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## Working Paper

Experiences in Extending Public Services to the Rural poor and Improving their Leadership Potential and Can We Provide Effective Assistance to the Rural Poor Who Wish to Remain in Farming? The Answer is Yes

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RURAL POOR AND IMPROVING THEIR LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

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POOR WHO WISH TO REMAIN IN FARMING? THE ANSWER IS  
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T. T. WILLIAMS

During the week October 19-25, 1975, Dr. T. T. Williams, Professor of Agricultural Economics and Administrative Assistant to the President, Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, visited the Department of Agricultural Economics, Cornell University. He has been appointed Adjunct Professor of Agricultural Economics at Cornell University. The following two presentations were given by Dr. Williams while he visited the Cornell campus.

## EXPERIENCES IN EXTENDING PUBLIC SERVICES TO THE RURAL POOR AND IMPROVING THEIR LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

It is with pleasure that I appear before you on this occasion. I feel somewhat like the old maid who was finally married and went on her honeymoon to Coney Island. Upon her arrival at the hotel her new husband said to her that he would go down to the lobby while she prepared for bed. "This", he said, "would only take fifteen minutes". When the husband returned to the room, the wife was in bed. As a loving husband, he went over to her as she lay there facing the door and patted her on the shoulder. At the same time, he asked her how she felt and if she was tired from the plane trip from New Orleans. The wife replied that she was very nervous, but very happy to be with him.

Ladies and gentlemen, I, too, am happy to be here and very eager to share with this group some of my thoughts relative to the experiences of the 1890 Land Grant Universities in extending public services to the rural poor and improving their leadership potential.

### Who are the 1890 Land Grant Colleges?

There were two Morrill Acts establishing Land Grant Colleges. The first act established one land grant college in each state. By and large, these were colleges for the predominately white clientele of this country. These colleges are referred to as the original land grant colleges or the 1862 land grant colleges.

In 1890 Congress, out of its wisdom, passed the second Morrill Act establishing land grant colleges primarily in the southern states for predominately black clientele. These 1890 land grant colleges were created with the understanding that they would develop educational programs with a focus for black people. In almost all of the southern states where these colleges were located, they were until most recently, the only state supported institution of higher education for blacks. These colleges provided a multiplicity of services to their clientele who resided in the rural and urban sectors of the respective state. In fact, the history of black involvement in higher education in general, and the mainstream of America in particular, is the direct result of the programs undertaken at the 1890 land grant colleges.

There is general agreement by educators that the 1890 land grant colleges have had major impact on higher education and economic development. These colleges, unlike their counterpart the 1862 land grant colleges, have been involved in development and committed to the personal well being of rural and urban blacks who are educationally disadvantaged, economically poor and politically alienated. During the 85 year history of the 1890 land grant colleges they have served as the training centers for black leaders for this country and the developing countries. One only has to turn the pages of history to observe the names of individuals who are in the forefront of business, law, engineering and yes, economic development.

Over the years, the 1890 land grant colleges have developed a unique kind of expertise, a proven quality so necessary for meeting the social and economic problems of mankind today. What is significant about these colleges is that they undertook these responsibilities and developed their expertise with limited state and federal support or publicity. Of the states where two land grant colleges are located (1862 and 1890), the 1862 colleges received eight times more state appropriation than the 1890 colleges but served only five times more students. In spite of the limited financial support made available to the 1890 colleges, their track record of success provided hope to a group of people who were outside the mainstream of American life.

In 1970, Congress attempted to correct the funding disparity between the 1890 and 1862 land grant colleges by enacting Public Law 89-106. Since that period, over \$70 million has been made available to these colleges to be used for research and extension. The allocation of the research funds by the 1890 land grant colleges provides this country and the 1862 land grant colleges in particular with a preview of the priorities placed on public services to the poor. It is estimated that over 80 percent of the appropriated funds are being used to support research dealing with improving the leadership potential of the poor. Certainly, this amount of funds allocated to "people" research is small when compared with the millions of dollars spent by the government and 1862 land grant colleges for non-people oriented research but it represents a significant start.

It is alleged that the Dean from one of the 1862 land grant colleges asked a recent graduate from the 1890 college this question: "What are the 1890 colleges doing in the areas of teaching, research and economic development?" The graduate student responded to the Dean's question with the answer: "The 1890 land grant colleges are graduating students who are attuned to that segment of society which your graduates find most difficult to relate." This in a nut shell is what the 1890 land grant colleges like Southern University are all about and the implications of this statement for the 1862 colleges by a first semester graduate student are many. Probably, it was this image of the 1862 colleges that prompted the criticism of the land grant college complex presented in the book "Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times."

