

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

CIRCULAR No. 209

(MARCH, 1919)

Reprinted June, 1921

THE FUNCTION OF THE FARM BUREAU*

BY B. H. CROCHERON

The time has come when the farm bureau should pause to consider what is its real function in the life of the nation. At present the farm bureau movement, the greatest organization of farmers that the world has ever seen, is very certain that it is on its way, but somewhat undecided whither it is going.

Farm bureaus are a natural outgrowth of the desire of American farmers to do two things. First, to unite for mutual self-help and coöperation along any line that may be needed, and second, to get into close and intimate touch with those institutions of public enterprise and of the government which have accumulated the information necessary to make farm life more prosperous.

Therefore we may well stop to consider the real purpose of the farm bureau and what phase of farm bureau work should be most emphasized in the future. In so doing I desire only to consider what is best for the farmers of California. Primarily I am not interested in the farm bureau unless it is the best type of organization for the farmers of the state and unless, in turn, it will do its part towards making American homes and lives better and set this nation upon a still firmer foundation than it now possesses. I am interested in farm bureaus only as an aid toward that end and if a more efficient organization can be devised to carry on this work the farm bureau should give place to it. I am interested far less in the perpetuation of farm advisors or of other agricultural extension work. I consider them only in relation to the welfare of the people of this state and country. They have no other function than to aid the development of rural life, which in turn is the greatest stabilizer in our national existence.

The farm bureaus started in several states under various names and under plans which were widely divergent. Even today the farm bureaus of America vary so widely in their administration, organization, projects, and development as to be almost unrecognizable as similar organizations occupied in similar work. This is chiefly because

* An address delivered before the Annual Farm Bureaus Conference. Printed by request of the Conference.

the farm bureau was new and untried, so that in the beginning no one had the foresight or temerity to set down on paper a definite method of work or a definite plan for the fulfillment of those objects which were in the minds of all farmers. The experience of the last few years has been so scanty that even now we hesitate to say that any one plan is best among the several that have been advanced or that any one specific sphere of work is alone the function of the farm bureau.

California was somewhat fortunate among the states in that its farm bureau movement developed later than in some others and had something of a background upon which to plan out the type of organization and method of work. A definite constitution and by-laws were laid down in the fall of 1914, which have been almost unanimously followed by the thirty-seven counties organized during the past five years. Thus, in California, we have a unity of organization which is coincident in all the counties and which articulates right down to the farm bureau center itself. The particular features of the California type of organization which are most worthy of note are those which stress and emphasize the rural community as the unit of organization. These communities, or farm bureau centers, are represented upon the board of directors. Necessarily, therefore, that board itself represents the entire county or those portions thereof that have membership in the farm bureau.

Another type of farm bureau organization prevalent in some other states, contemplates no community organizations or farm bureau centers. In that type, the board of directors represents lines of work or projects and are preferably chosen at or near the county-seat in order that they may easily get together for conference. This, it seems to us, tends to stress the county-seat or chief city of the county as the emanating point for the work rather than the rural community which is the natural gathering place of the people who live on farms. Indeed, it was felt in California that there was some danger in having the board of directors consist of men who largely came from that central point and were interested in special projects since they might not truly represent the whole farm population of the county.

At first in some states the farm bureaus were not promoted by the agricultural colleges. They were looked upon somewhat askance as a dangerous and untried procedure which might wreck the move for agricultural extension being promoted by the federal and state governments by means of paid extension workers. Later this fear passed away and the colleges of agriculture came to welcome the farm bureau as they saw more fully its possibilities of development and the progress which might be made in agricultural extension work when it was furthered by a large body of farmers who worked in close coöperation with it. However, in this state, the value of the farm bureau has been

fully recognized from the beginning. Therefore the administration of this college has required every county that desired the services of a farm advisor to first form a county farm bureau in which there were 20 per cent of the farmers in membership as an attest of their desire for the work of the farm advisor amongst them. The wisdom of this has been proven by experience in that no county of California has ever permanently abandoned the work which has gone steadily forward from that time until now, when 85 per cent of the farmers of the state are represented in counties which have farm bureaus. It is evident that the small residue of 15 per cent could easily be encouraged to consummate their organization if there were any hope of funds to give them a farm advisor for their service.

In organizing the farm bureau the problem necessarily became at once: what was this new farm bureau to do; what was to be its sphere of work; how far was it to go in the various movements requested by farmers; and finally, what was to be the relation between that farm bureau and the government and the state agent placed in the county to work on the extension of agriculture? These problems in part are still before us. Let us then look back to see what was the original conception of the California farm bureau both as to its plan of organization and its sphere of work.

In planning the California type of farm bureau the constitution was very carefully written so that no federal or state official might have any direction over it. The organization was definitely and purposely placed wholly in the hands of farmers elected from among their fellow membership representing agricultural communities of the county who would have in their hands the whole direction and determination of the policies of the farm bureau. The belief upon which this was based was that the farmers of California were wholly competent to guide their own affairs, and that provided this board of directors adequately represented the wishes of the members of their county, there would be no doubt either of the definiteness of their plans or of the propriety of their course since I believed essentially in the collective wisdom of the farmers of the state. In order that these farm bureau directors might really represent the wishes of their constituents and might have frequent opportunity to gather together their desires and proposals, it was planned that every farm bureau center should hold a meeting once a month at which they might receive from their director the report of the last directors' meeting held at the county seat, and might signify to him their wishes and plans for the future. In order that the farm advisor working with the farm bureau might have the benefit of the opinions and knowledge expressed, and that he, in turn, would have an opportunity for getting his advice to the farm bureau centers, it was planned that in general he should be present at their

meeting. The danger in this was recognized in that the farmers might come to feel that because the farm advisor was there that it was the farm advisor's meeting and not the farm bureau meeting. It was believed, however, that by proper direction and supervision from the central office the farm advisor could be held in his proper capacity as related to the farm bureau and could be brought to understand and clearly bear in mind that he had no other function so far as the policies of the farm bureau were concerned than to give advice and consultation when it was asked.

Persons who were conversant with farmers' meetings told us that it would not be possible to continue to gather indefinitely the people of any given community at a meeting once a month because they would soon be tired of such a gathering and would gradually stop attending. There was no experience upon which to base this conclusion except that various itinerant agencies, such as farmers' institutes, had found their attendance decreasing during the past generation. My belief was that if a definite and permanent organization could be formed which would have a programme of work based upon concrete and feasible projects for the development of the community, the county, the state, and the nation that the people would continue to come because of the efficiency of the organization and because of their interest and part in the work it was doing. This belief has been amply borne out by the experience of the past five years, wherein the average attendance at farm bureau centers in the state has steadily but slowly gained, and while it was satisfactory in the beginning, it is still more so at this date, when the average attendance at farm bureau centers in California is forty-one persons. Not only have these farm bureau centers continued to increase in attention and interest, but they have been permanent in their location, the percentage of those that have passed away being so small as to be almost negligible, while the number of them has now grown until there are 429 such community centers in California.

In all this time, however, the activity has been largely one of organization and development. The most interesting feature of this organization was that we did not at first form a statewide farm bureau or a state board of direction wherefrom it was brought down to the counties and later to the communities and ultimately to the people, but that one by one these farm bureau centers were formed in California by the people themselves wherever there was a group of persons who felt it desirable to get together for their mutual development and improvement. The organization has grown from the ground up and consequently is solidly set thereon. I do not believe that any other factor than an absolutely unwise and malicious direction could now wreck the farm bureau movement in California.

The very nature of the farm bureau under the California plan has made for a wide autonomy of the farm bureau centers whereby they have developed their own programme and projects of work. While the method under which the farm bureau centers are organized, maintained and directed is the same throughout the state, yet because the problems of the communities differ, the projects they have stressed are widely divergent. This was all expressly provided and desired. The system of organization has worked out as planned with astonishing success.

But how about the purpose—the function of the organization? Was there a definite conception of what the farm bureau should do? May I read you what was proposed as the function of the California farm bureau at the time of its inception to see whether we have in any way strayed from this original plan of action, and if so, whether this divergence is wise or unwise:

A farm bureau is an organization of farmers and ranchers who combine to promote agriculture through coöperative study of farm conditions.

