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THE EXPANSION OF HOME-ECONOMICS WORK UNDER
THE BANKHEAD-JONES ACT *

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We are approaching the close of the first quarter of a century of concerted Extension Service effort directed toward the rural home. Fifty-one of the land-grant colleges and the 17 negro colleges can report an off-campus home-economics extension faculty of 1,916 county home demonstration agents and assistants. In addition, the home-economics extension faculty includes 444 State home demonstration leaders, assistants, and home-economics specialists in most part with headquarters at the State agricultural colleges. This total of 2,360 women extension workers constitutes a strong and forceful group working largely in the interest of rural home improvement and using a variety of educational means and methods in instructing and guiding adults and adolescents.

Extension workers have peculiar advantages over other instructors in adult education. They are close to local conditions and almost all human problems lie within the scope of active and skillful agents. They have behind them the well-organized resources of the Federal, State, and local governments. They can call the colleges and experiment stations for information in almost any branch of science and culture. They also have the support of hundreds of laymen who give generously of their time in carrying out the program which they and the people of the communities have agreed upon to meet the needs.

Probably it is just as true today as it was when the theory was first advanced, that a great teacher plus a student makes a great school. When we think of a college our thoughts may go to campus and buildings, but upon second thought we know that a college may do brilliant work only when there is a strong faculty. Without a strong faculty a college is handicapped, no matter how fine may be its material equipment. The agricultural college can claim that much of its strength, its influence, and its opportunity for service lies in its extension-service faculty.

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DISTRIBUTION.—A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director; State leader in county agricultural agent work and in 4-H club work; State and assistant State leader in home demonstration work; home-economics specialist; land-grant college library; and experiment-station library.

The home-economics extension faculty has been built up slowly, and personnel has been selected carefully. The chief problem in selecting personnel is not in finding home-economics trained women, but in finding the combination of training and other qualifications very necessary for extension workers. The matured woman is preferred for a county home demonstration agent; one who has lived enough years to have had time to develop sound judgment and keen discrimination. We should like for her to have had experience in teaching, in business, in farming, or in homemaking. She must be someone who can guide as well as train, guiding women and girls in demonstration activities so that the community will see and feel the effects. She should be able to keep harmonious relationships with all educational and public service agencies. It goes without saying that this agent must possess, first of all, the spirit of service, and important requisites are good health and a saving sense of humor.

What minimum age should be required in the employment of county home demonstration agents, is a question that has been settled by most States. At present the State home demonstration leaders express a preference for 25 years of age as an average minimum. Twenty States now are employing assistant county home demonstration agents. That not only provides necessary assistance in some counties, but it enables younger college-trained women to enter the service, gain experience through apprenticeship, and later be assigned to larger responsibilities. Such a desirable plan for training home demonstration agents might be further encouraged to advantage. A college degree is now required for the county positions by 45 States. At the present time 24 States report that all their county home demonstration agents hold college degrees, and 34 States report that all State home-economics specialists and leaders hold college degrees. In all other States the number of State and county workers not holding degrees is small. As nearly as can be ascertained at the present time, the average tenure of service of State home-economics extension workers is 9 years, and 6 years' average tenure can be claimed by county home demonstration agents. The tenure has decreased appreciably because of the recent additions in State and county workers.

We have come a long way in home demonstration work since 1914, from 349 county home demonstration agents at the time of the passage of the Smith-Lever Act to 1,916 county home demonstration agents and county assistants. Home demonstration agents constitute 33 percent of the county extension personnel for 48 States, Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii. The Bankhead-Jones Act made possible further development of the cooperative extension system by authorizing the appropriation of additional Federal funds. A total of \$8,000,000 was appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1935, under the Bankhead-Jones Act. The additional funds were not made available to the States until September 1, 1935, which means that the increased personnel from July 1, 1935, to August 31, 1936, was appointed within a period of 12 months' time. In checking the number of county home demonstration agents appointed each fiscal year since 1914, it is found that the number of appointees during the 12-month period ending August 31, 1936, exceeds that of any of the previous fiscal years except the year 1918, when a large number of food-emergency agents were added during the World War. That gain, however, was practically lost in the 3 following years. The gain made now

is a more permanent one. We can expect growth with certainty in home demonstration work because of the additional \$1,000,000 of Bankhead-Jones funds for each of the next 3 years.

