

# THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

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## LOOKING AHEAD

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It seems to me that we have a most ideal agricultural education "set-up" here in Minnesota, one which has great possibilities of service to the farm people of the state. It is encouraging to see the increase in numbers of agriculture departments in the high schools. This is a definite manifestation of the fact that farmers are becoming more conscious of the need of better education for their sons who are to carry on in the business of farming. It is gratifying to me to note that many of the alumni of this School of Agriculture at University Farm are among those who, as members of school boards and as leaders in their communities, have strongly supported the establishment of agriculture departments in their local high schools. Many of these alumni have then sent their own sons through high school and then on to this School of Agriculture. During the early years of this school the enrollment came largely from young people who were not high school graduates. However, as high school education became more available and more high schools put in departments of agriculture, this School of Agriculture, pointed its program more definitely to meet the needs of those high school graduates who for one reason or another did not plan to go through a four-year course for a degree, but who did wish to supplement their high school training by post-high school vocational training in farming, practical nursing, homemaking, leadership, business courses, and related subjects.

During the past school year the average age of the students in attendance at the School of Agriculture was 20.8 years. Nearly ninety per cent of all the students are graduates of four-year high school courses and the remaining number are for the most part students whose high school training program has been interrupted.

We have many students who come directly from the agriculture departments in the high schools through the counsel of their Smith-Hughes agriculture instructors. I should like to emphasize that the Smith-Hughes agriculture instructor in a Minnesota high school occupies a most responsible position from the standpoint of counseling with boys engaged in the high school agriculture courses. In spite of the fact that other counselors are designated within the high school, the farm boy through his contact with the agriculture instructor respects and appreciates the advice given by that instructor. At our School of Agriculture, we hear statements from high

school graduates which give testimony to the fact that the agriculture instructors are giving very effective advice in encouraging the young farmers to continue their interest in farming and to continue with their education. I think no one would argue with the concept that it is advisable for a young man to secure a college education in agriculture and return to the farm wherever such arrangements can be made. We must not overlook the fact that there is a large number of very interested young farmers who plan to operate the home farm and who for one reason or another are not planning to enroll in a four-year college program. Our concern is primarily in offering a shorter period of post-high school vocational training of a practical nature. That idea was expressed very effectively in a statement made by the Minnesota Bankers Association in a brochure recently issued in connection with the scholarship program that various county associations are now setting up throughout the state. The Minnesota Bankers Association says in part, "In view of the fact that there are thousands of farm young people throughout the state, who, after finishing high school, for one reason or another, do not plan to enroll in a four- or six-year course for a degree but who do wish to get further vocational and leadership training for the purpose of returning to the home community and continuing in the business of farming and homemaking and since the School of Agriculture at University Farm, St. Paul, offers a program primarily pointed toward serving this group from the entire state and since this program has a definite vocational objective, the Minnesota Bankers Association sponsors and encourages scholarships to assist worthy and well-recommended older farm young people to attend the School of Agriculture at University Farm, St. Paul." This emphasizes the encouragement that is being given by the Minnesota Bankers Association urging young people to bridge the gap between their high school training and that of actual farming. I am sure that every teacher of agriculture appreciates the fact that there are always a number of his graduates who plan on staying in that community as good farmers. The teachers of agriculture appreciate this perhaps more than anyone else because they are near the particular situation and because of that nearness recognize the real need for leaders in the rural community. If that experience has been one in which his pride and enthusiasm

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for agriculture has been strengthened, he will become a more valuable leader in that particular area. The School of Agriculture program in which over twenty thousand young people from the farms of Minnesota have participated has sent young people back into their communities to carry on. Advisers, specialists, and others have reported that they have effectively taken positions of leadership in the community in connection with the agricultural organizations, the school, the church, and various other organizations which are the backbone of the community. On this campus there are literally two institutions, one dealing with the technical training and the other with this more intangible field of personal development and social ability that is so important if the individual is to acquire a position of leadership. Regular credit courses in leadership have been arranged in which the students are trained to go out to the rural organizations and carry on a laboratory experience in the field of leadership. Two courses are offered in which the principles of leadership and its practical application are carried out. One course in "Leaders and Leadership," was organized fifteen years ago. More recently a course in "Field Work and Leadership" has been established in which the young people go out to rural organizations and gain experience through demonstration and teaching procedure in assisting groups in conducting meetings, in demonstration work, and in the field of recreation. Our young people have reported that this training has been of great help to them in gaining confidence and understanding of the functions of a group and the place and responsibility of leadership.

