

THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

Vol. XVI

MARCH, 1929

No. 7

"LET'S PLAY"

All work and no play prevents many rural folks from experiencing the real joys and pleasures of life in the "great out-of-doors." The value of recreation on a play level as a factor in enriching the life of young people and older people alike is too well known to really need any argument. However, with the many demands made on persons engaged in making a living they frequently forget to really live.

The most difficult part of a program for organized recreation for rural folks is to get it started. For this reason it is necessary for some one to assume the definite responsibility of initiating and keeping alive the play spirit and to direct the play and recreational activities of rural communities. Because of the position as a leader in a community the teacher of agriculture is a strategic person in the organization of recreational activities for groups of rural folks. The following message from Professor Lundquist should be helpful in renewing the interest and zest of the teachers in planning and putting into operation some forms of recreational activities among the people with whom it is their lot to work.

A. M. F.

PROBLEMS AND SOURCES OF RURAL RECREATION

An era may be judged by what people choose to boast or worry about. Today we are not boasting so much about rural recreation, but we are becoming somewhat worried about the lack of it.

It is the nature of every human being to play. In other words, this means there is something which every person likes to do. Play is merely a general name for those activities which give us pleasure. Even sawing wood or pitching hay may be play under certain circumstances and to a certain extent to a person who does not have to do such work. Going fishing is play if we do not have to go oftener than we like. Beyond that it becomes work, and we have to be paid for doing it. Many people believe this would be a delightful world if we could play and make a living at the same time.

Some difficulties, however, seem to stand in the way of the realization of such an ideal. It is highly improbable

that the number of people who would like to go fishing would correspond exactly to the number necessary to supply the world with fish, or that the number of those who would delight in gardening or poultry raising would be the number necessary to supply the world with garden truck and with poultry products; and so on through all the different occupations. The improbabilities become so great as to amount to practical certainties. In other words, it is reasonably certain that no such world could ever exist. In order to get enough of certain products, more people must be induced to produce them than like to do so. The prevalence of desires whose satisfaction requires effort that is non-pleasurable is an ever-present fact. Consequently, there must be work. Not all of us can play all the time. This is really one of the great problems of men's adaptation to the universe.

Nevertheless, our basic interest is in play rather than in work. The desire for certain activities is as definite as is the desire for certain goods. To deprive ourselves of the opportunity for pleasurable action, technically known as play, would be as great a hardship as to deprive ourselves of material goods, except that necessary to our physical life. Agencies for the satisfaction of the desire for play are as legitimate as agencies for the production of material goods.

"Tell me how you spend your leisure time, and I will tell you what you are" is an old saying. However, it is almost synonymous with another statement, "Tell me how you spend your money, and I will tell you what you are" or "Tell me what material goods you prize most, and I will tell you what you are." You spend your money for the things you like best; you spend your leisure time doing the things you like best to do. These are pretty clear indications of your character.

On the whole it is not far from the truth to say that play has contributed as much to civilization as work, though there may be some slight exaggeration in such a statement. One interesting theory is that speech itself originated in play in the form of rhythmic movements and sounds, that is to say, the primitive being whom we now call man engaged in certain social activities with his fel-

THE VISITOR

Published monthly by the Division of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Entered as second class matter at the post-office at St. Paul, Minn., under the Act of August 24, 1912.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized August 2, 1918.

THE STAFF

A. V. STORM
A. M. FIELD
L. E. JACKSON

D. D. MAYNE
F. W. LATHROP
V. E. NYLIN

lows in which rhythmic motions of the bodies were accompanied by rhythmic sounds. Certain sounds came to be associated with certain motions and these gave rise to verbs of action. As these games became more complex, an increasing number of sounds came to have customary meanings; in other words, with many repetitions a given sound came to be associated by custom with certain objects as well as with certain motions. Thus both nouns and verbs of action were developed. Whether this theory be correct or not, it is at least plausible to those who have studied the habits of animals and the habits, customs, and institutions of primitive man.

All this merely shows how deep-seated is the desire for pleasurable action, and how "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" the world would be if we were to eliminate play and limit ourselves wholly to material things as the source of satisfaction. This is not to be interpreted, however, as encouraging people to turn unreservedly to play. Work is a necessity imposed upon us by the facts of existence. It is generally more difficult to get people to work as much as they should in order to meet these facts than it is to get them to play as much as they should for their own good. The process of adapting ourselves to the world in which we are forced to live consists in compelling ourselves to do whatever is necessary instead of abandoning ourselves to the guidance of our feelings and impulses.

