

They wanted something new and different. So folks in Vermilion county made their 1958 policy development program a huge success when . . .

During rehearsal for the policy development TV show, these Vermilion County Farm Bureau members begin discussion as WDAN-TV camera gets the range. Left to right: Frank Andrews, Patemas; Mrs. Richard Graves, Georgetown; Mr. and Mrs. Dixie Neuber, Georgetown.



## They Put PD on TV

By JAMES A. JENSEN  
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AT 9 p.m. on Thursday evening, Sept. 18, a small group of Vermilion County Farm Bureau members sat down at a kitchen table and began discussing local tax problems.

As they talked, thousands of farm folks in the area watched them and listened to every word.

For this was no ordinary kitchen conference.

This kitchen table was on a set in the studios of station WDAN-TV, Danville. Microphones and cameras picked up every movement and every word—and broadcast them simultaneously on radio and television.

For the Farm Bureau members who watched and listened in their homes that night, it was a unique and successful experiment.

Never before had TV and radio been used in this way to carry out a local policy development program.

When the members in the studio finished discussing state and local revenue problems, the TV camera swung to another part of the set and focused on Vermilion County Secretary of Organization Ken Cheatham.

He picked up a phone and called one of the dozens of homes where Farm Bureau members were gathered around a TV set.

"How do you feel about this problem?" Cheatham asked. He got a quick summary of opinion from the members in that home—while other viewers continued to watch.

Returning to the kitchen table in the studio, the camera picked up another group discussing "check-off" programs for research and market development.

After this second group discussed that problem, Cheatham made another call to sample opinion in another part of the county.

Talk around the kitchen table was supplemented with motion picture film which helped set the scene for each of the two major subjects discussed.

Then, in the last part of the hour-long show, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Graves of Georgetown, and Harold A. Linville, Fairmount, told of the IAA stand against the \$248 million state bond issue. Graves is Vermilion Farm Bureau president, Linville is vice president, and Mrs. Graves is a member of the State Farm Bureau Women's committee.

They explained why Farm Bureau favors a "pay-as-we-go" plan for financing state buildings rather than the costly bond issue, which will be voted on in the Nov. 4 general election.

After the show, members who had watched and listened in local kitchen conferences filled out questionnaire sheets.

These forms had been provided for each of Vermilion county's 3,000-plus members. WDAN viewers in nearby sections of Edgar, Champaign, and

Iroquois counties were also invited to watch and fill out the questionnaires.

The survey sheets, indicating the opinions of the individual members, were tabulated. The questionnaires were color-coded for the four counties, and results of the survey were forwarded to the other Farm Bureaus.

Cheatham reported results of the survey to folks in Vermilion county at a series of seven meetings the following week.

How was the new policy development plan received?

"With tremendous enthusiasm," Graves reported.

He pointed out that thousands of non-Farm Bureau members in cities and towns also watched at least part of the show.

"I'm sure it gave these people a new insight into the problems farmers are facing," Graves said. "We asked these non-members to send us their comments, too."

The cost? Mostly time and effort, Cheatham said. The TV and radio time was very reasonable. Add to that the questionnaires and a few other expenses and this policy development program was no more costly than others.

PD on television was a novelty for folks in the Danville area. But it was more than that.

It was a successful, hard-hitting policy development plan. And that's what really counts.