Many types of farmers' organizations have long been existent. There have been farmers' clubs, granges, institutes, unions, alliances, and others. Some of these have been more or less successful, but many have passed away. Their failure has usually been due to one or more of the following causes: (1) lack of a distinct purpose to fill a definite need; (2) lack of membership to sufficiently represent all classes of farmers and types of farming; (3) lack of coöperation with other similar farm organizations; (4) lack of continuous and unselfish leadership.

The farm bureau is distinct from all of these. It is not primarily a social organization; neither is it essentially to unite farmers so as to lower prices of stuffs bought and to raise prices of products sold. It is formed to bring together for mutual coöperation those farmers who want to investigate the fundamental problems that are involved in production on their farms.

Every state and territory has at least one "experiment farm" supported by federal and state funds. These have been exceedingly valuable because the results therefrom were noted by men whose business and interest it was to observe. The acreages of these farms were small; their crops were often meager—and yet they have been worth millions beyond their cost because the records of productions and the conditions under which they were grown were known and noted.

Many of our farm problems are already solved on the farms of the nation. Individuals have found the solution of vexing questions that are agitating the experiment stations and agricultural colleges. But these solutions usually fall out of sight unnoted or are known only to the man on whose farm they occur. If these unknown and unnoted experiments could be gathered, they would at once add much to our view of agriculture.

In America there are on the average more than 100,000 farms to each "experiment farm." Obviously, if the results on some small percentage of these could be viewed from the same standpoint as at the experiment farm, the benefits would enormously outnumber the records achieved by the experiment stations. It is, of course, impossible to gather all this material or to note all the changing conditions on farms. But it may be possible to gather together into one county

organization the wide-awake and interested farmers who will compare their results with those of others and, in a more or less scientific way, plan out experiments and demonstrations on their own farms. Such is a farm bureau.

Fundamentally, then, a farm bureau for the county can be collectively a sort of giant experiment station with several hundred observers who hold a monthly caucus to compare results.

The farm bureau has a trained man to aid it: the farm advisor (see Circular 133). It is his business to help interpret results, to point out new lines of work, and to deduce conclusions from the evidence at hand. The farm bureau can be of greater value to the county than the farm advisor. Together, they can be of more benefit than either alone.

Other activities may concern the farm bureau besides local research into agricultural problems.

The farm bureau may be a sort of rural chamber of commerce and thus be the guardian of rural affairs. It can take the lead in agitation for good roads, for better schools, and for cheaper methods of buying and selling. Various subsidiary organizations of the farm bureau, known as farm bureau departments, may be formed, thus linking together persons of similar or identical interests. Perhaps, most of all, the farm bureau can help promote the social institutions of country life. Some rural neighbors are so starved for recreational meetings that they will come out to anything from a patent-medicine show to a school meeting. The farm bureau can help put more recreation into rural life. Every country neighborhood ought to have some social gathering at least once a week. It is almost as much needed as the spiritual congregations at the church, or the educational assemblages of the children at the schoolhouse.

But very surely and insistently the farm bureau is not first and foremost of these purposes—good and desirable as they may be. Perhaps the farm bureau can help to buy cheaper and better seeds, can help to boost the local socials, can encourage the faltering school teacher, can get out and talk for good roads—but its first and surest function is to increase the local knowledge of agricultural fact.

This was written in 1915 as a part of the University circular on the "County Farm Bureau." As I look over the list of farm bureau activities I regard it as remarkable that we have so clearly followed the lines indicated in the statement there laid down, and from my rather intimate knowledge of the work of the California farm bureaus I stand here today to say to you that the farm bureaus of California up to this time and this point have stood solidly behind that platform expressed in those few paragraphs. In other words, the California farm bureaus have been largely an educational agency in the broadest sense of the term. Their greatest contribution to the welfare of the people has been their dissemination in an organized way of better methods of farm life as they have seen it. Occasionally, when they have seen the need of it, they have gone from this to take up the better handling of economic problems as business concerns, or as the promoters of business concerns. Personally, I have believed—and believe today—that it is a proper function of the farm bureau to set up business relations when they can do so in a better way—and by that I mean better in the broad sense for all those concerned—better than

existent agencies which are already doing the work. I do not believe that the farm bureau should be an agency which attempts to squeeze out the other members of the rural community or which should set up a sort of agricultural trust to manage and operate all rural affairs. I am glad to say that the farm bureaus in California have never permitted this and that their actions in the past five years have shown such remarkable judgment as to wholly justify the original preface that the collective wisdom of the farmers of California enabled them to guide competently their own affairs.

I have conceded that the chief function of the farm bureau is that of an educational agency, and I have testified that the farm bureaus in California have been chiefly an educational factor in the past. I believe that this should be because most of our problems are first educational in nature, although they may later proceed from that to the practice of what that education teaches. I may be permitted to quote one or two instances of this.

Three years ago the hog market situation in California was unsatisfactory to both the farmers who produced the hogs and the packers who bought the hogs, and an unintelligent survey of the surface indications might have led some to suppose that what was immediately needed was to set up some sort of a machine whereby the packing companies would immediately become displaced by some sort of a farmers' organization which would undertake to take the hogs off the farm and deliver them in cured form to the people. Such a scheme would have required an enormous amount of money and might have been doubtful of success, depending not only on the type of organization and a high class management with expert knowledge of packing and selling practices, but also upon the antagonism and strife in the trade which would have ensued. Instead of that an educational idea was brought from Australia by one of the farm advisors based on the principle that the trouble with the hog market in California was caused by three things: first, the farmers grew poor hogs; second, they sold them in ungraded and undesirable sized lots; and third, there was no free competition in their purchase. The result of this was the inauguration of a demonstration of the auction sales system as a method of marketing hogs. This auction sale brought the hogs together from the farmers to a central point. A committee of farmers graded them and placed them in carload lots. Buyers came to that place and in the presence of the farmers bought the hogs in an open market for the highest bid. The result was that the packers got the kind of hogs they wanted, in the right sized lots, at the highest prices they could afford to pay. The farmers got the best prices obtainable in the open market for the best hogs and the man who grew good hogs received a premium over him who raised poor hogs. The plan succeeded well because it

served a real need in the community and because it showed both the farmers and the packers the real status of the hog market. It has swept like wildfire over many of the counties of California, and although still in its youth a quarter of a million dollars' worth of hogs are sold each month under this system which, on the average, give at least 1 cent per pound more to the farmers for their hogs than ever was obtained before. The packers say that the hogs are better in quality than were ever known in the state and the farmers say that they get nearer the prices they think they deserve than they have ever experienced. It is assumed that even the small number of auction sales held in the state last year saved a quarter of a million dollars which went directly into the pockets of the farmers of the state. This was accomplished without setting up any elaborate machinery and without causing the farmers to go deep in their pockets to support an extensive plant which might never pay. It was made possible because educational thought had been brought to bear upon the problem and the farmers, in turn, were advised of every change in the situation and of the best methods for getting the results that they desired.