The experiences in extending public services to the rural poor and improving their leadership potential must be viewed within the context of the development of these colleges. Many of the situations that prompted Congress to create the 1890 land grant colleges still exist. The recent great society thrust and the war on poverty mirror these conditions. For those of us in higher education and the predominately black colleges in particular, the immediate past years have been challenging and frustrating. The 1890 land grant colleges were faced with the issue of survival and declining state support. One significant point that has come out of the dialogue and studies of the 1890 land grant colleges relates to the success of their track record. One study finding summarized the position in this manner: "If there were not the 1890 land grant colleges today, someone would have to create them." These colleges continue to provide higher education to people aspiring for a day in the "sun". Past

accomplishments of these colleges justify their need and mirror their role in the extension of public services to the rural poor. We are still a long way from the fullest utilization of resources of our total population. But one cannot be naive to the negative comments advanced concerning the quality of education at the 1890 land grant colleges or for all colleges for that matter. Be assured that these comments reflect those individuals who would like to see all poor people kept in bondage.

Early in this century one black leader stated that the history of any civilization supports the idea that no nation that seeks the advancement and development of all its citizens can afford not to utilize the abilities of all its people regardless of race and ethnic backgrounds. Certainly the future of the 1890 land grant colleges will bring this nation closer to the realization of this goal.

Reviewing the past accomplishments of blacks, should not blind us to the fact that there are thousands of black youth who will never complete secondary education. These statistics should not hide the fact that the lack of education rather than inferior education is the greatest handicap for black people.

Poor people, historically, have visualized a college education as the key to release from poverty. But it is no secret that the poor youth today has perceived this escape door in a narrow sense. Historically, the black youth has pursued careers in teaching, law and medicine primarily because he encountered fewer employment entrance barriers in these areas. With national attention focused on the full utilization of manpower and with the resources of the 1890 land grant colleges, an increasing number of black students are entering disciplines which have been closed to them. Without the reservoir of expertise at the 1890 land grant colleges to train these future leaders in the non-conventional occupations, the employment trend will not have been significantly changed.

In spite of the breakthrough, in the fuller utilization of human resources, too many of the 1890 land grant college graduates are still employed at jobs and assigned responsibilities below their educational abilities. Too many are economically underemployed.

The increasing demand for a better trained and educated labor force means that the 1890 land grant colleges must be able to match its proven expertise for the training of its clientele with money -- state and federal. These colleges must have the necessary funds to strengthen their offerings in keeping with the "raw product" they enroll and the "finish product" they offer to the labor market.

Throughout this discussion, the emphasis has been placed on quality education rather than the survival of the 1890 land grant colleges. The survival of these colleges is assured as long as there exists in our society an alienated group of people seeking direction for upward mobility. However, there are two major issues that will influence the future role of the 1890 land grant colleges as they continue to provide upward mobility for their clientele.

First, the 1890 land grant colleges must be attuned to the present and anticipated needs of society. In this effort, closer professional relationship must be maintained between the 1890 and the 1862 land grant colleges. Along these lines there are some encouraging signs on the horizon. For example, for the first time in the history of the two land grant college systems, one can observe a professional atmosphere of working together among administrators and professors. Some will argue that this is due to the fact that both land grant colleges are presently receiving their own "hard money" from federal appropriations. If this is true, then we might have the answer to the busing problem, improving leadership potential and expanding public services to the rural poor. These are issues plaguing many parts of the country today.

The 1890 land grant colleges have brought into sharper view for the 1862 land grant colleges to study the need for re-assessing the criteria for determining their allocation of state and federal funds for research and extension. It was by no accident that the 1890 land grant colleges spent over 80 percent of their PL-89-106 appropriations for economic development activities.

Secondly, the 1890 land grant colleges, like other institutions of higher learning must continue to be relevant. This is not to say that the education thrust must respond to the cries for relevancy by the student body. No university can afford to deviate from the basic fundamentals of education. Too, often there exists in education a dichotomy between intellectual relevance and student relevance. The land grant colleges must develop educational programs that are relevant to all cultures, races and issues. Just as important, the curricula at these colleges must be couched in a belief that in order for their graduates to understand the world in which they will live and work, they must be knowledgeable of economics, philosophy, history and sociology. The graduates must be able to articulate ideas gleaned from these disciplines in a logical manner if they are to make any significant contribution to the advancement of mankind. For too many of our students today, relevance is equated with what is important on TV or in the newspaper. This is not to argue that the news media is not relevant, but it does propose that relevancy in higher education is different from relevancy presented in the evening news.

The future role of the land grant colleges will be directly related to the extent to which their curricula is relevant to the now and the future happenings. Everything the student at these universities experience must be viewed as important at some stage in his or her development. In this regard, the criteria for assessing the performance of the student must be based on a national norm. The quality of education must be based upon the improvement of a student's attainment from point one to point two irrespective of his past history of deprivation. The standard should be universal. Compassionate college professors who teach the educationally deprived student, unless they keep this point in prospective, will do more to lower the quality of education for these individuals than all the racial bigots.

