

THE VISITOR

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OUR CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL LIVING

The authors of this issue of *THE VISITOR* are five farm boys enrolled for instruction in agriculture in the high school. The theme for the materials presented is *Our Contribution to Rural Living*. The contributions are extracts from reports made by the authors at the general session of the High School Congress and FFA Convention held at University Farm on May 4, 5, and 6, 1944. The thoughts expressed indicate what rural youth is thinking and many of their ideas are worthy of serious consideration. The last contribution is the winning speech in the FFA Public Speaking contest.

Morals and Religion in Rural Living

SIGVALD SANDBERG, Ortonville

"We just wanted to make a good place to live, one that we could enjoy and that the children would be happy to look back upon," Steve explained. Yet, I wondered if there wasn't more to the design for living that produced this pleasant home. So, I looked about the room. There it was—framed on the wall where it had hung in all the years since Steve and his young bride came there—a passage from the 90th Psalm!

"Let the beauty of the Lord, our God, be upon us and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it!"

That little incident is indicative, or an example, if you please, of the part morals and religion play in the life of rural America.

Let us discuss the causes and effects of the deep appreciation farmers have for the church and its functions. In my opinion, there are two main reasons or causes for that statement. First, the farmers' occupation has brought about a natural growth of personality which has produced a feeling that God is present. And second, the farmers' environment does not distract from God's greatness nor does it present the numerous temptations of the world.

The land belongs to God and man is a steward to bring forth fruit from that land. In man's process of bringing forth that fruit from the sod, he is always at God's command and power. Yes, rural life is always at the hands of God's will. A well-known botanist has said, "Man knows all about seeds and soils, but he will never be able to define or explain beyond science why a seed pushed through packed ground and against gravity to meet the outside world beyond."

Yes, the outside world of temptation. In

America we have one tavern for every 265 people and we spend four times as much for alcoholic beverages as we do for church work. Thank God, we who live on the farm know God, the creator, and live his way. One would not expect, generally speaking, a minister to be a bartender or visa versa. Neither would we expect anyone who is working hand and hand with God in food production to do so without feeling his presence.

What effects have these things had on our rural life, especially rural youth? Just to think of the enormous amount of moral delinquency of youth today and the small percentage of that immorality from rural America gives a good indication. Now, if the youth of today are to be the men and women of tomorrow for whom seven to ten million of our soldiers are fighting, and sacrificing, and suffering, and dying—will their unselfish and heroic sacrifice have been worthwhile? Are our soldiers going to die for a generation that knows neither God nor his eternal and unchanging moral law? My friends and fellow FFA members, we must realize as never before that all things are dependent on God. As we go to our homes and towns to develop our character and personality, let us be conscientious about Christianity. I know, as we establish our lives' work, that not all of us will take agriculture as an occupation. However, wherever we go or whatever we do, take the training you have received on the farm in religion and morals with you so others may share it. With that goal in mind, surely the causes of the important part religion and morals play in rural life, will produce effects that will be self-satisfying and God will say, "Well done."

Our Contribution to the Economic Phase of Rural Life

DONALD O'NEIL, Faribault

One of the contributions which all farm boys make is to furnish help on the farm. We help with the chores both morning and evening during the school term. When school is not in session we work full time. When the busy seasons come in the spring and fall we stay home from school and help through these rush seasons.

In most cases the farm boy is not paid for this work in cash but he gets his pay in another way. This is by carrying on a project from which he gets a cash or productive return. We get our feed and rent or whatever else we need to carry on the project or else

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pay a small sum for it. Then when we sell the project or get a return from it we are allowed to keep it. We can then spend the return as we see fit. In most cases the farm boy invests his money in another project and in this way gradually builds up a productive farming program.

On these projects of our own or on our father's farming enterprise we are generally carrying on new methods of farming practices. There are any number of new methods which we may be carrying out. For example, in our agriculture department we have many boys carrying different projects. We have several boys working with chicken projects. They work with their father's flocks and have increased production. We have boys feeding trio mixtures to hogs. Others are fertilizing corn and potatoes. On all these projects production has been increased. This increased production is needed very badly at the present time. This increased production also means more profit. We are directly responsible for carrying on these improved practices and the increased profit which results from them.

Not only do we contribute to the increased income of the farm family through our use of improved practices in home projects, but we also demonstrate improved practices to the community through our home practices and also through cooperative FFA projects.

These projects increase the profit and financial return of the individual members, of their parents and of the chapter. For example, last year Edward Drewitz, one of our FFA members grew, in partnership with the FFA, two acres of Minhybrid-403 seed corn. These two acres of seed corn were sold for \$180.00. Of the \$180.00 Ed was paid \$50.00 for seed, work, and other expenses. This left a net return of \$130.00. This was divided fifty-fifty between Ed and the FFA giving each \$65.00. Thus from two acres Ed received \$115.00 for his work and profit. The FFA members got \$1.00 a bushel for selling this corn. The farmers get better than average corn for less than market price. Therefore all the people concerned profited.