I need only mention one more result which is so large and far-reaching as to quite beggar description, namely, that of the war emergency campaigns conducted by the farm bureaus at the instance of the University of California and the United States Department of Agriculture. These campaigns sought to advise farmers what crops were needed for the successful prosecution of the war which, of course, meant the crops that would be in demand and which thereafter might be expected to bring a fair price. Sometimes when these campaigns were launched it was difficult for farmers to see wherein they would derive a profit, but because they were based upon a real knowledge of the conditions of the world's markets and because furthermore they took into consideration the promotion of the permanent agriculture of the state each one was founded upon a real knowledge of conditions. An educational institution, the farm bureau, became the agency through which each campaign was furthered in the county. Farmers planted wheat although the price was low, but when that wheat came to be harvested the price was higher than that of barley, and those that had wheat and had followed the advice of the farm bureau found no difficulty in their marketing problems. Farmers grew hogs in response to the hog campaign, and while it did not then look possible to raise hogs at a profit, by the time the hogs were fed and grown the price of feed had been so reduced and the price of hogs so advanced that the farmers throughout the state found that they had grown them at a profit. In turn the sheep campaign was furthered because of the prospective need of the government for wool. Where sheep were economically maintained on farms they resulted not only in an imme-

diate profit to the farmers but in a permanent addition to California agriculture. Diversification of crops which was furthered by these war emergency campaigns upon a sound economic basis has lessened unrest, has made for the local advancement of farm management in its right sense, and has bettered the condition of California farming more than any one thing in the last ten years. Farmers who were not in touch with these campaigns, in their desire to help the food situation of the government, often unwisely grew crops which were not later in demand and which consequently they could not market. Some of these still remain on their hands, although it is hoped that the difficulty may be overcome within the next few months. I wish only to point out that the farm bureaus in California have chiefly used educational means to overcome their difficulties and in the main have been successful.

Nevertheless, after all is said and done there does remain a residue of problems, complications, and injustices which can only be solved by farmers' organizations going ahead to better their conditions in any legitimate way that seems to them feasible. I am perfectly in accord with any well organized and considered movement of the farmers to better the conditions of the state, and therefore of the nation, through any means which may seem most feasible and desirable to the united judgment of the farmers of the state as expressed through the farm bureaus. I believe that the membership and direction of the farm bureau is so representative and I believe that the collective judgment of those who live on the land is so correct that if the farm bureaus are given a full opportunity to consider rural problems and to understand them in their various phases they cannot go far wrong. Therefore, I have entire confidence in the future of this organization and the direction it will take provided it is kept as at present, so that the far-spread membership of 20,000 may express themselves directly through their representatives on the policies of the organization. If there is to be a state farm bureau, it should be as democratic and representative in its organization as are those of the counties. Its affairs should not be handed over to a small executive committee, but should be managed by a representative from every county. So long as the farm bureau functions as a democratic institution which represents all parts and parcels of the rural body politic, there need be no fear for the future.

In all this I have mentioned but seldom the county farm advisor who has been the ever-present agent to aid this farm bureau in its work. He is the representative of the federal and state institutions of agriculture in extending their work in the counties of the state and nation. Already three thousand of these men are at work in as many counties of the nation and more will follow. It is important that their position should be understood and that their relation to the farm bureau should

be clear, in order that we should not be confused in our minds as to the function of the farm bureau in distinction from that of the farm advisor. These two have worked together so harmoniously that persons are likely to confuse them. I believe, however, that the future of this work, so far as the farm bureaus are concerned, is dependent upon the drawing of a clear distinction between the work of the farm bureau which is the farmers' agency and that of the farm advisor who is the agent of the state and national governmental agencies.

The farm advisor is placed in the county for a specific purpose, which is to extend the knowledge which the agricultural colleges and experiment stations have gained through the intensive research work of the investigators who are behind them. He is the field agent of the agricultural forces of the nation. As such he does not represent the farm bureau nor is he directed by the farm bureau, but rather he is maintained as closely as possible in direct relation with the federal and state governments. This is of the utmost importance.

The value of the farm advisor to the people of the county is in having the unbiased judgment of an official who does not represent a local situation or a local constituency, whose appointment and whose term of office is not dependent upon the favor of local politicians or even of certain influential farmers, but who represents the organized agricultural forces of the government and the knowledge that they have concerning the betterment of rural life. His value to the people is in precise proportion to the extent to which he knows and tells the truth. His only function in that county is to disseminate the subject matter which has been slowly and painstakingly gathered by the agricultural institutions, which, like great factories, are slowly but surely grinding out the product of the knowledge of life. He may advise the farm bureau upon its request as to the procedure which it may best follow. He may cooperate with it and doubtless will cooperate with it on most of the projects that it has under study, but in so doing he must be clearly defined as a governmental official who is working for the benefit of the whole people. There can be only three possible relationships between the farm bureau and the farm advisor.

The first would be to put the farm bureau under the direction of the farm advisor and to have the farm bureau the official agency which carried out the projects and purposes of the farm advisor, and therefore of those officials and agencies which directed the farm advisor. Such a plan would imply that the farm bureau should not undertake any projects unless approved by the government. As such it is clearly inadvisable unless the farmers desire to exercise no initiative or judgment of their own.

The second possible relationship is that the farm bureau should direct the farm advisor, and that he should be a sort of secretary or

manager for that farm bureau whereby he carried out the proposals and plans of the organization. Such a relationship would soon result in the farm advisor losing his entire significance and would in time prevent his support from public funds.

The third relationship is that which we have conceived and practiced in this state, wherein the farm bureau and farm advisor are separate and distinct instruments for the furtherance of agriculture. The farm advisor is directed by the federal and state governments and the farm bureau is directed by the farmers through their representatives who are directors of the farm bureau. When the farm bureau desires to carry on a project which is part, or wholly, in the nature of agricultural extension, then that part may properly come within the scope of the farm advisor. Then they mutually draw up a project or written plan setting forth the piece of work they are to do, the means by which they are to do it, and the results they hope to accomplish, and clearly distinguish which part in it is to be done by the farm advisor and which part by the farm bureau. This brings them into active coöperation on that particular project, but does not necessarily mean that the farm bureau will always work with the farm advisor, nor that the farm advisor is compelled thereby to join in every movement that the farm bureau desires to further. It does not hamper the farm bureau in its work and does not restrict it to those purely extension activities which are perhaps its chief function but from which it may from time to time depart in the interests of the farmers of the county. I believe it would be most unwise to attempt to put the farm bureaus of this, or any other state, under the direction of the United States Department of Agriculture, or of the State College of Agriculture. I think it would deprive them of their primary reason for existence, which is to represent the free and untrammelled action of the farmers of the country. Likewise, I believe it would be most unfortunate for the farm advisors to be placed under the direction of the farm bureaus, since it would deprive the farm advisors of their real mission, which is to represent the state and federal agencies of agriculture. Placed under the direction of the farm bureau, the farm advisor becomes no more than a farm bureau secretary or manager and can have no more than local usefulness and a local boundary to his horizon.

I have regretted to observe that some states have not always been clear in their vision of either the farm bureau or the farm advisor. They have confused the two in the minds of the people and have sometimes handed over the direction of the farm advisor to the farm bureaus, and then found those farm bureaus departing from a strict line of educational work as was perhaps necessary in the county. This brought the farm advisor and the farm bureau into embarrassing re-

lations, and, in turn, the United States Department of Agriculture and the College of Agriculture found their agents embarking upon projects which were neither federal nor state functions and which could not properly be undertaken by their agents under the guise of public necessities.

I conceive that there might possibly be three types of work going on in a county at once: first, that work which the farm advisor is carrying on alone because it is a matter in which only the federal and state governments are interested and which directed him to do it; second, that work which the farm bureau is carrying on alone because it is a matter in which neither the federal or state governments desire to enter but which the farmers of the county desire to promote themselves; and, third, that type of activity upon which the farm bureau and the farm advisor work jointly in coöperation. I anticipate that in the future, as in the past, 90 per cent of the activity of the farm advisor and of the farm bureau will be undertaken together upon projects to which they mutually agree. They will work together because in the ultimate judgment of the farmers they will find that the solution of most vexing problems is to be accomplished by means of the use of agricultural fact applied in an educational way to the local situation.

What, then, are to be the constructive problems undertaken in the immediate future? I will venture to hazard a guess at a few of them. I believe the first development immediately needed is to make the farm bureau the agency for rural progress for the whole family. In the beginning farm bureaus were predicated on the basis of work with men, and we have only now begun to see that it is not only with the men but also with the women and children that the farm bureaus should work, since they, too, have problems that need solving, and they, too, should become a part of the rural organization which aims to solve those problems. We are just now testing out in nine counties the value of the Farm Home Department of the Farm Bureau, in which latter women join exactly on the same basis as the men, but find for their service a specially organized department which concerns itself with the problem of the home. We have begun to realize in some small degree that these problems are even more vital because more intimate with the actual success of the family placed on the land. Home Demonstration Agents, who are women specifically trained to bring light to bear on these problems, are placed in the counties in exactly the same relation to this work as are farm advisors.