The characteristics and family orientation of the students who enroll and later graduate from the 1890 land grant colleges are also important to keep in prospective as one reviews the role of these colleges. The typical enrollee comes to these universities with a behavior pattern different from that of the dominate culture. He is usually characterized as economically poor, sociologically inferior, psychologically frustrated and academically unprepared to negotiate a college curriculum by conventional methods. His limited exposure to enriching cultural, social and educational experiences in the home and community have contributed to his behavior pattern. With such a background, it is a "national wonder" that so many of these students graduate and continue their education with honors at some of the leading universities in the country.

Studies of the graduates from the 1890 land grant colleges reveal that the professional and technical occupations are the employment outlets for their graduates. On the other hand, looking at the family background, a disproportionate number of parents of these students have a poverty level income and limited formal education. Study findings also reveal that students from homes in which neither parent attended college are strongly motivated toward higher education. Not only do poverty home based graduates from the 1890 land grant colleges rank high on the salary scale in all occupations, but they also tend to marry their educational peers. So you have a built-in upward income mobility. In addition, graduates from homes in which the parents have limited education take their college education more seriously than graduates from homes in which the parents are employed in professional occupations.

Given the environment out of which so many black students have come, it is easy to understand why some professors would be inclined to over empathize with them. Because of the understanding and sensitivity of the professors at the 1890 land grant colleges to the aspirations and desire for academic excellence, the graduates have gone on to make their mark on society. Their course grade, as it should be, mirrors a national academic norm. These university professors are far removed from graduating a mediocre student who will cripple the minds of the students they will teach upon leaving the university. With adequate funding, the expertise of the 1890 land grant colleges could be more fully utilized in helping higher education to expand the preparation of graduates who will return enrollees better prepared to negotiate a college curriculum.

In the business of education, there is no place for bleeding heart professors. The curricula must place emphasis on such skills as reading, writing, thinking and talking. An individual who devotes time each day to reading will have less time to spend on rapping. An individual who can put to writing his ideas and concepts for others to study will not tolerate illogical dialogue on issues or ideas. This is what higher education is all about and this will continue to be the role of the 1890 land grant colleges in the years ahead for extending public services to the rural poor.



Black Americans are at the threshold of accelerated development and the 1890 land grant colleges are leading this movement. Without these colleges the black youth of this country will face a bleak future. Any society that limits the upward mobility of over 20 percent of its population is inviting trouble. As leaders, we cannot stand and let this happen. Certainly the land grant colleges with meager financial resources have done a monumental task in the past in providing quality higher education to its clientele. The rules of the ball game in the next decade will place increasing responsibilities on these universities in training their student body. My plea to you is to continue to cooperate with these universities by providing scholarships to their graduates and apprising federal officials of the need for greater financial support to keep the 1890 land grant colleges viable.

Unless the 1890 land grant colleges are provided with the needed resources to accelerate their efforts to help the poor and the disadvantaged this group of people will rise up in arms and demand alternatives to accomplish their involvement into the mainstream of American life. The 1890 colleges have a proven structure and administrative organization to develop and implement ameliorative programs. This nation must rededicate itself to the elimination of all inhibitors of economic development and upward mobility. When this is accomplished the role of the 1890 land grant colleges will serve as the foundation for this country's expression of better life on this planet for so many alienated people. Without these colleges the plight of the neglected will stand as a memorial to what an enlightened society let happen to the most affluent people in the world.

CAN WE PROVIDE EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE TO THE RURAL POOR WHO WISH  
TO REMAIN IN FARMING? THE ANSWER IS YES

There are three ways we can provide effective assistance to the rural poor who wish to remain in farming but they must work simultaneously in order to be effective.

1. Action Oriented Research:

Action oriented research with now application is needed if we are to improve the income of those who have limited resources but who wish to remain in agriculture. There is a need to design and undertake action research based upon the characteristics of the population to be served.

Traditionally, people with limited resources have had to secure their research information the best way they could and usually this was no way or by trial and error. Research geared to the needs of the people with limited resources is in great demand by community leaders and planners. Our land grant colleges must admit that their involvement in planning for people outside the mainstream of society has not been effective because researchers have asked the wrong questions for the right reasons.

Leadership research designed to provide facts so necessary for the success of community development programs is in great demand by community leaders. For example, it is an accepted fact that rural migration has left a leadership void among people with limited resources. What we do not know are answers to such questions as:

- (a) Who are the community leaders and what are their social and economic characteristics?
- (b) What are their deficiencies and strong points?
- (c) Where are they located? and
- (d) How can available resources be re-allocated to meet the needs of these leaders?

