

Analyzing Requirements for Agriculture Students in the Social Sciences

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I am honored by having been invited to participate in this annual convention of the National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture.

The topic assigned for the panel this morning is a challenging one, and one that is certainly worthy of discussion at this meeting. It indicates considerable foresight on the part of those planning the agenda for this conference.

The views that I will be sharing with you today are those gathered over the years as a farmer and livestock feeder and as an individual involved in many facets of agriculture in attempting to find solutions to problems created by our rapidly changing society. I will be talking about the requirements for agriculture students in the social sciences.

In order to lay a little ground work, look at Webster's definition of "social sciences."

"It is the study of people and how they live together as families, tribes and communities. Any of several studies, such as history, economics, civics, dealing with the structure of society, and the activities of its members."

The definition exposes a very broad field of opportunity for discussion as we explore social science and its importance to agriculture.

Agricultural people, for several generations, have been known for their fierce independence. We have had little reason, until this point in time as agriculturists, to be concerned about problems other than those in our own little world. This is all being rapidly changed by the economic, social, and political pressures being generated in a fast changing society.

Although I'm sure most agriculture curriculums include some exposure to the social sciences, I am also confident that considerably more time must be spent in this facet of education, if we are to adequately prepare the farm and ranch owners and managers of the future, for the problem solving process that they will find themselves involved in. It will no longer be sufficient to educate a potential manager in animal nutrition, plant science, or many of the other disciplines of agriculture, because the competent farm manager of tomorrow will employ individuals specializing in these fields, to assist him in optimizing or maximizing the profit opportunities of his particular operation. His most important need as a manager will be how to deal effectively with people, as well as resolving routine management problems.

As I indicated a moment ago, the problem solving processes are being changed simply because the problems are being changed and the expertise needed on the part of farm and ranch owners and managers in problem solving is considerably greater than it was even 5 years ago, and in 5 years from now it will be even greater than

it is today. The economic pressures that are being created in agriculture, are creating a demand for a considerable amount of knowledge about the economic system of our nation, of the economic system of the world, and of the world markets. The increasing capital requirements for today's agriculturists are growing by leaps and bounds, and it will be impossible within 10 years, in my opinion, for the average farmer or rancher in this country to provide the collateral needed to secure his capital requirements. He will have to have the capability to project to the lender, on a very realistic and factual basis, his ability to repay. So we are really talking about the ability of an individual to sell his debt. It will take a considerable amount of planning on his part. He will have to be involved in a complete enterprise accounting program on his farm or ranch. He will have to be able to put his capital to the best use in a particular operation and the only way that he will be able to do this is through an enterprise accounting system.

This means then, that he will have to be familiar with computers, the capability of computers, and be able to realistically ask a computer for information that he will be required to have in order to provide the information required by his lender. He will be required to develop budgeting, he will have to make cash flow projections, and all of these things will become a very important part of the total management process of his unit and probably the most important part of it simply because of the vast capital needs that he will be confronted with.

No longer is a brief exposure to basic economic theory going to be sufficient to prepare the future farm and ranch owner or manager to deal with the economic pressures that will continue to mount in today's agriculture.

In the area of social problems, the agriculturist of the future is going to find himself involved in his community's social problems, whether he wants to be or not, simply because he will be sharing a rural community with people who are not involved in agriculture. If the rural development process now indicated by the present administration comes to pass. If the effort to move people from urban areas to rural areas is successful, the agriculturist of the future will have to be capable of analyzing, evaluating, and in many cases directing many of the social programs that will be evolved as a result of this effort.

He is already concerned about how to meet the educational needs of his own children in areas of rapidly declining farm and ranch population, which is placing increasing pressure on small school districts and small school systems. He is very rapidly being forced into the situation of having to

negotiate labor contracts, and whether we agree with the principle of this or not, I think it is only a matter of time until we will find unionization of agricultural labor.

So, he will have to have the ability to negotiate with and deal with this entirely new concept of farm and ranch labor. He will have to be able to do this or he will find himself out of business.

Another area that may be considered as a social problem, and could also be considered as a political problem, depending on your particular viewpoint, and that is the ecology and environmental aspects of agriculture that we are suddenly confronted with. The farmer or ranch manager of the future can no longer operate his unit without taking into consideration the effect that it will have on other people, as far as ecology and environment are concerned.

Probably the biggest need in this particular area is for the owner or manager to be able to relate to the other members of his community the reason for the particular practices that he may be employing in the management and maximizing of opportunities in his enterprise, in a manner and a method which will provide some degree of understanding as to the need for, and the benefits of, some of the practices that he must by necessity use.

The recent "eagle incident" in Wyoming points up very dramatically what can happen when decisions are made, without taking into consideration the effect that it may have on other facets of our society.

In my own judgment, perhaps because I am very directly involved in the political scene, is the need for political science. I feel that the teaching of political science in today's world is probably one of the most important social science requirements for any individual and particularly for agriculture students.

