

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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September 9, 1919

To Honorable Carl E. Milliken, Governor of Maine  
Re: County Farm Bureaus

We have the honor to acknowledge receipt from your office of a letter from the Dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Maine under date of September 4th, relative to the financing of County Farm Bureaus under the provisions of Chapter 42, Public Laws of 1919, and submit herewith our views upon the question.

Careful examination of the statute leads us to the conclusion that the only duty of the county officials in the administration of this law is to levy a tax under the provisions of Section 4, enforce its collection and pay it over to the Bureau in a lump sum. We feel that the responsibility for the proper handling of this fund thereafter rests entirely upon the Farm Bureau and the University authorities.

You will note that the work contemplated is to be "carried on" under the provisions of Section 2 in such manner as the Executive Committee of the Farm Bureau and the trustees of the University may determine. The carrying on of the work normally involves the payment of bills necessarily contracted. Under Section 3, it appears that the purpose of the creation of the Bureau is to carry out the provisions of the act. The same section says that they are to be recognized as the official bodies for carrying on extension work, etc. The amount to be raised under the budget plan (Section 4) is to be expended under the provisions of the act.

It should be borne in mind that under the general provisions of law (see R.S. Chapter 13, Section 5), the county treasurer is authorized to pay money only on order from the county commissioners or a Justice of the Supreme Judicial or Superior Court. Obviously, it was not contemplated that the county commissioners should audit each bill incurred in the prosecution of this extension work. It would seem more in line with the legislative purpose that the treasurer pay over the entire sum to the Farm Bureau on the order of the county commissioners.

Any other construction would lead to practical difficulty, especially when the last sentence of Section 4 provides for the union of two counties in one bureau. It certainly could not be the intention of the legislature that each bill should be presented in two parts.

It should be noted that the County Farm Bureau is required to make a detailed report of its activities including its receipts and expenditures from all sources, both to the trustees and to the county commissioners. This language clearly implies a greater degree of control over the financing of the extension work than that which arises from the mere contracting of bills and issuing orders for their payment.

Fred F. Lawrence  
Deputy Attorney General