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by

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When asked why they didn't have an adult farmer program in operation, some vocational agriculture teachers made statements similar to the following: "I have no spare time to handle adult farmer classes. My hands are full just trying to do a good job with the high school pupils. Not until I have that phase of the department's activities functioning just the way I want it will I consider sponsoring any other kind of program."

Two frogs fell into a pail of cream that was quite deep. The sides of the pail were slippery. They struggled for a long while, trying desperately to get out. Finally, after continued failure, one of the frogs gasped: "I give up!" He then sank and was drowned. But the other frog refused to give up. He went on struggling and splashing, and soon he gave out a satisfied croak. There he was, sitting safely on a large lump of butter that he had whipped up himself—by continuing to try! This is precisely what the supervisor or teacher trainer should do when working with teachers who respond as indicated in the above statements—try. Try to show the teachers concerned that even though it cannot be categorically stated that all vocational agriculture departments can or must have adult farmer classes, the statements as made are ill-advised and are sure clues to a lack of appreciation for the place of a department of vocational agriculture in a community school.

Why is the thinking shallow? The first reply implies that adult farmer classes should be held only if the vocational agriculture teacher has spare time—and this is not so. Further, it suggests that adult farmer classes—or any other phases of vocational agriculture besides the high school students—are adventitious or supernumerary parts of the program if, indeed, they are a part of the program at all. This leads us to the very definition of vocational agriculture.

Adult Classes Belong

The Smith-Hughes Act clearly shows that vocational education in agriculture for adults was not an afterthought. The act states: "Such education shall be of less than college grade and be designed to meet the needs of persons who have entered upon or who are preparing

to enter upon the work of the farm."¹ Contrary to much public opinion, the enabling act did not standardize the types of classes which might be taught; rather, these standards evolved out of experiences with the program in the different states as the work was developed under the supervision of the Federal Board for Vocational Education.² In its annual report to Congress in 1920, this board indicated its recognition of the needs of the adult farmers for services of the kind which could be offered by high school departments of vocational agriculture.

Phipps³ points out that the reason the high school phase of vocational education in agriculture developed more rapidly in many states than the young and adult farmer phases was that it was simply easier to organize.

The Educational Policies Commission⁴ has declared that adult education should become an integral part of the public school system. The Commission recognizes that one of the issues to be met is determination of the limits within which the school should operate, but it fails to fix those limits precisely. It lays down general principles of cooperation between the school and other agencies in the community and specifically opposes the possible establishment of a separate national system of education for youth and adults who are no longer in the old units of the public school system.

Further evidence that adult farmer classes in agriculture are considered an integral part of a modern program of agricultural education in a community school appears in a publication of the American Vocational Association entitled "Evaluative Criteria for Vocational Education in Agriculture."⁵ This publication lists the following, and others, as desirable characteristics of such a program: (a) long-

¹ (Public Law No. 347—64th Congress) (S. 703)

² (The Federal Board for Vocational Education no longer exists as such.)

³ Phipps, L. J. *Handbook on Teaching Vocational Agriculture*. Interstate, Danville, Illinois, 1952.

⁴ Educational Policies Commission. *Policies for Education in American Democracy*. N.E.A., 1946. 277 p.

⁵ National Committee on Standards for Vocational Education in Agriculture. *Evaluative Criteria for Vocational Education in Agriculture*. Washington, D. C., American Vocational Association, 1942. 75 p.

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time planning of an educational program to meet the needs of a community; (b) well-developed programs of supervised farming conducted by the individual students; (c) a course of study in which supervised farming and related activities are central; (d) a chapter of the Future Farmers of America organized so that all members participate effectively; (e) instruction for young farmer groups; (f) instruction for adult farmer groups; (g) teachers qualified as to farm experience and agricultural and professional training; (h) teaching based largely on problems found in the farming programs of the students; (i) students who are interested in farming or a closely related occupation; (j) rooms and equipment adequate for teaching that is related to the important local enterprises and problems; (k) provisions for following up students after graduation and assisting them in establishing themselves in farming.

Adult Farmer Classes Needed

Even though the young farmer program was not included in the statements to be analyzed and criticized, practically every justification for the need of an adult program would apply to it as well, perhaps more so. In addition to the needs of the adult farmer, the young farmer can certainly profit by guidance and assistance through a critical period of adjustment; a bridge, which the vocational agriculture department can help to provide, is needed for the gap between high school graduation and the time when the young farmer becomes successfully established on the farm.

In his book, *Agricultural Education in Community Schools*, Hamlin⁶ devotes fourteen pages to stating the case for adult education for farmers in the community schools. He emphasizes: "It is a clear-cut case and anyone who understands it should never waver in his convictions or be daunted by those who oppose them. There are many reasons, each of which would by itself support public provision of adult education for farmers." We need not deal with minutiae here because the case is concisely packaged in the concluding paragraph of Hamlin's chapter on the adult program.

