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RESOURCE USE ISSUES
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THE PLANNING PROCESS

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FOREWORD

This publication represents a collection of papers which were presented before the Second Northeast Extension Seminar of The Northeast Regional Committees. The conference, which was held in Boston, October 11-13, 1966, explored the topic of "Resource Use Issues and the Planning Process."

The seminar was attended by professionals in rural and urban planning, economics, and sociology; landscape architects; educators, agricultural agents; and extension specialists in forestry and wildlife, area development, and public affairs.

Included in this publication are all papers which were presented before the four committees and those presented before the Northeast Regional Extension Public Policy Committee. They represent current thinking in the field of resource use and planning.

Much guidance and support was given by Henry M. Hansen of the University of Connecticut, and Joseph Ackerman and R. J. Hildreth of the Farm Foundation to the Boston Conference and the publication of the papers presented there. Financial costs were underwritten by the Farm Foundation and the Institute for Research on Land and Water Resources of The Pennsylvania State University.

Finally, we salute Jack Brown and Carroll D. Price, II who devoted many hours to the editing of this compilation of papers.

John C. Frey, Chairman
Northeast Regional
Extension Public
Policy Committee

PUBLIC ISSUES IN WESTERN MARYLAND

by George E. Allen*

The public affairs programs and activities cited in this paper are those of which I have first-hand knowledge. They generally cover the counties around Washington, D.C. westward to Garrett County, the westernmost county in the state.

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Several major problems and opportunities face Maryland Extension agents in meeting today's educational challenge for a larger and more diverse clientele. This is especially true of Extension projects in community development and public affairs. Land-use issues are in this category.

The problems facing the traditional Agricultural Extension agent stem from several sources. They may derive from traditions, clientele, and personal insecurity. However, none of these are insurmountable.

One of the major problems is the controversial nature of many public issues -- especially land use and its implications. Frequently the agent finds his farm clients opposing those issues that suggest change, because of their urban orientation they appear to be threats to the historic rural power structure. The controversy arising from those issues are not readily resolved, as a result the agent may retreat to a noncommittal stand in the interest of "objectivity" or "balance." Agricultural changes, though initially controversial, usually could be justified in rather short periods by actual field demonstrations. The new practices then could be promoted without the agent being accused of bias. The introduction and subsequent promotion of hybrid corn is an example.

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Another problem area is the attitude of the traditional clientele, the farmer, toward these new activities of "his" county agent. This new demand for a broader educational role has coincided with a diminution of rural political power. Therefore, the farmer "feels" he may be neglected in an area which formerly served his exclusive interests.

Personal insecurity in this new educational role is probably one of major undercurrent problems facing the traditionalist in Extension education. The agent may feel inadequate and extremely hesitant to enter this arena where the clientele has little interest in "yields per acre," where investment dollars far exceed those in agriculture, and where demonstrable solutions are not readily available for complex problems. This problem and its interrelationship with the preceding problems make it difficult for the traditionalist to broaden his outlook and to recognize that rural interests can no longer exist in illusionary isolation and that public issues affect all, both urban and rural people.

This entry into public issues opens great opportunities for all Extension personnel. The very same tools used in effective Extension education in the past can be used with this broader clientele. In fact, Extension can bring to public issues -- and land use in particular -- more effective means for identifying problems reaching the decision maker and help in finding the elusive solutions to them.

OBSERVATIONS ON EXTENSION'S APPROACH

The ultimate consequences of Extension involvement in public issues such as land use must be recognized. For example, it is well and good to conduct educational programs on the advantages of comprehensive land-use planning; the mark of success may be determined by the creation of a planning commission and the adoption of a comprehensive plan. However, this adoption by the public puts an implicit commitment on the Extension Service to further the implementation of the plan even though it pinches some of the historic clientele. This commitment is no different than the commitment to the advantages of hybrid corn.

The new Extension Service has embarked on some techniques that may have unfortunate side effects if used in the absence of a comprehensive approach. That is, the technique of identifying and isolating problems and pointing to solutions. This technique seems to be implicit in several of the more notable public issue programs such as TENCO in Iowa.

Neither problems nor solutions exist in isolation. The danger in the isolated approach is that in satisfying the one community goal you may have prevented or diminished the opportunities to achieve a desirable level of an equally important goal. For example, at a recent Extension-sponsored meeting on local aspirations, a homemaker stated that the people of her community were satisfied with the great tranquility that now existed, but they needed a new modern highway through their community. It is incumbent then on Extension workers to recognize the need for a comprehensive or systematic approach to community problems.

