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PROCEEDINGS

of the

WESTERN FARM ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION

Thirteenth Annual Meeting

July 10, 11 and 12, 1940

The State College of Washington  
Pullman, Washington

and

University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho

Curtis Mumford - AS LAND-GRANT COLLEGE AS A WHOLE SEES COUNTY LAND-USE  
PLANNING, - EXTENSION, RESEARCH, AND TEACHING:

I have yet to meet a single individual, whether he be employed by a  
the Agricultural College or by the United State Department of Agriculture,  
after a thorough testing and a fair trial of the county land-use plan-  
project, including his actual participation in it, has not failed to be  
enthusiastic over its possibilities.

To my mind county land-use planning offers one of the finest vehicles  
invented to further the educational program of the Land-Grant College.  
It has a stimulating influence in creating an earnest desire for facts and also  
a influence in developing a tolerant appreciation of the viewpoint of others  
improving its practical value to farmers and professors alike.

This project is fast becoming a great educational force, - a great in-  
direct process for instruction and for learning. It is being recognized more  
and more as a slow process, - a method of procedure which cannot be completed  
in a single afternoon. Herein lies its strength. Its proper development is  
a continuous process.

Just a word as to its development. At first, the Land-Grant College  
did not fully appreciate the ultimate value of this project. However, it may  
be only fair to say that some of those who were instrumental in the early ad-  
ministration of the project did not see the broad possibilities in it from an  
educational standpoint that some of us see today. There was too much talk of  
the Triple A program; too much of an attitude persisted that "here was a bunch  
of figures that had to be sent to Washington and the sooner they could be ex-  
tracted from the farmers, yes, - even supplied for them by county agents or  
other representatives of the Land-Grant College, the better it would be for  
all concerned". Even after the project took a broader turn it was not un-  
common to come across a county agent or an extension specialist who really  
considered it an insult for anybody to believe that a group of local farmers  
could draw up a plan of recommended land use which would be as good as, let  
alone better than, a plan which they themselves could produce. These men  
missed the point entirely. So did the research and extension workers who did,  
yet shall we say still do, feel that the technician is the only person who can  
be entrusted to draw up a land-use map, surely not the farmer. Again, let us  
make it perfectly clear that the value of a farmer-drawn land-use map and a  
farmer-written land-use report, are not ends in themselves but are all means  
to an end. In this case there are at least two ends, namely education and  
economic democracy.

The Extension Service of the Land-Grant College is interested in land-  
use planning for at least three reasons. First, because of its unusually success-  
ful instructional technique. The indirect process of teaching whereby various  
fields of subject matter are taken up and discussed without putting labels on  
them has been found most effective. Second, because in many states it has  
helped to economize the time and energy of extension specialists. This has  
been done by routing men and women specialists into certain counties and away  
from others in conformity with the urgency of the needs and desires of the

local people as expressed in the county land-use planning reports. Third, there is no question but what many county agents and extension specialists have received new inspiration from their close association with the project. It has been a great thing for developing leadership, not only among farmers but also among our extension workers.

The research activity of the Land-Grant College has benefited from the pointed and timely suggestions of county land-use committees. Now problems have been discovered and old ones have been more accurately evaluated. The farmer and the research worker have been drawn more closely together.

The teaching branch of the Land-Grant College has found the program helpful in suggesting the theme of "proper land use" as a common denominator upon which most all departments can focus their attention. There are real possibilities here for coordinating the thinking and therefore the subject matter teaching of our many departments. County land-use planning has aided those teachers who have tried to give an orientation course for the purpose of acquainting students with the many activities of state and federal agencies fundamentally interested in the question of proper land use.

In all this discussion it should be pointed out that the research and the teaching departments of our Land-Grant Colleges could probably make far greater use of our Land-Use Planning Project than they do today.

Considerable criticism of this project has been advanced, mainly by state people, to the effect that "action agencies" have tried to use this county planning activity as a means to put over their own particular program. Is it any less objectionable when the Extension Service of a Land-Grant College tries to use this project as a tool to convince the farmer of the value, importance, and necessity of its own program? We have heard of instances where this was true. Let us hope that this is a thing of the past. The writer would like to suggest that the sooner we all overcome this idea of trying to use County Land-Use Planning to sell something, - whether it be the work of the Extension Service of the Land-Grant College or some federal action agency, the better it will be for this project. To be sure such activity may have a small place in this project but it should be decidedly secondary to the main proposition which is that County Land-Use Planning should be permitted to start with the farm people themselves. Once the local land-use planning committee has had an opportunity to think through their own problems by themselves and have made tentative recommendations, then, by invitation, representatives of the appropriate action agencies can be called into the planning picture to help develop land-use plans and help carry out plans already made. To follow out this procedure requires the services of a particularly well-trained discussion leader. This, of course, is a responsibility of the Land-Grant College.

