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A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE

The meetings of the Vocational Education Association of the Middle West in Minneapolis, February 9 to 12, were well attended and a great deal of interest was manifested in the topics selected for discussion.

The Agricultural Education Conference was full of good things.

J. A. James, professor of agricultural education, University of Wisconsin, presided the first day. G. W. Gehrand, state supervisor of vocational agriculture, Wisconsin, told in an interesting way what was being done in his state in "Slack-Season Courses in Agriculture." (The Visitor hopes to give a full account of what he said in a later issue.) G. W. Watson, state supervisor of vocational agriculture, Nebraska, showed very careful preparation of his paper, "Vocational Analysis as a Guide in Curriculum Building for Agriculture." (The Visitor hopes to give a summary of this paper, also, in a later issue.)

Teaching Vocational Agriculture on the Project Basis

A. W. Nolan, professor of agricultural education, University of Illinois, made the following points in his paper:

The term "vocational agriculture" should carry with it the full force of the word "vocational." The project should be made the basis for the curriculum in vocational agriculture. The project method gets better hold on subject matter and develops a technic of reasoning, leads to conduct more definitely and satisfactorily than mere information without activity and experience; it provides the natural setting for any teaching situation and is therefore most effective. The setting of problems as an introduction to a study of principle gives greater interest and better understanding of principles, and thus is the method used in project teaching. The projects available for the pupils should be such that all the principal facts, principles, and processes will be covered, which are ordinarily treated in the so-called logical and systematic presentation of

subject matter as usually organized. The project is used for an approach to all parts of a subject, and then a correlated or systematized study of the field follows as an extended summary. In preparing a curriculum as a basis for teaching vocational agriculture by the project method, we must take definite working units which constitute the major jobs of the farm and ascertain:

- (1) What are the problems arising?
- (2) What are the processes involved in the solution of these problems?
- (3) What are the principles and basic facts necessary to the intelligent understanding of these processes?

The speaker at this point illustrated his meaning by analyzing an orchard project and mentioning the major problems therein, then the sub-problems in seasonal sequence as the enterprise progresses. He then illustrated by further analysis of one specific problem how the content of subject matter for a curriculum for teaching purposes is made. Selecting the planting or setting of trees, he named the process or rule of procedure in the solution of this problem and the principles and basic facts underlying the process.

The rules of procedure are to be learned and applied as the problems arise in the actual project carried out by the students. Accompanying or following each process in the solution of the problems should be a study of the principles involved and such basic facts related as are necessary to an intelligent understanding of the project at each point. By this method it will be certain that most of our technical text-books can be used only as references, supplementing at every point in the development of the project, the helps and information needed.

A. M. Field, professor of agricultural education, University of Minnesota, briefly discussed Professor Nolan's paper.

A. H. Frick, instructor at Grand Rapids, Minnesota, had trained three boys of his class in agriculture to give a demonstration of various exercises on potato culture. The boys

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made an excellent showing, answering questions like experts. (The Visitor hopes to give a detailed account of this demonstration in a later issue.) Director L. S. Hawkins, of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, and E. M. Phillips, director of vocational education for Minnesota, highly commended the boys and the instructor.

B. M. Gile, state supervisor of agricultural education, Minnesota, presided over the second day's conference.

A Class Exercise in Agriculture

The 1921 class of the Sauk Center high school, which is made up of twenty farm boys, appeared with the instructor, E. M. Gillig, giving a class exercise in agriculture and conducting it as they would at home in their own classroom. The subject chosen was wheat rust and the barberry. The instructor and the class were prepared to give a full class and laboratory exercise and had a large amount of material ready. The plan was to give a combined exercise showing both recitation and laboratory work. The instructor had high-power microscopes, various kinds of plant specimens, barberry, wheat plant, oat plant, and various other plants carrying rust disease, charts, and mountings of all kinds. Twenty-five minutes were allowed for the class work, following that about half an hour was spent in general discussion. The convention members were anxious to quiz the boys and the instructor concerning home conditions. The boys were asked questions about their home farm and its conditions; why they were taking this agriculture course,

what they were studying and what practical value they thought they could get from the course. They were also asked about their project work of next year. Questions concerning their project work brought out several facts.

