

The Separation of the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service: Political Issue in a Federal System. By William J. Block. *Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences*, Volume 47. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960. Pp. vii, 304. Bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$5.00; paperbound, \$4.00.)

The Agricultural Extension Service and the Farm Bureau both had their inception in the last half of the decade of the 1910's and for many years followed parallel paths. In some states their mutual relationship was established by law, in others by custom, and in still others the two agencies cooperated informally but usually rather effectively.

This book traces in considerable detail the struggle to effect official separation of the Agricultural Extension Service and the Farm Bureau at the national, state, and local levels. The author very effectively relates the pressure for separation to the rising struggle for power among various agricultural leaders and the different farm organizations in an effort to influence the growing network of governmental participation in agriculture.

In the early part of this century, some of the land grant agricultural colleges had been doing informal adult educational work with farmers which soon came to be known as extension work. With the advent of World War I, extension service employees, both in Washington and in the field, recognized that they could do their educational job most effectively when "farmer-students" were organized in definite local associations. These local associations came to be called "farm bureaus." Thus the Farm Bureau started, in most instances, as a purely educational arm of the infant Agricultural Extension Service.

It was inevitable that the county organizations would federate into state organizations, which was precisely what happened in many states. The next step, of course, was national federation. This came in November, 1919, in Chicago, when the temporary organization was named "American Farm Bureau Federation."

By 1939, when this study begins, some fifteen states had formal sponsorship of county extension programs through the Farm Bureau, either by legal action or by administrative agreement. Financial contribution to agricultural extension work made by the Farm Bureau in those states totaled almost \$1,000,000 in fiscal 1939.

In the latter part of the 1930's the national farm organizations began to go their separate ways with respect to support of or opposition to important federal farm programs emanating from Washington. In general, the Farm Bureau strongly favored decentralization of farm programs, with a maximum amount of local control and direction. This policy was natural, since that agency's major organizational strength lay in the counties and the states. The Farmers Union, on the other hand, increasingly favored centralization in Washington of administrative control over major farm programs. The National Grange lined up on either side from issue to issue, but frequently took the side of central administration. This developing situation gave added emphasis to the long-time campaign of the Farmers Union, and to a lesser extent to that of the National Grange, to obtain official separation of

the Agricultural Extension Service and the Farm Bureau, especially at the county and state levels.

During the administration of Secretary of Agriculture Anderson from 1944 to 1948, attempts at separation subsided markedly, at least partly because the Farm Bureau and Secretary Anderson were relatively close to each other on matters affecting national agricultural policy. With the appointment of Secretary Brannan in 1948, however, battle lines formed again. The Farm Bureau, from a national point of view, became increasingly vulnerable to criticism because of its close association with a tax supported educational program while taking such a vigorous stand relative to national agricultural policy on the other hand.

Secretary Brannan, who was perhaps more vigorously opposed by the Farm Bureau than any other secretary of agriculture, did not himself see fit to issue an order forcing dissolution of official ties that still existed in a few states. It remained for Secretary Benson to do this by executive memorandum in the fall of 1954. But his time, official separation of the Agricultural Extension Service from the Farm Bureau was supported publically by the federal extension director, the Land Grant College Association, most of the state extension directors, a great majority of the state farm bureaus, and, tacitly at least, by the American Farm Bureau Federation itself.

There is no concrete evidence that dissolution of the official ties between Extension and Farm Bureau enhanced the membership of either the National Grange or the Farmers Union or that it injured the membership of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

This book is strongly recommended for students of agricultural policy and for students of the relationships among the agricultural pressure groups, the general farm organizations, and the development of agricultural programs. In this sense the struggle for separation of Farm Bureau and the Agricultural Extension Service is incidental, as indeed I believe it to be, to the broader and more fundamental question of the kind of general relationship that exists between government and agriculture.

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Readings in the History of American Agriculture. Edited by Wayne D. Rasmussen. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960. Pp. xi, 340. Illustrations, chronology, selected readings, index. \$6.50.)

In view of the preponderant importance of American agriculture in the general scheme of things, it is somewhat surprising that not more has been written about its history. Professor Rasmussen's book is a welcome addition to the rather short list of works bearing upon the subject. As the title indicates, it is a collection of readings. These are divided into eight parts, the division being made largely on the basis of chronology. That is, the book starts with earliest colonial times and comes down to the present. Attention is given to technology, public policy, national emergencies, and other significant aspects of the development of agriculture.