The work with boys and girls is a look ahead into the immediate future. The school has not entirely filled its place as an educational agency because the children only spend five hours a day for five days a week in school, but the farm bureau can step in where the school

leaves off and can so organize the boys and girls that they may grow up with the vision of a better country life and the knowledge of the benefits that good farming and good home making may mean for them. If country life is to prosper and progress we must keep a fair share of the good strong American children in the rural life to which they were brought up. I believe this is essential not only for the perpetuation of American families on farms but for the real happiness and prosperity of these children themselves, since I believe that under proper conditions there is no better place to spend a life than on a good American farm. Our present development is wholly along the line of agricultural clubs for boys and girls. I think I foresee the development of this idea until it will integrate in the various phases of child life.

It may be, too, that farm bureaus will desire to organize still another agency as an adjunct; that is, they have already to some degree the agricultural clubs of boys from ten to eighteen who are growing crops on farms on a competitive basis under the general direction of the farm bureau. They also have the main division of the farm bureau which concerns itself with mature men and women, say, from the age of twenty-five to sixty years. It may become desirable to organize a Junior Farm Bureau for the special service of those young men between eighteen and twenty-five, taking them as they leave the agricultural clubs and carrying them forward in to a special division of the farm bureau until they have reached maturity and are on their own farms when they go into the main farm bureau itself. I have dreamed of this Junior Farm Bureau as the link that would connect the boys of today with the men of tomorrow, and had gone so far as to detail one of our men to an investigation looking towards the formation of a Junior Farm Bureau in one county. At the outbreak of the war the furtherance of that branch of our work had, of course, to be discontinued, since the army took precisely the group of young men whom we were planning to organize into this agency. With the demobilization of the armies we may turn back our thoughts to this plan, and may soon hope again to bring this up before you as a possible development.

I believe that the farm bureau should be the far-sighted agency to plan for a permanent agriculture. Up to this time we have been occupied upon plans for the immediate future. We need to provide a means of making farming in California a permanently successful enterprise. I need not dwell upon the problems connected therewith, which are many and diverse, but will merely mention one of these, which is—and I almost say it with bated breath—the increase of alkali wherever proper drainage is not provided. A quarter of a century ago it was predicted by Dr. Hilgard that we must provide against this danger in California, and the matter was duly written up and pub-

lished, but no organization existed at that time, nor has ever existed, which was sufficiently far-sighted to take up this problem and provide, while time yet remained, for the ultimate consideration and disposal of this very imminent danger to our state. Perhaps the greatest problem facing rural California is the drainage of the interior valleys now coming under irrigation. The farm bureaus can furnish an agency which will look far ahead and which will promote the bettering of country life upon a more permanent basis than the needs of today and next year.

Again, I believe, that the farm bureaus may well take as one of their chief purposes the proposal to make rural civilization as efficient and satisfying as city civilization by the creation within their boundaries of those necessary appurtenances to successful country life that come through governmental agencies. By that I mean such things as good roads, good schools, equable taxation, and the repression of crime and immorality. I believe that those farm bureaus in California which have encouraged the building of permanent roads have done more perhaps than even they have realized. They have brought into being a community asset which will live after those who have promoted it are long gone away.

Persons will arise who will tell us that the farm bureau most of all needs to start a department store where hats, shoes, and cookstoves will be sold. They will say this because they believe some local shopkeeper is deriving an unjust profit. Others will tell us that the farm bureau should elect some man governor and thereby cause to be rectified all injustices of government and all defects of politics. Still others will cry that the farm bureaus attack the labor problem in such a way as to create immediately a sort of rural industrial slavery whereby yellow or brown men will work for scanty wages to raise up a landed class of aristocrats. But I do not believe that the farm bureau is in any danger of selling its position for such a mess of pottage. Such voices will be in the small minority, and the conservative, sober judgment of the farmers will continue to point out the wise course.

And, finally, I believe that the farm bureau must clearly comprehend that in order to be an agent of progress it must be a vehicle of work. It must have a definite programme and projects. It must lay out a line of attack for the problems to be solved, and it will proceed precisely as fast as its members are willing to put their time and attention into the solving of those problems. No association is worth its salt unless it does something. The passing of resolutions is seldom effective as a means of progress. Many organizations have been wrecked on that rock. They have gradually worked themselves up into a state of mind whereby they somehow felt that through the passing of resolutions they caused the world to advance. They would

spend a day appointing committees and wrangling over the wording of flowing sentences, and then go home with the glowing sense that they had accomplished something; but the sun would set upon a world that was no different than that upon which it had risen.

A farm bureau to be effective must get the active coöperative interest and work of its entire membership. No single board of directors can carry a farm bureau forward to success. The more persons involved in the solving of the problem the more certain it is that it will be solved correctly and the quicker it will reach that solution. I believe that the work of the farm bureau should be built up not only on a county programme of work but on a community and even an individual programme of work where members from the farm bureau should have laid out at the beginning of the year not only what part their county is going to take in the programme for agricultural progress, not only what work the farm bureau center is going to do and what projects it is going to further, but what they, themselves, are going to do to aid in this programme—what part they are going to take in the enterprise. Built upon such a basis, the farm bureau will become the most potent factor in rural life. Already we are beginning to see the progress that has been made. The public is confused and perplexed by the multiplicity of agencies which exist, some of which spend their time passing resolutions or writing up in the newspapers what they intend to do. Glance for a moment at your newspaper column and see the wide diversity there is in the published material of that which is promised from that which is accomplished. So many investigations are to be made, so many criminals are to be caught, so many irrigation districts and roads and railways are to be built—but how few announcements you see that they have been built—that they have been brought into existence. Fortunately thus far the farm bureau has advertised itself by accomplishment rather than promises. It tells more about what it has done than what it intends to do. It has concerned itself with getting concrete results that were demonstrational in terms of dollars and cents, and in homes and farms made better. I hope our farm bureaus may never be confused in their perception of the problem, which is not to delineate a policy for some other institution to further, but to attack the problem themselves first hand and to bring it to consummation.

Already our farm bureau centers are becoming a real community meeting place and focal point for progressive ideas. The farm bureaus have always maintained themselves as a public forum towards which all persons may come to present their cases to the rural people. I hope that the farm bureaus will always so remain and will not be afraid to hear any one who has a straight story to tell.

I look forward to the time when the farm bureau center shall become a community center in the real sense. I see there a rural school with an auditorium to seat the people of the country-side; that in that school guided, aided, and advised by the farm bureau, there will be boys and girls who take a real interest in their work because they, too, are a part of that farm bureau center; that the school will be manned by an agricultural teacher employed twelve months in the year who sees beyond the walls of the building and who looks out to the farm and fields not only as a means of inspiration but as a laboratory for his work. There will be a woman employed as a teacher of the subjects that center about the home, who will gather to herself a group of girls who will be taught how to make the homes of the community as efficient as they can be developed; that in that school there will be a branch of the county free library under our California system which will give any man the book he wants at the time he wants it, and there shall be a community kitchen and dining-room where the people can get together for picnics and suppers. In the simple auditorium will be held the farm bureau center meetings and other committee meetings from night to night and from week to week. Back of that farm bureau center, focused in the county-seat, there will be a farm advisor, a home demonstration agent, and a county club leader acting as the agents for those agricultural institutions which are gathering the facts for the progress of country life, and from that country life will come the wisest, most public spirited and ablest farmers as directors of the county farm bureau who will sit together and plan out with the aid and direction of the other farmers of the county the plans and projects which will make for the betterment of the folk who live on farms. Such agencies as this gathered together into a state organization for mutual helpfulness and occasional meetings from all the states in a national organization where experience and plans may be exchanged, will be to America the greatest governor of the body politic. On this will be builded for all time a sane and progressive country life which will give to the cities of America that basis for confidence and coöperation which they have a right to expect and which the farmers are willing to extend.

