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## CLOSING COMMENTS

By F. W. Peck

I had in mind before the conference a few criteria by which I have attempted to evaluate the discussions of the conference.

1. Is public policy a proper function of the extension services you represent? Does it constitute an important responsibility of your institutions? I think it does.

2. Have the objectives been clear and definite? Did you understand clearly at the beginning of the presentation the objectives of each discussion? At times I was not sure about this.

3. How effective was the plan of the conference? It appears to me to have been an excellent example of careful planning of major premises and organization of details.

4. What about the character and quality of organization -- its management and sequence? This was well done. The choice and use of personnel and subject matter, the quality of "know-how," the effectiveness of techniques, and the point emphasis were outstanding.

5. Was there audience interest and participation? I doubt that I have ever attended a conference in which there was better sustained interest and participation in the discussion.

6. Do the results tend to stimulate extension activity in the area in which you have been studying? This I shall leave to you.

We are indebted to the National Committee and to the "work-horse" subcommittees that produced the resource material for the conference. A great deal of work was done by the discussion leaders in advance of the conference.

Someone asked why these topics were selected? Some of you may have more important local policy problems. The selection responsibility rested upon the National Committee, and the subsequent work upon the subcommittees. The subjects were selected because they were recommended by a number of replies from the states. They were well selected because they represent important current problem areas. The entire conference, I would say, has been constructively effective. It has more than met the expectations of us in the Farm Foundation.

We have desired at all times that administrators and staff members will feel these meetings are their responsibility and are representative of their programs. We merely give them the opportunity to get together and discuss problem areas in order that they may do a more effective job with their people. Our common objective is to increase the understanding of rural people with respect to important public policy problems and issues. This objective has dominated the discussions of this meeting.

## THE FOUR TOPICAL DISCUSSIONS

**International Affairs.** This was an excellent historical outline by Wallace Ogg with problem indications and alternatives for advancing these relationships so important at this time. We could not agree upon a definition of just what our foreign policy is or what it may lead to. I don't know to what extent collective security is a factor here. I am sure I would find it difficult to feel sure of my ground in leading a discussion of this subject, but I think one is safe in dealing with the history of these relationships without getting into the question of where we go from here.

Referring to the committee's report I think there is much to be considered regarding financial and technical assistance. We will likely be faced with a large question in the subject of "free trade vs. tariff protection." I would like to see financial aid diminished when it accomplishes its purpose. The question is: when can it stop? How can it be diminished? Government programs are seldom temporary. So it might be with aid. I would like to see the countries make their own decisions as to how much and the kind of consultative aid they need. I think, also, that it might be better for the foreign people to come here and observe our methods rather than so many of us going there for short periods of time.

**Inflation.** I liked the Rotary talk given under some pressure by D. B. Varner. Time did not permit him to discuss some important points of the question so as to complete his job. Each of us had questions that were not answered.

J. Carroll Bottum's presentation in dealing with statistics with a farm audience was excellent. I was impressed with the technique which he used in which he permits the audience to find things they think he overlooked. It was well geared to a farm group.

We get the impression that it is relatively a simple matter to write a prescription of direct and indirect controls. Why not put them into effect? The fact is we continue to like inflation. That is why public opinion is not crystallized against it. Why doesn't Congress act? What will it take to obtain action? How long will this "do nothing" policy continue? How is political action stimulated in matters of this importance? These are some of the questions that occurred to me.

**Agricultural Production Policy.** This was an outstanding presentation by Brice Ratchford of an historical analysis on the one hand and a critical evaluation on the other, of a highly important price support cotton program. There is a great deal of valuable information in the type of analysis that has been provided for your use. It can be applied with equal force to other commodities. There are a number of reasons why these programs persist, and why commodity interests are now asking for full parity.

I was impressed with the explanation of how an institution pointed out the values of types of research and analysis regarding production policies in contrast to a type of national directives sent to individual states. It is difficult to set up a national set of directives equally applicable to varying conditions in 48 states that would be satisfactory to all. There are distinctive limits to centralized authoritative direction.

**Interrelationships of Agriculture and Other Segments of Our Economy.** This was another valuable and interesting presentation. It will aid in later problem analysis. Our economic progress truly has been phenomenal. We might ask: In what areas will stimulation advance rather than retard progress? I am sure this and other questions could have been processed had there been more time.

I noted in Mervin Smith's presentation some things that might well be expanded - perhaps in some of the differences between urban and rural communities. Make a note of the seven points in the summary by Smith - they made an excellent statement. This committee did a good job in selecting criteria, but again time did not permit testing problems by critical analysis.

We are anxious that extension administrators understand your relationship to a conference of this type -- its personnel, its program effectiveness, the values in self-improvement, the seeking for more effective applicable techniques. We should avoid trying to do too many things in this field too fast. There are those who tend to run a fever in this area. The subjects are intriguing - they stimulate argument - they feature the daily press - farmers want to know more about them. Let's be sure of our ground and better trained in how to handle discussion groups. This must grow into extension teaching of public affairs gradually and carefully.

To those of us who work with groups such as this we feel we have had a highly successful conference. We have reached a high bench mark for which you people have been responsible and one that we will have to strive to maintain in future group discussions.