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PART-TIME WORK

PART TIME WORK OF MUCH IMPORTANCE

One of the important phases of the work of the high school agricultural teacher is the instruction which he gives outside the schoolroom. As has been said, the man who regards the high school or his classroom as the only place for instruction is failing to take advantage of his opportunities.

In the early days of agricultural teaching little attention was given to classroom work. It was performed in a perfunctory manner and little advantage was taken of the opportunity to make agriculture an important part of the curriculum. Much time and energy were given to work in the field, particularly among farmers and boys not in school. This work was not in the form of definite instruction but largely of an advisory nature. As a matter of fact, the agricultural teacher and the county agent carried on practically the same type of work and agricultural education in the high school was neglected.

Class Work Over-emphasized

The actual teaching in the schools gradually became so unimportant (in the minds of the teachers) that a reaction set in. It was felt that the teacher was devoting too much time to extension or extra-school activities and not enough to instructional work with high school boys. With the growth of teacher training departments in colleges it was now also possible to supply men who understood teaching methods and realized the need for the training of the coming generation. County agents became more numerous and the need for outside activity by the high school man was further decreased. The teaching of agriculture to boys in school, and classroom technique and management became all important in agricultural education. If a man were a good teacher he was usually regarded as successful, no matter what his community activities might be.

Continued on page 2

PART-TIME WORK IN ACTUAL OPERATION

Paul Calrow, State Supervisor of Agricultural Education, in an address before the members of the Agricultural Education Club, University Farm, March 14, pointed out clearly the importance of extending the instruction in agriculture to a larger group than is ordinarily reached when the work is confined to the students in the high school. He said that the part-time work is just as important as the all-day school work now carried on in the high schools.

In a recent bulletin issued by the Federal Board for Vocational Education, J. A. Linke says that there are two great divisions in the development of vocational agricultural education in the United States. The first deals with the organization of the work in the public high school and the second with the organization of part-time classes for those who are not in high school but who are actually on the job of farming.

What Some Schools Are Doing

During the year 1920-21 some form of part-time work in agriculture was carried on in 34 states. In all these states, however, there were but 468 such schools organized, which indicates that we are just beginning a type of work in vocational agriculture that promises to reach a group that can be highly benefited by definite instruction in scientific agriculture. Many of the schools in Minnesota are giving some work that is designed to help the young men who are not reached by courses offered in the high schools. The schools at Albert Lea and Grand Rapids have developed a special type of part-time instruction this year that is worthy of special mention. At each of these schools the teacher of agriculture, in coöperation with other local men, organized special evening classes for adult farmers in outlying districts and secured special teachers to carry on

Continued on page 3

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Continued from page 1

But the pendulum had swung too far. As in most situations of adjustment to new conditions, the extremes are tried and then the best position is found somewhere in the middle ground. We believe that we are now working on a basis of sound common sense. We are emphasizing neither school nor extension education, but realize the value of both. We are possibly a little slow as yet to break away from the idea that it is impossible to accomplish much in an educational way except with high school students. Many are still of the opinion that, to use a standard expression, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Even though time-honored, this expression is not wholly true. While it may not be possible to change a farmer's entire attitude or practice, it is possible so to alter some of his habits and practices that he will succeed better in some particular work.

Part-time Work Defined

Part-time work is one of the forms of out-of-school instruction. It is designed primarily to meet the needs of mature farmers who wish to improve their methods and also those of young men and older boys who are unable to get instruction in the regular high school agricultural course. As a rule these men are anxious for definite and specific instruction along definite and specific lines. They do not want historical or general information courses of any kind, but a practical and usable series of lessons.

Usually there will be more opportunity for these part-time courses dur-

ing the winter months, or slack season, but they may be offered at any time. The tendency is not to concentrate the lessons into a period of two or three weeks, but to spread them over several months with one or two meetings each week. This allows plenty of opportunity for thought between meetings. It is probable, also, that attendance will be better over the longer period.