What, then, is the function of the farm bureau? To make better farms and better homes in the open country.

CIRCULAR No. 209

MARCH, 1919

THE FUNCTION OF THE FARM BUREAU

By B. H. CROCHERON

The time has come when the farm bureau should pause to consider what is its real function in the life of the nation. At present the farm bureau movement, the greatest organization of farmers that the world has ever seen, is very certain that it is on its way, but somewhat undecided whither it is going.

Farm bureaus are a natural outgrowth of the desire of American farmers to do two things. First to unite together for mutual self-help and co-operation along any line that may be needed, and second, to get into close and intimate touch with those institutions of public enterprise and of the government which have accumulated the information necessary to make farm life more prosperous.

Therefore we may well stop to consider the real purpose of the farm bureau and what phase of farm bureau work should be most emphasized in the future. In so doing I desire only to consider what is best for the farmers of California. Primarily I am not interested in the farm bureau unless it is the best type of organization for the farmers of the state and unless, in turn, it will do its part towards making American homes and lives better and set this nation upon a still firmer foundation than it now possesses. I am interested in farm bureaus only as an aid toward that end and if a more efficient organization can be devised to carry on this work the farm bureau should give place to it. I am interested far less in the perpetuation of farm advisors or of other agricultural extension work. I consider them only in relation to the welfare of the people of this state and country. They have no other function than to aid the development of rural life, which in turn is the greatest stabilizer in our national existence.

The farm bureaus started in several states under various names and under plans which were widely divergent. Even to-day the farm bureaus of America vary so widely in their administration, organization, projects, and development, as to be almost unrecognizable as similar organizations occupied in similar work. This is chiefly because the farm bureau was new and untried so that in the beginning no

one had the foresight or temerity to set down on paper a definite method of work or a definite plan for the fulfillment of those objects which were in the minds of all farmers. The experience of the last few years has been so scanty that even now we hesitate to say that any one plan is best among the several that have been advanced or that any one specific sphere of work is alone the function of the farm bureau.

California was somewhat fortunate among the states in that its farm bureau movement developed later than in some others and had something of a background upon which to plan out the type of organization and method of work. A definite constitution and by-laws were laid down in the fall of 1914, which have been almost unanimously followed by the thirty-seven counties organized during the past five years. Thus, in California, we have a unity of organization which is coincident in all the counties and which articulates right down to the farm bureau center itself. The particular features of the California type of organization which are most worthy of note are those which stress and emphasize the rural community as the unit of organization. These communities, or farm bureau centers, are represented upon the board of directors. Necessarily, therefore, that board itself represents the entire county or those portions thereof that have membership in the farm bureau.

Another type of farm bureau organization prevalent in some other states, contemplates no community organizations or farm bureau centers. In that type, the board of directors represents lines of work or projects and are preferably chosen at or near the county-seat in order that they may easily get together for conference. This, it seems to us, tends to stress the county-seat or chief city of the county as the emanating point for the work rather than the rural community which is the natural gathering place of the people who live on farms. Indeed, it was felt in California that there was some danger in having the board of directors consist of men who largely came from that central point and were interested in special projects since they might not truly represent the whole farm population of the county.

At first in some states, the farm bureaus were not promoted by the agricultural colleges. They were looked upon somewhat askance as a dangerous and untried procedure which might wreck the move for agricultural extension being promoted by the federal and state governments by means of paid extension workers. Later this fear passed away and the colleges of agriculture came to welcome the farm bureau as they saw more fully its possibilities of development and the progress which might be made in agricultural extension work when it was furthered by a large body of farmers who worked in close co-operation with it. However, in this state, the value of the farm

bureau has been fully recognized from the beginning. Therefore the administration of this college has required every county that desired the services of a farm advisor to first form a county farm bureau in which there were 20 per cent of the farmers in membership as an attest of their desire for the work of the farm advisor amongst them. The wisdom of this has been proven by experience in that no county of California has ever permanently abandoned the work which has gone steadily forward from that time until now when 85 per cent of the farmers of the state are represented in counties which have farm bureaus. It is evident that the small residue of 15 per cent could easily be encouraged to consummate their organization if there were any hope of funds to give them a farm advisor for their service.

In organizing the farm bureau the problem necessarily became at once: what was this new farm bureau to do; what was to be its sphere of work; how far was it to go in the various movements requested by farmers; and finally, what was to be the relation between that farm bureau and the government and the state agent placed in the county to work on the extension of agriculture? These problems in part are still before us. Let us then look back to see what was the original conception of the California farm bureau both as to its plan of organization and its sphere of work.

In planning the California type of farm bureau the constitution was very carefully written so that no federal or state official might have any direction over it. The organization was definitely and purposely placed wholly in the hands of farmers elected from among their fellow membership representing agricultural communities of the county who would have in their hands the whole direction and determination of the policies of the farm bureau. The belief upon which this was based was that the farmers of California were wholly competent to guide their own affairs and that provided this board of directors adequately represented the wishes of the members of their county, there would be no doubt either of the definiteness of their plans or of the propriety of their course since I believed essentially in the collective wisdom of the farmers of the state. In order that these farm bureau directors might really represent the wishes of their constituents and might have frequent opportunity to gather together their desires and proposals, it was planned that every farm bureau center should hold a meeting once a month at which they might receive from their director the report of the last directors' meeting held at the county seat, and might signify to him their wishes and plans for the future. In order that the farm advisor working with the farm bureau might have the benefit of the opinions and knowledge expressed and that he, in turn, would have an opportunity for getting his advice to the farm bureau centers, it was planned that in general

he should be present at their meeting. The danger in this was recognized in that the farmers might come to feel that because the farm advisor was there that it was the farm advisor's meeting and not the farm bureau meeting. It was believed, however, that by proper direction and supervision from the central office the farm advisor could be held in his proper capacity as related to the farm bureau and could be brought to understand and clearly bear in mind that he had no other function so far as the policies of the farm bureau were concerned than to give advice and consultation when it was asked.

Persons who were conversant with farmers' meetings told us that it would not be possible to continue to gather indefinitely the people of any given community at a meeting once a month because they would soon be tired of such a gathering and would gradually stop attending. There was no experience upon which to base this conclusion except that various itinerant agencies such as farmers' institutes, had found their attendance decreasing during the past generation. My belief was that if a definite and permanent organization could be formed which would have a programme of work based upon concrete and feasible projects for the development of the community, the county, the state, and the nation that the people would continue to come because of the efficiency of the organization and because of their interest and part in the work it was doing. This belief has been amply borne out by the experience of the past five years wherein the average attendance at farm bureau centers in the state has steadily but slowly gained and while it was satisfactory in the beginning, it is still more so at this date when the average attendance at farm bureau centers in California is forty-one persons. Not only have these farm bureau centers continued to increase in attention and interest, but they have been permanent in their location, the percentage of those that have passed away being so small as to be almost negligible while the number of them has now grown until there are 429 such community centers in California.

In all this time, however, the activity has largely been one of organization and development. The most interesting feature of this organization was that we did not at first form a state-wide farm bureau or a state board of direction wherefrom it was brought down to the counties and later to the communities and ultimately to the people, but that one by one these farm bureau centers were formed in California by the people themselves wherever there was a group of persons who felt it desirable to get together for their mutual development and improvement. The organization has grown from the ground up and consequently is solidly set thereon. I do not believe that any other factor than an absolutely unwise and malicious direction could now wreck the farm bureau movement in California.

The very nature of the farm bureau under the California plan has made for a wide autonomy of the farm bureau centers whereby they have developed their own programme and projects of work. While the method under which the farm bureau centers are organized, maintained and directed is the same throughout the state, yet because the problems of the communities differ, the projects they have stressed are widely divergent. This was all expressly provided and desired. The system of organization has worked out as planned with astonishing success.

But how about the purpose—the function of the organization? Was there a definite conception of what the farm bureau should do? May I read you what was proposed as the function of the California farm bureau at the time of its inception to see whether we have in any way strayed from this original plan of action, and if so, whether this divergence is wise or unwise:

A farm bureau is an organization of farmers and ranchers who combine to promote agriculture through co-operative study of farm conditions.

