

THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

Volume XL

July 1953

No. 3

THE CHALLENGE WE ACCEPT

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It is the responsibility of American education to provide every individual an opportunity to become the best producer that he is capable of becoming. Production is an essential feature of a vocation. All vocations have an economic aspect—the production of goods or services of use to others, the creating of economic values. Society is the poorer when an individual does not become the best producer he is capable of becoming. Also the individual is the poorer.

Education not only has the responsibility of providing every person an opportunity to become the best producer he can become, governed only by his innate capacity, but of providing him an opportunity to become the best producer *as early in his life as possible*, with due consideration of his other educational needs and personal welfare. Education has the responsibility of providing every person an opportunity to be the best producer *over as many years as possible*.

To provide an opportunity for every individual who should farm would result in improving the community, the state, and the nation. Benefits in producing economic goods and services are not limited to the persons who produce them. Increased proficiency in agriculture would result in improvement in all the arts and sciences. It would free energy for such purposes—increase the amount of energy that can be spared from supplying the necessities of life, without which there can be no advancement in civilization. It would free, and is freeing, people to follow other vocations than farming. Still more people need to be so freed for the good of agriculture. It would free, and is freeing, farm people from painful toil and the frustration of

unfulfilled hope. You perhaps remember the first lines of that immortal poem, the man with the Hoe, written in the hoe age of agriculture, which is supposed to have closed in America decades ago:

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face
And on his back the burden of the world.

It is only with the growth of ability to produce, that there is an increase in ability to support education. This fact is too generally overlooked. Greater numbers of American young people and adults go to schools that are better because of our increased productive ability resulting from greater vocational competence. The present program of education in this country would have been wholly impossible in an earlier less-productive day.

In the recent words of a well-known economist, "Guns and butter in adequate quantities require a rapid increase in production." Since the end of World War II, the country has done only *fairly* well in increasing production. The combined physical output of private industry and government in 1952 was about 24 per cent above 1946. But population is 11 per cent above 1946. After the needs of the defense program have been met and after increasing or replacing plant and equipment, perhaps the average person has no more to consume than in 1946. This will not do. Production must increase at a faster rate.

Total farm output increased 9 per cent between 1945 and 1952; farm output per man-hour of labor increased 25 per cent. Thus, total farm output did not increase as fast as total population, but farm output per hour of labor increased more than twice as fast as the total population. To what extent the increased output per hour was due to vocational competency as such, and to what extent to greater use of me-

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VISITOR

Published quarterly during the calendar year in October, January, April, and July, by the Division of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, University Farm, St. Paul 1, Minn.

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at St. Paul, Minn., under the act of August 2, 1912.

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

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chanical power and the like, I do not know. During this period, crop production per acre increased 7 per cent, and live-stock production per animal unit increased 11 per cent. It would seem that vocational competency has become greater.

Farmers as a group are disadvantaged in income. A chief cause (not the only cause) of this fact, of course, is the low level of productivity at the bottom of the economic pyramid. There are far too many farming poor—farm people at the bottom of the nation's pile of incomes. A man who expects to succeed in a vocation of farming today must have something to farm with; he must have control over capital goods—land, buildings, power, machinery. The great bulk of the practices he uses must not be the obsolete and less fit. He must have the ability to plan and manage. He must be vocationally competent. Apparently, many of our departments of vocational agriculture fail to focus their efforts on training for proficiency in farming as a vocation—on training people who either are in a vocation of farming or who will likely enter and succeed in a vocation of farming. I do not mean to imply that we have no responsibility to work with other farm people. We certainly do not wish any people to “grow less sturdily through want or lose one atom of vigor that might be.” No people should have to “eat the scanty food of charity and walk their shining earth in broken shoes.”

We in vocational agriculture accept the challenge of helping the individuals we teach become the best producers that they are capable of becoming. At the same time we recognize that every individual should have the opportunity to become the best

person, the best parent and the best citizen he may become. Rather than interfere with these developments, we accept the challenge to contribute to them in attaining our vocational objectives.

We in vocational agriculture accept the challenge of getting theory and practice experience together. In my opinion, this is one of our biggest challenges. If theory and practice are not experienced together, they will not be learned together. Both the social and the economic worth of man depend upon his doings (which are not limited to the manipulative). His doings in turn may depend heavily on the understanding or theory behind them.

Theory that is not associated with practice in the learning is not likely to be learned in a functional manner; it is not likely to increase one's ability in doing.

Only experiences that occur together may be expected to recur together. Practice and theory should be bound together in learning if they are to contribute to each other. “One learns to do by doing,” as understood by most people, apparently is a half-truth. Mere “doing,” mere activity, is never enough. In too large a part of our efforts in teaching vocational agriculture and in teacher training, theory and practice are never experienced together. What goes on in the classroom is not experienced in a doing situation; the doing makes no use of the theory; the theory does not become a part of the doing; the two remain forever separate; and the teacher seems to be utterly unaware that this is so. I could cite you many illustrations.

Surely we should not need to say again that the national acts for vocational education provide for systematic instruction in agriculture for young men not in school and for adult farmers as well as for boys in school. The future of farming and farm life depends, to no small extent, on an adequate program of instruction for young farmers and for adult farmers.

The young-farmer program is, in many ways, the most important part of the total program of vocational education in agriculture. I am aware of the difficulty many teachers are having at present in securing good enrollment in young-farmer classes. In normal times, however, it is

doubtful if any school can justify offering vocational agriculture for high-school boys where there is not a need for young-farmer work in agriculture. If farmer training terminates with the boys, high-school vocational agriculture cannot be justified. *No program of vocational agriculture is adequate unless it provides training for young farmers.*

To start farming and progress in it calls for a number of abilities, the development of which requires several years beyond the high-school period. It is not possible in high school to give all the training necessary for proficiency in farming. The future attitude of young farmers toward adult education and toward the school will largely depend on how their educational needs as young farmers are met.