Another observation that may serve Extension well is the fact that Extension personnel are not selling any single program as a solution to public affairs problems. Extension is in the enviable position of presenting alternative solutions to the decision maker. Psychologically, this can be good for the agent and the client. The agent is not forced to sell any single plan, project, or alternative. Therefore, he can speak with dispassion and candor. This has a salutary effect on the client and generally will make him more receptive to making a positive rather than negative decision.

A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK

An agent assigned to this type responsibility needs a framework on which to hang his plan of work. Community development and other public issues must be approached systematically. Such a system will assist the agent in clarifying his role, which at first glance may appear chaotic. So frequently a person in this role spends all his time rushing around to "put out fires." Without a system he cannot bring order to his work, and it will be difficult to put it into perspective so that he might allocate his time in order of priority. A "Simple Simon" framework such as the following can serve as a starting point:

1. Problem identification and analysis.
2. Goal setting.
3. Inventory of resources.
4. Plan making.
5. Plan implementation.

Some of today's Extension programs on public issues carefully avoid the action or implementation phase. This is shortsighted, for the best prepared plans frequently gather dust because decision makers frequently do not know the importance of translating the impetus in the planning stages into the implementing stage. Furthermore, they are not aware of the steps or contacts needed to go from plans to realization. The Extension agent has a large responsibility to bring in education and information during this phase. To do this, the agent may have to be involved far more than tradition suggests. In other words, the agent must not be satisfied to stop his efforts at the end of the planning stage.

WESTERN MARYLAND PROGRAMS

The public issues facing the Western Maryland region run the gamut in land use problems. The counties next to Washington, Frederick and Washington, are two of the richest and fastest growing counties in the nation. They are feeling the fallout of urban pressures from the Washington metropolitan area. Agriculture is still strong in these two areas. Allegany County is one of the economically stagnant counties in Appalachia, and the agricultural base is rapidly declining. Garrett County has a high unemployment rate but has a strong recreation potential and an enlarging agricultural activity.

Participation by Maryland Extension in some public affairs programs are outlined below:

Montgomery and Prince George's County -- The Agricultural Science agent provided significant assistance in the early stages to the Maryland National Capital Planning Commission -- a bi-county organization -- in the inventory of agricultural resources for the preparation of a general plan. Extension also served as a sounding board for rural opinion and helped

identify organizations and people that should be informed of the planning proposals. Extension staff also served on the TAP committees, which formally reviewed the preliminary plan before adoption. In his endorsement of the adopted plan, "On Wedges and Corridors," Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman states:

"It gives me pleasure to congratulate your commission for recognizing the role of agriculture in your general plan proposals for the development of Montgomery and Prince George's counties, adjacent to our Nation's Capital. Your proposal for a natural resource wedge between corridors of urban development provides for an orderly and discriminating use of our rural lands."

The Extension Service has continued to work with these groups, especially in urban horticultural information and land-use seminars, largely attended by local staffs in the bi-county area. The opportunity for a greater educational and service role is possible, and exploratory talks have been initiated to this end.

Frederick County -- The Extension agent for Resource Development in Frederick County was assigned almost full-time to work with the county planning staff. This assignment has been partially credited as the local share of inkind costs for a "701" planning grant program. The need for this assignment was justified because of the urban development pressures on agricultural lands. This agent, as a part of his assignment, developed an informational program for a small watershed project (P.L. 566). This activity will inevitably result in the involvement of other public issues.

Washington County -- The area Extension agent and the county staff have been involved in two major land-use issues facing this rapidly growing area. One is in providing information and advice in obtaining sponsorship of a watershed project. This involved the preparation of a course of action in order to get sponsorship, the methods for enlisting the assistance of local leadership, and the preparation of financing for several alternatives for developing the watershed. In the space of eight months, a watershed association was officially created by the County Commissioners. Obviously, this activity has political ramifications, and the fulfillment will be realized through political pressures.

Another major effort has been in planning education. The Extension agents serve as technical advisors to the planning committee of the Economic Development Commission. This subject is "hot potato" among some farm groups and individuals. However, much of the opposition has been based on emotion and too little factual information.

