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SOME PROBLEMS IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A DEPT. OF POULTRY HUSBANDRY AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

The purpose of this paper is simply to point out a few of the problems which have come up for solution during a year of such work at a secondary school.

Agricultural instruction from even a Collegiate point of view is a comparatively recent thing. In this country it has been developed to its present status within the last half-century. The same is true of agricultural experimentation in general. As a member of an agricultural curriculum, Poultry Husbandry is much younger than such others as Agronomy, Horticulture, etc. It is also younger than most of the other branches of Animal Husbandry in its larger sense. From a pedagogical standpoint, Agricultural teaching today lacks STANDARDIZATION, and it is along this line that much of the future development must take place. From the standpoint of efficient teaching, Agriculture is perhaps a half-century behind the general Academic subjects. Various authorities have, some years since, proclaimed the propaganda Era of agricultural development nearly at an end, and predicted that the Agriculture of the future would be largely founded on basic education and scientific instruction.

As the whole development of Agricultural education is comparatively modern, from a Collegiate point of view, the contrast is the more remarkable when viewed from the angle of the secondary school. Here is a development of the last decade, and really only within the last four or five years has the growth been rapid. So what may be said of the lack of standardization in Agricultural teaching in general, must be reiterated and still more strenuously emphasized in the case of instruction through the medium of the Secondary school.

One of the first problems with which one is confronted in the organization of

a Poultry Department at such a school is the task of defining the scope and limitations of its work. This, let me state, is no mean problem. Such questions as the following immediately arise:

1 (a) Granting cooperation with the State Agricultural College thru ITS Poultry Department is highly desirable to avoid duplication of effort and to promote efficiency in extension work, to what extent shall this be carried, and how far shall the Department direct its own extension activities? With but a single instructor, there are manifest physical limitations in the development of this field.

(b) To how great a radius shall these activities extend, since obviously a centrally located College of Agriculture can handle these duties the more efficiently outside of certain more or less arbitrary limits?

2. Another problem which confronts the projected Poultry Department is that of EQUIPMENT. How large an enterprise should be built up for the best instructional needs? How many breeds should be kept: how large an expansion of laying and breeding flocks and appliances, etc?

3. Again should our hypothetical Department attempt EXPERIMENTATION? Obviously it should to the extent of adding interest to the instruction, but should such extraneous enterprises as egg-laying contests or other long time experiments be attempted, or are these simply carried out by those who are laboring along the lines of least resistance? We have no precedents established; logic must be resorted to, and of course mistakes must inevitably occur, for there appears to be no unanimity of opinion.

4 (a) For the best interests of our students to what extent should we offer elective, specialized courses in addition to the customary fundamental and elementary ones? Here we come face to face with a fact which, in my opinion, lies as the basic contributory cause to the present situation. In a Secondary

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School, as contrasted with the College, a completely new set of conditions are encountered, which demand their own peculiar methods of analysis and attack. But necessarily they fall into the hands of College-trained men, with essentially a College point of view. Further, most of these men have had little or no previous pedagogical training, and are truly INEXPERIENCED. Is it not far from simple to transport one's reasoning processes trained in one general direction of thought to a completely new set of conditions, and not obtain something of the same mental response? This is but a sort of the mental inertia which the psychologist tells us about. Herein lies the difficulty, of this I am entirely convinced. It is evident from the chaotic condition of the general arrangement of courses which I have observed in a study of the catalogs of all of the Secondary Schools of Agriculture in this country I have been able to collect. The result of analysis seems to indicate that sufficient time has not yet elapsed for the men engaged in this work to get thoroughly in mind the true viewpoint of the Secondary School, and adapt their work accordingly. Without doubt the extreme specialization of the College is without its place in the Secondary School.

(b) Another problem in this connection is whether, under average conditions, the development of poultry work at a Secondary School is justified beyond that which a single instructor can personally manage, granted more or less assistance with the practical equipment of the Department. This point is raised having in mind the symmetrical development of general Agricultural instruction, with the proper emphasis on each subject according to its relative importance under average conditions. This is too often desired yet unattained.

5. Under certain conditions the poultry instructor has to cope with a very manifest LACK OF INTEREST. This, I find, is not confined to any particular section. In our location in Southwestern New York the pendulum of general Agricultural interest and endeavor has, in the past, swung very decidedly toward the dairy cow, and made the production of market-milk the dominant industry. The certain resultant reaction is now well under way due to several well understood agencies at work. But still much of the old time prejudice remains. Here is a problem which the State College probably does not duly appreciate, since it does not, like the Secondary School, cater to a restricted area which is dominated by a certain somewhat fixed and definite set of more or less local circumstances. Under these conditions there is an utter lack of proper understanding of the true significance and place of poultry on the farm. We now appreciate that this condition is only temporal, and economic forces are resulting in a very pronounced tendency to change. But alas how slowly things happen in Agriculture! At a recent legal

hearing before an investigational committee of the New York State Legislature unquestionable evidence was submitted to the effect that the sum total of the conditions surrounding the market-milk industry in the lower Hudson Valley had long since made it unprofitable, yet witness how slowly the readjustment is taking place.

