

# The Visitor

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## The American Challenge

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As one travels through the rural communities, the small cities, and the various "Main Streets" of America, one soon receives the impression that he is an outsider looking in upon a most fascinating and curious phenomenon. Even before arriving at the next village or city, one can predict which businesses will be thriving and successful and which ones appear to find the struggle excessive. The successful businesses will include the banks, the Rexall Drug Stores, the J.C. Penney Stores and the franchised stores, especially those in food lines, and some of the farms. The less successful will include most of the hardware stores, the produce businesses, the bakeries, laundries, many of the implement dealers and most of the farms. Specification of those which are successful and those which are unsuccessful is only suggestive; the pattern and the trend is compellingly obvious.

What is the crucial element or the pivotal criteria which separates the businesses on main street and the farms into successful and unsuccessful categories? What is the stimulus responsible for this phenomenon of polarization? Although the answer takes many forms, it follows a single theme; it is the application of a management information system with elements which are often computerized. It may also be described as the application of systems analysis to the implementation of institutional or business objectives. The planning and management systems which have been so successful in the weapons industry and in moon shots have found their way to the main streets and the farms of the country. Many of the successful livestock feeding operations, for example, are using linear programmed least-cost ration analysis with information updated by computer at least once a week in response to changes in feed prices. Franchised retail food preparation businesses provide standardized products and management control adhering to carefully calculated and continuously updated specifications. Other businesses in the financially successful category have accepted the inevitable—the need to draw upon a system of management information and subsequent decision-making which includes elements of systems analysis.

There are two main features of the systems approach employed by the successful businesses on main street and farms. First, the business is managed in a way which parallels a golfer playing golf; namely, there is invariably a "par" for the course (system) and a "par" for each of its subsidiary units (sub-systems). The concept of "par" is employed in the dynamic sense rather than a static sense and its purpose is to gauge improvement. As important to the golfer as "par" is his own previous score. Previous performance compared with present performance is likewise a systems-analytic basis for the successful performer on main street.

The second feature of the application of the systems approach is the utilization of systematic management information drawn, if necessary, from other businesses in the system and on other main streets. The evidence of good management is wise decisions yielding good performance. This can cumulate as a kind of collective memory within the system and is thus available to each business as an estimate of a reasonable "par" for the course. In short, successful businesses are alert to the need to draw upon shared management services which they often draw from outside of their immediate environs and to which they contribute as a part of the system.

As one travels through the rural communities and cities of the country and observes this pattern of successful and unsuccessful businesses, he is reminded of the book, *The American Challenge* by Servan-Schreiber which has been on the European best seller list for more than two years. Servan-Schreiber, editor of the lively Paris weekly, *L'Express*, has carefully chronicled the capture of large segments of European industry and commerce by American corporations. This capture, according to Servan-Schreiber, was not due to superior technology, more advanced science, or better equipment. It was due to more systematic management. He warns, moreover, that there is no way to stop it. Restrictive covenants would be of no value; they would only increase the gap which invited the American challenge in the first place. Worse, such covenants would prevent the European businessmen from allowing the challenge to be instructive.

This American challenge has now come to the farms, rural communities and cities of America. There is no way to stop it. In its wake there will be many casualties including businesses, schools and school administrators. This prompts the most important question: are schools in the successful or the unsuccessful category of main street establishments? What does this classification have to say to educators and to the field of education?

Isolated efforts to include systems management within the curriculum is already underway (i.e. agriculture), but in general the curricula of schools are a long way behind the phenomenon which is obvious on main street. A start has been made with the creation of intermediate units, systems of shared services within and among states and a number of regional emphases on management systems.

In their application to schools and to instruction, management systems are complicated, however, by certain size and geographic features of school districts. For the purpose of considering these complications, communities can be divided into three categories, each containing approximately an equal proportion of the nation's population. The first are the rural communities with a population grouping, according to the census, of 2,500 people or less. The second are the jurisdictions ranging in population from 2,500 to 85,000 and the last includes all jurisdictions with more than 85,000 people.

The rural communities are the most difficult to describe. Most often they are described in the past tense as if their existence occurred sometime during the writer's childhood or as though the time had past when there was a reason for their existence. It has almost become a literary convention to assume that rural communities have lost their importance to current reality. In fact, a number of national achievement testing programs have failed to include an accurate sample of rural students in their norm groups due to the difficulty of sampling and the ease of ignoring the problem.

Yet these rural communities contain more business enterprises than the rest of the nation combined, they have custody of the bulk of the nation's natural resources and they contain approximately one-third of the nation's elementary and secondary school students. The total size of America's rural population is very often underestimated. The size of the rural population of the United States exceeds the total population of every Latin American country except Brazil and is approximately the same as the largest of the European countries. The total rural population in America is equivalent in numbers to the world's ninth largest country.