If this program, the sponsorship of scholarships by the Minnesota Bankers Association, is developed as it has been in Michigan, and is being developed in other states, we may look forward to the day when we shall have a considerable number of scholarship students from all of the counties of the state attending this school through the efforts of the banks of the State of Minnesota. This program has been developed as part of what is known as a Short Course Scholarship

Program sponsored by the American Bankers Association and the Minnesota Bankers Association. The American Bankers Association has urged all State Associations to cooperate with whatever is offered at the Land-Grant colleges in non-degree post-high school vocational short course training in agriculture and homemaking. The plan of the Minnesota Bankers Association is that the banks of each county or an individual bank may sponsor at least one high school graduate for a full two-year program of six months each year through scholarships of \$100.00 per term, making a total of \$400.00 for the four terms covered in the period. The banks of the following counties sponsored students during the school year 1951-1952: Winona, Olmsted, Houston, Fillmore, Freeborn, Nobles, Blue Earth, Hennepin, Scott, Le Sueur, Mower, and Anoka. The selection is made by a local county committee usually made up of the agriculture and home economics instructors, the county agent, the home agent, and alumni of the School of Agriculture.

One of the very interesting developments here at the School of Agriculture during recent years is the establishment of an Alumni FFA Chapter. This chapter was activated a couple of years before World War II and then reactivated after World War II. The FFA Chapter is under the supervision of Dr. Milo Peterson, with the assistance of staff members who serve as advisers. Mr. Waino Kortsmaki and Mr. Ray Cochran of the State Department of Education have given valuable assistance in the development of this FFA program at the School of Agriculture. The co-operation from the high school agriculture instructors has been excellent. This Alumni Chapter of the FFA is composed of students enrolled in the School of Agriculture at University Farm, who were members of their local chapters in high school. The purpose of this chapter is to do promotional work for the FFA organization in Minnesota and to assist the local chapters wherever possible. This chapter also provides another means for the practice of leadership and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

As the percentage of high school graduates has increased, we have become more thoroughly mindful of the responsibility and privilege of working with a mature group of young men and women who have had the experience and the excellent background in the fields of agriculture and homemaking in their home high schools. As a rule, the student who comes to the campus is thoroughly familiar with and has a real pride in the field of agriculture and rural living and is anxious to improve his or her technical knowledge as well as the ability to serve as a leader in the home community.

The program of this School at University Farm provides a curriculum in the various subject matter fields of agricultural produc-

tion and management. The curricula are arranged under the headings of General Farming, Farm Mechanics, Crop Production, Live-stock Production, and Horticulture. For the young women there is offered a curriculum in Practical Nursing and Home Management, Home Economics, as well as courses in Business, Music, Dramatics, Athletics, and supervised programs of activity in nearly twenty student clubs. These all serve in the broad all-around training of the young men women.

The relationships between the students in the School of Agriculture and the regular college four-year program are excellent. For the past several years representatives of the School of Agriculture student body have sat on the Farm Union Board of Governors and helped direct the activities of that Union. They have had a part in the formation of policies, as well as committee assignments that have made it possible to strengthen the program of the Union on the St. Paul Campus. The main difference between the two groups is the fact that the young men and women in the School of Agriculture are primarily interested in a short time post-high school vocational training program leading to the farm, the farm home, practical nursing or some related fields of service. The other young men and women are primarily interested in training that will lead them into professional work in agriculture, forestry, home economics, or veterinary medicine, in the fields of research, teaching, extension work and related activities. Many of the students in the School of Agriculture will ultimately be back in their home communities as farmers and homemakers serving on committees which will be instrumental in setting up policies and programs. Many of them will be in positions calling for cooperation with professionally trained people who serve as agriculture teachers, county agents, home agents, and extension specialists. Therefore, it is particularly beneficial that good relationships between these two student bodies have been established while the students are together on the St. Paul Campus.

Looking ahead, in Minnesota I can see great opportunities for continuous significant service to rural youth and to the state in utilizing to the fullest all of the educational facilities provided through our high school departments of agriculture, the schools of agriculture at Morris, Crookston, Grand Rapids, and Waseca, the School of Agriculture on the St. Paul Campus, our College of Agriculture, Forestry, Home Economics, and Veterinary Medicine, and the Agricultural Short Courses. I feel that it is the responsibility and duty of all of us, not only to serve as effectively as possible in each of our own areas, but also to be helpful whenever possible in the on-going program of any and all parts of the entire educational pattern in this state. It is my firm conviction that much progress has been made towards that end.

All who serve in the field of agricultural education may well hold their heads high as they play their part in advising and aiding the rural youth of this state toward a better life through the fullest development of their talents and their spirit of tolerance, good will and faith in themselves, their God, and their Country.

## MEETING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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This is Part II of the article by Mr. Glenn Parker which was taken from a talk delivered to the Agricultural Education Section of the A.V.A. convention at Minneapolis.

