

September, 1956

Dr. Floyd Andre, Dean of Agriculture
Dr. James Hilton, President
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa

Dear Dean Andre and President Hilton:

A number of us in the state who have occasioned to meet and talk at various times and under various circumstances regarding the welfare of Iowa agriculture have been concerned for some time with the question of how the Land Grant Colleges could play a more vital role in the solution of the urgent problems now facing American agriculture.

These discussions have indicated what we believe is the need for a careful re-examination and inventory of our current research and educational programs in the light of our currently pressing problems. We have attempted to spell out our thoughts on this matter in the attached memorandum.

This is a sincere attempt on our part to be as helpful to you as we possibly can. We are simply offering our support to you in your continuing efforts to make Iowa State College of maximum usefulness to the State of Iowa.

Be assured of our continuing support in the excellent job that you are doing and feel free to call upon us if there are additional ways in which we can be of assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Orval Helmer
Milford Beechley
Paul J. Ludwig
William Valanderson
Carl Hamilton

September, 1956

MEMORANDUM

to

Dr. Floyd Andre, Dean of Agriculture
and

Dr. James Hilton, President
Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa

American agriculture is in serious trouble. Although increases in population have surpassed all predictions and the level of national income is at all time highs farm income has declined almost constantly since 1949.

In short, our farm plant is over-expanded to such a degree that authorities estimate that farm out-put will continue to increase faster than population for at least ten years and probably for a much longer period. Though a blessing to the nation, this situation presents farmers with the stark reality of over-producing themselves into a state of chronic poverty and sub-standard living conditions not unlike those of the Twenties and Thirties.

One of the chief contributing factors of this dilemma of chronic over-production and sub-standard incomes in the field of agriculture is the technological revolution of the past 25 years. This almost unbelievable development has poured forth new varieties, hybridization, new fertilizers, new machines, weed and pest control chemicals, better feeds, etc.

Almost wholly responsible for the accelerated outpouring of revolutionary new production methods has been the publically supported research programs of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Land Grant Colleges. The success of the effort is without parallel in either other nations now or in history.

Those farmers first adopting these new methods frequently profit temporarily. But new techniques that prove sound are soon in general use. With widespread application the benefits of this research accrue almost wholly to consumers. This is true because with most new techniques farmers increase output in order to be more efficient and lower their unit costs. Except in periods of unusual expansion of demand, such as during a war, the net result in the aggregate, is a lowering of prices. This lower price more than offsets the lower unit costs. Net farm income is, therefore, lower.

One way farmers have adjusted to this situation has been to reduce the labor force sharply. Farm youth have left rural areas in great numbers. Generally employment opportunities for these rural youth are inadequate in typical farm states such as Iowa.

Thus we have an over-expanded farm plant returning an unacceptable income to farm people and wholly inadequate non-farm job opportunities in rural areas.

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In the face of this situation, it seems clear that the resources of the Land Grant Colleges should be completely re-examined with a view toward directing them more specifically to solutions of the current and pressing problems of agriculture. This is not a matter of "stopping progress" or of curbing research; it is a matter of shifting and reorienting resources (manpower, budgets, and facilities) into those new areas of immediate concern and national importance.

Iowa State College should take leadership in this effort. Particular and immediate attention should be given to these areas:

1. Production adjustment. This unquestionably is one of the foremost problems in national policy. It is worthy of the best efforts of the Land Grant Colleges. It will demand new ideas and great imagination as we bring research efforts to bear upon agriculture's problems in the aggregate as contrasted to our past concern with per farm, per animal and per unit production.
2. Distribution. Improvements in this field would not alone cure the ills of over-production. However, both consumer and the farmer would benefit from expanded research in the fields of marketing, processing and distribution. In addition, much greater emphasis should be given to the matter of consumer preferences and ways and means of increasing the consumption of low income people of high quality foods, especially red meats and dairy products.
3. Job Opportunities and Industrial Development. In a further effort to help meet these urgent problems facing agriculture, Iowa State College should organize a comprehensive research program to inventory and analyze the human and physical resources of Iowa with a view to their further utilization in industrial development. The teaching and extension programs, too, should be re-examined in view of our continuing trend toward a more highly industrialized economy.

At this critical period you may count on our full support and, we sincerely feel, the full support of Iowa farmers generally in shifting the resources of the College to bear more directly on the problems now besetting agriculture.

Orval H. H. H. H.
Wesley H. H. H.
Fred J. Ludwig