

# THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

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## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION ABROAD

In this issue of *The Visitor*, four graduate students in the University of Minnesota Department of Agricultural Education present glimpses of agricultural education in British Honduras, the Philippines, India and Ireland. One of the contributors is an American Peace Corps Volunteer, the others are native to the country they write about. The limitations of space preclude any comprehensive treatment; rather, the purpose is to highlight significant problems based on the insight, philosophy and experiences of these men who are preparing themselves for further service to agriculture through education.  
*Milo J. Peterson, Editor*

### BRITISH HONDURAS

British Honduras shares the southern border of Mexico with Guatemala and is just a \$150.00 plane ride from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. With its timber resources depleted and only a few small industries, the country's economic growth is dependent on fishing and agricultural development. As a number of individual and corporate farms have recently proven on land acquired there, tremendous tropical as well as temperate-climate crop yields can be obtained using proper agricultural practices.

The local government is acquiring independence from Britain and is especially anxious to assist its own farmers in increasing their agricultural production. However, it faces a number of problems in developing its agricultural education programs for reaching individual farmers.

The majority of the population has a fairly high level of education (in years), with elementary education available to the 8th grade in most areas. However, the quality of this instruction in the smaller villages is low and an elementary school graduate could qualify as an elementary teacher until recently. Secondary schools located in the largest towns provide instruction on a par with U.S. standards, but the opportunity to attend is limited

and no vocational courses are taught. Agriculture is looked down on as an occupation; anyone with ability and/or education is expected to go on to something "better." Educational snobbery is apparently worldwide.

British Honduras has a number of racial groups—each with its own customs, language, area of habitation and skin color. Although English is the national language, less than 70% understand or speak it.

In much of the country farm families are accustomed to subsistence agriculture and have no serious ambitions beyond their day-to-day existence. This has proven to be one of the biggest challenges to agricultural development. Among the Caribs, for instance, women do the farm work and the menfolk are understandably reluctant to change this arrangement. The tendency is to live in village centers and walk to the farm each day of work. This encourages neglect.

Of the families living on their land and considered serious farmers, few have farms large enough to support the cost of a tractor. The concepts of using credit for expansion, rotating crops, applying fertilizer, planning and working for the future, forming and using cooperatives, etc., are relatively new ideas encouraged by the government, but not entirely understood or trusted by the small farmer.

With Jamaica, Mexico, U.S.A. and other nearby countries offering a much higher standard of living and greater opportunities for the educated, British Honduras finds itself unwillingly exporting much of its best personnel, thus creating a lack of qualified people at home.

With many small farms, the cost-benefit ratio is a limiting factor in the educational program. For example, can the government afford to give one bulletin costing 50c to a farmer selling only \$30.00 in farm produce annually and paying no taxes? Or can a specialist in citrus diseases afford to visit individual farmers with 5 acres each?

For this reason government efforts have

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been concentrated on developing a network of experiment stations which serve the following functions:

- experimental plots, farm practices and fertilizer research
- development and propagation of improved varieties
- result demonstrations for area farmers' benefit
- equipment depots, farmers can rent government-owned machinery
- supply centers, providing improved planting materials, chemicals, etc.
- extension specialists' offices
- education, practical (but correct) work experience for station employees
- supervision, local office directing special development schemes of government

One small secondary school for boys presently includes agriculture and farm work experience in its curriculum. An experiment including an agriculture school within the experiment station failed. Many elementary schools have gardens where students tend their crops during work periods, etc. This is being discouraged by the government now because of poor practices being taught by inexperienced and inadequately trained teachers. Short courses in agricultural education for these teachers during vacation periods might be a good investment.

Although the experiment stations are well equipped and a considerable amount of research is carried out, the idea of universal public education seems neglected as an objective, probably because of cost. With limited vocational agriculture personnel in the country, much of the resulting research information is "filed for future use" and does not reach individual small farmers. The idea of "junior" education-extension workers is being considered. This fall a group of ag-

riculturally trained Peace Corps Volunteers are programmed to supplement the existing program. *Thomas Kajer, Peace Corps Volunteer*

### PHILIPPINES

For centuries now, until last year, there has been no major change in the agricultural sector of the Philippine scene. In October, 1963, a land reform law was enacted. This law will have a great impact. Among other things, the law provides for the expropriation of large estates. For the first time tenants will be given the opportunity to own land. About two-thirds of the rice and corn farmers are tenants.

