

editor's page

Having Your Perspective Count

How often in our Extension career can any one of us, regardless of our specific job responsibility, expect to be asked our perspective on Extension—its mission and goals—and know it'll make a difference? In the process of determining "The Future of Cooperative Extension," every member of the Extension staff *will* be asked.

How do those of us who are part of Extension today answer the *five W's* and *How* for Cooperative Extension?

Why—why do we exist?

Who—who are our clients?

What—what is our program?

When—for the decade and beyond?

Where—at what level is the program planned and carried out?

How—do we reach clients—methods?

These are the issues.

Our multifaceted land-grant universities of today began as small agricultural colleges. As their responsibilities broadened, did those of Extension also expand? Should Extension serve the people of our states, regardless of education or occupation, in many or in a few subjects? Each one of us has a perspective.

The 1981 GAO¹ Report suggests we're not using Extension's unique delivery system in "the most prudent ways." Extension needs focus. Articulating our mission can help us recognize our uniqueness and give us this needed focus.

Not since the late 60s has Extension carried out a self-appraisal. We're all familiar with the outcome—"A People and a Spirit" has been cited repeatedly, providing direction to Extension nationally since 1968.

Sharing our perspective as Extension staff will help us clarify and set priorities as an organization. Participating in the discussion will help us better understand the final consensus reported in "The Future of Cooperative Extension." Being part of the process can be just as important as what results. Yes, do express your opinions!



¹Cooperative Extension Service's Mission and Federal Role Need Congressional Clarification," General Accounting Office, CED-81-119, August 21, 1981.