

The Last Word

Agricultural Organizations As Communicators (continued)

THE FIELD of agricultural communications is in a state of change. Anyone who reads the business pages of a magazine or newspaper knows that it's difficult to keep up with mergers and acquisitions of companies. Likewise, during the past couple of years, similar trends of mergers have appeared in the field of agricultural organizations.

In late 1971, seven professional societies voted to form a national organization to become "agricultural science's voice on the national scene." Charter members of the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) are the American Society for Horticultural Science, the American Society of Agronomy, the American Society of Animal Science, the Crop Science Society of America, the Society of Nematologists, the Soil Science Society of America, and The Poultry Science Association. Since incorporation, the American Forage and Grassland Council, the Association of Official Seed Analysts, the Council on Soil Testing and Plant Analysis, and the Weed Science Society of America, have also joined CAST. CAST claims to have 21 supporting members and more than 1,000 individual members. In their words their purpose "is to make agricultural scientists more effective sources of information for the government and the public. The approach is that of supplying the best available information, not lobbying."

Late in 1973, three national agricultural groups—the National Agricultural Institute, the National Agricultural Communications Board, and the Farm Summit Steering Committee—formed the Agriculture Council of America (ACA). A Committee on Program in ACA has proposed some operating goals including, "a coordinated theme and media campaign, pooling the creative resources of interested organizations in materials dissemination, and, creating a new Communications Center through which the farmer's

views can be more clearly and constantly articulated in the urban media." The organization also hopes to establish a Resource Bank of available communications materials that will be available to all who are interested in telling the positive story of American agriculture.

It's interesting to note that both CAST and ACA have generally stated a common goal—to more effectively communicate about American agriculture. If we are to look at Dr. James Evans' conclusions on what might be expected from increased and concentrated communications activities by organizations (page 13), we would have to assume some positive results will come about for agriculture. For AAACE members, however, the more important implications are in the conclusions he draws relating to agricultural communicators. Perhaps each of us, or at least those of us active in agricultural communications *per se*, should closely assess the implications of Evans' six questions about *our* communicating activities.

There are some who may frown at the stated communications goals of other organizations. I don't really think the American public is sophisticated enough to differentiate between who is doing the communicating about agriculture. Evidence during the past year or so would indicate that agriculture is going to be a major newsmaker for some time to come. Let's be sure the public gets the right message; then, if backs are to be patted, we can get our fair share. *C.E.B.*