Among its most serious problems are poverty, low standards of public services, disproportionate concentration of substandard housing and severe restrictions in educational opportunity. Its school systems have suffered from an eroding tax base and they continue to do so.

It is not worthwhile to attempt a further characterization of rural communities. It is sufficient to point out that the "American Challenge" has already come to rural communities and that there are many thriving farms, businesses and institutions. But among its schools the process is slow and the progress is difficult. Without a considerable amount of external assistance, little progress can be expected. The problems of rural education now border on a national disaster.

The second category, the communities whose populations range from 2,500 to 85,000, also comprise about one-third of the nation's population. It is the most heterogeneous of the three categories. It contains the most rapidly growing segment of America's population groupings—those in jurisdictions ranging in population from 10,000 to 50,000. For more than 50 years, cities of this size have led the way in absorbing America's population increase. As one might expect, this category contains the communities with the greatest pressure of population on public services. Population densities are ordinarily low (less than 500 per square mile) which adds to, rather than diminishes, the problem of providing public services.

Schools in this middle category have the greatest opportunity to employ management systems for both instruction and for administration. It is also in this category that one finds the largest number of successful examples among business firms as well as among schools.

The cities in the third category having populations that exceed 85,000 have many of the problems of Rural America. This category has many of the nation's disadvantaged although not as many as are found in the rural category. It has conspicuous consumption and conspicuous poverty. The larger cities have a geographic differentiation of social classes which presents added educational problems.

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geographic differentiation of social classes which presents added educational problems.

Many of the schools in these larger cities have begun to employ a systems approach to administration and a few have extended this to instruction. Application of a management information system to the educational problems facing a large city school district has shown promise to be an effective educational decisioning tool.

New and powerful analytical and management tools have brought an "American Challenge" abroad and to main streets—from rural to metropolitan America. Hopefully, there will be little delay before it can become a manageable challenge within the educational enterprise of communities of all sizes.

### New Faces in New Places



Paul M. Day

Mr. Paul Day has been selected to succeed George R. Cochran as state supervisor of agricultural education in Minnesota. Mr. Day brings to his new responsibility a background of training and experience that makes him admirably qualified to meet the challenge. Certainly this is a time when vocational agriculture needs the dedication and courageous leadership which the profession demands and needs.

Mr. Day will be supported by a staff of well qualified men. Mr. Odell Barduson, William Hohenhaus and Waino Kortsmaki have earned the respect of vocational educators throughout the state and nation. In cooperation with the faculty of the Department of Agricultural Education of the University of Minnesota, Mr. Day will have an opportunity to further develop meaningful programs of agricultural education in Minnesota. To fill the shoes of George Cochran is indeed a challenge. The Visitor has confidence that Paul Day will be equal to the task.

Paul Day was born and raised on a general farm near Northfield, Minnesota. He received a B. S. and M. S. degree from the University of Minnesota and has earned additional credits beyond the M. S. degree. He began his teaching career at Plainview, also taught at Lakeville and was in his thirteenth year at Faribault at the time of his appointment as state supervisor.

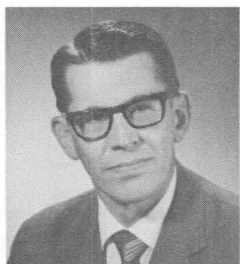
Mr. Day has been a member of the National Vo-Ag Teachers Association, American Vocational Association and Minnesota Vocational Association for his entire teaching career and has served as director, vice-president, president-elect, and vice-president 1968-69 of the Minnesota Vo-Ag Instructors Association. He has served as president-elect 1969-70 MVA and a member of the board five years, chairman of the Constitutional Revision Committee and is one of the authors of the present MVA Constitution and chairman of the Incorporation of the Association, chairman of agriculture Section Program of MVA, member of the MVA National Convention Planning and Steering Committee as well as Agriculture Division Convention Committee and a member of the MVA Legislative Committee.

He has attended every AVA convention since 1961 and served as Parliamentarian for AVA House of Delegates in 1962, '63, '64, '65, and '67; Vice president - National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association 1965-66 representing Region III (Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North and South Dakota and Wisconsin); Chairman Constitution Revision Committee, NVAIA, 1966, member American Vocational Association Constitution Committee.