First of all, in their project work the boys showed a great interest in and knowledge of what they had done. It brought out the fact that they remembered through their project work the things that they had studied in school and as a natural consequence the crops and stock that the boys had been dealing with showed increased production and yield over the local community standards and averages. The boys all said that they kept accurate records of all their work and gained quite a little experience therefrom. They brought out the fact that it was very important to know costs of production of both livestock and crops. The boys were also asked how many of them were interested enough in the agriculture work that they would like to attend the College of Agriculture and go deeper into the subject. About half of them rose to their feet, expressing their desire for more study. The boys were quizzed concerning the project work for the coming season.

In the animal husbandry class the majority of them are selecting a swine project. Three of them are selecting a dairy project, and one a sheep project. This boy has twenty well-bred ewes. In the field crops class the majority are selecting a corn project, two are selecting a seed potato plot, and several of them will try out soy beans with corn for silage, and alfalfa plots.

The members of the class who took part in the exercises are:

Thomas Allen	Bert Neal
Edward Borgmann	Harvey Oldham
Lester Burdick	Lester Pangburn
Bernie Cole	Harold Riley
Lyman Gilson	Russel Riley
Archie Harder	Lewis Schaub
Clarence Illgen	George Steuer
Vincent Kenna	Elmer Volkman
Frank Kline	Bruce Wilcox
Henry Loyd	Glen Stephenson
Ben Neal	

Professor J. A. James, of the University of Wisconsin, speaking on "Present and Desirable Future Relations of Vocational Agricultural Workers and Club Workers emphasized the following:

"First, there is conflict between the workers under the Smith-Hughes and Smith-Lever laws, particularly in the

work of the young people in projects and club work, and again in demonstrations and in some of the part-time work which is being developed and which is really the same as that being done by county agents and extension workers. The methods used by Smith-Hughes workers are the same as have been used by extension workers and we have simply adapted our work to their methods.

"Second, the agricultural college is the head of the agricultural institution and Smith-Hughes workers must keep desirable relations with the agricultural college and not come in conflict with it. If such conflict came, the strength of the American Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations is greater than that of the Smith-Hughes and conflict would mean the cutting off of the life blood of all work in the state.

"Third, forms of extension work, which have been prominent with Smith-Lever workers in the past, that is, intensive instruction in unit courses as shown by corn and dairy schools held for one or two weeks in the communities, have been practically discontinued within the last four years by the extension workers, and in turn Smith-Hughes workers have continued this work of intensive instruction in two weeks' to eight weeks' courses with appropriate follow-up work.

"There is plenty of work for all Smith-Hughes and Smith-Lever workers and insufficient funds to meet the entire needs at the present time. Lever-Smith-Hughes, the 'Smith' being the common point in the arrangement in the name, means that 'Smith', the common noun in both laws, had not in mind two distinct fields but one supplementing the other, which might be considered twilight zones. Cooperation must come between the two workers for ultimate success in the agricultural field.

"Fifth, the twilight zones to-day are in the fields with young people and in the part-time instruction. In general, Smith-Hughes people should work with the younger element, as it is their field, for it is evident that Smith-Lever people are carrying on demonstrations as their field. In the twilight zones close cooperation and agreement must come between the county agent and the Smith-Hughes worker. Altho the time must come when we will have practically a county agent in every county in the state, we

cannot divide the territory but must cooperate.

"Sixth, to present this point it is only necessary that certain agreements be made and that in local, state, and federal reports, the report be divided, showing the work that is distinctly Smith-Hughes, or Smith-Lever, and also the twilight zone work in which both forces organize.

"Seventh, where conflict was being carried on three years ago, to-day we are coming in every state toward an agreement along these lines. An agreement of this kind would in no way lessen the work of the club leaders under the Smith-Hughes program, but would give them a working relation with the high schools similar to that which the teacher training department in the agricultural colleges now holds. It would increase their responsibility and labor, inasmuch as it would add to the fields at the present time."

