RURAL LIFE EXTENSION PROGRAM

from

RURAL SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Presented to

WISCONSIN EXTENSION WORKERS

November 7, 1938

I. Analysis of Present Situation

1. Assumptions on which program is based

a. We assume that we are interested in seeing that people have an opportunity to function as individuals and as members of a well-rounded and satisfying rural society.

b. We believe that rural people as a whole have fewer opportunities than urban people. These opportunities vary from one situation to another.

c. We believe that the sound approach to a rural life program starts with the local situation and grows from there outward. This program of work is, therefore, based as far as possible upon analysis and interpretation of local social needs. (Local is used here to mean neighborhood, community and county situations.)

2. The emphasis of the program last year was centered around three major needs:

a. Greater coordination of local activities and agencies.

b. Better understanding on the part of rural people of vital social and economic problems of the day.

c. More group cultural activities and increased personal development through such means as:

(1) drama
(2) discussion
(3) music

II. Methods of Carrying on this Program

1. Analyzing local needs

a. Local situations are analyzed to discover local needs and as a means of interesting and informing local people of the social situation in which they live. Interpretations are then made in light of the relation of the local to broader situations.
b. Such analysis and interpretations are undertaken by the following means:

(1) Interviews, conferences of leaders and committee meetings.

(2) Cooperative-self-surveys. Examples:

(a) Recognition of the general social needs of a local situation on the part of local people came out of the Kenosha County "Citizens' Survey" of 1928-1931.

(b) Appreciation of the needs of a special age group came out of the "Youth Surveys" in Douglas, Waushara, Taylor and Washburn counties.

(3) Regular departmental research. Example:

(a) Original urge for drama, group discussion and leader training came out of the "Special Interest Groups" study of 1925-1927.

2. Planning with existing groups and agencies

a. Planning is carried on in cooperation with existing local, county and state groups and agencies. Meetings may be on county or state basis.

b. The purpose of planning is:

(1) To decide upon the objectives to be sought.

(2) To develop means of accomplishing these objectives.

(3) To stimulate individuals and groups to action.

3. Developing leaders

a. Emphasis is on developing volunteer local leaders. (The turnover of officers and committee members is from two to three years.)

b. Training is available to all who are interested irrespective of organizational affiliations.

c. Most of training schools up to this time have been of one-day duration set up on a county basis. We are doing some experimental work with larger schools and schools in series.

d. A few schools are set up on district and state basis. (Some of these are not recognized as an extension function.)

(1) Discussion and recreation schools on district basis.

(2) State Recreation Leaders Laboratory.

(3) Summer School for Rural Clergy
4. Furnishing materials

a. One of the most important services is the preparation of useful and interesting materials which people can use with respect to their local programs of work.

b. Types of materials takes two forms:

(1) Free materials (with Agricultural Journalism Department)
(2) Loan materials (with Dept. of Debating and Public Discussion, University Extension Division.)

5. Assisting with or sponsoring events

a. County and State Demonstrations

(1) Drama festivals
(2) Music festivals
(3) Group discussions
(4) Social recreation programs
(5) Athletic events

b. Importance of such demonstrations

(1) Teaching devices
(2) Methods of setting standards
(3) Creating public interest
(4) Demonstrating possibilities of achievement
(5) Providing expressional outlets for rural people
(6) Giving rural people an opportunity to secure wider social and cultural contacts.

c. State wide conferences

(1) Rural organization leaders conferences - Thinking together at a state wide level is essential to local cooperation.

(2) Youth conferences - It is proposed to broaden the base another year in order to secure a cross section of the older rural youth of the state, both in school and out of school.
6. Measuring results

a. Techniques for measuring - Satisfactory techniques have not yet been devised for measuring results of educational enterprises. It is felt that the true measure in this program, however, should be based upon personal development and group participation.

b. Convenient measures at hand include the following:

(1) Numbers participating in group enterprises.

(2) Benefits and pleasures of participation as indicated by individual expression and his willingness to take part another time.

(3) Higher standards in terms of:
   (a) Better plays
   (b) Good reading material
   (c) Better music
   (d) More carefully planned discussion

(4) Leadership
   (a) Numbers engaged in programs
   (b) Evaluation of what leaders do in program
   (c) Development of leadership characteristics

(5) Achievement in terms of:
   (a) Getting jobs done
   (b) Objectives reached

III. Looking to the Future

1. Approach to the program

a. The service of this department is essentially concerned with assisting in the coordination of the social, educational and cultural programs of groups and agencies in the county and community. One phase of this coordination consists not only of helping these groups and agencies directly but also of promoting cooperative enterprises which reach across group lines, and which are intended to accomplish general as well as specific objectives. This requires cooperation at the following levels:

(1) Federal

(2) State

(3) County and "community"

(4) Inter-cooperation of the above levels, as failure of cooperation at the state or federal level can easily negate any locally coordinated plan.

b. There is similar need for this coordination in dealing with problems of the home and problems of the individual farm. We construe our task as being that of working with individuals and groups on the "community" level.
2. University Relationships

   a. Staff members of this department in drama and group discussion are also staff members in their respective university subject matter department, namely Speech. In addition one of the teaching staff members of the Speech Department devotes part time as advisor to this phase of our program.

   b. It is hoped that similar arrangements can be worked out for music with the School of Music, and in Recreation with the departments of Physical Education.

   c. Arrangement with the Department of Debating and Public Discussion of the Extension Division makes possible the distribution of loan materials for practically every phase of this program.

3. Assumptions for the future

   a. Our approach to the future assumes that the county extension agents will think of themselves as coordinating administrators of local, out-of-school social, educational and cultural programs.

   b. It assumes that each college specialist will have a greater appreciation and understanding of the total extension program.

   c. That a greater amount of attention on the part of the administrators of the state extension service will be given to the analysis of local situations and to the coordination of local and state efforts.

4. Emphasis for the future

   a. We recommend the following points for emphasis

      (1) More satisfying living for rural folks including:

         (a) Cultural expression (drama, music)
         (b) Individual and group expression
         (c) Constructive use of leisure time
         (d) Better understanding of the processes of consumption in the broad sense including health, education, recreation, etc.

      (2) More logical thinking processes in dealing with local, state and national issues. (Demonstrations should begin at home and cannot exist nationally unless they function locally.)

      (3) Better coordination of individual and group efforts as a means of achieving these emphases.