The Faribault Chapter Future Farmers of America has received eight gold and two silver emblem ratings in the past ten years. Gold emblem winner in National Safety Contest, 1968, 1969; State winner, Safety Contest, 1958, '60, '62, '64, '66, '68, and '69. He has been advisor of 84 State Farmers, 15 American Farmers, State Star Farmer, State Reporters, 2 State Vice Presidents and coached the State winning General Livestock team; advised State Star Livestock, State Star Crops, State Star Poultry Farmers, State Star Soil and Water Management and State Farm Electrician winners. The Parliamentary Procedure teams have won eight of eleven past state contests. He has served as District FFA Advisor six years; and has received the Governor's Safety Citation; Outstanding Service to Safety citation from the National Safety Council in 1967.

He is a recipient of the Jaycees Outstanding Young Man Award, Faribault J.C.I. Senator; member Phi Delta Kappa, Chamber of Commerce and American Legion, was recipient of the A. O. Smith Harvestore Corp. Outstanding Teacher Award in 1968.

The Visitor wishes him success in his new position as state supervisor of agricultural education. In trying times such as these it is good to have men in positions of leadership who know the name of the game and how it is played.



**A New Dean  
Takes the Helm**

Dean Jack C. Merwin has succeeded Robert Keller as Dean of the College of Education. His appointment marks another milestone in the advancement of public education in Minnesota. The Visitor takes this opportunity to wish him well and assure him of the support of all those concerned with improved educational opportunity in agriculture.

Dean Merwin was born in Woodstock, Illinois, where he received his elementary and secondary education. After receiving his B. S., M. S., and Ph. D. degrees from the University of Illinois he taught mathematics in Moline, Illinois, at John Deere Junior High School. Following this he assumed professional duties at Syracuse University.

He came to Minnesota in 1960 where he became involved in state-wide testing programs, teaching educational measurement and working with the Dean of Students and student counseling. In 1967 he was appointed director of Psychological Foundations and Professor of Educational Psychology.

Dr. Merwin became an Assistant Dean of the College of Education in 1968, and served in that capacity until his appointment as Dean of the College in 1970.

Dean Merwin is a personable young man who will make his mark in the history of public education in Minnesota and the nation. He brings to his new responsibilities a background of training and experience at local, state and national levels.

The Visitor takes this opportunity of welcoming Dean Merwin and wishing him well. All those concerned with agricultural education should avail themselves of every opportunity to utilize his expertise.

#### **Dr. Curtis D. Norenberg**

Curtis D. Norenberg is an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education with a joint appointment as program coordinator for extension education in the Office of Special Programs, Agricultural Extension Service at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Norenberg was named to his present position and joined the University of Minnesota staff on March 15, 1970.

He was born on December 17, 1931, on a farm near Towner, North Dakota. He graduated

from Towner High School in 1949 and from North Dakota State University in 1953 with a B. S. degree in agriculture.

After spending two years in the Army as a lieutenant stationed in France, he returned to North Dakota State University in 1955-56 to qualify as a vocational agriculture teacher. He taught eight years in Stanley, North Dakota, during which time he received a Masters degree in agricultural education from Colorado State University in 1962. In 1964 he moved to Minot, North Dakota, and helped establish an agricultural occupations program in the Vocational Agriculture Department. In July, 1968, Norenberg started a graduate program for a Ph. D. in agricultural education with a minor in educational administration at the University of Minnesota and graduated in June 1970.

Dr. Norenberg has a special talent. He has been team coach of the Fifth Army Reserve Rifle Team for 15 years. He was the National Reserve winner in 1965 at the national rifle matches held at Camp Perry, Ohio.

The Visitor is proud to have Dr. Norenberg as a member of the team. The establishment of his position marks another milestone in the development of educational opportunity in agriculture in Minnesota.

#### **Dr. George H. Copa**

Dr. George Copa was appointed as assistant professor of Agricultural Education with a joint appointment in the Research Coordinating Unit of the College of Education, University of Minnesota, July 1, 1970.

George Copa is a Minnesota product of which the state can be proud. He is a graduate of Little Falls High School (1961) who subsequently earned his B. S., M. A. and Ph. D. at the University of Minnesota. During his undergraduate career he was awarded Sears Roebuck Foundation, Borden's and Johnson scholarships. He bears the distinction of having only two grades below "A". This attests to his scholarship. In recognition of this his classmates selected him as the Outstanding Senior in Agricultural Education in 1965. In addition he received the Caleb-Dorr Award for the graduating senior with the highest grade point average in the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics.

Dr. Copa taught vocational agriculture in Alexandria, Minnesota before entering full time graduate study. He has also served as technical consultant to Midland Cooperatives during which time he developed a linear program for least-cost feed formulation for beef feeders. His interest in this field continues.

In cooperation with the Michigan State University and the University of Minnesota he has contributed to the development of local evaluation programs for vocational education. The Visitor is proud to welcome Dr. Copa and anticipates a definite contribution to agricultural education from his efforts.