In view of these facts, the people of this generation like people in previous generations realize the value and importance of play in life. We today believe that the desire to play is not confined to children, that its values are not restricted to childhood, and that any individual or community that would ensure himself or itself an abundant or even a normal life must provide natural and constructive play. We have passed the day, in our understanding of individual

emotions and social structure, when we think of play as mere amusement, or of recreation as consisting of either play or amusement. Amusement is anything that pleases. But one might go through life highly amused, and yet never have experienced anything more of play than the emotional exhilaration which comes with having the stage turned upside-down a thousand times. Play is something that pleases, plus an end or goal to be attained. If it is a game the goal is consciously set. If it is not a game, the goal is there just the same in the tonic to life, the joy of experience, and the development of personality. It is as universal as human action, and as broad as life itself.

In discussing whether rural people need recreation, we need only ask whether they ever need release from monotony; whether they need the zest which comes from play; and whether they need woven into their lives the creative process which comes as a product of freedom and zest. Since these have been demonstrated as worth while factors in life generally, they are certainly the birthright of the boys and girls, and men and women, of the open country.

In evaluating recreation anywhere, we usually find the problem centered around the moral, mental, social and physical aspects of play. The moral values of play are so well recognized today that churches, schools and almost any other agency include play in their regular program of activities. This is being done not only to attract and attach people to their religious activities, but also because they recognize that the best way to teach ethics and morality is to make each of them a part of a person's ethical and moral code as well as a part of habit established in games. It is less difficult to do it in play and recreation than by precept and preaching. Therefore the problem of controlled and supervised play is so evident that further discussion is futile, when it is generally accepted that self-control, self-confidence, determination and courage are more easily developed in games than in practically any other activity. Furthermore the recognition of the rights of others, fairness, altruism, and even self-sacrifice are strikingly developed. Finally, enthusiasm, zest, joy and aspiration inhere in most recreational activities, all of which are the very fibers of personal morals, of social ethics, and even a part of religion itself.

The mental value of most games is no longer questioned. Mental alertness, initiative, quick decision, optimism, precision, skill and readiness arise out of play. All these qualities will give any

child character and an appreciation of itself, and many of them are not furnished by any other activity of childhood except through play. For this reason country children and country folk generally should be given an opportunity to develop their personalities and habits established by means of play.

Social values of play probably rank above all others. These rural dwellers need especially, for it is in social experiences that the country is lacking. In play, group action and group solidarity have a chance to develop, while techniques in cooperation and community organization are also fostered here as in no other activities. Team play, leadership, community loyalty, and capacity to associate run together in a spirit of freedom seldom if ever evidenced on so wide a scale. Furthermore, relaxation or release from monotony and routine usually follow play, and it is in this sense that the social values accruing from recreational activities in rural areas cannot afford to be underestimated.

The physical value of play among rural dwellers is probably the most difficult of all problems because it is generally assumed by most country people that boys and girls who work on the farm get enough exercise. No one denies that this is true, but those well informed know that no other group of people needs certain kinds of exercise more than those very boys and girls who do hard work in the field and in the home. The fact that the fundamental muscular movements are frequently repeated makes these muscles hard and rigid. Therefore exercises are needed in rural areas which will develop the secondary muscles. These muscles often determine graceful bodily movements more so than do the primary muscles. The notion that rural children are being offered these opportunities through their daily labors is a sad misconception. We have also too long neglected the idea that play is a part of nature's way of developing a normal child. Play and not work is the best medium through which muscles and nerves can be made to coordinate in such a manner as to create that bodily harmony so necessary to an individual's social welfare. Thus we have come to say that physical recreational activities are a tonic in that they arouse the emotions. The body furthermore becomes more symmetrical because all the muscles in the body are used properly and in balance. Here then we have the medium through which coordination, rhythm, and grace are developed. Meanwhile persons from rural sections who know how to play can often be picked out from the awkward and clumsy individuals who

have not played. Finally, where muscles and nerves, mind and bodily movements, and the auxiliary muscles are properly coordinated, we have a more perfectly developed individual than where work alone holds sway.