The time and place for the instruction should be chosen to suit the convenience of the largest number. In practice probably the best place is a schoolhouse, for here blackboards, charts, and other teaching equipment are available. It is often valuable, particularly if the classes are held in the daytime, to meet at some farm home where livestock or equipment may be used in illustrating an important lesson. The main considerations in choosing the place for meeting are that it be centrally located, well lighted and heated, and equipped with tables and chairs and as many teaching conveniences as possible.

Unit Courses Best

The nature of the instruction, has been mentioned above. Let it again be said that no attempt should be made to give an extensive course but rather one that is extremely intensive. Courses called Animal Husbandry, Vegetable Gardening, Dairying, are very likely to fail. It is questionable that a course as broad as one on "Hogs" will succeed. It would probably be better to limit the work as indicated by the following titles, offering but one at a time, "Breeding of Hogs," "Feeding for Pork," "Feeding and Care of Sow and Litter," "Hog Housing and Equipment," "Diseases of Hogs."

Methods of Instruction

In other words only small unit courses should be attempted, at least when the work is first introduced. The spread of discussion should be limited so that each lesson may have a definite and applicable conclusion. Usually not more than ten or twelve lessons should be included in any one unit and this in itself will tend to limit the scope of the subject matter.

In order to make a success of teaching, a man must possess both teaching skill and a thoro scientific and practical knowledge of subject matter. This is particularly true of part-time work. The classes will be composed of serious minded men, interested and anxious to learn, but probably woefully

weak in ability to study and to interpret the average "lecture." This means that illustrative material must be used in abundance, that teaching devices must be brought into play, and that the teacher must use every means at his command to direct the progress of these men. Pictures, charts, slides, and samples must all be used. Discussion and blackboard outlines must take the place of lectures. Careful assignments and directed study must be the rule. The instructor should feel responsible for providing reference material in sufficient amounts that the students will be able to study for themselves between meetings and thus utilize the class periods for discussions of the more difficult problems.

There is little doubt of the worthwhileness of part-time unit courses. Their success depends almost entirely however, upon the ability of the instructor as a teacher, as a leader, and as a diagnostician of community needs.

S. D.

Continued from page 1

the work. P. W. Chase, instructor in agriculture in the public schools of Grand Rapids, organized five classes for the purpose of giving special instruction in poultry. Mr. C. E. Brown, a poultry specialist, was secured as instructor and a unit course of twelve lessons on poultry was worked out to fit the needs of the people near Grand Rapids. Mr. Brown spends part of his time during the day in preparing his work for the various lessons. In the evening he goes out to one of the school centers and conducts the group meeting. Each lesson is organized to meet the actual needs of the local group. Directed practice or follow-up work will be carried on throughout the year by Mr. Chase. There are 160 men enrolled for this instruction. It should mean much to the future poultry industry in that section of the state.

Dairying at Albert Lea

The work at Albert Lea was organized by L. H. Thurwachter, the teacher of agriculture in the public schools. He found no great difficulty in securing good sized classes in six communities surrounding Albert Lea. He found bankers and prominent farmers ready to cooperate to the fullest extent. In some of the communities the bank furnishes the room in which the classes meet, while in other places the schoolhouse or town hall is used. L. H. Fudge was secured to carry on the class work in five of the centers and Mr. Thurwachter takes care of the sixth. Each class meets one evening a

week and the course runs for twelve weeks, making twelve lessons. All the groups are studying dairying, as that is the greatest local interest in each community. The classes are made up of the following types of students.

- a. Adult farmers who own and operate their own farms.
- b. Young men who are on rented farms.
- c. Young men who are staying at home to help parents on partnership basis.
- d. Boys who have left school but are interested in farming.

Mr. Fudge has had a great deal of experience in practical farming and has had several years of experience in teaching agriculture and in extension work. He states that teaching in these part-time evening schools is difficult because the range of ages runs from seventeen to forty and the previous education runs from less than eighth grade to high school graduation.

