

# THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

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## MEETING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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The article by Mr. Glenn Parker is taken from a talk delivered to the Agricultural Education Section of the A.V.A. convention at Minneapolis.

### PART I

These are exciting times for all, particularly for educators who teach with vision and imagination. We have the pleasure of living through and participating in some things that are the equal of anything that we have studied in recorded history. From the splitting of the atom to the destruction of Hiroshima and from there to the Korean War, has been but a phase in the revolution that is going on in man's relationship to man.

Educators are in the driver's seat today. In all the meetings that I have attended this year, I have sensed a general feeling of enthusiasm rolling up. I feel it—and you feel it—at every meeting that you attend. It might result in our rolling up our sleeves and going to work at home in our own communities, to start doing the tasks that have to be done in order to make a better world—through making a better community.

Don't you have at times a feeling of humility when you think of the mammoth responsibility that is yours as teachers? If you can look beyond the daily routine and grind to the finished product, you cannot help but realize that in your hands lie the future of our country. You have the most powerful job in the world—for you teach—you create—you develop—you mold the minds of the students that come to you for help. Your power is greater than the power of Napoleon or Hitler because the thing that you mold will live. It is hard to destroy a properly developed mind.

The schools are under attack today. Let us not fail to recognize it. At the same time let us proclaim to all the truth that the schools made America great. The strength of a nation always lies in the people, their fortitude and endurance, their capacity to adjust to new conditions of life and their ability to meet every contingency of life with intelligence and common sense. The schools play a vital part in developing that ability. The blessing of free education along with free expression and the printed word have brought forth the greatest flow of ideas from the greatest number of people that the world has ever seen. We educators can look with pride to the fact that our schools, the very

ones that are under attack today, were the instruments that loosed upon the world this productive giant and this colossal development of the human will. We have nothing to be ashamed of in past performance. We have no reason for hiding our heads or wincing when called a teacher. However, human events change and with that change, fundamental and piercing, it is necessary for schools to change to meet the challenge of existing conditions before conditions get out of hand and the schools become an instrument for social lag.

We know that it was only recently that there has been any clear cut agreement as to why we educate. We have always known that education was good. But only recently have we asked ourselves, "Good for what?" We are all in agreement now, that the one aim of education everywhere is to perpetuate the form and substance of American life. It is simple now that the decision has been made. We know to our sorrow that in too many instances boys and girls graduate from our schools lacking any deep appreciation of the immortal principles and ideals that gave this country birth. We *know* that! We will correct it! We know and have known for some time, that we have so many students under each teacher that we fail to know them well—and to guide them wisely. We know those things—we as educators will correct it.

We know also that the creative energies of youth are seldom released or developed in our schools. We know that well, for we struggle every day with the problem. We know that the curriculum of the schools, of my school and yours, is too far removed from actual needs of youth. We know that and will do something about it. We know that the traditional subjects of the curriculum have lost much of their vitality and significance. We are doing something about it. Let me say this, you agriculture teachers have a field that is more related to the needs of some youth than any other program in the educational system. But I'm not talking to you as agriculture teachers. I'm talking to you as teachers—as molders of youth in many lines—as educators facing a total problem. I think that you would want to be thus considered.

Lets forget this distinction in the public schools as to vocational and general education. To me there is no distinction; it's just all education.

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Curriculum study is going on in many thousands of American schools. The number is legion. Many plans are being worked out. Some are working and some are not. The educational world is being literally shaken by the up-heavals that have already shaken the communities where they have taken place. Let us always remember that change is an unchangeable law of nature. But in human affairs change does not always denote improvement. It just signifies change, nothing more.

The American form of government puts the responsibility for education upon the states. They in turn delegate that responsibility to local communities. This is true in most states. Thus we build from community to community, keeping responsibility close to individuals and maintaining the principle that the school is but the lengthened shadow of a well organized and operated home, doing a job that most homes are not equipped to do.

Because of the individual nature of education we can keep the virtue of democratic life alive and pulsating with undiminished lustre in men's lives. We do not want and we do not need, let me say, we will not accept, any curriculum handed down from above that is rigid and uniform the nation over. Education is a process of the development of the individual. In that way we strengthen our local political democratic society. Education is a business run for the benefit of society. However, society does not benefit unless its needs are being met. Its needs will not be met by an educational system that stands like a rock in the middle of a stream of water, forcing the water around it on its journey through its natural watershed.

Society is fluid, changing and fickle. Man's relationship to man is ever changing as the total world gets smaller in travel time. Are we as educators capable of the vision and imagination necessary in order to meet those changing conditions. I think so.

Have you ever stopped to think why we have made so much progress in the physical

science and so little in other fields? Is it because we are all so intelligent in those fields? I think the opposite is true. We all know that we know nothing in those fields and therefore if we want to make any progress we will have to provide the money and the men who have the time to study and search for hidden truths. That, it seems to me, is the answer. On the other hand, everybody knows how to raise children, and everybody knows how to run a school. Therefore, as long as everybody knows already, no study is necessary and none takes place. No money is provided because it is not necessary.