Schools that continue to teach Agriculture to children alone are doing little

more than playing at agricultural education. Any serious effort at improving the agriculture of a community and the lot of farm people must be directed at the people who control and direct the farming of a community, more than at their children. Any very important immediate results of agricultural education will be secured with adults. The average farmer will continue to farm for nearly 20 years more; he is farming today without systematic education for farming or with training secured nearly 20 years ago. If there is entire safety in trusting the land and the operation of farms for the next 20 years to persons thus prepared for farming, there may be no need for teaching agriculture to high school boys. At the present rate of turnover of farm operators, it would take approximately 35 years to replace our present farmers with high school graduates trained in vocational agriculture if all our present farmers were succeeded by persons thus trained (and we know that fewer than half of them will be). Thus viewed, the teaching of vocational agriculture to high school boys alone becomes a nearly hopeless and futile task. It gains significance only when we combine the teaching of high school boys with the teaching of adult farmers.

Bateman⁷ in a guest editorial appearing in the January 1953 issue of the *Agricultural Education Magazine* states:

Young Farmer and Adult Farmer Programs are one of the greatest assets of school districts in agricultural areas.

The need for school help as a farmer and as a citizen does not end when the Future Farmer graduates from high school . . . The success of the school in this work will depend to a great extent upon the quality of teachers who handle the program . . . If there is only one teacher of Agriculture in the high school, he should be selected because of his ability to carry on in each area of school service. If there is more than one teacher in the "Ag" Department, one of them should have special ability in working with young farmers.

No other program will pay off better for the good of the school, the community, and the farmer.

Material evidence that those beyond high school age are interested in more education in agriculture is shown by the fact that during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1949, the total enrollment in young and adult

⁶ Hamlin, Herbert M. *Agricultural Education in Community Schools*. Interstate, Danville, Illinois, 1949. 487 p.

⁷ E. Allen Bateman, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Utah.

farmer classes approximated the number of boys enrolled in high school classes.⁸

The Responsibility Is Apparent

Excerpts from Peterson's article⁹ on the Vocational Agriculture Farm Management Program point to who has the responsibility for education for farming:

In the final analysis it is the folks, who operate the family farms of Minnesota, who must determine what kind of education-for-farming they want.

In the final solution of our farm problems there is no substitute for education.

... we believe that our local public schools are the channel through which all educational resources can and should be coordinated. We do not believe that other agencies, public or private, can replace the public school in the community as the hub of educational activity.

Allen¹⁰ points out that: the rural community high school is the only existing agency already set up and possessing both adequate physical facilities and adequately trained personnel to perform this function on a community level; the vocational agriculture instructor cannot and should not attempt to do the job independently; it is only by working closely with other agencies which cut across the community and by taking advantage of the services and information which they offer in their respective fields that the vocational agricultural instructor can accomplish his own purpose of fulfilling the needs of the community so far as agricultural education is concerned.

It would be very convenient if the vocational agriculture teacher could recognize the need for education in agriculture for adult farmers and then neatly hand the full responsibility over to the Extension Service. But, as early as 1921, the following very definite statement of the division of responsibility between the extension program and the vocational agriculture program was issued:

Where the school provides a comprehensive program of agricultural and home economics education which meets the needs of children and adults, through systematic instruction and supervised practice, the extension forces of the land-grant colleges shall not be duplicating such work of the schools, but shall rather cooperate with the schools by providing, on request, subject matter, special lectures, conferences, and other similar services. This shall not be interpreted to limit the freedom of the extension forces to prosecute their extension work through local organizations of farmers.¹¹

The adult farmer classes usually consist of ten or more meetings, generally referred to as "systematic instruction." Adult farmer work does not duplicate what is done by the Agri-

cultural Extension Service. The county agents or farm advisers do not teach organized classes as such though they often hold more than one meeting on a subject. These two organizations complement and supplement each other.

The responsibility rests with the high school vocational agriculture department. The school is the agency set up to handle the responsibility on the community level—the only agency whose only interest is education and whose atmosphere is educational. It is the community agency with the staff and facilities for providing adequate education in agriculture for the adult farmers who can benefit from it.

Finding The Time

The reply: "I have no spare time to handle adult farmer classes," is somewhat shattered when it is shown that the adult farmer program is not something extra, but rather an integral part of a total or complete program of vocational agriculture. Criticism, of course, is not sufficient. When a dichotomous question like: "Should I neglect my high school classes in order to accommodate the adults?" is presented, positive suggestions are in order. Some possible ways that time could be found for adult farmer classes follow:

1. Don't teach non-ag subjects in the high school program.
2. Have a smaller high school enrollment by having only farm boys; that is, don't have any dilutions.
3. Develop proper perspective; that is, the high school adult programs are parts of the over-all agricultural education program.
4. Work for administrative understanding so other suggestions in this list will meet with approval.
5. Recognize that time spent on an adult program can save time on other responsibilities.
6. Use resource persons in the community to help run the program.
7. An advisory council can be helpful.
8. Put a reasonable limit on your non-ag activities.
9. When possible and practical, have your heaviest adult class load when your high school load is lightest. (This brings effective planning into the picture.)
10. Learn how to properly delegate authority and responsibility for activities.