Let us be clear now as to what I am talking about. I am not talking about educational methods. They must be revised in light of the findings of how children learn. We are concerned with what children should learn and of where the objectives of curriculum should in many instances arise. Let me tell you by way of being specific what we are going to try to do in our community. When I went to the community of Walker, about one and one half years ago, it seemed to me that all the problems of all communities were there rolled into one. I did the only thing I know how to do—I yelled for help. I asked five of the states top educators to meet with me and to tell me how we could more adequately meet the need of our community. Let me tell you some of those problems so you can see the picture better. Walker is the county seat of Cass County, Minnesota. It is located on the western boundary of the Superior National Forest, in the so called cut-over timber land. The town and countryside are natural habitat for summer resorts. Only 35 per cent of our school district is available for taxation purposes. The rest of the property belongs to the Federal or State Governments or is Indian allotment land. The Superior National Forest is constantly expanding and taking more land off the tax rolls. More land is becoming tax forfeited. More than 10,000 acres of land have become forfeited since 1947. The Federal lands and Indian lands are available to whites on a lease base, which means more roads to be built and more children to be educated. Yet, they pay no taxes.

The whole country seems to be rolling in wealth. Yet, Cass County isn't. More than \$750,000 a year is spent in our county alone on welfare. On top of all this we have at the school, certain problems. We have been unable to get the Indian to see the benefit to him of attending school past the age of 16. During the past ten years we have graduated only 10 Indian children and it

happens that all of them have been girls. Why? What is wrong? That is the question that haunts me. On top of those mentioned, we have the usual problems that attend any school, the maladjustment of school curriculum to students wants, the apathy of students, the traditional subjects and curriculum, and all the other ills to which the schools are subjected. To me this picture constitutes sociological and educational problems that I want to do something about.

The five educators met and decided that they didn't have enough information about the subject, that any change to meet community needs had to be preceded by study of the community in order to determine those needs. They are proceeding on the theory that you can't cure an ailment unless you can diagnose the disease correctly. They are advocating a complete study of every facet of community life. Only in that way can something be done about them. Only by that method can we expect that our conclusion will be any more than guess work. If you were to stand on a high mountain and look down on a community you would get one picture. If you were to live among the people of that community you would get another. When you study that community you get another picture.

What type of information will be needed? In the first place you can't consider the school separately from the community. You can't say we will study the school and then determine school action. That can't be done. The total community must be studied. School procedure must be worked out only as it is related to the total problem. That is why the group decided to tackle the whole problem before doing anything about the school. The Indian problem is just one of our problems, the welfare problem is just one of our problems. The school situation is just one of the problems. In a real situation we must not study as we do in school. In school we study a group of unrelated facts. In attacking a real life problem you must know the total problem and study it accordingly. We must study the economic life of the people, the culture, the religious, the sociological, the educational and all the phases.

In studying the economic life of the community we must know the income levels of people in that community. We must know the available jobs, skilled and unskilled; the total payrolls of all business; the base the economic life of the community goes on; the physical resources of the community; the demograph; the agricultural picture; the forestry outlook and the resort trade which forms a large part of our business activity. We need to take a look at the social life of the community; the cliques and the prejudices; the church affiliations and attendance as well as the institutional framework and patterns.

We will need to look closely at the school, into the limitations imposed on the graduates, the jobs they get or do not get. We

need to know where they go for jobs. We will need to trace our graduates back to find deficiencies in their training and to get their ideas on what best could be done. We would want to know what barriers exist between the school and the community. We want to know the activities of various groups in the community that effect education. The county agent, for instance, and any other government group; the forestry service in our area—the department of conservation and any other organization that might be carrying on a program that would bear on the total picture. We want to know the racial barriers that arise, the opinions of school board members, of teachers, of leader groups.

After all this information has been collected and assembled in an understandable manner then and only then will we have the knowledge necessary to carry on such a program as school adjustment to community needs. This will not be the only study of this nature that has been made. Many have been made and many are being contemplated.

With that information collected, phase I of the program will be completed. The usefulness of that information will now depend on our concept of the role of a school in the social system. Is it an instrument of social improvement? Or is social betterment, which is the end product of education, to be left to other agencies, or to the vagaries of time and conscious neglect?

Education can make a better world if teachers teach in such a way that a better world is a conscious objective. These objectives should become apparent once a complete knowledge of a community is gained. The needs stare at you and dare you to ignore them. But once you see them your conscience will keep you too busy to avoid them. Be careful not to decide objectives first, to anticipate needs first, to tinker with adjustment first. Saturate your mind with all the details concerning your community, then do your adjusting.

Many teachers have caught a glimpse of the worlds to conquer and minds to shape in pursuit of the thrill that comes from doing an exciting job well. The drudgery and deadening effect of the daily routine belongs only to those who teach without vision and without imagination and with no concept of what needs to be done and no skill or urge to do anything about it. There is romance in tackling a problem, to feel that you are a part of a movement that is as important and vital as shaping and determining individual happiness.

All jobs are important jobs but none so exciting as the molding of a mind, that is our job; the shaping of a character, that is our job; the determination of a destiny, that is our job.

Your community is your laboratory. New worlds can open up, new happiness can be yours for you face the greatest challenge of all times—What are you going to do about it?