We live in a scientific age and we teachers brought it about. Therefore, let's apply those scientific methods of research to discovering and uncovering the needs of the community in which we live. Let's not be guilty of hasty and inconclusive conclusions about school adjustment that only meets the test of satisfying our own likes and dislikes, our own preconceived notions of right and wrong procedure.

There is only one way of making a better curriculum in the schools and that is by carefully analyzing society and then determining what children need to know in order to carry on successfully. When we do that the artificiality of our curriculum becomes apparent to all. Children don't breathe in a vacuum, but in the free air of a growing, developing society, alongside their parents and neighbors, each participating in community life side by side. When they do that, children do not leave the school in order to start living. They have been living.

(To be continued)

## Stem Rust Slide Set Available

Mr. Thain Stewart, Area Leader of the Barberry Eradication Program in Minnesota and North Dakota announces a new set of 27 Kodachrome slides on stem rust. A syllabus which accompanies the slides makes this a useful teaching vehicle. This set of slides and the syllabus are available on loan to vocational agriculture teachers through the Agricultural Extension Service Film Library at University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Mr. Stewart's long experience in this work and his record of cooperation with teachers throughout the state is well known.

## Congratulations

The VISITOR extends its sincere congratulations to Mr. Milton L. Korpi, Mr. Joseph V. Raine, and Mr. Godfrey P. Van Meter. These three men received their Master of Science degrees at the winter quarter commencement exercises at the University of Minnesota.

Congratulations to all of you and may the farm people of the United States profit from your interest and achievement in professional improvement.

## SOME EXPERIENCE OF A MINNESOTAN IN THE POINT 4 PROGRAM IN LATIN AMERICA

By ALVIN W. DONAHOO

Slightly over six months ago, I left the staff of the Department of Agricultural Education at the University of Minnesota for a two-year appointment with the Institute of Inter-American-Affairs. This agency is responsible for the administration of the Point 4 program in Latin America, and my assignment was that of a specialist in agriculture education in Bolivia. The Institute of Inter-American-Affairs program includes the cooperation of other United States agencies, under an expanded program approved by the Congress of the United States. By direction of Congress, the Department of State set up the Technical Cooperation Administration, for which IIAA is the Inter-American Regional Office.

Rounding out ten years of "Point 4 in Action" in Latin America on March 31, 1952, the Institute has been very active in Bolivia. Now that the Technical Cooperation Administration has been set up to render assistance to many other countries of the world, the experience acquired in the other American republic is being applied on a world scale.

The Institute offers its successful experience to the Near East and Africa Development Service and the Asia Development Service which will function similarly to the IIAA. Together these programs offer one of the most effective contributions of the United States to the free world against Communism.

After a month of indoctrination with the State Department in Washington, D.C. we (my family and I) arrived in La Paz, Bolivia where the education staff is headquartered.

One of the first things that one notices about Bolivia is that it is a country of contrast. On the roads large trucks carry produce to and from the market places, yet on these same roads the burro and llama are also a common method of transportation. In a field one may see diesel tractor pulling a five-bottom plow and in the neighboring field find a team of oxen pulling a wooden plow that does no more than scratch the surface of the earth. The types of agriculture in Bolivia add to this contrast. On the altiplano (a barren, wind swept area between two mountain ranges at an elevation of about 13,500 feet) one finds only such crops as barley, oats, radishes, and onions able to withstand the cold windy climate. Yet forty miles from La Paz one will find oranges, bananas, the grapefruit growing abundantly.

In the field of education the main emphasis is given to rural education. Certain schools have been turned over to Servicio (a name given to the group of North-American and Bolivians working together) where the

Servicio is given an opportunity to demonstrate improved methods of education. Materials and supplies are also furnished to the schools by Servicio. Two of these schools are rural normal schools and the remainder under Servicio are rural elementary schools. It was rather a shock to find no vocational agriculture such as the program in the United States. However, agriculture is taught in all the rural schools and teachers of general agriculture have some land for laboratory use. The purpose of this land is to give the children some practical agriculture as well as to provide food for the school children. However, agriculture is very backward in Bolivia and as a result most of the school land produces very little.

One of the first jobs undertaken was that of attempting to increase the production from the school lands. This looked like an almost impossible task. To one raised in the fertile corn-producing area of Iowa and Minnesota, the bleak, barren, rocky, altiplano looked very discouraging indeed. What crops would grow under these conditions? When one asks this question he is given such strange sounding names as Habas, Oca, and Quinoa. Such things as green manure, fertilizers, organic matter, and rotations are unheard of. No one seems to know whether alfalfa, clovers, and other such crops will grow under these conditions. There are no agricultural experiment stations such as in the United States to provide experimental research in solving agricultural problems. Much of the work must be done by trial and error at the local level.

