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A POLICY PROGRAM IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Idaho is typical of many states with no public affairs specialist. The continuing public affairs education job in Idaho rests with the extension economists, who have such diverse duties they are unable to be intimately acquainted with very many public affairs problems.

My assignment today is to review for you the organization we have used in the Boise, Idaho, area to promote education in the foreign policy field and the organization we will use this year across the state for work in U.S. foreign policy. The program includes foreign trade topics, which are the foreign policy aspects most closely related to agriculture.

The discussion which follows purposely emphasizes the evolutionary development of cooperative working relationships we experienced, and the great wealth of group and agency interests uncovered. The mutual interests brought to light in the process enabled us to do a job of adult education in public affairs which was not previously being done.

THE BOISE VALLEY WORLD AFFAIRS PROGRAM

A few years ago a group of Boise people decided more information was needed locally on foreign affairs than was provided by the occasional lecturer or service club speaker. They set up the Boise Valley Foreign Affairs Committee in cooperation with the Boise Junior College and the Boise Ministerial Association, with voluntary help and a minimum of financing. Extension was not involved, and the year's program was limited to a two-day World Affairs Institute and a few public meetings.

Interest in intergroup effort was stimulated by the Foreign Policy Association, a nonpartisan, privately endowed organization, set up to promote educational activity in the field of foreign affairs. In late 1954 it brought representatives of several interested groups together in a state-wide meeting to discuss ways of working on foreign policy programs of common interest. Those attending the meeting included representatives of the Idaho Education Association, the League of Women Voters, the Association of Radio and TV Stations, two divisions of the University of Idaho (the Political Science Department and Agricultural Extension), the Idaho Federation of Women's Clubs, the State Home Demonstration Council, and the Boise Valley World Affairs Committee.

This session indicated a wide interest in foreign policy problems, and the Boise Valley World Affairs Committee increased its activities.

It drew on leadership from the University of Idaho, Boise Junior College, the College of Idaho, and from various groups which have a committee on foreign affairs, including the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, and the Ada County Home Demonstration Council, to name a few. It also increased its efforts to serve the nearby towns of Caldwell and Nampa.

The Committee formalized its organization in 1955 by incorporating as the Boise Valley World Affairs Association, a membership organization. Extension personnel were added for the first time. Expansion in programming appeared to parallel a growing public interest in foreign affairs topics.

The 1956 World Affairs Institute sponsored by the Boise Valley World Affairs Association dealt with the Middle East. A successful institute session which featured an Israeli and an Arab on the same platform demonstrated that touchy subjects could be discussed successfully.

The Foreign Policy Association gave great assistance in obtaining competent program participants for the 1956 Institute and in counseling on procedure. It participated to a lesser degree in developing the program itself.

Institute and other speakers obtained by the Association were used for student assemblies by the Northwest Nazarene College at Nampa and College of Idaho in Caldwell. Service clubs in the two towns arranged joint sessions to hear speakers sponsored by the Association—and gave them more than normal service club time to be heard.

In 1957, the World Affairs Institute was used to kick off an eight weeks' discussion series known as "Decisions 1957," part of the nationwide Decisions program sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association. FPA provided discussion materials, but local leadership organized and conducted the program.

In the Boise area primary leadership was assumed by the Boise Junior Chamber of Commerce. The World Affairs Association made its contribution through participation in the steering committee and in the advisory capacities on publicity and other phases.

Extension workers assisted FPA in locating JC leadership for the discussion series and served on the steering committee to handle the discussion series and discussion leader training.

The accomplishment of the Boise Valley program in arousing thoughtful citizen interest in foreign affairs was recognized on May 18, 1957, when the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a subcommittee to Boise to interview interested citizens regarding their views on U.S. foreign policy. The Boise hearing was the only one held west of Kansas City.

The Association, in cooperation with the Boise Junior College, the University of Idaho General Extension Division as represented by the Borah Foundation (an endowed foundation administered by a University committee), Agricultural Extension, College of Idaho at Caldwell, Northwest Nazarene College at Nampa, the Foreign Policy Association, and the Boise Junior Chamber of Commerce, is moving into a broader program for the coming year. This will again include a World Affairs Institute and a Decisions discussion series, but the continuing program will be increased to include a greater variety of discussions during the season. We have in mind conducting a series of discussions on the developments in European cooperation and another on the emerging nations of Africa.

Extension's contribution to the growth of the program lies in mobilizing interested groups and organizing programs, rather than in presenting subject matter. Throughout, extension personnel were guided by the interests of the local people, and Extension involvement increased as the demand for a broadened program grew. Extension, along with the Foreign Policy Association, apparently became a catalytic agent in this process. Extension's particular contribution lay in the area of consultation, question raising, and facilitating intergroup contacts to arrive at a consensus regarding the type of program desired and the method of presentation that would have widest appeal.

It may very well be that in a state with a small staff this kind of contribution is one of the most useful Extension can make. The extension personnel involved need a rather wide background of knowledge of the subject matter area, but not necessarily intimate knowledge of the topic to be programmed.

The set of circumstances we found in the Boise area will not be found in another state, to be sure, but any area must have interested groups that can be drawn into a unified program on foreign affairs. Foreign Policy Association assistance is now available to most states, I believe. Local college support is fairly readily available. Extension personnel can provide a real service to these groups by assisting them in coordinating their efforts. I use "coordinate" in the sense of helping them determine what they wish to do and deciding how to do it rather than in the managing or directing sense.

STATE-WIDE PROGRAM ON FOREIGN POLICY

We will have a "Decisions 1958" program in Idaho in 12 to 15 counties. Leadership will rest with the Borah Foundation's executive secretary, with direct assistance from Extension in organization. The present plan is for the county extension agents to bring together an exploratory group to meet with the Foundation secretary and one of

the extension economists. If this group believes the program is worthwhile, the agent will call a larger group together to make the final decision about whether to engage in the program and to arrange for local leadership. Extension personnel will train discussion leaders, and the agent's office will be a principal dispersal point for materials, together with city libraries where available.

The Borah Foundation secretary, in consultation with extension staff members, will adapt for our use the handbook which the Oregon Extension Service used in its Decisions 1957 program. We will draw on the Foreign Policy Association for the bulk of the materials.

CONCLUSIONS

I believe our experience indicates that if a state with a small staff chooses to make its contribution in the effective coordination of interests of various groups, it can expand educational work in public affairs far beyond what Extension could do alone. Although a good general knowledge of the subject matter is important, our special contribution in this situation lies more in the field of leadership organization and program arrangement than in the specific public affairs subject matter involved.