T. A. Erickson, state club leader, Minnesota, and W. H. Bender director of vocational education, Iowa, briefly discussed Professor James' topic, both expressing themselves to the effect that cooperation between Smith-Hughes project supervisors and Smith-Lever club leaders was highly desirable and actually in existence in their respective states. C. R. Wiseman, state supervisor of agricultural education in South Dakota, discussed the same topic in substance as follows:

1. **Some club work can well be a part of every Smith-Hughes agricultural instructor's program.** As instructor, he needs to develop a broad, vital program of action in his community. Where there is a county agent, the instructor should cooperate with the county agent and his club program. The agricultural instructor will make the best local leader. To promote the cause for the good of the community he needs to educate and influence the whole community but he **first** must consider that his **first duties, first time, and first energies** are his organized vocational agricultural groups. The county agent must realize this also. It is **undesirable** for the Smith-Hughes agricultural instructor to so load up with other work as to cause him to neglect his intensive instructional work with his vocational boys.

2. Smith-Hughes projects and any Smith-Hughes work should maintain their identity wherever they go; and in all contests, etc., should carry the Smith-Hughes label. Both the agri-

cultural instructors and the club leaders should realize that the Smith-Hughes project is the application and carrying out of purposeful planning and study—that it is a means in agricultural instruction and not an end, and in contests should compete with similar work. If a Smith-Hughes boy wins local, county, or state honors or prizes at the International or other shows he should at all times be recognized as a Smith-Hughes pupil. It is **undesirable** that vocational agricultural projects in club contests or vocational pupils in club judging contests lose their identity as Smith-Hughes students in becoming members in the contest.

3. A reasonable use of the contest idea in vocational agriculture will prove beneficial, but exploitation through the contest idea is to be avoided. Large prizes or a series of many prizes won may sometimes be valued at more than the product or time spent, and thus false ideas of values are engendered in the minds of the young people. This feature, which has been found in some club work, is **undesirable** and should be carefully guarded against in our newly developing vocational agriculture work.

W. P. Dyer, professor of agricultural education, University of Minnesota, presented data gathered from twelve states concerning home-project work in 1919-1920, and pointed out the tendencies to set up certain standards for the home project worker, for inducements to undertake project work, for the location of projects, for the selection and size of projects, for the supervision of projects, and for the completion of the same.

T. E. Sexauer, professor of agricultural education, University of Missouri, closed the conference with a brief discussion of Mr. Dyer's paper.

Training the Teacher of Agriculture

The following is a digest of what Professor J. A. James, of the University of Wisconsin, said in his talk before a general meeting of the Vocational Education association.

States of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Michigan have been outstanding in the development of secondary or vocational agriculture. The agricultural colleges of these states have been factors and early assumed responsibility for training teachers of agriculture. The past

has shown that the progress and advancement of vocational agriculture depended upon the training of teachers, and the greatest progress has been made where agricultural colleges assume their responsibilities. In 85 per cent of the states the college of agriculture is entirely responsible for the training of teachers.

Today there are four times as many men in agricultural colleges in teacher training as prior to the enactment of the Smith-Hughes law. The problem of today in teacher training in agriculture is the problem of raw material, factory equipment, and the handling of the product in the field. The teacher must have an appreciation of rural life conditions, must teach not a vocation but a method of living.

His technical agriculture should be received at agricultural colleges under specialists. The number of credits required for professional training varies from 20 to 30 per cent of total graduation credits in those departments of agricultural education controlled by colleges of education, to 10 to 12½ per cent in those departments controlled by colleges of agriculture.

The teacher in this field needs specific attention on his problems of rural life. Utility courses in education are needed, with minimum requirement of psychology and general courses in education. Rural sociology should be emphasized. The student will enter practical fields sooner or later. He wants a degree from the college of agriculture. Psychology and general education courses should constitute 35 to 50 per cent of professional training; utility, professional courses, and practice in agricultural classes, 50 to 65 per cent—about 15 credits in a basis of 120 for graduation as a maximum. Apprentice teaching is desirable. Teacher training in service may consist of conferences, visitation, intensive training courses, correspondence, and circular letters.

Success of training depends on finding men of rural vision who can show the boys on the farm a future in agriculture. Agricultural colleges will continue to contribute to constructive pedagogy in the training of teachers of agriculture.