Following is a tabulation of the increase in extension personnel during the period July 1, 1935, to August 31, 1936, with the totals and with the increase by number and percentage over the personnel on June 30, 1935.

	<u>Total</u> <u>Aug. 31, 1936</u>	<u>Increase</u> <u>in number</u>	<u>Increase in</u> <u>percentage</u>
County home demonstration agents.....	1,566	317	25
Assistant county home demonstration agents	177	117	195
County home demonstration agents (negro)..	173	34	25
Assistant State leaders and district agents	87	18	26
Assistant home demonstration leaders (negro)	11	3	38
State extension specialists (women).....	290	74	34
County agricultural agents.....	2,866	52	2
Assistant county agricultural agents.....	820	353	74
County agricultural agents (negro).....	227	41	22
State extension specialists (men).....	1,160	219	23
County 4-H club agents.....	286	75	36
Assistant county 4-H club agents.....	53	20	61

This administrative audience is familiar with the general system of State extension-service budgeting. In general the classification for budgeting is under such project headings as follows: Administration, Publication, County Agent Work (supervisory and county), Home Demonstration Work (supervisory and county), and the various subject-matter projects such as Agronomy, Foods and Nutrition, etc. For the fiscal year 1936-37 funds from all Federal, State, and county sources are budgeted under Home Demonstration Work (meaning only salary, travel expenses, and incidentals for State supervisory and county personnel) to the extent of 19.3 percent of the entire budget. The funds budgeted for the State specialists (women) amount to 3.4 percent. These two percentages (22.7) do not represent the total amount of funds going into home demonstration work.

A certain amount of administration could be rightly charged against home demonstration work. What amount, no one has determined as far as we know. Often a high percentage of the amount budgeted for publications goes into home demonstration and girls' 4-H club publications. It is estimated by those who know the State budget best that 33 percent would be the average amount budgeted under Publications that goes into home demonstration and girls' 4-H club publications. A check on a few of last year's inspection reports shows that one State spent 50 percent of the Publication item for such purposes, another 40 percent, and another 25 percent. Another item which is by no means small is the time given by county agricultural agents to home demonstration work in counties without home demonstration agents. It is difficult to set a proportionate figure, but we know that time is money in

extension work and that 731 agricultural agents in such counties gave some time to the work of organized groups of farm women in 1933. We are not able to ascertain the number for more recent years because of our present system of reporting. In addition, State agricultural specialists, especially the poultry, horticultural, dairy, and farm-engineering specialists, make some contributions to home demonstration work. To be financially accurate, items which have just been mentioned plus home demonstration personnel budget items represent the full amount of funds going into home demonstration work.

State home demonstration leaders are looking ahead with businesslike astuteness and are setting up personnel needs in counsel with State extension directors. There are not only anticipated needs, but needs that can be said to be evident. Some of the reasons on which the needs are based follow:

1. In most counties the county home demonstration agents are responsible for girls' 4-H club work. It is the consensus of opinion of those who have had opportunity to make careful observations, that in the counties without either a home demonstration agent or club agent sometimes the quality of work done by the girls' 4-H clubs is inferior and the average is none too high. That is a condition we might as well face squarely. It is due to lack of proper guidance and the impossibility of local leaders' getting sufficient training without a resident home demonstration agent.

2. At least 730 counties without home demonstration agents have 12,462 organized groups of 220,000 women which have been given some guidance and assistance by State specialists and district agents. The interests and activities of these groups are constantly increasing. The demands made by the groups upon county agricultural agents and State and district home-economics extension workers are many times greater than can be taken care of properly.

3. Some agricultural counties have received no attention or benefits from home demonstration work. This may be due to lack of interest on the part of the county in not knowing the full meaning of the service. Propaganda or preliminary education may be impossible because of limited personnel.

