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TEACHER EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AN APPRAISAL AND SOME CONCERNS

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EDITORIAL NOTE: This issue of The Visitor is devoted to the current problems and prospects of the field of Agricultural Education. The focus of the discussions originated at the Centennial Convocation of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities held at Kansas City in November, 1961.

Each of the articles in this issue consists of excerpts of addresses given by prominent leaders in agricultural education. The first is an analysis by Rufus W. Beamer of a paper given at the Centennial Convocation by L. D. Haskew. The second consists of excerpts of an address by T. W. Schultz. It was directed to Land Grant Colleges on the occasion of the Centennial Convocation and, more specifically, it directed attention to the joint responsibilities of Land Grant Colleges and the field of Agricultural Education.

Dr. Lawrence D. Haskew, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Texas, presented a paper at the 1961 Centennial Convocation of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities on the Evaluation of Teacher Education in Land-Grant Institutions. The paper was based on a study Dr. Haskew had made of teacher education programs in the schools and colleges making up the Land-Grant system. In his appraisal of teacher education, Dr. Haskew had some things to say about teacher education in agricultural education which I hold to have some significance to our profession.

Here are some excerpts from Dr. Haskew's paper.*

"The greatest contribution of the Land-Grant Institutions to teacher education

stands today in partial eclipse. This contribution is the education of teachers of agriculture and homemaking and, to lesser extent, of trade and industrial education. In the fabric of an urbanized, intellectualized, sophisticated world these mundane designs are being embroidered over as rapidly as possible, or shoved into a corner in the hope that Mr. Jacques Barzun or the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education will not notice them. But in the warm light of an appraisal based on having a job to do and getting it done, the clean, crisp, utilitarian lives of those designs still display the signature of true art.

"I submit that no subjects have ever been better taught in American high schools than the subjects of agriculture and homemaking; that no contingent of teachers have ever equalled the teachers of agriculture and homemaking in command of their specialized subject matter; that no more effective curricula — effective, that is, in achieving the purposes they avowed — have been designed than those in these two fields; that no set of teachers has kept more abreast of technological and scientific contributions; that no teachers have reached higher average attainments in methodology; and that no teachers have ever made more direct contributions to the improvement of adult community life than have the teachers of agriculture and homemaking. Here is teacher education that begins in the high school, extends throughout college years with display of directed laboratory experiences most other divisions are still trying to emulate, fits the student to his job, goes right there with him and practically forces him to continue to be a student."

*Lawrence D. Haskew, Centennial Convocation Paper: "Evaluation of Teacher Education in Land-Grant Institutions," November 14, 1961, St. Louis, Missouri.

is not here anymore. Many young people of today will, during their lives, enter occupations not in existence today. This has real implications for the training of occupations. So, it becomes imperative that people in teacher education understand change and concern themselves with it.

Concern for Research. Research is so essential to the advancement of sound educational programs that it can no longer be neglected or given a minor role. We cannot have sound teaching programs unless these programs are based to an increasing degree upon sound and comprehensive research, both as to methodology and subject matter. We have been saying this for a long time, but the void in most of our institutions in research effort directed toward solving agricultural education problems is a black one.

Research is necessary to the genuine advancement of education, and some of this research must be basic and developmental in nature.

New Programs and the Strengthening of Existing Programs. We must make a greater effort toward providing the type and character of instruction which would largely eliminate the factor of obsolescence in knowledge growing out of the rapidity of technological change. Perhaps outdated knowledge may be made less harmful by placing more emphasis on education in the basic principles and less on skills and practice; by placing emphasis on process as well as product; in keeping knowledge up-to-date by teaching students to remain students throughout their professional careers.

In our effort to strengthen existing programs we need to give greater emphasis to the science side of agriculture at all levels of instruction. We need to take a long hard look at the influence State and National

contests, and the accompanying awards, are having on our high school instructional programs. There are people in our ranks who believe (and not without supporting evidence) that the emphasis we have placed on contests and awards in our FFA programs has served as a major deterrent to sound program development in vocational agriculture. The teacher who spends 25 to 50 percent of his teaching time preparing for and entering contests will not be engaged in teaching the kind of agriculture that meets the needs of our time.