These are, then, the problems. We now come to the sources or forms of activities which are to be used in developing a workable rural recreational program. We noted in mentioning the problems that some were mental while others were physical. The mental sources or forms of recreation are those which relate to music, vocal or instrumental, reading, literary and debating societies, and entertainments in general as now constituted. With radio, victrola, and player-piano much of the old-time singing, orchestra and band music have, for the time being at least, been set aside. That is, there is less of the home-made kind of recreation than formerly, and we Americans are apparently as content to "can" our recreation as we have been content to "can" many of our meats and vegetables. Most of these activities were outside our homes. Many of us even go to the library to read. Thus at times it appeared as if the home were to be sadly neglected. But since the coming of the radio, an instrument has been invented which probably is to restore the home to its former prestige. In speaking of these mental recreational activities, it seems almost sacrilegious to mention the fact that aside from the community singing in vogue during the war and in some sections since the war, we, as a people, had almost forgotten the art of creating our own mental recreation. Much is now being done by agricultural experiment stations to direct rural dwellers, and to teach them that the best entertainment is the home-made brand. Where real efforts have been made, good results have been shown and people have come to know that "the world is a great stage" and all of us are good actors provided opportunities are afforded where our talents may be put to use.

Important as these mental activities are, we must not forget that after all physical sources of recreation are not to be neglected. Baseball, basketball, football, skating, wrestling, jumping, putting the shot, swimming, running and any other forms of play which invite the trial of physical strength are as old as civilization. Any one of these activities will help to develop the muscles which commonly are not used when engaged in physical labor. Therefore we must see to it that country districts are provided with equipment and supervision. Equipment can be had by communities which have vision and which show a co-opera-

tive spirit. Most of us know of instances where interested persons in small towns and in the open country have by their own initiative been instrumental in making a baseball diamond or a football field. Others have provided basketball equipment, and again skating rinks and swimming holes have been made ready for eager youths in many places. Thus where people have once enjoyed such recreation, they are eager and willing to maintain it, even at some considerable cost. We are not going backward. Ten years ago boys and girls from rural sections at the University Farm School had an average attendance of about thirty-two places where recreation was provided during a period of six months, from April 1 to October 1. In 1928 young persons coming from practically the same surroundings average an attendance of forty-six times over a similar period of time.

Even though the facilities for rural recreational activities are not comparable with those provided for urban children, the lack of proper supervision is even more to be regretted. It may not be so far out of the way to predict that some day supervision of rural recreation is going to become a fact. Other seemingly impossible things have happened. Witness, for instance, rural school supervision, agricultural schools, rural evening schools and the itinerant rural teacher. These are bright spots in the life of country people, and we who have interest in rural life must not rest or remain inactive until some of the recreational activities common in urban centers have been provided children and adults in rural sections. Then some of the rural problems will have been solved, and rural sources of rural recreation will have been utilized, so that dwellers in country districts will in some measure experience the zest and joy that come from the use of proper equipment and the influence of supervised play.

G. A. Lundquist

Livestock Judging Contest

"It won't be long now" before the annual livestock judging contest for students in vocational agriculture will be held at University Farm. Let us not select our teams too early because this plan tends to cause students who are not selected for team membership to lose interest in the agriculture work. The previous general order of procedure will be followed in the conduct of the contest. The probable date for the judging contest is May 16, 17, and 18. Complete rules and regulations will appear in the April issue of the Visitor.

A. M. F.

Recent Books

Rosendahl, C. O., Butters, F. K., Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota. 1929. 385 pages, \$4.00. The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"The interested amateur as well as the teacher and the professional botanist will find his needs met in this volume. It is the most complete and authoritative account ever made of trees and shrubs of Minnesota."

Ashbrook, F. G., Fur Farming for Profit. 1928. \$4.00. Macmillan Company.

"Treats of the whole fur farming industry. Of special value to teachers and students who are interested in fur farming."

A.M.F.

F. F. A.

The Future Farmers of America is a national organization of students of vocational agriculture in the United States. The organization has been granted a charter and has established national executive headquarters. The present executive secretary is H. C. Groseclose, Blacksburg, Virginia.

In Minnesota a number of teachers have organized clubs among their high school boys who are enrolled in the agriculture classes. Two years ago delegates from these clubs held a meeting at University Farm for the purpose of perfecting a state organization of agriculture clubs. A state constitution was agreed upon and officers were elected but the lack of a definite program of interest has kept the organization from making any great progress.

The establishment of a national organization should renew the interest among the teachers and students in Minnesota. The state organization can affiliate with the national Future Farmers of America and receive a state charter. Under this state charter local chapters can be organized and local programs of activities established in cooperation with the state and national organization.

It is suggested that the present officers of the state agriculture club organization make plans for a meeting to be held at the time of the annual state livestock judging contest for the purpose of organizing a Future Farmers of Minnesota Chapter of the National F. F. A.

A. M. F.

Teaching Helps

Write the Stanley Rule & Level Plant, New Brighton, Connecticut, for copies of helpful charts to use in connection with the work in Farm Mechanics.