Many types of farmers' organizations have long been existent. There have been farmers' clubs, granges, institutes, unions, alliances, and others. Some of these have been more or less successful, but many have passed away. Their failure has usually been due to one or more of the following causes: (1) lack of a distinct purpose to fill a definite need; (2) lack of membership to sufficiently represent all classes of farmers and types of farming; (3) lack of co-operation with other similar farm organizations; (4) lack of continuous and unselfish leadership.

The farm bureau is distinct from all of these. It is not primarily a social organization; neither is it essentially to unite farmers so as to lower prices of stuffs bought and to raise prices of products sold. It is formed to bring together for mutual co-operation those farmers who want to investigate the fundamental problems that are involved in production on their farms.

Every state and territory has at least one "experiment farm" supported by federal and state funds. These have been exceedingly valuable because the results therefrom were noted by men whose business and interest it was to observe. The acreages of these farms were small; their crops were often meager—and yet they have been worth millions beyond their cost because the records of productions and the conditions under which they were grown were known and noted.

Many of our farm problems are already solved on the farms of the nation. Individuals have found the solution of vexing questions that are agitating the experiment stations and agricultural colleges. But these solutions usually fall out of sight unnoted or are known only to the man on whose farm they occur. If these unknown and unnoted experiments could be gathered they would at once add much to our view of agriculture.

In America there are on the average more than 100 000 farms to each "experiment farm." Obviously, if the results on some small percentage of these could be viewed from the same standpoint as at the experiment farm, the benefits would enormously outnumber the records achieved by the experiment stations. It is, of course, impossible to gather all this material or to note all the changing conditions on farms. But it may be possible to gather together into one county organization the wide-awake and interested farmers who will compare their results with those

of others and, in a more or less scientific way, plan out experiments and demonstrations on their own farms. Such is a farm bureau.

Fundamentally, then, a farm bureau for the county can be collectively a sort of giant experiment station with several hundred observers who hold a monthly caucus to compare results.

The farm bureau has a trained man to aid it: the farm advisor (see Circular 133). It is his business to help interpret results, to point out new lines of work, and to deduce conclusions from the evidence at hand. The farm bureau can be of greater value to the county than the farm advisor. Together, they can be of more benefit than either alone.

Other activities may concern the farm bureau besides local research into agricultural problems.

The farm bureau may be a sort of rural chamber of commerce and thus be the guardian of rural affairs. It can take the lead in agitation for good roads, for better schools, and for cheaper methods of buying and selling. Various subsidiary organizations of the farm bureau, known as farm bureau departments, may be formed, thus linking together persons of similar or identical interests. Perhaps, most of all, the farm bureau can help promote the social institutions of country life. Some rural neighbors are so starved for recreational meetings that they will come out to anything from a patent-medicine show to a school meeting. The farm bureau can help put more recreation into rural life. Every country neighborhood ought to have some social gathering at least once a week. It is almost as much needed as the spiritual congregations at the church, or the educational assemblages of the children at the school-house.

But very surely and insistently, the farm bureau is not first and foremost of these purposes—good and desirable as they may be. Perhaps, the farm bureau can help to buy cheaper and better seeds, can help to boost the local socials, can encourage the faltering school teacher, can get out and talk for good roads—but its first and surest function is to increase the local knowledge of agricultural fact.

This was written in 1915 as a part of the University circular on the "County Farm Bureau." As I look over the list of farm bureau activities I regard it as remarkable that we have so clearly followed the lines indicated in the statement there laid down and from my rather intimate knowledge of the work of the California farm bureaus, I stand here to-day to say to you that the farm bureaus of California up to this time and this point have stood solidly behind that platform expressed in those few paragraphs. In other words, the California farm bureaus have been largely an educational agency in the broadest sense of the term. Their greatest contribution to the welfare of the people has been their dissemination in an organized way of better methods of farm life as they have seen it. Occasionally, when they have seen the need of it, they have gone from this to take up the better handling of economic problems as business concerns, or as the promoters of business concerns. Personally, I have believed—and believe to-day—that it is a proper function of the farm bureau to set up business relations when they can do so in a better way—and by that I mean, better in the broad sense for all those concerned—better than

existent agencies which are already doing the work. I do not believe that the farm bureau should be an agency which attempts to squeeze out the other members of the rural community or which should set up a sort of agricultural trust to manage and operate all rural affairs. I am glad to say that the farm bureaus in California have never permitted this and that their actions in the past five years have shown such remarkable judgment as to wholly justify the original preface that the collective wisdom of the farmers of California enabled them to guide competently their own affairs.

I have conceded that the chief function of the farm bureau is that of an educational agency and I have testified that the farm bureaus in California have been chiefly an educational factor in the past. I believe that this should be because most of our problems are first educational in nature, although they may later proceed from that to the practice of what that education teaches. I may be permitted to quote one or two instances of this.

Three years ago the hog market situation in California was unsatisfactory to both the farmers who produced the hogs and the packers who bought the hogs and an unintelligent survey of the surface indications might have led some to suppose that what was immediately needed was to set up some sort of a machine whereby the packing companies would immediately become displaced by some sort of a farmers' organization which would undertake to take the hogs off the farm and deliver them in cured form to the people. Such a scheme would have required an enormous amount of money and might have been doubtful of success, depending not only on the type of organization and a high class management with expert knowledge of packing and selling practices, but also upon the antagonism and strife in the trade which would have ensued. Instead of that an educational idea was brought from Australia by one of the farm advisors based on the principle that the trouble with the hog market in California was caused by three things: first, the farmers grew poor hogs; second, they sold them in ungraded and undesirable sized lots, and third, there was no free competition in their purchase. The result of this was the inauguration of a demonstration of the auction sales system as a method of marketing hogs. This auction sale brought the hogs together from the farmers to a central point. A committee of farmers graded them and placed them in carload lots. Buyers came to that place and in the presence of the farmers bought the hogs in an open market for the highest bid. The result was that the packers got the kind of hogs they wanted, in the right sized lots, at the highest prices they could afford to pay. The farmers got the best prices obtainable in the open market for the best hogs and the man who grew good hogs received a premium over him who raised poor hogs. The plan suc-

ceeded well because it served a real need in the community and because it showed both the farmers and the packers the real status of the hog market. It has swept like wildfire over many of the counties of California and although still in its youth a quarter of a million dollars' worth of hogs are sold each month under this system which, on the average, give at least 1 cent per pound more to the farmers for their hogs than ever was obtained before. The packers say that the hogs are better in quality than were ever known in the state and the farmers say that they get nearer the prices they think they deserve than they have ever experienced. It is assumed that even the small number of auction sales held in the state last year saved a quarter of a million dollars which went directly into the pockets of the farmers of the state. This was accomplished without setting up any elaborate machinery and without causing the farmers to go deep in their pockets to support an expensive plant which might never pay. It was made possible because educational thought had been brought to bear upon the problem and the farmers, in turn, were advised of every change in the situation and of the best methods for getting the results that they desired.

I need only mention one more result which is so large and far-reaching as to quite beggar description, namely that of the war emergency campaigns conducted by the farm bureaus at the instance of the University of California and the United States Department of Agriculture. These campaigns sought to advise farmers what crops were needed for the successful prosecution of the war which, of course, meant the crops that would be in demand and which thereafter might be expected to bring a fair price. Sometimes when these campaigns were launched, it was difficult for farmers to see wherein they would derive a profit but because they were based upon a real knowledge of the conditions of the world's markets and because furthermore they took into consideration the promotion of the permanent agriculture of the state, each one was founded upon a real knowledge of conditions. An educational institution, the farm bureau, became the agency through which each campaign was furthered in the county. Farmers planted wheat although the price was low but when that wheat came to be harvested, the price was higher than that of barley and those that had wheat and had followed the advice of the farm bureau, found no difficulty in their marketing problems. Farmers grew hogs in response to the hog campaign and while it did not then look possible to raise hogs at a profit, by the time the hogs were fed and grown the price of feed had been so reduced and the price of hogs so advanced that the farmers throughout the state found that they had grown them at a profit. In turn, the sheep campaign was furthered because of the prospective need of the government for wool. Where sheep

were economically maintained on farms they resulted not only in an immediate profit to the farmers but in a permanent addition to California agriculture. Diversification of crops which was furthered by these war emergency campaigns upon a sound economic basis has lessened unrest, has made for the local advancement of farm management in its right sense, and has bettered the condition of California farming more than any one thing in the last ten years. Farmers who were not in touch with these campaigns, in their desire to help the food situation of the government, often unwisely grew crops which were not later in demand and which consequently they could not market. Some of these still remain on their hands, although it is hoped that the difficulty may be overcome within the next few months. I wish only to point out that the farm bureaus in California have chiefly used educational means to overcome their difficulties and in the main have been successful.