We need desperately to strengthen and extend our post high school and adult education programs. Agricultural education has pioneered in adult education but, for some reason, we have never been able to exploit our opportunities in this field. The need for this type of education is growing, not diminishing. There is no way for people to remain productive in our economy without continuous efforts in education. Continued study is going to be a way of life.

The task of improving agricultural education in this generation demands new ventures. Our leadership must be sufficiently competent and committed to bring about the modification of laws, to solve problems of financial support, to bring about massive changes in programs. Are we in teacher education making inventive contributions to the emergence of this kind of leadership? Are we in teacher education committed to pushing up the norms, pushing back the horizons, or are we committed to compliance, to pretty much the status quo, to meeting certification regulations as established by the State Departments of Education? The difference between commitment and compliance has real implications for teacher education.

MEETING THE TEST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

THEODORE W. SCHULTZ
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Let me remind you of a long neglected opportunity of major magnitude within your province which is consistent with the national interest. You will recall the earlier stress on serving the national interest and how it had come to pass that the apparent

goals of agriculture seemed to be at variance with the national interest, placing "the agricultural colleges in a climate of problems rather than opportunities." Regretably, this is indeed the situation.

The neglected opportunity is so close and

such a natural part of your task that it is hard to believe that it could be overlooked all these years. But it is **not** in plants and animals, soils and yields, growth regulators and genetic improvements or in the fundamentals of science that open doors to the development of new and better techniques of production. **The neglected opportunity is in the education of farm people.** Paradoxically, few people appear to be aware of how badly farm people have fared relative to the rest of the population in the amount and quality of education that they have been receiving.

The facts are painfully distressing. The proportion of the adult farm people who have had only 8 or less years of schooling is about twice as large as for the rest of the population. Since education is clearly an investment that increases future earnings, let me burden you with a few figures for employed males, 18 years and older, as of March, 1959. Thirty-six percent of all farmers and farm labor had had less than 8 years of school, whereas for all occupations the comparable figure was only 16 percent; and, for 8 years or less of schooling, the respective figures were 60 and 32 percent. Furthermore, the typical year of elementary schooling that farm people have to their credit was both shorter and much lower in quality than that received by the rest of the population. Look now at the proportion that had had four years of high school: only 18.6 percent of those in the farm sector compared to 27.1 percent for all occupations (males 18 years and older, employed).

These large differences are the mistakes of the past, bygones we must live with. But what about the youth now in schools? The percent of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in school is about a fourth larger for urban than for farm youth. My last figure strikes even closer home because it shows that the percentage of urban high school seniors who plan to attend college (among those who were seniors during October, 1959) ran 59 percent higher than for farm high school seniors (32 and 51 out of a hundred). The reasons are many and they are complex. They are not to be found, however, in soils, plants, animals and tech-

niques of production — your stock in trade. Oh, where is there a **Conant** to guide us in transforming the schools serving farm youth?

It will be said, "Too bad, but elementary and high schools, even those in agriculture, are not our business." The reply is, "Nor is farming your business, yet you have contributed greatly to farming through science and technology." You can also develop and mobilize intellectual resources on behalf of these schools with a view of increasing the amount and vastly improving the quality of education of farm children. This task represents a major opportunity within your province and both farm people and the nation would be better off as you succeed.

Let us not forget that education, which people prize highly for cultural reasons, as they should, is also an important investment in people. **Education has become a major source of economic growth**, accounting for fully a fifth of the economic growth of the United States, between 1929 and 1957. Almost another fifth came from advances in knowledge, according to a recent study by Edward F. Denison.

Finally, then, have the agricultural colleges lived up to the expectations of the founders? On the score of advances in knowledge, useful in agricultural production, they have far exceeded the most optimistic expectations, and because of this achievement, they have earned and received the acclaim of thoughtful people and leaders at home and abroad. On the score of winning for farm people the amount and quality of education that is on a par with the best, the agricultural colleges have not lived up to the expectations of the founders. Honored visitors from home and abroad are always shown farms to see animals, crops and machinery; they are never taken to country schools to see first rate teachers, modern laboratory equipment, and high quality of schooling for farm children.

. . . There should be agreement that the great opportunity to which I have referred, so long neglected by the agricultural colleges, is **still open.**