Whether we are willing to admit it to ourselves or not, a great portion of our lives are affected by political decisions. Whether this is through local government, state government, or federal government. Agricultural people, because of the declining number, are going to have to develop a political expertise that far surpasses their counterparts in the business world.

As we move into a period of more regulation of the business economy, it becomes extremely important that agricultural people understand the governmental processes that do take place and the avenues that are available to them to have their opinions heard. Good examples of this are:

Public hearings that are taking place in our state today, held by managers of public lands for the purpose of gathering information to be used in determining what management practices and procedures should be used on public lands of the various areas of Wyoming.

Agricultural people, because of their lack of understanding of the process, because of their lack of ability to develop and present factual in-

formation at a hearing, are finding decisions being made that are extremely detrimental to their use of public lands, which in some areas of our state are absolutely necessary in order to keep a farm or ranch operation in business.

Many times people in agriculture blame government for too much control, when realistically, adequate avenues have been established to present both sides of the issue, and in most cases decisions made by governmental agencies have to be based on facts presented through the hearing process.

This applies to all levels of government, from the local governmental level through federal government.

Because of the lack of understanding of this total process, agriculture for many years has been getting the short end of the stick in a great variety of hearings, including freight rate hearings, rules and regulations that have been established concerning labor, pesticide use, moving commodities in inter-state commerce . . .

The list could go on and on.

In attempting to help agricultural people solve some of the problems created because they have not presented their case adequately, I have come to believe that they simply do not have the know-how or the understanding about the processes that have been established to provide for the gathering of information to be used in the decision making processes by the various governmental agencies. We have some very good examples that I could cite to you:

Air quality standards,

Water quality standards,

Almost all states today have adopted some degree of air and water quality standards. Without exception, agricultural interests have not been adequately represented, if represented at all, in the hearing processes that have been taking place. We are confronted now with the land use planning as a possibility, and it will become extremely important that agricultural people become involved in the hearing processes that are going to determine land use planning and zoning. It is going to take place in almost every community in this country within a few short years.

I have called these political pressures because these are new problems that will have to be solved by political means or through governmental processes. There needs to be a very thorough understanding of the

structure of government, the executive level, judicial, and legislative, and particularly the legislative processes that are followed during the legislative sessions. Much good legislation has failed simply because the legislative processes were not known and understood well enough by agriculture people. I have talked very broadly in terms of needs for social sciences for agricultural students and hopefully I have exposed some areas for your consideration and possible questions.

If I were to refer to any specific social sciences as being the most important, I would have to pick out history, political science, psychology, sociology, economics, and a good background in business administration. I think increased emphasis must be placed in these areas. If we could increase emphasis in these subjects, we would be moving toward the fulfillment of the needs of agriculturists of the future from the owner-manager standpoint. I can see little need to expose or require the same level of social sciences for those individuals in the various disciplines of agriculture who plan to specialize in some particular field, but I do think it is extremely important for the farm and ranch owner and manager of the future, if he is to be able to solve the new problems and become a part of this rapidly changing society.

People in agriculture have suddenly been thrust into a new world so to speak. They find themselves in many cases inadequately equipped to deal with this new set of problems.

It has been said that neglect of social sciences, not only in agriculture but in all parts of our society is responsible for the social dynamite that we find all around us. It seems that with almost a dedicated complacency, we have cut ourselves off from intellectual and spiritual sources from which the very existence of our freedom as a nation and as individuals stem.

We place little, if any, emphasis on what contributes to a good life. We have forgotten about the ancient Roman concept of civic virtue based on a government of laws,

not of men. We have forgotten the Christian ideal of the infinite worth of man in the eyes of a sovereign God, it is almost non-existent. These are the basic principles from which our system of constitutional, representative government, private competitive business, and civil and religious freedom flow. Education and these basic principles are the only source from which the fountain-tide of American freedom can be renewed.

For far too long, we have been placing less and less emphasis on the study of religious and classical history, the psychology of Plato and Aristotle, the writings of Cicero, and the discussions of political philosophy by the founders of our own nation. Instead we have given more and more emphasis to the material and physical side of life. We have thereby lost the crusading faith in our free institutions which characterized the early days of this republic.

Education will be a hollow mockery in America if it does not include, in the broadest sense possible, the understanding of, training in, and the responsibility of citizenship in a republic of free men.

Although there are many problems peculiar only to Agriculture, there is one major problem that confronts all of us and that is how to preserve, intact, a system of government and an economic system, that has created a higher standard of living for a larger percentage of a society than any other system in the history of man.

The hue and cry of the young people of our country today might well be measured as the loudest uprising and objection in the history of mankind, to a system of values that has not worked. They could well be telling us to . . .

Get out of the rut, Take a new look at a new world, and teach people how to live with their fellowmen.

This is in effect the definition of social science.

How to live together, How to work together, and Play together, in a harmonious society that can produce the needs of the people with a minimum amount of government and a maximum amount of free enterprise.



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