Nevertheless, after all is said and done there does remain a residue of problems, complications, and injustices which can only be solved by farmers' organizations going ahead to better their conditions in any legitimate way that seems to them feasible. I am perfectly in accord with any well organized and considered movement of the farmers to better the conditions of the state, and therefore of the nation, through any means which may seem most feasible and desirable to the united judgment of the farmers of the state as expressed through the farm bureaus. I believe that the membership and direction of the farm bureau is so representative and I believe that the collective judgment of those who live on the land is so correct that if the farm bureaus are given a full opportunity to consider rural problems and to understand them in their various phases they cannot go far wrong. Therefore, I have entire confidence in the future of this organization and the direction it will take provided it is kept as at present, so that the far-spread membership of 20,000 may express themselves directly through their representatives on the policies of the organization. If there is to be a state farm bureau it should be as democratic and representative in its organization as are those of the counties. Its affairs should not be handed over to a small executive committee, but should be managed by a representative from every county. So long as the farm bureau functions as a democratic institution which represents all parts and parcels of the rural body politic there need be no fear for the future.

In all this I have mentioned but seldom the county farm advisor who has been the ever-present agent to aid this farm bureau in its work. He is the representative of the federal and state institutions of agriculture in extending their work in the counties of the state and nation. Already three thousand of these men are at work in as

many counties of the nation and more will follow. It is important that their position should be understood and that their relation to the farm bureau should be clear, in order that we should not be confused in our minds as to the function of the farm bureau in distinction from that of the farm advisor. These two have worked together so harmoniously that persons are likely to confuse them. I believe, however, that the future of this work, so far as the farm bureaus are concerned, is dependent upon the drawing of a clear distinction between the work of the farm bureau which is the farmers' agency and that of the farm advisor who is the agent of the state and national governmental agencies.

The farm advisor is placed in the county for a specific purpose, which is to extend the knowledge which the agricultural colleges and experiment stations have gained through the intensive research work of the investigators who are behind them. He is the field agent of the agricultural forces of the nation. As such he does not represent the farm bureau nor is he directed by the farm bureau, but rather he is maintained as closely as possible in direct relation with the federal and state governments. This is of the utmost importance.

The value of the farm advisor to the people of the county is in having the unbiased judgment of an official who does not represent a local situation or a local constituency, whose appointment and whose term of office is not dependent upon the favor of local politicians or even of certain influential farmers, but who represents the organized agricultural forces of the government and the knowledge that they have concerning the betterment of rural life. His value to the people is in precise proportion to the extent to which he knows and tells the truth. His only function in that county is to disseminate the subject matter which has been slowly and painstakingly gathered by the agricultural institutions, which, like great factories, are slowly but surely grinding out the product of the knowledge of life. He may advise the farm bureau upon its request as to the procedure which it may best follow. He may co-operate with it and doubtless will co-operate with it on most of the projects that it has under study, but in so doing he must be clearly defined as a governmental official who is working for the benefit of the whole people. There can be only three possible relationships between the farm bureau and the farm advisor.

The first would be to put the farm bureau under the direction of the farm advisor and to have the farm bureau the official agency which carried out the projects and purposes of the farm advisor, and therefore of those officials and agencies which directed the farm advisor. Such a plan would imply that the farm bureau should not undertake any projects unless approved by the government. As such

it is clearly inadvisable unless the farmers desire to exercise no initiative or judgment of their own.

The second possible relationship is that the farm bureau should direct the farm advisor, and that he should be a sort of secretary or manager for that farm bureau whereby he carried out the proposals and plans of the organization. Such a relationship would soon result in the farm advisor losing his entire significance and would in time prevent his support from public funds.

The third relationship is that which we have conceived and practiced in this state, wherein the farm bureau and farm advisor are separate and distinct instruments for the furtherance of agriculture. The farm advisor is directed by the federal and state governments and the farm bureau is directed by the farmers through their representatives who are directors of the farm bureau. When the farm bureau desires to carry on a project which is part, or wholly, in the nature of agricultural extension, then that part may properly come within the scope of the farm advisor. Then they mutually draw up a project or written plan setting forth the piece of work they are to do, the means by which they are to do it, and the results they hope to accomplish, and clearly distinguish which part in it is to be done by the farm advisor and which part by the farm bureau. This brings them into active co-operation on that particular project, but does not necessarily mean that the farm bureau will always work with the farm advisor, nor that the farm advisor is compelled thereby to join in every movement that the farm bureau desires to further. It does not hamper the farm bureau in its work and does not restrict it to those purely extension activities which are perhaps its chief function but from which it may from time to time depart in the interests of the farmers of the county. I believe it would be most unwise to attempt to put the farm bureaus of this, or any other state, under the direction of the United States Department of Agriculture, or of the State College of Agriculture. I think it would deprive them of their primary reason for existence, which is to represent the free and untrammelled action of the farmers of the country. Likewise, I believe it would be most unfortunate for the farm advisors to be placed under the direction of the farm bureaus, since it would deprive the farm advisors of their real mission, which is to represent the state and federal agencies of agriculture. Placed under the direction of the farm bureau, the farm advisor becomes no more than a farm bureau secretary or manager and can have no more than local usefulness and a local boundary to his horizon.

I have regretted to observe that some states have not always been clear in their vision of either the farm bureau or the farm advisor. They have confused the two in the minds of the people and have some-

times handed over the direction of the farm advisor to the farm bureaus, and then found those farm bureaus departing from a strict line of educational work as was perhaps necessary in the county. This brought the farm advisor and the farm bureau into embarrassing relations, and, in turn, the United States Department of Agriculture and the college of agriculture found their agents embarking upon projects which were neither federal nor state functions and which could not properly be undertaken by their agents under the guise of public necessities.

I conceive that there might possibly be three types of work going on in a county at once: first, that work which the farm advisor is carrying on alone because it is a matter in which only the federal and state governments are interested and which directed him to do it; second, that work which the farm bureau is carrying on alone because it is a matter in which neither the federal or state governments desire to enter but which the farmers of the county desire to promote themselves; and, third, that type of activity upon which the farm bureau and the farm advisor work jointly in co-operation. I anticipate that in the future, as in the past, 90 per cent of the activity of the farm advisor and of the farm bureau will be undertaken together upon projects to which they mutually agree. They will work together because in the ultimate judgment of the farmers they will find that the solution of most vexing problems is to be accomplished by means of the use of agricultural fact applied in an educational way to the local situation.

What, then, are to be the constructive problems undertaken in the immediate future? I will venture to hazard a guess at a few of them. I believe the first development immediately needed is to make the farm bureau the agency for rural progress for the whole family. In the beginning farm bureaus were predicated on the basis of work with men, and we have only now begun to see that it is not only with the men but also with the women and children that the farm bureaus should work, since they, too, have problems that need solving, and they, too, should become a part of the rural organization which aims to solve those problems. We are just now testing out in nine counties the value of the Farm Home Department of the Farm Bureau, in which latter women join exactly on the same basis as the men, but find for their service a specially organized department which concerns itself with the problem of the home. We have begun to realize in some small degree that these problems are even more vital because more intimate with the actual success of the family placed on the land. Home Demonstration Agents, who are women specifically trained to bring light to bear on these problems, are placed in the counties in exactly the same relation to this work as are farm advisors.

