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Pictured with Dr. Harold Macy, center, Fifth Annual Farm and City speaker, are civic leaders, service club representatives, bank representatives, and businessmen who presented seventeen awards to FFA members at Fairmont High School.

FAIRMONT'S FIFTH ANNUAL FARM AND CITY PROGRAM

by

J. H. TSCHETTER

An important job of education is not only to inform the public but also to improve relationships. Agricultural educators and research men in the past have been so busy doing their job of gathering technical information and informing agricultural producers that they have been forgetting to improve relations and understanding between the agricultural industry and other businesses. To gather technical information and to make it available to producers has been noble; the results

have produced an abundance of cereals, fibers, and animal products. The general public, especially the consumer not associated with agriculture, has not been well informed about such problems as the large capital investment per worker, cycles in production, rising costs of production, greater volume of production with less profit per unit produced, and hazards of changeable weather conditions.

Before coming to Fairmont in 1951 I taught vocational agriculture in towns

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where the population was 1700 and less. The townspeople in these areas and the farm citizens feel the dependence of one on the other more than the folks in larger towns and the farm citizens in their trade area. Fairmont, with its population near the 10,000 figure, is an example of a growing center where farm problems are not always as well understood as in less populated centers. Even though farm population represents approximately 13 percent of the total population of the nation, this small percentage still has stabilizing influence and is the basis for a healthy national economy.

Because the high school vocational agriculture department works with its young farmer members in and out of school and with adult farmers on their farms, and because it renders other community educational services, it is an important public relations agency of the entire community.

In 1952 the vocational agriculture department interested the Fairmont Chamber of Commerce in a cooperative Farm and City Program in order to promote better understanding of problems between rural and urban people. At this time the Chamber of Commerce secretary worked with the agriculture instructor in securing a speaker and encouraging businessmen and civic groups to award suitable trophies to members of the FFA who made outstanding animal industry achievements. There were only four trophies awarded in 1952. A beef trophy was given by the Fairmont National Bank, the dairy trophy was given by the Farmers Cooperative Creamery, and the swine and sheep trophies were presented by the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs respectively. A program of

this nature has been held annually since then. At the most recent Farm and City program held on November 25, 1957, Mr. Robert Manning, President of the Fairmont Chamber of Commerce, presided. The mayor of Fairmont was chairman of the program in 1956.

At the most recent program, the fifth to be held, fourteen FFA members won 17 plaques, cash prizes, and trophies for achievements in leadership, crop production, poultry production, and animal industry—awarded by four Fairmont service clubs, three local banks, one civic organization, the radio station, the daily newspaper, and four businesses.

For the main attraction at each program, a well qualified speaker presented information of interest common to both the town and country citizen.

Dr. Harold Macy, Dean of the Institute of Agriculture of the University of Minnesota, was the speaker at this year's Farm and City program. His subject was "Through Understanding We Progress Together."

The publicity for these programs has been through several media such as the local radio station, the local daily newspaper, posters, and invitations by letters and post cards. Many local businesses in advertising through KSUM, the local radio station, included 30-second spot announcements publicizing the Farm and City program. In this manner one hundred or more short invitations were sent over the air waves preceding the event. The Fairmont Daily Sentinel each year produced a one-page display which included the program for the evening, pictures of some of the trophy winners, and an invitation to attend.

All award donors or their representatives are seated on the stage during the program. These men present the awards at the close of the program, thus drawing closer the interest of the businessmen, service clubs and Chamber of Commerce to the rural young men and their parents. After the program the parents of the FFA members provide and serve a lunch of sandwiches, cake, milk and coffee. The social hour at lunch time in the school cafeteria provides opportunity for the

farmer to visit with the businessman and the businessman to meet the farmer.

Throughout the evening many ideas are exchanged. Everyone participating gives and receives. The guest speaker provides inspiration and information, the vocational agriculture instructor explains the achievements of the young men, and the city folk provide the awards. Thus, bringing together students, parents, farmers, and businessmen for a common educational and social function does have a wholesome Farm and City influence.

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IS VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE AT THE CROSSROADS?

By

LOYAL JOOS

Vocational Agricultural Education has reached that bemused age of 40, at which say the optimists, life begins. Or, if you like the pessimistic view, 40 years brings only fallen arches, sunken chests, and mid-section debility. There are those who have taken a quick look in the mirror, hoisted a shaking finger to test the wind, and concluded that vocational agriculture is about ready to go the way of the dodo bird. "Farms are getting larger! Fewer farmers are needed! Our young people are leaving the farms! Rural youth are a bunch of confused delinquents! Science education is in demand, not vocational courses!"—or so they say.