It is hoped that ownership of land will provide incentive toward higher productivity. Ownership of land may not guarantee greater productivity, but it will certainly contribute to it.

The Filipino tenant-farmer is in a stage of transition from a tenant who has little or no decision-making responsibilities to an owner-operator who has full responsibility. Whereas before he was not concerned about what variety to plant, where to get funds and when to sell his harvest, now he has to make all these decisions.

Is the Filipino tenant-farmer ready to tackle these farm management decisions? In other words, can he stand on his own? The answer for some farmers is yes, for the greater number, no.

Most of the rice or corn farmers plant one crop a year. Consequently they also get their cash income once a year. And yet the farmers need cash every day. As a tenant, the farmer had the landlord to go to for his credit needs. On his own, the farmer will have to deal with the bank. The government will provide credit facilities through banks to be established in areas where land reform will take effect. Considering that the average tenant farmer has only four years of education, it may be in the ways of acquiring and using borrowed funds that he needs immediate assistance.

It has been estimated that the rice farmer gets only eleven centavos of the consumer's peso (eleven cents out of a dollar). Most of it goes to the middleman. This fact may be explained by the prevalent marketing set-up in the rural areas. The middleman is also the source of credit. Farmers borrow during planting time for their capital needs. They also borrow for their subsistence needs. Pay-

ment is made during the harvest time in kind and at a price dictated by the merchant-lender. The farmer is left with no choice but to sell to his creditor. The function of distribution performed by the middleman is essential but his practice, that is clearly a disadvantage to the farmer, may be eliminated by providing a substitute for him. One alternative is for the farmer to market his products himself. This might not be feasible because of lack of capital. Another alternative is for the farmers to form a cooperative. Some attempts in the past failed because of the lack of leadership. The vocational agriculture teacher could provide leadership!

The rice or corn farmer has been planting the same crop through the years; it may have been the same crop planted by his father. What could be the reasons for the farmer's tendency to cling to rice and corn? Are these crops the only ones suited to the soil? Do these crops really bring the best income? The more disturbing thought to me is whether these questions have ever been asked! I wish to suggest that it is essential to examine these questions with the farmers. I wish to suggest further that the vocational agriculture teacher is in the best position to do this. He is situated near the farmers. He has the facilities and resources to try out new ideas with them. *Bonifacio Bangcaya*

## INDIA

When asked what learning was the most necessary, he said, "Not to unlearn what you have learned." — Antisthenes

Agriculture has been and still is the pillar of many a civilization. In ancient days, Greece and Rome held agriculture in high esteem. In modern times the U.S.A. owes much of its economic strength to the soil resources and great agriculture-based industries served so effectively and uniquely by vocational agriculture.

In India, too, about 70% of the people derive their livelihood from agriculture, directly or indirectly. India's future is closely bound up with the advancement in agriculture and much depends on India being self-sufficient in food. In this advancement agricultural education has a key role. Considering its importance a great fillip has been given to agricultural education since Independence. At present many agricultural schools are operating throughout the country.

India is the second most populous country

in the world. Eighty to eighty-five percent of the Indian people live in the 600,000 villages scattered across the countryside. The enormous diversity within the Indian society is no more dramatically illustrated than by the diversity of her languages. At the national level, English and Hindi carry official status and are the two most widely understood in India today.

With the rise in population and scarcity of food in India, agricultural education has assumed paramount importance. The benefits of agricultural teaching and research never reached the Indian peasants. It was often dinned into our ears that Indian farmers are illiterate, ignorant and poor and so they could not follow the scientific agricultural methods taught in the agricultural colleges. As a result of this, Indian agriculture never made any headway and this was severely criticized by planners and political leaders. The need of the hour was to get at the root of the problem and improve the teaching of agriculture with a view to making it farm and problem oriented. This was not done and instead a new Extension Department known as Community Development Scheme was initiated. Experience has shown that Community Development Scheme has failed in its mission to improve agricultural methods and thus raise food production. This failure has probably given rise to the idea of establishing agricultural Universities, mostly on the lines of American Land-Grant colleges, to support and strengthen local vocational agriculture programs.