The work with boys and girls is a look ahead into the immediate future. The school has not entirely filled its place as an educational agency because the children only spend five hours a day for five days a week in school, but the farm bureau can step in where the school leaves off and can so organize the boys and girls that they may grow up with the vision of a better country life and the knowledge of the benefits that good farming and good home-making may mean for them. If country life is to prosper and progress we must keep a fair share of the good strong American children in the rural life to which they were brought up. I believe this is essential not only for the perpetuation of American families on farms but for the real happiness and prosperity of these children themselves, since I believe that under proper conditions there is no better place to spend a life than on a good American farm. Our present development is wholly along the line of agricultural clubs for boys and girls. I think I foresee the development of this idea until it will integrate in the various phases of child life.

It may be, too, that farm bureaus will desire to organize still another agency as an adjunct; that is, they have already to some degree the agricultural clubs of boys from ten to eighteen who are growing crops on farms on a competitive basis under the general direction of the farm bureau. They also have the main division of the farm bureau which concerns itself with mature men and women, say, from the age of twenty-five to sixty years. It may become desirable to organize a Junior Farm Bureau for the special service of those young men between eighteen and twenty-five, taking them as they leave the agricultural clubs and carrying them forward in to a special division of the farm bureau until they have reached maturity and are on their own farms when they go into the main farm bureau itself. I have dreamed of this Junior Farm Bureau as the link that would connect the boys of today with the men of tomorrow, and had gone so far as to detail one of our men to an investigation looking towards the formation of a Junior Farm Bureau in one county. At the outbreak of the war the furtherance of that branch of our work had, of course, to be discontinued, since the army took precisely the group of young men whom we were planning to organize into this agency. With the demobilization of the armies we may turn back our thoughts to this plan, and may soon hope again to bring this up before you as a possible development.

I believe that the farm bureau should be the far-sighted agency to plan for a permanent agriculture. Up to this time we have been occupied upon plans for the immediate future. We need to provide a means of making farming in California a permanently successful enterprise. I need not dwell upon the problems connected therewith,

which are many and diverse, but will merely mention one of these, which is—and I almost say it with bated breath—the increase of alkali wherever proper drainage is not provided. A quarter of a century ago it was predicted by Dr. Hilgard that we must provide against this danger in California, and the matter was duly written up and published, but no organization existed at that time, nor has ever existed, which was sufficiently far-sighted to take up this problem and provide, while time yet remained, for the ultimate consideration and disposal of this very imminent danger to our state. Perhaps the greatest problem facing rural California is the drainage of the interior valleys now coming under irrigation. The farm bureaus can furnish an agency which will look far ahead and which will promote the bettering of country life upon a more permanent basis than the needs of today and next year.

Again, I believe, that the farm bureaus may well take as one of their chief purposes the proposal to make rural civilization as efficient and satisfying as city civilization by the creation within their boundaries of those necessary appurtenances to successful country life that come through governmental agencies. By that I mean such things as good roads, good schools, equable taxation, and the repression of crime and immorality. I believe that those farm bureaus in California which have encouraged the building of permanent roads have done more perhaps than even they have realized. They have brought into being a community asset which will live after those who have promoted it are long gone away.

Persons will arise who will tell us that the farm bureau most of all needs to start a department store where hats, shoes, and cookstoves will be sold. They will say this because they believe some local shopkeeper is deriving an unjust profit. Others will tell us that the farm bureau should elect some man governor and thereby cause to be rectified all injustices of government and all defects of politics. Still others will cry that the farm bureaus attack the labor problem in such a way as to create immediately a sort of rural industrial slavery whereby yellow or brown men will work for scanty wages to raise up a landed class of aristocrats. But I do not believe that the farm bureau is in any danger of selling its position for such a mess of pottage. Such voices will be in the small minority, and the conservative, sober judgment of the farmers will continue to point out the wise course.

And, finally, I believe that the farm bureau must clearly comprehend that in order to be an agent of progress it must be a vehicle of work. It must have a definite programme and projects. It must lay out a line of attack for the problems to be solved, and it will proceed precisely as fast as its members are willing to put their time and

attention into the solving of those problems. No association is worth its salt unless it does something. The passing of resolutions is seldom effective as a means of progress. Many organizations have been wrecked on that rock. They have gradually worked themselves up into a state of mind whereby they somehow felt that through the passing of resolutions they caused the world to advance. They would spend a day appointing committees and wrangling over the wording of flowing sentences, and then go home with the glowing sense that they had accomplished something; but the sun would set upon a world that was no different than that upon which it had risen.

A farm bureau to be effective must get the active co-operative interest and work of its entire membership. No single board of directors can carry a farm bureau forward to success. The more persons involved in the solving of the problem, the more certain it is that it will be solved correctly and the quicker it will reach that solution. I believe that the work of the farm bureau should be built up not only on a county programme of work but on a community and even an individual programme of work where members from the farm bureau should have laid out at the beginning of the year not only what part their county is going to take in the programme for agricultural progress, not only what work the farm bureau center is going to do and what projects it is going to further, but what they, themselves, are going to do to aid in this programme—what part they are going to take in the enterprise. Built upon such a basis, the farm bureau will become the most potent factor in rural life. Already we are beginning to see the progress that has been made. The public is confused and perplexed by the multiplicity of agencies which exist, some of which spend their time passing resolutions or writing up in the newspapers what they intend to do. Glance for a moment at your newspaper column and see the wide diversity there is in the published material of that which is promised from that which is accomplished. So many investigations are to be made, so many criminals are to be caught, so many irrigation districts and roads and railways are to be built—but how few announcements you see that they have been built—that they have been brought into existence. Fortunately thus far the farm bureau has advertised itself by accomplishment rather than promises. It tells more about what it has done than what it intends to do. It has concerned itself with getting concrete results that were demonstrational in terms of dollars and cents, and in homes and farms made better. I hope our farm bureaus may never be confused in their perception of the problem, which is not to delineate a policy for some other institution to further, but to attack the problem themselves first-hand and to bring it to consummation.

Already our farm bureau centers are becoming a real community

meeting place and focal point for progressive ideas. The farm bureaus have always maintained themselves as a public forum towards which all persons may come to present their cases to the rural people. I hope that the farm bureaus will always so remain and will not be afraid to hear any one who has a straight story to tell.

I look forward to the time when the farm bureau center shall become a community center in the real sense. I see there a rural school with an auditorium to seat the people of the country-side; that in that school guided, aided, and advised by the farm bureau, there will be boys and girls who take a real interest in their work because they, too, are a part of that farm bureau center; that the school will be manned by an agricultural teacher employed twelve months in the year who sees beyond the walls of the building and who looks out to the farm and fields not only as a means of inspiration but as a laboratory for his work. There will be a woman employed as a teacher of the subjects that center about the home, who will gather to herself a group of girls who will be taught how to make the homes of the community as efficient as they can be developed; that in that school there will be a branch of the county free library under our California system which will give any man the book he wants at the time he wants it, and there shall be a community kitchen and dining-room where the people can get together for picnics and suppers. In the simple auditorium will be held the farm bureau center meetings and other committee meetings from night to night and from week to week. Back of that farm bureau center, focused in the county seat, there will be a farm advisor, a home demonstration agent, and a county club leader acting as the agents for those agricultural institutions which are gathering the facts for the progress of country life and from that country life will come the wisest, most public-spirited and ablest farmers as directors of the county farm bureau who will sit together and plan out with the aid and direction of the other farmers of the county the plans and projects which will make for the betterment of the folk who live on farms. Such agencies as this gathered together into a state organization for mutual helpfulness and occasional meetings from all the states in a national organization where experience and plans may be exchanged will be to America the greatest governor of the body politic. On this will be builded for all time a sane and progressive country life which will give to the cities of America that basis for confidence and co-operation which they have a right to expect and which the farmers are willing to extend.

What, then, is the function of the farm bureau? To make better farms and better homes in the open country.