of weaving material from the study team reports into our broader educational program on the farm problem and its relation to national leadership in world affairs, and this level is perhaps much more important than the first.

PART IV

*The Land-Grant System and
Public Affairs Education*