At the request of the County Council of Homemakers, the Extension staff organized a one-day workshop for community development chairmen of the homemaker clubs. The purpose of this workshop was to provide information and facts on the fundamentals of county planning. Experts on planning, which included a legal council, a planner, and a county engineer, presented sessions of this workshop. This instruction, plus a packet of factual materials, enabled each chairman to conduct a 45-minute program on planning for each of the 23 clubs, with a potential outreach to 900 families. Two practical results came from this effort. First, Hagerstown Junior College applied for a Title I grant under the Higher Education Act to conduct similar educational programs and procure materials for all organizations in the county. The college was encouraged and assisted by the Extension staff to apply for these funds. Upon approval, the staff plans to continue to assist the college in this community service program. Another result was the defeat of a motion in the Farm Bureau to censure the Extension Service for this involvement.

A long-range program has been discussed concerning the need for an educational program on Erosion Resulting from Urban Development. This is in the exploratory stage but has significant implications involving rural conservation practices in urban areas.

Allegany County- The Extension Service has been involved here in various public affairs programs, some of which have been indirectly related to land use.

The Extension staff has worked with the small rural community of Mt. Savage (1,700 pop.) in organizing a beautification committee. If fruitful, long-range benefits will result from changes in land-use practices.

Several programs have been held on organizational procedures, objectives, lawn care, landscape architecture, etc. However, the need for a handbook on Community Beautification soon became evident. As a result, the Extension Service is getting a Title I grant under the Higher Education Act to prepare a Beautification Handbook for small communities in Maryland. Mt. Savage will be used as a testing and development area for this project.

The Extension staff has worked with Frostburg State College on another Title I application. This is to be a Potomac River Basin Demonstration Project on Georges Creek. This area is to be used to show how local people can be involved in river basin planning, and how there can be an accommodation of national, state, and local goals for improvement and development of the Potomac. One agent will devote one-quarter of his time in developing an information and involvement program for local citizens. The area agent will serve as the technical advisor for the entire project. This is to be a comprehensive approach using the five-point framework previously mentioned. The results will be used in the four-state basin as a major educational tool.

Another significant involvement has been with local industries that have experienced coal-utilization problems. The Extension Service is working with this group to find solutions to these problems. This activity reflects back to strip mining practices in Western Maryland.

The Extension staff has helped Allegany Community College prepare and organize a Project Management Course to be conducted under a Title I grant. This will be for project directors such as community action staff, planning staff, and county engineers to give them the fundamentals of project analysis, project management, and project evaluation. Modern management tools such as PERT will be introduced in this course, scheduled to be used in February 1967.

Garrett County -- The Extension staff has worked closely with the community action agency and the County Commissioners on major problems confronting this county. As a result of Extension's effort, the County Commissioners allocated some money for county planning. This was the first such allocation in the county's history.

The Extension staff has assisted the Community Action Agency in developing its program. This has involved modern survey techniques to identify need with names, organize local action groups, encourage projects, and prepare applications for various [participating] programs.

The Family Survey technique was used in over 1,300 interviews. The results were tabulated by machine processing and have been used to identify critical needs and develop meaningful programs. This technique was used in Washington and Allegany counties with the assistance of the Extension staff. Several counties in Pennsylvania are considering its use.

The organizing of neighborhood action committees resulted in improving a stretch of road so that 35 families could have mail and school bus service. Another community developed a playground and a third has improved its local sewage system. The Extension staff assisted the CAA staff in these efforts.

The Extension staff assisted in the preparation of a Neighborhood Facilities grant application to H.U.D. This facility is to be sponsored by the county, run by the CAA, and assisted by a local town. This application, if approved, will be the first such grant for a rural area.

Maryland Appalachia Region -- The Extension staff has worked on several regional projects as well as proposals with regional and interstate implications.

The staff helped prepare the Appalachian Land Stabilization and Conservation Plan for Maryland, under Sec. 203 of the Appalachia Act. This program was successfully implanted in the first year. It was unique in that selected areas in each of the three Maryland Appalachian counties were eligible for these cost-sharing practices. This was an innovation over the usual ASCS programs.

The Extension Service cosponsored an educational meeting with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. The staff helped organize and conduct the program on "Appalachia Meets the Potomac." Local needs and aspirations were pinpointed, and out of this the demonstration project on Georges Creek evolved.

NEW ACTIVITY FOR AGENTS

These are only the highlights of Extension activity concerning public affairs and land use issues in Western Maryland. In the time allowed, it was not possible to detail all the little maneuvers, contacts, and activities necessary to initiate and complete these projects. However, any Extension agent in this new area can read between the lines and see the implications. It is believed that once the traditional agent has tasted this new activity, he will never be satisfied to limit his concern for the total community.