⁸ Digest of Annual Reports of State Boards for Vocational Education, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1949, p. 64. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Washington, D. C.

⁹ Peterson, Milo J. "Education for Farming Serves the Whole Farm Unit." *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. 27:12.

¹⁰ Allen, Lee. *A Plan for Adult Education in Agriculture for Oregon*. Master's Report, M.S., 1949. Oregon State College.

¹¹ True, Alfred Charles. *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States*. United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 1929, p. 376.

11. Set and follow a definite starting and closing time for evening classes so both the farmers and the instructor can get the necessary rest for the next day's work.
12. Eliminate non-productive activities. Frequent evaluation of results is a good way to find time. Teachers have many things they can do; there is no reason to continue activities which are not productive.
13. Plan; then stick to the job until it is done. But don't forget that everyone's plans should include time for rest, relaxation and play, because no one can work efficiently all the time without diversion.
14. Practice what you preach about work simplification. For example: A teacher can use up a considerable amount of time putting away books and magazines after class. This can be eliminated by a good system of student help.
15. Locating materials can eat into a teacher's schedule. Establish a filing system which the students can use.
16. Planning time must be set aside. Allot a regular period each week for this fundamental route to efficiency.
17. Be an educational leader, not a service station operator.
18. Don't let state reports, and the like, pile up. Don't get behind.
19. Finding time really hinges on a firm belief and faith in an idea. How do you find time to fish or to golf?

High School Program Benefits

If a vocational agriculture teacher were to wait until his high school program was just as he wanted it before starting an adult program, it is doubtful that an adult program would ever be undertaken. There are at least two reasons for this assertion. One is that the teacher worthy of his hire is never satisfied; he is always striving to improve his program. The other is that a good adult program is needed, or at the very least will contribute considerably, to make the high school program effective. Some of the ways it will do this follow:

1. Teachers who have taught adult farmers successfully have more confidence, poise, etc.
2. Experience in working closely with adult farmers keeps the teacher posted on the real agricultural needs of the community. Thus, the high school classes will be more realistic and practical—less artificial.
3. Working with adults helps to mature young teachers and keeps the older teachers more alert.
4. Experience with adult farmer classes helps the agriculture teacher to better understand the parents of his high school boys.
5. Contacts with adult farmers often provide field trips and the like for the high school classes that would otherwise be unavailable.
6. The prestige of the teacher is increased

with the successful teaching of adult farmer classes. High school students have greater respect for teachers who help solve the farm problems of adults.

Research Needed

No attempt is being made here to indicate that every department of vocational agriculture should have adult farmer classes. What is being maintained is that those who make the kinds of statements given in the beginning paragraph do not have a sound philosophy of vocational education in agriculture or that they have just made poorly considered replies to the question: "Why don't you have adult farmer classes?" Many factors would have to be taken into consideration before a judgment could be made. Some of the most obvious factors are the needs of that particular community, the ability of the teacher, the availability of additional personnel, administrative viewpoint, facilities, finances, etc.

It is quite possible that many of the instructors voicing such replies just fear the unknown—that is, they missed the opportunity for experience in teaching adult classes during their student teaching. As long as they weren't forced into sponsoring an adult farmer class they rationalized and procrastinated. This is purely conjectural because no studies appear in the *Summaries of Studies in Agricultural Education*¹² dealing specifically with this particular phase of the program.

The big difficulty is that too many educators—this includes the vocational agriculture teachers as well as administrators—just don't accept adult instruction as an integral part of the total education program. It is unfortunate that adult education is considered by many to be part-time; that is, the teachers are recruited from the personnel teaching a full high school load. Likewise, it is made to seem like an "extra" job, particularly in those states where extra pay is given on an hourly basis to those teaching adult farmer classes instead of the arrangement being that it is part of the regular contractual assignment.

Every study on adult farmer classes listed in *Summaries of Studies in Agricultural Education* was reviewed in preparation for this statement. The studies are scattered and limited in scope. Obviously the whole problem needs more attention. The rapid advances in the technology of farming and the changes in the farm family's social pattern make it appear that careful study in the whole area of adult farmer education would be fruitful. One such area is the Minnesota Vocational Agricultural Farm Management Program. It appears to be a program which offers great promise of supplying a core-type adult farmer program which would give the program real meaning and go far toward meeting the needs of farmers.

¹² *Summaries of Studies in Agricultural Education*. Vocational Division Bulletins. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Washington, D. C.