

PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION AND THE LAND-GRANT SYSTEM: AN ADMINISTRATOR'S VIEW

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You have all heard Dr. Bishop's fine paper. I don't think any of us interested in policy education would say anymore than a loud amen to his comments. Perhaps as a former director of Extension I can emphasize a few points as viewed through my eyes.

Today the demands of the Extension audience for policy education have changed. The audience wants more sophisticated information on a much wider range of issues. Most Extension administrators are cognizant of this need and are trying to meet the need one way or another. The administrators also know that the discussion climate often is tense, emotional and controversy-laden. This means that in order to carry on this type of work only Extension educators with considerable skill in concealing their personal views are able to survive this type of climate. There are insufficient funds to hire these kinds of personnel.

It is next to impossible to go to the state legislature to secure funds for adding staff to do policy Extension work. It may be quite easy to acquire new funds for a horticulture or livestock specialist, but as the saying goes, "It's a horse of a different color" if you are asking for more resources to do public policy education. Conflicting views of the importance of this work and the fact there is no clientele or commodity group to go to for support make the securing of new funds very difficult.

Perhaps some of the solution to securing additional manpower may be in the selective training of some of our present specialists. Specialists in other fields can be trained and can very satisfactorily carry out some of the public policy educational work in their own specialized fields with the first hand aid and support of those trained in public policy education methodology.

Our experience in North Carolina has shown us that both men and women agents can be trained in economics, through organized well planned in-service training courses. Certainly some of our most competent agents interested in public policy education can be

trained to carry out some of the responsibilities in this important field. Some are already involved but many more could be with specialized training. Many, many times we leave our agents hanging.

I firmly believe in and have always aggressively supported public policy education. I believe in it and am proud to have been involved in some of the work. In a speech made in 1975, former administrator of the Extension Service in Washington, Ed Kirby said, "Our future as a democracy rests upon both the quality and quantity of citizen participation. Extension Education using accurate information is democracy's greatest ally, just as it is the enemy of anti-democratic forms of government." I agree 100% and can support the view that public policy educational work through our Extension Service is certainly democracy in action.

Our challenge now is to become more involved, broaden and deepen our programs, and do the best job we can to help our clientele make better decisions. The key to becoming really effective public policy educators is our ability to anticipate well in advance what the issues are going to be and then going to work on them.