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PROCEEDINGS
of the
WESTERN FARM ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION

Twenty-First Annual Meeting
June 23, 24, 25, 1948
Davis, California

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

by

D. Barton DeLoach
Oregon State College

Members of the Western Farm Economics Association and Friends:

On behalf of the Western Farm Economics Association I wish to express its appreciation for the plans worked out by Dean Ryerson, Professor Griffin and their staff. The accommodations for our members, their families, and the convention meetings are highly satisfactory.

The privilege of serving as president of your association during the past year has been a pleasant one. I feel honored. For that honor I thank you.

The program of our Association during 1947-48 varied only slightly from that of preceding years. Your officers have concerned themselves with specific assignments given at the Logan meeting, and in preparing for this conference. The first obligation was delegated to your committees among which was the one of agricultural policy. The second assignment became a real chore on occasions. It required much time, some expense, and a few sleepless nights. The suspense will probably lessen as the program draws nearer to a close, because there will be less likelihood of cancellations. The duty of preparing a program to parade before the membership at its annual meeting requires the help of many people. It is with a great deal of personal satisfaction that I can say that this help was generous and the program as you see it is largely a result of the work of my associates. We feel that the plan is, in the main, good. The major shortcomings in our preparation will be more in evidence as the meetings progress.

It was not possible to meet each request or to provide time for each subject that was worthy of consideration. The sectional meets are largely the result of the efforts of the subject-matter groups whose interests are indicated by the structure of their particular group meetings. Personally I feel our major omission was our failure to include a section relating to teaching techniques and problems in the field of agricultural economics. As a group our attention and interests are being directed toward research and extension activities. These phases of agricultural economics appeal more to administrators and taxpayers. Since this condition is true and has been true for some time, we are now facing the consequences. Today there is visible evidence that good research and good extension cannot be carried on without trained people. What is our answer?

A few matters have arisen within our association that deserve the attention of the members. Let us turn to them.

1. There is a need for a more thorough contact with the membership than is possible under present arrangements. The experience of the past presidents as well as myself in attempting to work through the state councilmen is lacking in many respects.

2. Only two or three states have any arrangements for expanding the activities of their councilmen to include contacts with members outside the college or university. Except for one state, no meetings of the state groups are held between the annual conferences. Membership interest lags.

3. The obligations of the Association's secretary under present conditions do not permit other than routine correspondence. The office of the secretary is the only office with any continuity; therefore, questions of our organization, even though minor, fall into inexperienced hands. Procedures are haphazard and time consuming. Something is necessary to maintain an active interest on the part of our members. Interest and participation go hand in hand. The secretarial office could become the vehicle through which this contact and interest is stimulated. I believe this matter is worthy of the attention of the Association when it is making its plans for the coming year.

4. The matter of joint memberships for graduate students in the American Farm Economics Association should be given attention. This subject was brought to the attention of the executive committee during the past year. Your committee decided, temporarily, that graduate students should be entitled to a joint membership with the American Farm Economics Association at a rate below that given to regular members.

Your Association has fulfilled its obligations to the American Farm Economics Association during the past year. Your president participated in the annual meeting at Green Lake, and the American Farm Economics Association Council meeting at Chicago. More than 40 percent of our members hold joint memberships with the A.F.E.A. Without being too specific as to details, the existing relationships between the American Farm Economics Association and our group are in need of clarification. The President of the Western Farm Economics Association is an ex-officio member of the executive council of the American Farm Economics Association. None of the officers of the American is on any of our committees. This should be considered carefully.

I have confined my remarks thus far to certain Association problems as I see them. But before I conclude, I wish to comment briefly on a matter that affects our profession as well as our organization.

Recently enacted federal legislation for research in the marketing of farm products has afforded to our profession an opportunity to advance its usefulness to society. It is true that the funds appropriated for marketing studies are small compared to the governmental subsidies and supports granted annually to some of our minor farm crops. But these funds are still large enough to test our abilities to staff a research organization and to do research work that merits the continuance of the appropriations. This is not an alarming condition provided it is viewed in its proper perspective. Progress is being made in developing an efficient organization. It should be compared to the organizing and tooling activities of industries. A part of the cost is that of experimenting in the development of an organization to do research; another part is a cost of training and recruiting workers for the task assigned to us by Congress. Any reasonable appraisal would be that a considerable part of the outlay should be assigned to recoverable charges.

As a group of professional people we have a great deal to do to take ourselves out of the popular classification of impractical dreamers and servants of pressure groups. We have never had a better opportunity to do this than

now. We have never had a better opportunity to serve our country wisely than we have today. Sound leadership in studying the economic problems of agriculture is needed desperately. We as a group of professional economists are in a position to lead. The essence of true leadership demands that we inspire sufficient confidence among our constituents to make them willing and eager to follow. That is our job.