

# THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools.

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## PROFESSIONAL ANEMIA

### A Plain, Simple Talk to Teachers in Service

The inspiration for this title came when a teacher said, "I haven't been back to college since I graduated. Attending summer school is the bunk." Perhaps the teacher was a little disgruntled because he had recently received a notice that his "services will not be needed another year." The writer naturally could not help but wonder what relationship there existed between the professional attitude of the above teacher and the not uncommon dilemma in which he found himself with regard to re-employment. Altho this particular case happened to concern a teacher of agriculture, similar cases undoubtedly exist in other secondary school subject matter fields. This brief discussion, however, is limited to some of the problems involved in the professional improvement of those engaged in teaching agriculture.

Agriculture is a complex and dynamic occupation. New problems, new challenges, and new procedures are constantly arising. No one who is alert to the present social and economic problems that are engaging the attention of America, and the world for that matter, needs to be reminded of the importance of agriculture as a factor in readjustment and recovery. Constantly, one hears or reads that out of our present chaos will be evolved a new agriculture and a 'new social order for our rural population. To keep pace with the changing agricultural situation there must also be a change in the procedures of teaching agriculture. Objectives must be re-defined and made to harmonize with the purposes of those engaged in the new agriculture. Courses of study must be purged of old and out of date materials. New subject matter must be added and new points of view must be established so that the learning in the classrooms may be consistent with the changing practices on the farms. The successful teacher of agriculture can no longer stress mere production as a major problem. Perhaps in the future emphasis should be given to the quality of products rather than quantity. The program for teaching agriculture is no longer primarily concerned with the problem of how to "raise two blades

of grass where one grew before." In fact, the major emphasis is not on grass at all but on human values. To make farming profitable in the future, it is not only necessary to produce products of higher quality but these products must be produced at a lower cost. The producer must become more sensitive to market demands in order to avoid the waste that comes from the production of commodities beyond the needs of the consumer. The problems of marketing will become even more acute than they have been in the past. With the changing economic activities will come vital changes in the social set-up for rural America. The teacher of agriculture must abandon the old materialistic philosophy of education and develop a social philosophy consistent with the new rural social order that is now in the making. No teacher who is unwilling to study the present trends in the theories of social and economic changes can serve effectively the needs of the progressive, dynamic modern rural communities. Success in teaching does not depend entirely on how hard teachers work but on the kind of philosophy that guides their efforts. Teachers whose professional and technical collegiate preparation antedates the modern period by even a few years is guided by obsolete and antiquated ideals unless they have remained close students of the recent trends in social and economic affairs. Many of these teachers of agriculture from the "old school" are rapidly approaching the western horizon of their teaching career. It is with compassion in our hearts that we view their fading professional sun prematurely sinking into the land of lost opportunities, of stolid conservatism—a land unknown to the impetuous, virile youth of the oncoming generation.

It is not conceivable that all teachers possess the power and initiative to make on their own accord all the adjustments that are necessary in order to be influential leaders in the new movements in agriculture. It is certain that all teachers did not learn how to meet all their teaching problems as a part of their under-

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## THE STAFF

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graduate preparation. In fact, it is not possible nor desirable to prepare a teacher so that he will stay professionally "put" the rest of his days.

With the best of undergraduate preparation many teachers come to the task of actual teaching with a large amount of professional preparation yet to be obtained while in the actual process of teaching.

If the teaching of agriculture in the secondary schools is to survive, it must not merely keep pace with the modern movements in agriculture but it must lead the way. The successful teacher of agriculture of tomorrow is the one who is in the front ranks blazing the trail for the procession of progressive agriculture. The good teachers are going to be busy, more busy than ever, because the new problems appearing over the agricultural horizon demand immediate action. The poor teachers will probably also be busy but they will need to make immediate plans for a vigorous program of personal improvement as a safeguard against professional oblivion. Standardized mediocrity cannot survive in the new deal for agriculture. There is no time better than the present for a teacher to take stock of his professional resources and evaluate his community activities, to make a self-examination, in order to "spot" himself with regard to the effectiveness of his program in agricultural education.

