SOME EFFECTIVE AIDS FOR AGRONOMY EXTENSION IN MICHIGAN

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SOME people think of the extension worker as a teacher whose classroom is the rural community bounded possibly by county or state lines, and our students as those people living within these boundaries who are interested in agriculture. This is a simple way of explaining our duties, but simplicity ends with that explanation—the actual carrying on of extension work is much more complex.

The undergraduate student goes to classes at a definite time, at a definite place, and often with no definite ideas or experience regarding the subject which he is taking under a definite instructor. If the latter fails to make the subject interesting, it will not greatly affect the size of his audience, at least not during that particular term or semester.

The extension worker meets his group at places calculated to suit the convenience of those interested and these meeting places vary in seating comfort, lighting arrangements, temperature, and other conditions which can influence the attention of those in the group. People attending are generally experienced and often have well-established ideas regarding the subject matter to be presented. They are not backward with criticism. If their ideas are erroneous we must tactfully find a common point upon which we can agree and proceed from there to set up a favorable reaction to the correct practice. In short, our aim is to present correct information in such a way that it will encourage folks to go home and make use of it.

In carrying out extension work we cannot hope to reach everybody through our own personal contacts. County agricultural agents can receive the information from us and assist in distributing it within their counties. They in turn can relay information to Smith-Hughes instructors or to individual farmers whom they find willing and capable of conducting meetings in their communities. More will be said about this later.

We hardly dare to expect that we are going to secure 100% action with one presentation of our subject matter. Personally, I am not certain that high-pressure salesmanship which would secure such results is desired with some projects. Although extension workers endeavor to pass out information which has been well proved experimentally, the extension agronomist is often confronted with many situations affected by soil and climate, as well as the different customs of farmers in carrying out cultural practices.

It was pointed out that the conditions under which meetings are held often will influence the results obtained. About 18 years ago the Dairy and the Farm Crops departments at Michigan State College decided that there was a need for a state-wide campaign to acquaint

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