

## VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN A PERMANENT PROGRAM OF AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT

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The title of this paper suggests that the framers of the program were of the opinion that we are to have a permanent program of agricultural improvement. I believe that they are correct in this opinion. A few years ago agriculture might have been called the forgotten vocation. The tillers of the soil were left to shift for themselves—to take what they could get and like it. The farmer and his family were considered by city dwellers and business men as adequately provided for if they had enough to eat and were able to do manual labor. Today we are in a much better position, because all vocations are interested in the purchasing power of the farmer.

All of you are familiar with the great change which has developed in our farming operations due to the development of the machine age. Operations which formerly required long days of labor and constantly held the farmer and his family to the farm are now accomplished in a few hours by using our mechanized equipment. This led to increased acreage under cultivation and larger harvests. One of the most potent factors entering into a surplus production has been the mechanization of agriculture. This has caused economic changes faster than men could adjust their enterprises to the new situation. The technique of producing agricultural products has advanced rapidly, resulting in production of farm crops faster than our markets have provided outlets.

With what we call modern conveniences the farm folks are in close touch with everyday happenings and are as up to date in news and developments as anyone in the world. With this change of conditions, the farm population has developed desires for pleasant and comfortable living that compare with the circumstances of city dwellers. In order to fulfill the farm family's desire for better living and at the same time being faced

with lower prices, the only immediate solution was greater production.

It took a depression of major proportions to convince all groups of people that agriculture is a basic industry; that if the free flow of money in the money cycle was stagnated by low farm income, all professions and businesses would suffer. The farm income not only affects the farmer but it also affects all industry and labor. With these facts so clearly demonstrated, it was evident that something must be done. These conditions led to the birth of the farm program. All of you are familiar with the changes and growth through which that program has gone. The experiment stations and our universities have long been working to develop truths as well as to learn new practical facts in connection with agriculture. The Seventy-sixth Congress of the United States has now passed a measure as follows: In the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1938 Congress provides that "The secretary of agriculture is hereby authorized and directed to establish, equip, and maintain four regional research laboratories, to conduct research into and to develop new scientific, chemical, and technical uses and new and extended markets and outlets for farm commodities and farm products and by-products, thereof." One of these regional research laboratories is being developed at Peoria, Illinois. The major problems at this laboratory will concern corn, wheat, and agricultural waste products.

I have mentioned these facts which assure us that agriculture is receiving consideration and in some cases is in a better position than it has ever before held.

All of us know that the establishment of experiment stations years ago did not make the business of farming less complex, less hazardous, or even solve all common farm problems. Likewise, I think we should not expect the establishment of research laboratories to be a

cure-all for farming ills. Farming will continue to be very much the same as it has been, with the exception of slow changes and gradual readjustments. Many of our farmers will be successful and many will fail. I can see no hope for a farmer on poor soil, using antiquated methods and possessing poor managerial and business ability. In order to farm successfully, at the present time, a man must possess abilities as exacting as those required in any other vocation, and should use them wisely.

A large amount of material is now published on agricultural problems, and it seems safe to predict even an increase of this material in the future.

Our vocational agriculture departments are serving and shall continue to serve as the logical clearing house for material concerning practical agriculture. Vocational agriculture provides men, trained under high specifications and paid salaries from public funds, to serve the agricultural interests of small communities. Such men are in close contact with their constituents. Under their leadership boys learn the latest methods of various phases of farming. Adult farmers too are taking advantage of vocational agriculture departments by attending evening schools. In 1918, we had in this state, 15 such departments, 1923—130 departments, 1928—181 departments, 1932—228 departments, 1937—288 departments and 1940—373 departments. It seems safe to predict that we will soon have 500 such departments. Then we will have reached the point where a large part of our new farmers will be the products of our vocational agriculture departments. They will enter the occupation of farming with a wide knowledge of its hazards as well as of its

possibilities. They know that agriculture is due for possible changes in the future as it has changed in the past, and in order to keep informed on these new developments, constant study will be required. Our students who learn to correlate study with the application of what they learn will be in a position to profit by continued study after graduation.

The farmer will continue to manage his own farm, and upon his managerial and business ability will depend his income.

We are particularly anxious that our students make application of new knowledge. Even if it is on a small scale, necessitating the expenditure of only a few dollars, we believe the application is the strong point in our program, and if a boy is to receive the best training in our department he will carry out recommended practices.

General interest in vocational agriculture is growing. The agriculture department in the high school is in an ideal position to serve the agricultural interests of a community. Its worth is directly proportional to the quality of leadership which it provides farm people.

We have unquestionable evidence that our agriculture departments are practical and that many improved practices have been promoted by them.

Vocational agriculture is organized in such a way that it can develop either a program of its own or else work cooperatively with any or all other agricultural agencies.

Vocational agriculture in the United States is anxious to continue its work and improve its facilities to take its place in a permanent program of agricultural improvement.