4. The Rural Resettlement Administration suggests that the women in rehabilitation families be absorbed into regular home demonstration work as soon as possible. In counties where the rehabilitation load has been heavy, it may take an assistant home demonstration agent to take care of this group in a satisfactory way, as more individual service is likely to be necessary for the particular group of families.

As it has been stated the State home demonstration leaders have set up, in counsel with State directors, the personnel needs to complete the home demonstration picture. This has been done within the past 4 weeks so that the following data are the latest on the interesting subject of

additional personnel. It is hoped that in not too many years the picture can be completed.

The following is the list of additional home-economics extension workers needed to complete the picture as reported by State home demonstration leaders:

County home demonstration agents (white)	653
County home demonstration agents (negro)	38
Assistant county home demonstration agents	138
District and agents at large	27
Assistant State leaders	13
Specialists in girls' 4-H club work	4
Home-economics specialists	58

Specialists classified as follows:

Child development and parent education	11
Home management	7
General (not designated)	20
Food and nutrition	5
Recreation	3
Clothing	2
House furnishing	3
Home industries	2
Rural organization	3
Home grounds	2
Editorial work	3

Home demonstration programs function through several types of organizations of rural people. The home demonstration groups, 41,504 in number, have become stable and effective and report a membership of 950,027. Fortunately the organization set-up of these groups has been kept very simple. Though country wide acquaintanceship has increased because of extension work and the automobile, the fact remains that the natural order of the average woman's interest outside the home begins with the intimate nearby group. Further down the list is county interest, and State and national appeals are much less. One of the reasons home demonstration work has made the splendid progress that it has is that organization has not outstripped program. Too many committees, too many meetings, overorganization, could easily cause local leaders to grow faint with well-doing. County home demonstration councils in the strict sense of the word are councils with the membership representing the groups back in the communities not organizations with independent functions. The chief functions of such councils are to advise and plan with the county extension agents as to the best means of carrying out the home demonstration program, and these councils have been most helpful and stimulating.

The job of the home-economics extension worker calls for a combination of talents and tastes. The home demonstration agent reduces to simple terms her working knowledge of a great variety of subjects. Education as

both a means and an end in building a life holds good for extension workers, as well as for the folks they instruct and guide. We make a plea for a greater number of colleges to grant the professional privilege of sabbatical leave for study. The records of Epsilon Sigma Phi, the national extension fraternity, show that there are more than 2,400 extension workers who have been in the service 10 years or more. A large number of these long-time service men and women would no doubt rejuvenate themselves and their work by advanced study if financial assistance through sabbatical leave could be made available. At present our information is that only 13 of the State colleges grant sabbatical leave to extension workers. Three of these 13 grant the leave to State staff workers only. From a very informal survey, we have the information that all extension workers, both State and county, hold professional rank in 14 States, and such rank is held by a limited number in 10 additional States.

Long-time objectives are never fully accomplished in any adult educational work, as there is no "finish" or "completion", because education ends only with life itself. Long-time objectives are always held in mind in extension work, and some effort is made each year to measure the ground covered. For fiscal purposes such measurements are necessary, but at best they are somewhat inaccurate. Let us not worry too much about these measurements, but work constantly and happily toward the long-time goal. One home demonstration leader, when asked why she went into home-economics extension work said that all the reasons could be added and they would sum up in one phrase, "To equalize opportunity for the farm family." She refined or broke down the phrase into the following:

1. To help women to understand what is an adequate standard of living for farm families.
2. To help women work toward that standard.
3. To develop better health for rural families.
4. To help women to work out their home problems so that they may have energy and leisure for their children and for the cultural things of life.
5. To help to develop rural leadership, so that farm people, through their own efforts, may be able to improve their conditions both financially and socially.