This year our chapter is growing, in cooperation with individual members, twenty

acres of double crossed hybrid corn, two acres of advanced generation single cross, and four acres of first generation single crossed corn. The community is very interested in these projects and from seeing these projects being carried out they oftentimes get a better understanding of the crop or project involved.

Therefore, I think our three most important contributions to the economic phase of rural life are first, to furnish help on the farm; second, to carry out improved farm practices on the farm; and third, to present to the community these improved practices.

The Social and Recreational Phase of Rural Living

VIRGIL ISRAELSON, Little Falls

In the category of social activities, dancing is by far the most commonly mentioned. Douglas county is lowest in rank with 58 per cent of the younger and 54 per cent of the older age groups belonging to no social organizations.

Age is a factor of considerable importance in most organizations. In general the younger group participates to a considerably greater extent in community organizations than older persons. The social needs of the younger groups are served by the school and such organizations as 4-H Clubs, FFA, Boy and Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls. The older group in most communities turns to dancing as its principal social and recreational outlet. At this age recreation tends to be more confined to smaller informal groups.

In high school athletics Douglas county ranks first with 12 per cent of its farm youth in each group as members in one or more athletic organizations. In community athletic organizations St. Louis County ranks first with 21 per cent of the young people in each age group. High school and community athletics play a very small role in the recreational life of the majority of young people on the farm.

There are various reasons why such a small percentage do participate. Many young people have to work in the community and others feel that they just do not need any additional organizations or activities. Cultural differences between areas in the backgrounds of people, especially in the realm of organized activity, together with lack of uniformity in interpreting the question, probably account for much of the desire for additional organizations.

Need for better health services was noted when as many as half of the draftees were rejected. This was due mainly to defective eyes, teeth, and feet. However, these figures were taken when men were drafted up to 38 years of age. Good health depends in part on medical care and on availability of modern equipment for diagnosis and treatment. It also depends much on knowledge of a proper diet, exercise, personal hygiene, and a periodic

check-up. Health is usually thought of as a personal problem. Health is more than a personal problem, it is a national problem. We must now, more than ever before, be physically fit in order to shoulder our wartime responsibilities.

Our Contribution to the Civic Phase of Rural Living

ARTHUR MATASOVSKY, Lakefield

Webster has defined civic as, "that pertaining to citizenship." In order that the youth of today might be the leaders of tomorrow they must develop qualities of good citizenship.

Some of the organizations which are helping greatly to develop qualities of good citizenship are the Future Farmers of America, the 4-H Club, the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and various others. Through membership in these organizations we become better citizens of our country because we develop, first of all, leadership. By attending regular meetings held under the supervision of an adviser, using regular opening and closing ceremonies, and using correct parliamentary procedure we establish our first step of leadership. Each member has an opportunity to participate in meetings thereby developing the ability to get up and express his opinions before a group.

Cooperation is another essential in making our youth better citizens. Each boy must learn to work with others and be able to accept other peoples' ideas along with his own. Most of the projects, activities, and organizations carried on are done not by one individual but by all the members as a whole or by committees. In our chapter at Lakefield we purchase cooperatively at reduced prices western feeding lambs, meat scraps, seed potatoes, and seed corn. Such things could not be done by just one individual alone. The holding of meetings in local organizations, the holding of district meetings, and the holding of this convention is brought about by the cooperation of each one of us.

Our youth must be able to handle financial business satisfactorily. Through a carefully planned long-time program of farm practice work a young person will know exactly what his receipts and disbursements are for each enterprise. By keeping up his financial record and establishing a good reputation for himself he will be looked upon as a citizen well deserving of his place in our democratic way of life. The receipts which a boy receives from his projects should be handled by himself, probably under the supervision of his parents for a while, but he should learn to do his spending wisely when young so that when he is older he will be able to more than "just make ends meet." Through a farm practice program of this sort a boy is given an opportunity to learn how to use credit, and to invest and handle money all of which will be of tremendous value in his later life as a citizen.

In conclusion I would like to repeat that three main things our youth must possess to attain the good citizenship that will be required of them in later life are: leadership, the ability to cooperate, and the ability to handle money satisfactorily—three things which we are learning through active membership in the Future Farmers of America.

Agriculture Our Basic Industry

PAUL ANDERSON, Grand Rapids

In a recent issue of the high school magazine *Scholastic* there appeared an outline of the objective that different groups should have in the postwar world. The article stated that agriculture should have as its objective, "To increase the efficiency of agriculture and improve the diets of all people." In parallel to this is the objective of labor which the article said should "Improve the working and living conditions of labor throughout the world."

In this last objective is shown the most common philosophy of the man in the street. According to this philosophy, the individual is to think in terms of personal betterment, rather than in terms of helping himself by helping others. Conspicuous by its absence is the fact that no mention is made of the possible value that labor is and may be to the world.

