4. THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF FIELD DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER EXTENSION METHODS IN AGRONOMY

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A very significant fact has been indicated when one-fourth of the program at the sixteenth annual meeting of this Society is devoted to a discussion of extension work in agronomy. This interest is the culmination of a gradual revolution in extension methods during the past few years. The methods have been changed and revised and improved until at present the extension project bids fair to supplant, to a certain extent, the old type of farmer’s institute and extension school.

An extension project is a completely outlined program of extension work conducted throughout the entire year or a period of years. A successful extension program should be thorough and comprehensive. For example, if the project is one dealing with pure seed, then the campaign should include all the factors necessary in demonstrating the worth of pure seed.

In a well organized project the problem is outlined; the method of procedure illustrated; provision made for making the gained information available; and, finally, the number of farmers who have followed the recommended practice is ascertained. Such a program might be executed through the use of general meetings, farm visits, field demonstrations, subject matter or follow-up letters, demonstration reports, and general publicity.

As an extension worker understands the term, a project, in a certain sense, is an experiment designed to establish a fact which is well known to the extension workers, but not recognized as such by the farmer. Quite often the farmers are skeptical and, in their minds, the project is strictly experimental. The farmer must be convinced that the practice in question is the best one to follow. Therefore, the extension worker outlines the project with the express idea of proving the fact to the satisfaction of the farmer.

A project in bindweed eradication will illustrate this point. The bindweed is a serious pest in portions of Kansas. A bindweed eradication project has been outlined and a county-wide campaign has been inaugurated in several counties. The control methods are based upon several years of experimental work at the Fort Hays

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