Finally, the Land-Grant College is interested in Land-Use Planning because it seems to afford the best system yet devised of properly evaluating, in terms of the local setting, one action program with another.

In conclusion, and again looking at Land-Use Planning from the stand-

point of the Land-Grant College, we can, if we only will, use farmer opinion and recommendations to point-up and to make more effective the entire program of the Land-Grant College, - Extension, Research, and Teaching.

Discussion Notes: Condensed and edited by the Chairman:

Mr. Turner: We do have a number of agencies, and naturally the increase in people that are cooperating in any job slows the whole process down. It is really a serious problem to find a way to get action, but the unified counties are demonstrating an effective way of getting action on at least a number of recommendations made.

Mr. Fendrick: Unless something is done, some effective achievement is obtained, then you might consider all work so much water gone by the dam. The thing that concerns me in developing any system is that you have to get not only the spectator attitude but also the participant attitude, and unless the various individual farmers do participate and do correlate and integrate their particular programs at one time, there are going to be jealousies develop which will defeat the ends in themselves.

Mr. Bell: A part of the answer to that lies in the emphasis on the possibility of local action by the people within the county themselves, rather than depending upon the outside--on federal and state governmental agencies to do the job for them. There are a lot of things that haven't been done in most of these counties that appear quite obvious when we get to studying the situation. They can work on local adjustment -- on adjustments by their county commissioners, such as on the matter of what is to be done with county-owned land. There are things they can be working on and getting results, whereas in the past they haven't done much about it. It seems that this is a very good step toward increasing the efficiency of democracy in getting adjustments made that need to be made.

Mr. Mumford: I object to the inference that the main purpose of the county planning idea is to get action. It seems to me that one very important objective is to get less action. We have a number of agencies, federal and state, and in the past people have said it would be fine for everyone to get together and try to move in a coordinated fashion, but to my mind, this county planning idea is the only hope we have presented so far for being able to get some effective coordination. Therefore, I say it isn't solely to get more action, but to get more intelligent action. Perhaps a little less speedy action in some cases.

Mr. Venstrom: A survey of all county recommendations in Virginia indicated that about 85 percent were local matters. This would indicate that federal programs, while important, may be only a small portion of all readjustments.

Mr. Smith: It is very true that these county land-use committees would have a job to do if there were no action agencies. I think that they will do more effective planning if they feel a greater responsibility within

their own group for doing something about the things of which they talk and merely depend on government and state and local political subdivisions for doing the business for them.

Mr. Green: Isn't there back of this whole policy of planning, a combination of the man-on-the-land experience with the broader outlook of the specialist or scientist or the economist, if you please, a coordination of those experiences and ideas in developing a program which will be well rounded out and will come nearer fitting the conditions than a program which could be developed by one group alone.

Mr. Bolster: I don't believe there is much danger of developing hasty recommendations if, when we are developing the unified programs, we are careful to bring in the representatives of all the agencies in regard to these programs. I think we will find farmers will be pretty broadminded in their attitudes on it. They won't expect every one of these things to be carried out right off the bat.

Mr. Fondrick: It seems to me we are dealing there with a very critical part of the whole thing. Obviously a corpse does not expect much action. But the liveliest person expects more action. Now what kind of expectation is it, and if the group is going to attempt to direct the action, by what method do they try to decide what that is? The inference has been made that committees are making certain recommendations without much real consideration. In other words, if we did that, we would not want to raise much expectation. On the other hand, is there a judicial consideration that should go through before you get the kind of recommendations on which you expect action?

Mr. Turner: That is what I had in mind in urging coordinated action, in bringing out the importance of some local action that the people can see. We realize that if there was no action, the educational benefits of these discussions are helpful and worthwhile, but some tangible actions and accomplishments are very worthwhile to keep the people satisfied and to carry on that educational process. Another way of saying it is that this is an educational process in the hands of the local people, that they have a lot of new tools to use and to draw on and to apply locally together in solving their local problems.

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Mr. Benedict: I have been wondering why land-use policies for a county necessarily should be determined by the farm operators of that county. Isn't that a social problem of the people in that whole county, and how far is that system representative of the interests of all the people in that county? I am quite sure in California we could remove 50,000 people we do not really need. Is that solution the proper one or is that turning it over to some other area? How far is this procedure likely to lead to a real social approach to the matter? It seems to me that land-use planning in its best sense is a social approach and not the approach of a particular group.