Each year, as an aid in making a step toward such a goal, a home demonstration program is set up in a community, county, and State. One has only to study these programs to know they are meeting needs. There are usually so many needs in many communities that few home demonstration programs could be wrong. Extension workers know that people like fragments better than wholes because they live more intimately and understandingly with them, hence in home demonstration work different phases or fragments of the whole are emphasized each year, each fragment helping to round out the more complete projects. All home demonstration programs carry some practical aspects which have to do with stimulating people to think more carefully about their immediate home problems. It is not necessary here to elaborate on the large expansion in the cultural and community interests of the program that has come about through the years.

Planning is better than drifting. We who study many home demonstration plans of work know that the good planning, as well as the execution of plans, has meant for success in home demonstration work. The credo for planning with its educational implication is stated by Lester F. Ward in American Masters of Social Science, as follows:

"Society should not drift aimlessly to and fro, backwards and forwards, without guidance. Rather, the group should carefully study its situations, comprehend the aims it desires to accomplish, study scientifically the best methods for the attainment of these, and then concentrate social energy to the task set before it."

That might have been stated by an extension service worker, so well does it brief extension program planning.

Thus far I have tried to brief the effects of recent legislation on the development of home demonstration work, the high professional qualifications of the personnel and the constant expansion of program activities. Let us now try to get a longer view. As we approach the close of the first quarter of a century of Extension Service effort directed toward the home, we can ask, What does it all mean? Has our work been empirical, incidental, or are we building permanently? Are attitudes changing? Are farm families going forward with pride and determination in making their homes still better places in which to live? The correct answer to these questions will determine our success much more than increase in personnel or funds.

The influence of any educational effort cannot be measured in terms of year to year development. Extension work like most influences has its ebbs and flows. These are dependent upon many circumstances--funds, personnel, economic situations, and other factors affecting agriculture and rural life. But is there "a destiny that shapes our ends" regardless of this? Is the trend swinging upward? If so, we can temper our enthusiasm for momentary progress. We are no longer a pioneer nation, however the influences and attitudes of the pioneer still prevail and color much of our thinking and effort. Culture is the result of slow development. It is the effect of age and maturity. The farm home has always been something more than a ranch or farm headquarters, something more than a shelter; but under the influences surrounding pioneer settlement, the farm home has often been the incident rather than the incentive of development. If we are to have a rural culture that is lasting and stimulating, the basis must be in home attitudes and social values rather than in sound economic foundations alone--desirable though they may be.

From many sources comes to us now a different story, more interesting because this story can be told at the end of a long depression during which time needs of the farm plant itself have become very acute. It is evident throughout the country that both the farmer and the farm woman are becoming increasingly home-minded. The farmer and his wife are business partners in a way that has little parallel in our urban family life. The farmer has always been a man of strong home instincts. Notwithstanding this, when it comes to

spending money, it has been the farm business that has usually had first claim and consideration. We shall not argue whether this is right or wrong, because the farm woman has been willing, in most cases, that this should be. With splendid self-sacrifice, she has often postponed home improvements to another year. Reports seem to indicate that in the field of power development the farmer is thinking in terms of electric lights and washing machines as well as in corn shellers and feed grinders. This is most hopeful. Without question, the depression itself taught some valuable lessons. Losses from investments and land speculation no doubt contributed to the apparent change in attitude toward spending.

Home demonstration work can rightly and proudly claim that it has contributed much in bringing about a higher appreciation of home values and a brighter farm outlook. When the home-comfortable and the home-beautiful can hold for its own security and for national well-being some of the best of our rural young people, then young people will grow into countrymen in the true English meaning of that term. They will become men and women whose attachment to country life will be based on satisfactions that are tangible and real. In talking with farm young people, we are finding that the city is becoming less glamorous and less appealing to them, and they are thinking that the diamonds of success, happiness, and contentment might be found in their own home acres. Perhaps the time has come in our economic and social development when we must perforce of necessity as well as in response to educational stimulation "Brighter the corner where we are" rather than look for ready-made embellishments. A resourcefulness that makes the most of opportunities at hand is the very essence of an enduring culture. Home demonstration work has played a big part in this development of home-mindedness - home-comfortable, home-beautiful, home-cultural - crowning glories which home demonstration work should always strive to attain.

The Expansion of Home-Economics Work Under the Bankhead-Jones Act

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