Method of Instruction

In order to be at all effective the instruction must be on the problem basis. The group should enter into a free discussion of whatever topics are involved in the problem or problems assigned for each group meeting. The difficulty of securing proper books or bulletins for study by these young farmers is a problem the teacher will have to solve if the highest degree of efficiency is to be approximated. *The lecture method in this work is a waste of time and no teacher should even attempt it.*

Mr. Fudge writes that the most interested group is one in which all the men are owners or managers of their own farms. They are attending the class for a definite purpose and many are the intense discussions that take place at each week's lesson. The problems are real ones and if any ideas are to be taken seriously they must be backed by the best scientific data before they are accepted as worthy of trial. The job of the teacher is to direct these thought processes so that they are kept in profitable channels. The teacher must also aid in summarizing the results of the discussion and should present the findings in clear, definite terms. The needs of individuals should be cared for by visits to the home during the week if the teacher deems such personal instruction necessary.

Follow-Up Work

Mr. Thurwachter is making arrangements for each person attending the courses this winter to carry the instruction into actual practice during the

coming year. Many of the farmers have already begun to profit by the instruction. Some are feeding oilmeal, others have made plans to build silos and several have purchased milk scales with the idea of testing their whole herd for production. The intention is to have each person plan, carry out, and keep records on some definite phase of the work in dairying. Every member of the various groups seems eager to do this, which means that Mr. Thurwachter is going to be a busy man during the coming summer. Mr. Chase is making similar plans for definite summer work at Grand Rapids.

Measures of Results

It is always difficult to measure the results of any instruction but the following indicate that the part-time courses at Grand Rapids and Albert Lea have been successful:

1. Increased attendance.
2. Majority of those who started the course have been present at every lesson.
3. Better farm practices.
4. Definite plans for improved practices.
5. Requests for similar courses next winter.

As evidence of these points we quote from two letters received by Mr. Thurwachter from men who are now enrolled in the part-time classes.

"As a member of one of the classes in the group of night schools now being conducted in Freeborn County under the supervision of the Agricultural Department of the Albert Lea high school, I wish to express my appreciation of the work being accomplished under the leader, Mr. L. H. Fudge. In my opinion these classes are going to exert a very beneficial influence upon the communities in which they are being held.

"I truly believe that this system of instruction will give better and more lasting results than have been obtained in the past by the work of our Farmers' Institutes. In the classes now being held the interest is steadily increasing. In this form of instruction there is a much greater opportunity for discussion of the various points which come up in the work of the course, and the help and information which we gain from each other is of no little value.

"But the chief value of the system, I think, lies in the fact that the various members of the classes learn to understand the principles involved in the study of the questions of breeding, feeding, etc., by actually working out the problems themselves, instead of only hearing it explained by a speaker. *And what a man has worked out for himself he seldom forgets.* Also the spirit of coöperation is kindled by the simple fact of a group of men meeting and working together upon a subject of common interest. Taking it as a whole, I consider the experiment an unqualified success."—C. L. Freeman.

"In requesting the continuation of the night classes, which we hope will be conducted another year, I wish to outline some of the benefits which I have received from these lessons:

"My mind is refreshed on what I am to look for in selecting a good dairy sire.

"I have learned a more efficient method of feeding. I had always considered myself a good feeder but found my ration deficient in the nutriments required through this study.

By the erection of a second silo and doing summer feeding, more cows can be kept on the same acres so that the portion of our pasture that can be cultivated may be turned into producing fields.

"In conclusion will say that the discussions add much inspiration to my work."—John D. Ruble.

It is hoped that this brief discussion will arouse the interest of a number of men teaching agriculture in Minnesota so that plans may be under way earlier if similar work can be undertaken. Remember that this work is a part of the state program for vocational education and as such will be supported by state aid on the same basis as the vocational agricultural instruction in the high schools. The organization of the part-time schools and the methods of carrying on the work will be among the prominent topics for discussion during the intensive training course for teachers of agriculture to be held at University Farm Aug. 21-26.

A. M. F.