The American farmer, like the rest of the world, desires improved living conditions, more wealth, and shorter hours—but he should and does have an expressed desire to help his fellowmen by being more efficient. To produce efficiently in quality and quantity should be the objective of all individuals and groups—for of what value is a teacher to his pupils if these pupils, because of his efforts, do not become more efficient units in their mature life—of what value is a banker if his loans do not make his community more productive and a better place for all people to live. Of what value is a farmer—or anyone—if, through his actions the world does not become a more efficient, productive unit. The real objectives of all individuals is to produce for the betterment of other individuals.

In the Farm Column of the *Fortune* magazine, each month there appears an item which reads like this: "The farm is still the broad enduring basis upon which the entire United States economy rests." This shows that agriculture is our basic industry and science. The fact that all the food and clothing of the world are products of agriculture indicates that any economy is completely dependent upon agriculture for both survival and prosperity. Consequently, land is our greatest resource; farming is our greatest business.

Secretary of Agriculture, Claude R. Wickard, has said that "Food will win the war and write the peace." From this quotation and from the common knowledge that man to live must have food, we may begin to

judge the importance of the part that agriculture will play in building the peace. We cannot produce too much food. We know no cases of surpluses, only cases of maldistribution. The world is only as peaceful as the production from its soil is able to meet the demands of all peoples. This last principle was recognized by President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill when they said in the Atlantic Charter that all peoples shall have free access to those materials which they desire.

How, then, is agriculture to meet the overwhelming needs of the world's people? It is conservatively estimated that in our well-fed American ten times more dairy products would have to be consumed before each American would have an adequate supply of milk. Similar parallels, only worse, may be drawn in nearly every other country of the world with many of the world's foodstuffs. The truth is that the greatest percentage of the world's people are not living, but merely subsisting. And—alarming as it may seem, agricultural production is not now great enough, nor is it in peacetime, to provide much more than a subsistence for these peoples. Peace cannot come, and peace will not come, until we, who have the opportunities offered us by rural communities realize that it is our task to solve the two-fold food problems of sufficient production, and satisfactory distribution. This, my fellow Future Farmers, is the challenge which is confronting, and which shall continue to confront agriculture: To establish world peace, it is imperative that agriculture produce efficiently in quality and quantity; and that the problems of maldistribution be solved.

But how is agriculture to be highly efficient and productive? Wherein is the answer to maldistribution?

Though we may search nations and continents, the answers are to be found in no such large or complex place. The solutions of the problems is to be found in the work of the individual, and in the separate and collective activities of the communities. To completely combat war is as difficult a task as to wage war. We have all been told, and each day are realizing it more fully, that total war throws a great responsibility upon the individual. Likewise, total peace requires that each individual accept part of the job of keeping total peace. If we, of the next generation of rulers or if our parents of the present ruling generation, hope to establish peace, the realization must come that so gigantic is the task of bringing and keeping peace that it will require each individual to accept part of the responsibility. We Americans, as members of a democracy do exert an influence. Our influence is as great or as small as we wish to make it. The business, science, and industry of agriculture, because it is made up of individuals, has the potential power to satisfy the nutritive and clothing needs of the worlds' people.

The community was the first real form of organized exchange, united power, and consequently government. It began when some of our ancestors found that a point of exchange was desirable. This point of exchange developed into the village, town, and city. Radiating from the towns in our rural communities are the all important, basic units, the farms. Thus the rural community is composed of the farm and town or point of exchange.

The ideal community of those early days was the one which was completely self-sufficient. The ideal community of today is the one which functions as an active, very necessary part of the nation. Communities, in reality, are living cells of protoplasm which make the civilized world. Many cells make a tissue; and tissues make organs; and organs make a complete body. Since agriculture is our basic industry, business, and science, it is the heart of the world. Agriculture is the production heart of the world.

With each new harvest, with each can of cream or load of hogs to market this heart pulsates. It provides the blood of the world, the people's food for all organs of the world. It produces food for people in the cities, in the offices, in the factories—and for the masses in the congested areas where sufficient quantities of food cannot be raised. Agriculture, then, is the heart which produces the blood, which feeds the world.

We may well wonder, however, if for sometime this old world of ours has not had heart trouble, and also circulation trouble. The heart has sent blood to all the organs; but there has not been enough blood, enough food. Just as serious is the problem of poor circulation. The cells, the communities who make up the masses are not living. They are only subsisting, waiting for the agrarian heart to pump more blood, more quickly to all parts of the world.

Such is the problem of agriculture. Not only must agriculture produce, but it must distribute. This is the key to world peace. Only agriculture can forge that key. And even agriculture must stand all night vigils in the fields, in the communities, solving the two-fold food problem of sufficient production and satisfactory distribution before we may hope for world peace.

Fellow Future Farmers, the task of agriculture is no simple one. It will be long lived. Most of us will live through the present war to enter the many walks of agriculture and life. Let us so live now, that we are prepared for the task which is ours in the future. Let us not be agriculturalists unless we believe "in the future of farming, in the ability of organized farmers to serve our own and public interest in the marketing of the product of our toil, in leadership from ourselves and respect from others, and in the ability of each individual to exert an influence on his home and community."