This situation has compelled the national government to organize agricultural teaching and research to augment the national economic resources. As a result, agricultural training is available at the secondary level in Vocational Agricultural high schools. Special training is provided agricultural extension workers at the village and block levels.

India's first agricultural university (Uttar Pradesh Agricultural University), established on the general pattern of the U.S. Land-Grant colleges, began its first academic year in July 1960. Establishment of this agricultural university was an important step in agricultural education in India. Previously, practically all college training was academic, and most of the graduates had sought clerical government employment. The combination of agricultural education, research and extension work in the University should go a long way toward developing practical agricultural leaders. Currently five American

universities (University of Illinois, University of Missouri, Kansas State University, Ohio State University and University of Tennessee), under United States Agency for International Development contracts, are assisting selected agricultural colleges in India to develop, strengthen and coordinate their teaching, research and extension programs. One difficulty confronting Indian educators, as pointed out earlier, is the diversity of languages spoken. Thus, progress in agricultural education is slow but modern methods and procedures are bound to produce results in the years ahead if vocational agriculture is developed as a basic ingredient. *Hanu Hanu-manthappa*

## IRELAND

A booming European economy coupled with the exclusive Common Market alliance has placed Ireland's agricultural industry at a serious disadvantage and an immediate improvement in all sectors is vital if the country is to remain economically viable.

Agriculture is a major industry in Ireland accounting for 25-27% of the gross national product and employing some 500,000 persons of a total population of 2.9 millions.

Ireland enjoys many natural advantages in her mild climate, adequate rainfall, proximity to markets and isolation from animal diseases, yet she has not exploited these to anything like their full potential.

There will be no easy ways to success as time is limited and competitors are ever improving, but the issue is vital — succeed or perish.

This situation is a direct challenge to agricultural educators. Its solution demands ingenuity, vision and hard work but success can be achieved.

It is this writer's opinion that immediate attention to the several areas of agricultural education can bring about desirable change in many sectors of the industry.

Despite the fact that most agricultural graduates use a teaching situation to disseminate their information there has been a lack of instruction in teaching techniques during the degree course. No vocational agriculture as practiced in the United States is available.

Most, if not all, graduates would benefit from such training and it must be deemed a priority if a better presentation of improved agricultural practices is to be achieved.

The only course offered at the vocational level is called Rural Science and this is not adequate for present needs.

There is a great potential for improvement in this area of education for the pupils are still living on farms and many of them are future farmers of the area.

Immediate improvements must come in teacher training; more attractive salaries; better facilities including laboratory equipment, audio-visual aids and more land for demonstrating agricultural techniques; and revised and revitalized curricula in agriculture. This last is most important.

The adult education aspect of agricultural education has been neglected too long and will have to be vastly improved. Here vocational agriculture can make a real contribution.

The Irish farmer pays no income tax, but despite obvious advantages of such an arrangement it breeds the undesirable tendency to treat farming as "a way of life" rather than as a business. There must be a swing to record keeping of a simple type to give the operator some idea of his strong and weak enterprises and better understanding of his business.

Generally, much has been achieved by rural organizations in improving both the economic and social life of the rural population, but now a reduction in the number of organizations and a new forward-looking policy toward education could achieve still more in a short space of time.

Denmark offers a fine model for Ireland. It, too, is a small country of small farming units. There is an urgent need for vocational education in this field for both graduates and farmers. Ireland should seriously study cooperatives as a means of becoming strong in the areas of dairy and swine production and marketing.

The use of television for adult education in the area of Farm Management and enterprise classes must be considered as a method of speeding progress while better trained graduates and new curricula are being prepared. A business-like attitude must be fostered amongst farmers and an awareness of the importance of the industry must be created in urban dwellers.

After World War II Ireland lost a golden opportunity to become a leader in European agriculture. Now she must catch up if she is to survive. The result depends on whether agricultural educators are equal to the challenge. *Charles Maguire*