Answers to these questions are needed by the extension personnel if they are to be effective in helping limited resource rural people.

The failure of limited resource people to fully utilize the services available to them is not so much a reflection on the part of the recipients but on the dispensers of the service -- the extension personnel. Researchers at the land grant colleges know very little about the characteristics of the limited resource population who are minorities yet they are authorities when it comes to the dissemination of information to this group.

2. Cooperatives have long been recognized as one of the most effective instruments for improving the living standard of people with limited resources:

The unique aspects of cooperatives (one man, one vote) lends itself to an economic development thrust. In addition, the concept of self-help and the pooling of resources by members serves to attract limited resource individuals to join cooperatives.

In recent years, the term "emerging cooperatives" has taken on increasing importance as an instrument for development. These are cooperatives organized by people who are the residuals of an affluent society. The membership is predominantly black, educationally disadvantaged, economically poor and politically alienated.

During the peak years of the growth of emerging cooperatives, 1965-70, there were over 300 in the South with a membership in excess of 200,000. Despite the popularity of cooperatives as a development tool the success of emerging cooperatives in improving the income of limited resource people must be viewed from two dimensions:

(a) Community leadership and thrust.

(b) Economic viability.

Community leadership characterizes the thrust of emerging cooperatives. These cooperatives have served as the vehicle to promote social and political action. This characterization of emerging cooperatives supports the belief that in the final analysis the catalytic agent for community development is a determined group of people who understand how to work within the system to bring about social and economic change.

Leaders of the emerging cooperative movement are responsible for organizing the most effective instrument for participatory democracy during the critical period in this nation's history. The increase in the number of black elected rural officials is the direct result of the leadership in the movement. In pursuit of their goal, the leaders often resorted to activities which went against the local establishment. For example, a cooperative in Alabama decided to build and operate its own cotton gin. Another group in Louisiana purchased a sweet potato curing plant for use by its members. While the combined membership of emerging cooperatives in several states used rented vans to transport produce to terminal markets to be handled by their own sellers. The upshot of such activities resulted in the sharing of economic decisions by the cooperative members. In the initial stages, this sharing of economic power by limited resource people did not set too well with the establishment. In the process, there was created a communication void at a time when cooperation was so necessary to community development. Again, the land grant complex lost "brownie points" because it kept hands off in resolving the impasse.

Economic viability is not a virtue of emerging cooperatives and their immediate economic advantages were probably overstated. While it is true that many of the emerging cooperatives have a short history of operation as a legal entity, few have paid patron dividends and fewer still have realized savings for the members. It should be pointed out, that few of the managers of emerging cooperatives had any business experience or training prior to being hired as managers and during these crucial years the land grant complex was not qualified to provide the needed training to the very articulate manager.

### 3. Continuing Education:

The structure of the delivery system -- extension -- must be reappraised to aid the residuals of an affluent society. Land grant colleges with their built-in organizational structure must assume the leadership role in re-evaluating the extension services.

The new thrust of extension should place emphasis on providing information and services to that group of people who are searching for ways and means to negotiate the system. This new extension program must retrieve and utilize research findings located at the 1890 Land Grant Colleges.

It is most difficult to develop viable communities without instilling in the people the desire and ability to perform leadership roles. The realization of this goal is compounded by the fact that the migration of people from rural to urban areas has altered somewhat the leadership quality in rural areas. Rural leaders with the ability and the initiative to lead have moved and those leaders who have emerged are experiencing difficulty in moving the limited resource people forward. It is within this area that our land grant colleges need to evaluate their continuing education priorities for improving the income of those who have limited resources but who wish to remain in agriculture.

Certainly, the Extension Service was established for the purpose of providing technical and non-technical assistance to rural people but with the passing of time, extension has become so successful in working with commercial producers that limited resource farmers have migrated to urban centers. In the meantime, extension has responded to the migration pattern by assuming greater responsibility for helping the urban population. This shift in the role of extension is often justified by the fact that the number of limited resource farmers was declining and the commercial farmers remaining desired such sophisticated information that the conventional extension worker found it difficult to meet their needs. So we witness the broadening of the extension clientele to include the urban population with a declining emphasis on the limited resource farmers. On the surface, such a change in the extension thrust should work to the advantage of all limited resource people but closer observation tends to refute this belief.

There are more service agencies providing assistance to the urban population than is the case with the rural population. Meanwhile, the modern extension personnel find it most difficult to deliver needed services to their new clientele -- the residuals of an affluent society residing in the urban communities. Failure of this group to utilize the many services available to them attest to the need for restructuring the traditional extension in keeping with its original thrust.

Extension Service personnel must be trained in the skills needed in working with the limited resource people. The land grant colleges have the responsibility and the opportunity to assume the leadership in bringing this about.