### Factors in Improvement

There are at least six factors that are important in connection with the professional growth of teachers.

1. There must be a genuine recognition of a need for improvement.
2. There must be a wholehearted desire to make the needed improvements.

3. There must be a recognition of what improvement is needed.
4. There must be the innate ability to improve.
5. There must be a sound understanding of how to make the improvement.
6. There must be the ability to know when satisfactory improvement has been made and when the improvement has been successfully incorporated into the teaching activities.

No teachers do poor work because they choose to fail. Failure to do successful work as teachers may be due to low standards on the part of the teacher. Undoubtedly many teachers who are failing today are not aware of it. The work may be moving along fairly well up to a certain point but the teacher may lack that final "punch" which is so necessary to give the program the depth and breadth it should have to be highly acceptable. Teachers of agriculture who possessed the qualities of merit that were acceptable a decade or so ago when the work was new, when the problems were simple, may be wholly incompetent to meet the exacting demands of the modern, complex and bewildering turmoil incident to the birth of a new rural generation. During the ox-cart days in agricultural education, poorly prepared teachers with meager and shallow programs were frequently considered satisfactory. But today the modern complex pattern of social and economic rural life demand highly trained and technically skilled teachers. Teachers who are not highly competent must give way to those who can measure up to the new requirements. A decade ago the demand for teachers of agriculture exceeded the supply but today there is an over-supply in every state. Selection of teachers on a higher level is inevitable. The over-supply of teachers should bring about a demand for men of superior ability and increased educational preparation. Agricultural education is not at the crossroads. It is well along on the highway of progress, whither bound we know not, but only those teachers will survive who have the wisdom, the vision, the courage, and the competence to hold the course.

It is not enough for a teacher to merely recognize the need for improvement. There must also be a serious desire to actually make the adjustments that are necessary. An attitude must be attained that will enable the teacher to enter upon an improvement program in a whole-

hearted manner. The teacher who earnestly desires to improve must become a critical student of himself as well as of the new social and economic environment in which he works. If he is fortunate enough to possess the mental, social, and physical powers that are necessary to bridge the gap, he is ready to plan and to proceed with his improvement program. If the necessary facilities are at hand, he can study his problem at home. If not, he can attend summer school at some institution of recognized standing where adequate facilities are available for a thoro and intensive study of the specific problems where improvement is most needed. The University is a place where students may come to do intellectual work. The libraries, the laboratories, and the professors are available sources where competent and serious-minded teachers may receive invaluable help. A few weeks of uninterrupted study serves to aid the experienced teachers to gain a better concept of the general trend of the educational philosophy in the field of their special work. The agriculture teachers who are employed for twelve months need to get away occasionally from their narrowing circle of activity in order to broaden their point of view and avoid serious stagnation from repetitive routine. It is possible for teachers to be so devoted to the traditional duties of their job that they fail to become a vital factor in social and economic progress of the community. Teachers do not stand still professionally. The work of the agricultural teacher is far from a static occupation. They either progress or they regress. Frequently, poor teaching is done by "good" teachers who have stopped growing. They stop growing because they have become ensnared in a cyst of minor local routine entanglements that gradually strangles their initiative, narrows their perspective, which in turn limits their sphere of interest and leadership. They soon become impregnable to new ideas, new ideals, new attitudes and new opportunities. Professional growth ceases and professional anemia sets in because the life blood of inspiration, enthusiasm, and study has been shut off.

#### Summer School Helps

Perhaps the attendance upon summer school is the "bunk" for some teachers. The evidence at hand does not sustain the indictment for all teachers. The following data show the judgment of thirty-seven state supervisors of agriculture as to the value of summer school attendance on the part of teachers of agriculture.