They tell us that college students today rank little, if any, above the general population in intelligence. The public furnishes comparatively large sums of money for the education of persons of young-farmer age who leave their home communities and go to college. *Those who remain in their communities also have a right to a continuing education.* They are the very young men who, most likely, will operate the farms there in the years to come. The community would do well to recognize them, to honor them certainly no less than the ones who leave. "They, while I forgot and ran, remembered and remained."

We should accept the challenge to provide young-farmer work for the young men on farms.

Only the ability and desire of schools to meet the needs of adult farmers hold back further development in our adult-farmer work. There is a tremendous potential expansion of education for adult farmers. If schools in farming communities believe that education is a continuous process and that there should be a community program of education, they will provide education for adult farmers. Adult farmers in this country will be educated at public expense by some agency—the schools or some other public agency. This is the challenge to us. The school is the agency whose only interest is education and whose atmosphere is educational. *Adults tend to support liberally that*

agency from which they receive something directly. To what educational agency will adult farmers throw more and more of their support?

Agriculture teachers have been pioneers in systematic education for adults. They have "blazed the trail." After adult courses in agriculture, other adult courses have followed. In their pioneer work teachers of agriculture have made, and are making, a great contribution to adult education in general. Who among us is not challenged by this fact? Lives there a man with a soul so dead who never to himself hath said, "This is our own?"

Every person should have the opportunity to become the best producer he is capable of becoming. Then he should have a fair opportunity to produce. *Teachers* are producers—producers of desirable changes in the people they teach. The business of the teacher is to teach. The amount and quality of learning secured can never be a matter of indifference to the teacher, to his administrator, or supervisor. Men who are to teach should be trained to teach. Teacher training, like farmer training, is a continuous process. And when teachers are trained they should be permitted, even encouraged, to teach rather than expend their energies in doing something else. Schools exist in order that teaching may be done in and through them.

This country does not realize the importance of the teacher. Each man here is what he is very largely because of what he has learned. So are the other people we know. What would you be if stripped of your learning? All that is distinctly human is learned. To the extent that learned behavior is significant, teaching is significant. The amount and quality and kind of learning are tremendously influenced by teaching. Thus only are we justified in holding this conference of teacher trainers and supervisors.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to vocational education in agriculture is to secure and hold an adequate supply of men who really can teach agriculture, men who are master teachers. A great gulf exists between mediocre teachers and master teachers. From poor to excellent, of course, is always great.

The challenge we accept I have not at all completely spelled out. There is much more. We accept the challenge of the Victorian snobs, that "nice" people do not soil their hands by toil. We accept the challenge of the academic snobs, that only *their* subjects can be carried along intellectually. We accept the challenge of our critics, that intellectual training is the sole aim of education. We accept the challenge of the college professors who regard the teaching of manipulative skills as beneath the dignity of the college however much their graduates need these skills. We accept the challenges of the many graduate schools that are more concerned with their standards than with meeting the educational needs of their students. We accept the challenge of those who say that farming cannot support a good kind of life on the farm, that civilization and culture must be left behind when one passes through the door of a farm home, that life on the farm cannot be essentially satisfying.

In this presentation in which providing the opportunity to become a good producer has been stressed as a point of view, I have not meant to imply that human beings are producers in the same sense as a cow or sow or hen. Man is infinitely more important than crops and animals. It is on the basic Christian concept of the worth of a man that democracy is based.

A poem, called *Heaven*, by Frank Townsend, was published in 1930. The long poem ends with these lines:

Suddenly there appeared once more to me

The same wise old man I had seen on Mount Meditation.

He said:

A long way from here there is a garden
And in the garden lives a Being,
In whom are the faculties of Creation
and Understanding and of Rhythm.

As to the garden,
Innumerable books have been written
about it,

And about every part of it.
The Being who lives in the garden,
In whom are the faculties of Creation
and Understanding and Rhythm,
Is man.

The challenge we accept, I am sure, is developing this Being so that he may live creatively instead of meanly, that he may live with understanding instead of ignorantly, that he may live in rhythmic enjoyment instead of monotony.

In closing, we here assembled accept the challenge of a new frontier in vocational education in agriculture.

There still is left to men a new frontier; Let none believe there is no virgin soil For venturing, no land for pioneer to prove with plow and harrow. Fruit of toil Beyond the dream of harvesters remains.

Introducing Lauren Granger

Many of the readers of *The Visitor* have met Lauren Granger who recently accepted a position as coordinator of the Minnesota Cooperative Farm Management Service and Study. This will serve to present a brief summary of some of Mr. Granger's background and experience.



Mr. Granger has been secretary of the Lake of the Woods County Farm Bureau and is a veteran of World War II. He owns a farm near Graceton, Minnesota and has taught veterans agriculture at Baudette and Morris, Minnesota. He has served as a member of the Board of Education at Williams, chairman of the district agriculture instructors group, commander of the American Legion at Baudette and adjutant of the Sixth district. He has been a director of the County Crop Improvement Association, has served on the County Agricultural Extension Committee and as a member of the county selective service board, and was a member of the M.V.A.I.A. Adult Education Committee the past two years. He has worked and traveled in many parts of the world and brings to his new position a wide background of experiences.

Mr. Granger is a graduate of the University of Minnesota and holds the Bachelors' and Masters' degrees.