With the agriculture instructors at the various schools the problem of increasing agriculture production was discussed, a rotation was planned, and new crops were suggested. Certain fields were set aside to be planted to green manure crops.

It is at this stage that the problems in such a program really start. The first big problem is that of language. The average North American has a very limited knowledge of Spanish so that almost all conversation requires translation. After the agriculture instructor and the school director are convinced of the value of the new plan it must now be discussed with the Indian leaders. Since few of the Indians speak Spanish, the plan must be translated from Spanish to the Indian dialect of Aymara or Quechua, depending upon the location. Only after the approval of the community leaders can one proceed.

Ignorance and superstition hamper the work with the Indians. Potatoes could not be planted until a certain day because on that day a God in the nearby mountain would look with favor on the work and as a result a big harvest would be assured. On one occasion a brown crow landed in the field as potatoes were being planted. This caused much excitement as the brown crow is a sign of poor harvest in that field. While the

planting was in progress all the teams of oxen were decorated with bright colored cloth to keep the devil out of the potato fields.

It is extremely difficult to convince the Indians that crops should be used for green manure and organic matter. Their feeling is that if the earth gives forth a crop and the crop is not used but turned back into the soil, the earth may rebel and refuse to give forth a crop the following year. Under this system organic matter is probably one of the greatest needs of the soil.

In working with this program, one finds the need for skills that are no longer taught in our vocational agriculture programs at home. No grain drills are available so the ability to seed the proper amount by hand is a most useful skill. If a piece of machinery breaks down there are no electric welders for a quick repair job. However, one can usually find a forge and the ability to weld with a forge may make it possible to repair the equipment. In most agriculture departments in Minnesota, the adjustments of the collar on a horse is no longer taught, but on several occasions it has been necessary to make such adjustments here.

Most of the work in the fields is done with oxen. The yoke is placed around the horns of the animals. This type of harness make it impossible for a team to pull a mole-board type of plow. If one could get every farmer to move the yoke from the horns to the shoulders of the oxen it would be a real contribution to Bolivian agriculture; the extra mechanical advantage would make it possible to actually turn the soil with a plow. However, the ability to make a yoke for a team of oxen is a skill never acquired in the vocational agriculture training of this writer!

The basic community school philosophy demotes in the rural areas. The Indian feels very strongly that the school belongs to the community, and the teachers and school directors are very conscious of this fact. In almost every case one finds that the people in the community have built the school buildings. They will devote many hours of labor planting the school lands, constructing teachers' living quarters and many other tasks for the betterment of the school. The rural population watches the work of the school very closely and if the changed practices appear to be good, they are readily adopted.

The farm of the Indian on the altiplano is small and the teaching of agriculture has been adjusted to help meet the needs of the people. The one big need seems to be the raising of the subsistence level of the farm people. These people are not engaged in a commercial type of agriculture; this, emphasis is given to gardening and to raising rabbits, chickens, and similar animals and fowls.

While such a job can at times be very discouraging, there are many compensating factors. There is the feeling of helping people where help is really needed; the feeling that perhaps one can help give the children of Bolivia a better future. It is a program where it is possible to see results. If a few improved practices are adopted, the results can be seen quite readily, at least in the field of agriculture. Bolivia is a country that is developing rapidly. Vast new fertile lands are being opened for agricultural purposes. The possibility of irrigation on land where rainfall is lacking is being considered. It is a source of satisfaction to be taking part in this development.

There is also the enjoyment of working for a better understanding between people of different countries. In a program such as Point 4, one must work very closely with the people of the host country. Each North-American technician has his Bolivian counterpart and, through such an arrangement, each learns from the other. It is most encouraging to see people of different nationalities work out common educational problems for future generations. This constitutes the challenge and the opportunity presented to teachers as they come to know other groups.

#### Summer Time Tune-Up

This is the time of year when we de-winterize our automobiles, drain out the winters' accumulation of sludge and tune them up for the summer time driving. Is there a parallel in this situation that relates to the professional improvement and intellectual "battery charging" of agriculture instructors? We think there is and hope we have not stretched the point too far in introducing this announcement of the summer session program at the University of Minnesota for the first session, beginning June 16, 1952.

In addition to the regular offerings and the old reliable professional improvement courses, emphasis this year will be on development of units of instruction in farm machinery, livestock marketing and the development programs of work for Future Farmers of America.

Our guest "mechanic" will be Mr. Carlton Johnson from Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. A number of resource persons will be involved in this summer session in addition to the regular staff of instructors. Again this year as in previous years arrangements have been made in certain courses whereby the first three weeks are in residence, and the second three weeks are on arranged basis. The VISITOR hopes that agriculture instructors will continue to be alert to the need for professional improvement and will take advantage of the offerings during the first summer session.

Welcome to University Farm! Come and meet your friends and swap ideas. Who knows, you may pick up some new ones.