Now, we envy the ability of some people to discern the existence and direction of longtime trends by the judicious use of a wet finger in the breeze. For most of us, it has taken the best part of forty years to discover that vocational agricultural education has been doing much more educating than vocational or agricultural training. Perhaps we should have had the

assistance of more prognostication in our program planning through the years. We might then have seen the significance of farm mechanization, school consolidation, decentralization of industry, and increasing ratio of non-farm to farm population. Just how we might have done differently is not quite clear; but to have these changes suddenly revealed to us as catastrophic is somewhat startling. We are about as surprised as the third little pig was when his brothers' houses were unable to withstand the huffing and puffing of the wolf.

To some in vocational agriculture, however, who have built their concepts of education on a narrow interpretation of the basic laws, a little falling plaster may well indicate the need for a new house. To some it may mean disaster; to others, opportunity for a new and modern structure. How solid is our foundation? How strong are the forces which (we suddenly find!) are ready to overthrow us? How much plaster has already fallen? What are the facts?

There has been a long-time slow decrease in farm population, and a recent spurt in that decrease. About 13% of our total population is now on the farm. What does this mean? We know that when a farm family is on the farm, the farmer's wife is not counted as a farm worker; if that family moves to town and the wife works, she is a worker, by official census tabulation. If the family lives in town, yet continues to farm, (a popular modern trend) they are not considered in the farm population. The loss in farm population may or may not be permanent, since most of the actual decrease has been in marginal farmers who are now in marginal industries. This is a reversible trend which follows the instabilities of marginal situations.

Loss of farm population due to irreversible changes in size of farms is counter-balanced by two factors. First, there is still a continuing shortage of skilled farm workers; second, there is a trend toward more small "residence" farms, which are rural homes of industrial workers, but, nevertheless, still farms. The farm population trend is extremely

complicated, and is, therefore, a good spot for our wet-finger prognosticator.

The startling thing, to some people, is the 13% figure. This does not mean a reduction from 50% to 13% of the basic population; it means that our total population has increased while farm population has not. There is no falling plaster here; this is exactly what we have been trying to do for more than 40 years. If efficient farming does not mean more people being fed and clothed *per farmer*, what does it mean?

Whatever modern farming means to you, it brings with it an ever increasing specialization of farming activity. More and more people who do not classify as farmers work in what have been called "related occupations." This fact, combined with the decentralization of "non-farm-related" industries, has resulted in a change in the occupational status of the population in most rural high school districts. Consolidation of schools also enters the picture, broadening the base of the school population so that it is now increasingly difficult to find rural high schools with a farm-boy representation as high as 60% (of boys). Establishment in farming is no longer the predominant goal of boys in rural high schools (if it ever was).

Nevertheless, we still have not met the need for agriculturally trained young men to enter farming as an occupation. Recent figures show what similar figures showed in the past; for every four farmers entering farming each year, we graduate only two from high school vo-ag departments, and of these, only one actually enters farming. Those who have a solid foundation for their educational programs have always recognized that non-farm rural boys need vo-ag training, and the prospect of "shifting" to a program of teaching "related-fields" in agriculture is really one of declaring our intention to do more of what we have always done.

It is worth noting at this point that there is no surplus of young men who have vo-ag training. They are in demand in all kinds of farm-based industries; so

much so that these opportunities compete with their natural desire to remain on the farm. As more and more high schools add courses in "Agricultural Arts," "Agricultural Science," or "General Agriculture," they will be filling a need which does not displace the original need for vocational education for farm people. Like the third little pig, we shall find room for our brothers in their need—if we have built well.

If we have a broad foundation of philosophy, which sees our basic purpose as education for the needs of all those who look to agriculture for their living, rather than a narrow foundation of training only for establishment in farming; if we have met the social and community needs of our rural school areas as they developed; if we have kept abreast of modern farming with educational facilities in mechanics and farm management; if we have guided our youth in the paths of higher achievement; if we are ready with plans for expansion where expansion is needed, for changes where changes are needed; if we have the foresight to carry out research so that wet fingers are put to better uses; then we need have no fear of all the winds that blow.

It cannot be claimed by anyone that in our nationwide vo-ag program we have done as well as we might have in broadening the foundation and strengthening the structure of our house. Good progress has been made, in some areas, in meeting changing needs. We do have weak points; one of the weakest is in research in agricultural education. It is in this area of research that we can obtain better information about our present situation. If we had had solid research underway ten years ago, we would know now whether vocational agriculture *is* at a crossroads. More than that, we would know which way to go. We could replace pessimistic or optimistic guesses with knowledge.

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