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Part IV

Some Methods Being Used in Public Policy Education

Responsibility for developing discussion materials and conducting educational programs on matters of public policy is now being taken by agricultural economists in most land-grant institutions. In some states extension teaching in policy is a full-time assignment for certain individuals. In most states, however, public policy work in agricultural extension at the present time must be carried along with other economic work in farm management, marketing, and outlook. The background material and the number of persons available varies considerably among the states.

Because of this variety of conditions, and in order to bring out possible approaches that might be used with limited personnel, five examples were selected for presentation and discussion: (1) work with State Planning Committee in Colorado, (2) annual policy conference in Connecticut, (3) policy work with women's groups in Kansas, (4) the Farmers' Forum in Missouri, and (5) work with farm organizations and government agencies in Ohio.

These examples do not constitute the total program in any of the states from which they were selected. They merely illustrate possibilities not brought out in the other sessions of the conference, and are designed to round out and broaden our knowledge of methods and techniques that may be used in public policy work.

THE RELATION OF THE COLORADO STATE AGRICULTURAL PLANNING COMMITTEE TO PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

By S. Avery Bice

The Colorado State Agricultural Planning Committee

The committee is an organization of rural people selected from more than 10,000 rural men, women, and older youth en-

gaged in leadership activities in the State Extension Service programs. These people are direct representatives of the County Agricultural Planning Committees. Although it is sponsored by the Extension Service, the committee's program is of its own choosing and direction.

The function of the committee is twofold: (1) to identify rural problems that are state-wide (or at least more than county-wide) in scope; (2) to work toward solution of these problems.

The organizational device used by the State Agricultural Planning Committee to develop policy and to determine program on problems it identifies is that of policy subcommittees. Subcommittees are assigned the tasks of: (1) reasoning out a desirable direction or standard of action, based on known facts (policy), and (2) developing ways and means of following the determined course of action (program). In determination of both policy and program, subcommittees are charged with the responsibility of keeping consistent with the requirements of the general welfare.

Subcommittee "lay" members come directly from County Agricultural Planning Committees, each of which is invited to name *the* person from the county deemed best qualified to serve on the particular problem at hand. Each subcommittee is served by a group of technical advisers, whose functions are to search, to fact-find, and to suggest—*no more*. They are persons originally selected by the Executive Committee of the State Agricultural Planning Committee for their unique ability to supply technical data pertinent to the assigned problem. Other advisers of the subcommittee's own choosing may be added as it becomes apparent that their services would be helpful. The Extension Service provides a secretary for each subcommittee. In most cases he is the subject matter specialist whose field is most closely aligned to the problem assignment.

The titles of the currently active subcommittees will suggest problems being tackled:

Tax equalization	Roads
Rural health	Rural education
Conservation	Animal health
Water resources	Research advisory

Points of Strength in the Committee's Work

1. Excellent device as "stage setter"—a basis for sound accomplishment. Has ability to draw diverse interests together on common problems.
2. Farm leaders are in a position to act as individuals with a public interest viewpoint rather than as representatives of farm organizations or commodity groups whose official views must be supported. For this reason, the committee's opinions and/or requests are given greater than ordinary consideration by government agencies, the state legislature, and state and county officials, as well as by others whose cooperation may be solicited.
3. All who serve do so without recompense of any kind. This helps gain acceptance of the viewpoint that recommendations are essentially unbiased and are made in the public interest.
4. Through its organic relation to County Agricultural Planning Committees, the State Committee has local groups immediately available to assist on educational or action programs.

Some Problems

1. Continuity of membership on subcommittees.
2. Probably not enough emphasis on educational aspects of programs.
3. Best basis for selecting "lay" members.
4. Pre-meeting preparation not always as carefully considered and planned as might be desirable.

Some Accomplishments

Major influence on:

1. State Soil Conservation District law.
2. School district reorganization legislation
3. Farm to market road expenditures policy.
4. Tax equalization formula and application for rural lands.
5. Brucellosis control legislation.
6. Rancher-Forest Service "meeting of minds" on public domain policies.