Mr. Wheatley: I would like to comment on that because I think it is the kernel of this county planning effort; to get a group of farm men and women together along with a good number of business men and start to consider the welfare or what should be done for that county, that is a rather new experience. Ordinarily their considerations have been, "What can we do to promote our personal interest?" A group of livestock men may get together and they will plan what is best for the beef cattlemen, and sugar beet growers will plan what is best for them. I believe perhaps the most important function of this planning effort has been to change that attitude a little bit. I believe it is the most important change from our older approaches to these problems. Customarily, we went in and worked with certain groups who have certain interests of their own, and we tried to help them work out that interest. It seems to me to look not at the interest of this individual group but at the interest of this area, and we do have rather a large representation of interests other than actual farmers, retired farmers, bankers and other people.

Mr. Benedict: It seems to me that doesn't quite reach the question I raised. I think the most extreme example in this region is this -- the State of California has approximately just the same number of people who work as farm laborers as it has people who work as farm operators, and their families. Now, I would wonder how much consideration there is in the picture of the land problem from the point of view of that other large group, which is just as large in number as the operator group. The retired farmer, banker, and people of that kind are going to think pretty much like the farm operator. The question I raise is not one of challenging the desirability of a county planning mechanism. I think it is very desirable. But the question of whether it has been set up in the most desirable way to accomplish the biggest social interest; and, secondly, whether we haven't got to think in terms of a somewhat larger unit that the county in a good many of the problems. It is obvious that a great many counties can simplify their own problem by intensifying the neighboring county's problem. I have had examples of that in the last few years in our coast counties where they get an overdose of workers coming in. They simply furnished gasoline to those people and got them out of the way. That wasn't solving the problem.

Mr. Haight: I believe farm people generally recognize that it is a social problem. The question continually comes up - who should assume the burden, - and I think folks in Montana are perfectly willing to go a long ways. I believe they are looking at it from that basis better than we had a right to think they would.

Mr. Bolstor: I believe that would be true in advanced counties. I do not believe it is true when you first start in. When you start in, they are rather selfish. After you get started they improve a lot.

Mr. Fendrick: Isn't the problem fundamentally one of transforming the attitudes from self-interest to that which involves a larger social interest--a larger social group--where you have a change from an extremely self-centered to a more altruistic point of view, balancing the action so

that it will produce the greatest good for the greatest number on the long-run.

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Mr. Smith: There ought to be parallel with the land-use planning, some activity on the county level which will assist the "hired hands" to coordinate their approaches and mutually to understand each other's program. Once a month the county agent, the AAA representative, the FSA man, the Forest Service man, and others could sit around a table and talk about the various phases of the work that they are doing, and things that they can do, and any new phases of the program that may come in. That does not detract from the planning; it makes us more intelligent when we go before the land-use committee in the county.

Mr. Moore: Is it possible to coordinate the activities of the various federal, state and county agencies without consideration of the land-use problems on which you are trying to obtain action? In other words, can this group here coordinate their action to agree on what land-use planning is without considering a specific problem in land-use planning?

Mr. Venstrom: Is there any room for meetings of the hired hands apart from the bosses? I speak of us as hired hands and the farmers as bosses.

Mr. Willard: There are some times when you come to questions of administrative contact; in other words, the administration of the program in relation to other programs. A problem may develop; then doesn't it become necessary administratively for the representatives of those agencies, whether they are county, state or federal, to come to an understanding between themselves as to who is going to do what?

Mr. Haight: The danger of that is that they immediately begin to determine the policy for the farm operator and for land use without farmer judgments being considered. There is a place for separate meetings of agency personnel, but not very much.

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Mr. Eke: We have discussed representation quite a bit in Idaho and are trying to get true representation on the county committees, realizing that the county agents have worked with leading farmers a good deal more than they have with the tenants, laborers, and others down on the scale. Most of their work is with the people who want to work with them, usually the leading and progressive farmers. When the county agents went out to appoint these committees, they appointed the men they usually worked with in the county. We have been working around to getting them elected rather than appointed that way. We have been wondering how we could get true representation. We have had this experience, and of course every other county agent knows the same thing, you get a bunch of farmers and others together and farmers do not say anything. They let the good talkers and others do all the talking and bring out the ideas. It is hard to get farmers to talk



less it is all farmers there. How can you in a community level get farmers to talk? If you have tenants and owners, the tenants will hold back in expressing their views. You will have to develop some new social patterns to allow a farmer to stand up in the community and say what he thinks.