#### The Effect of Systematic Study on Teaching Procedures

| Degree of Improvement   | Number of Supervisors | Per Cent of Supervisors |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| No change .....         | 2                     | 5.4                     |
| Some improvement.....   | 9                     | 24.3                    |
| Marked improvement..... | 26                    | 70.3                    |

The fact that 24.3 per cent of the teachers made some improvement and that 70.3 per cent made marked improvement in their teaching procedure after attending summer school is encouraging to say the least. It is not unusual to find that a period of depression inaugurates a curious paradox in the teaching profession. The economic crisis with its topsy-turvy social problems increases the responsibilities and intensifies the duties of the teachers but it also at the same time reduces the financial resources of the teachers at a time when professional improvement is most needed.

#### Present Need for Improvement

When teaching positions were more plentiful than teachers, when the program for teaching agriculture was new and simpler in scope, when the social and the economic problems were relatively stable, normal professional improvement and graduate study were regarded as a sort of luxury rather than a necessity. But today with the complex program of teaching activity, with the over-supply of teachers, with the downward trend of economic expenditures, with the rise of standards for teachers and with the uncertain social and economic outcome of the present turmoil, professional improvement has become a dire necessity.

The present unsettled social and economic order has brought into prominence several activities and responsibilities of the teachers of agriculture that were practically unknown a few years back. Important among these is the National Association of the Future Farmers of America. There is need for a thoro study of the problems and opportunities for effective leadership in this new and important addition to the activities of the students in the vocational agriculture classes. Among the other items of importance is the increased emphasis given to vocational guidance and occupational counselling provided in Agriculture I. A suitable program of instruction for the increased number of unemployed young men in rural communities presents a vital problem for the part-time schools. These few examples will suffice to emphasize the urgent need for an increased attention to a more serious study of the current problems that are vital to a broader and better program in agricultural education.

A. M. F.

### Alpha Gamma Rho Medal

The Alpha Gamma Rho medal which is awarded annually to the person winning the highest individual score in the state judging contest for students in agriculture was won this year by Elroy Homuth, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

"If a man write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."—Ralph Waldo Emerson.



**Governor Floyd B. Olson Becomes Minnesota Farmer**

The Minnesota Association of the Future Farmers of America at the fourth annual convention elected Gov. F. B. Olson to honorary membership in the Future Farmers of America and awarded him the degree of MINNESOTA FARMER. Members of the F. F. A. in Minnesota are pleased to add Gov. Olson to their membership and they will be proud to have him wear the gold key which is emblematic of the State Farmer degree.

### F. F. A.

At the annual convention of the Minnesota Association of Future Farmers of America the following officers were elected: Elmer Ziegenhagen, Bertha, President; Norman Goodwin, Austin, Vice-



president; Millard Olson, Thomson Twp., Treasurer; Clyde Gleason, Austin, Secretary; Gordon Ellis, Staples, Reporter; William Loegering, Long Prairie, Waino Kortsmaki, Thomson Twp., Theodore Drackley, Tracy, Executive Committee; A. M. Field, State Adviser.

The State Farmer degree was conferred upon the following student members: Orval Jacobson, Staples, William Loegering, Long Prairie, Millard Olson, Thomson Twp.

### ? Finis ?

This issue of *The Visitor* closes the twentieth volume of the publication. For twenty years it has been published each month of the school year. It began its monthly visits about the time that agriculture was first introduced as a subject for study in the secondary schools. Each succeeding volume tells the fascinating story of the growth of agriculture in the high school. *The Visitor* lived through the interesting years when the program had its rapid expansion as a new subject for rural youth. It weathered the retrenchments incident to the World War. It has served a useful purpose in building the sound program for vocational education in agriculture made possible by the National Vocational Education Act of 1917. It has reached the present social and economic crisis when retrenchments are necessary on every hand.

The question that arises is, "Shall we continue to issue *The Visitor*?" We are interested in having those who receive this monthly message to teachers of agriculture help us to decide. Does the *Visitor* serve a useful purpose in stimulating a better program of instruction for rural youth? Is it helpful to teachers? In brief, is it worth the effort and the cost? A frank and unbiased statement will be appreciated from persons who are interested in vocational education.—A. M. F.