Mr. Green: I am not here to tell you what correct land use is. I think that thing grows out of the experience of the farmer and out of the experience of these technicians combined. I think that is one of the beauties of this program. It is a growing program. There are a number of things we know need to be changed. When we used the words "correct land use" we do not have in mind any particular cut and dried program, but a growing program, and adjusting program.

In the last ten years we have made a lot of adjustments in land use. We have only started. We are thinking of an ideal rather than the thing we expect to attain for the whole county, state or nation, not in one year or fifty years, but a whole program that is working toward that ideal.

Mr. Mumford: Suppose that every other county in the United States and our own county make these plans. How can we in this county draw up an intelligent plan for proper land use unless we know what the other counties are going to do? I don't mean it in the way of pessimism, but regardless of this thing, it is a two-way road, and we mustn't get too enthusiastic about simply adding together 1000 or so county reports. I emphasize again the educational program - the value we get from mulling these things over.

Mr. Benedict: It seems to me that education, in a sense, is one of the ends, one of the satisfactions in life, understanding those things around us, and yet I agree very heartily with the point that education is also a means to an end. I think that the land-use planning is a very important educational process and I sometimes think that it might be justified on the basis alone of a better understanding of the relationships involved. I used to do a lot of so-called farm outlook work and never felt that farmers very generally took those outlook conclusions and acted upon them, but it did seem to me one of the most effective ways of educating the farmers as to what were the multiple factors in the economic situation with which they had to deal and I think that has merit in itself, in the ultimate happiness of the individual. I don't think we need to be apologetic for it. I am not arguing against getting action, but I am simply challenging the point that education is always a means to an end. I think it has other values as well. Certainly that is the motivation in a great deal of the scholarship of the world today.

Mr. Fondrick: Education is a "process" rather than a "thing". After all, you are dealing with a way of producing a change, with kinds of activity, with operations, and when you speak of education, you are simply meaning the process by which certain changes are made rather than an object or something concrete.

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Mr. Smith: There is one point on which we have all rather agreed a number of times--that this whole planning deal should be progressive and that under certain circumstances would change it. I think we should keep in mind there are certain things which should not be changed. If specialists say that if you do not keep this hill land in grass, you will lose what little land remains, economics shouldn't change that next year. It seems to me that is a type of basic or static planning that would remain year after year.

Mr. Bell: That is an economic determination, however, rather than a physical one, and I think it is illustrated by the fact that in Europe it is considered in certain places good economy to go down to the bottom of the hill and carry back the soil to the top each year. Economic conditions apparently justify that. These things aren't such cold, physical determinations that you can say, "Here is the line," but there are economic determinations based on the physical facts and environment.

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Mr. Roskelley: This question that we have been discussing raises one point perhaps that is quite fundamental as to what role county planning should play in the change of values. If I may refer to an illustration in Colorado, from a soil point of view, perhaps they have produced too many sugar beets, but their justification in producing sugar beets at the present time is not so much that there is any money in sugar beets, but the use of the pulp as a by-product in feeding lambs has given rather lucrative returns. Should land-use planning attempt to change the motives of the people at the expense of an immediate economic return? I wonder what the group will have to say on that point.

Mr. Wheatley: You get a group of leaders together and they are not entirely satisfied that people's sense of values today are what they ought to be. In nearly every county of Utah, farmers are making some recommendations and trying to follow up those recommendations with action or educational procedure to really evaluate some of the things which they think have become a little warped. The bulk of the public, our village people, are putting emphasis on perhaps an automobile, when they ought to be putting a little more emphasis on seeing that the house is painted and the yard is cleaned up.

Mr. Bell: It has been suggested as a possibility that the whole economy of the Palouse country might well be changed from one in which large scale cash grain farming is the principal system followed to one in which rotation of legumes and feed crops assumed a more important role, but it is pretty hard to talk against the immediate dollar to bring about that system. I think this planning system should recognize the ultimate consequences of continued cash grain farming, and before it becomes too late. If a positive procedure is suggested which is not too far out of line from the standpoint of the dollar, they will give attention to it.

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Mr. Venstrom: To me it is something of a challenge to us at every moment to see that the machinery for land-use planning does not become cumbersome--that there is enough flexibility in it so things will be done by a faster way instead of slower. I don't know much about the most desirable speed for social change but we should get more accomplished in a given time with a like amount of energy than we are getting now.

At the first meetings, the impossibility of fixed plans continually came bobbing up. I am very pleased today in that we have gone practically the whole afternoon without that idea of a static thing creeping out. Most of us now are seeing this county planning as a way of dealing with continuous changes rather than the fixing of a plan. We are recognizing that society is dynamic and we need some way of speeding up our adjustment to social change. We are using the word "planning" in the continuous process sense rather than the word "plan" in the static sense.