6. Another problem of considerable significance in the teaching of Poultry Husbandry, among other subjects, is the lack of sufficient fundamental scientific preparation on the part of the students. As the desire to present more advanced and more specialized courses increases, the seriousness of this problem becomes more apparent. As a result of this condition we have as yet, as far as I can ascertain, no poultry text-book which anywhere near adequately meets the situation. Personally my brief observation leads me to conclude that the text-book is essential to logical, systematic, and well-directed effort and progress IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL, though this may not hold true in the College.

7. From a pedagogical standpoint the lecture and recitation problems are quite important. It has been truthfully pointed out that as we progressively deal, from the College downward, with more and more youthful sets of students, the value of the lecture decreases, and the value of the recitation increases. But the great value of the lecture lies in the ability to present a relatively large amount of material in a correspondingly relatively short period of time in short in its efficiency. This problem is not yet solved in our Colleges, as many of you are doubtless aware, for an extension of the recitation system seems desirable and imminent.

8. Secondary Schools, as their scope of territorial influence tends to decrease, become increasingly local in character. This results in a very small student body as compared with the College, but not as one might expect, in a more uniform class of students EDUCATIONALLY, as regards maturity, the fundamental scientific training of which we have already spoken, practical experience, and general ability and initiative.

(a) In looking over the entrance requirements of all the six Secondary Schools in New York State, I find they are, in all cases, substantially these—

1. At least 16 years of age
2. The completion of the eighth grade of the elementary schools or its equivalent

3. Good health and moral character.

In the first place as merely a minimum age is requisite, there is a fairly wide variation above this point, although probably no wider than, on the average, holds true in the College. But due to the greater lack of thorough preparatory training and the fact that the average mind is considerably younger, this variability is more keenly felt, and of greater significance.

(b) You will note that practical experience is not an entrance requirement

in any of the schools, though it is true that it is requisite for graduation in all. Because of the greater immaturity of the minds with which we must deal, this lack of practical experience is even more disadvantageous than in the College, for in the latter case greater mental development and capacity serve to compensate in no small degree for this lack of practical experience.

(c) Again, because no High School work is presupposed, a variable proportion of students who either failed to satisfactorily handle this work, or who lacked the firmness of purpose necessary to hopefully attack it, drift into the Secondary School of Agriculture, hoping to find it easier or at least more interesting and attractive than the usual High School curriculum. Unfortunately often the reverse proves true, and quite a number, I believe a considerably larger proportion than in the College, fail to complete the course. The preparatory training and ability of the student seems to vary fairly directly with the general prosperity of the region from which he comes, as measured roughly by its propitious location and resources, both agriculturally and industrially.

9. One of the problems which has dwelt with me most steadfastly has been that of the student who, completing a large proportion, often all of the Agricultural course, suddenly discovers that he desires a College training. Usually he is deficient from one to three years of the High School preparation needed for College entrance. But that is not so serious as the fact that all his time and funds spent at the Secondary School are lost from the point of view of the College—because no exchange credit for any of this work can be allowed under existing arrangements. It has been my experience to see several promising young minds thoroughly disheartened by this dismal outlook toward the remote possibility of a College education; for once put aside, the desire is usually permanently abandoned. Here is a situation which urgently demands remedy.

10. Besides the problems already mentioned, there are certain others which depend largely on the local situation. One of these with which we have to cope is the fact that the farm is nearly a mile from the instruction building, a condition which was made necessary by the topography of the region. Being so inaccessible and our laboratory periods so short—but one and one-half hours in duration—it is practically impossible to utilize the farm equipment and facilities to any extent in class work. Consequently one has to defer until field trips certain practical features which should have been hitherto emphasized and pointed out.

Another condition which one in some cases is called upon to meet is a lack of sympathy for poultry work with the members of the governing Board of Trustees. Fortunately modern developments are rapidly changing such an attitude. An ever present problem, of course, is

that of lack of funds for seemingly essential equipment, which necessitates much thought and ingenuity to counteract.

Summing up, as Agricultural education must be a growing developing thing and not static in any sense of the word, ABSOLUTE STANDARDIZATION can never be feasible or even possible. But, on the other hand, I firmly believe that we have now reached the time when more efficient presentation of the facts and principles already established is MORE TO BE DESIRED, EDUCATIONALLY, than the discovery of new facts and that standardization of material and method is urgent and necessary, and must inevitably be ultimately realized.

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CO-OPERATIVE EGG MARKETING IN CANADA

(Continued from page 40, Vol. 3, No. 5)

During the summer of 1912 Mr. W. A. Brown, now Chief of the Poultry Division of the Live Stock Branch, Ottawa, visited Prince Edward Island and made an exhaustive investigation of the conditions prevailing in the poultry industry of the Island, with the result that it was decided to appoint a resident Representative whose duty it would be to attempt the organization of the Island farmers with a view to improving their markets; and it is perhaps in this Province that the greatest and most definite progress has been made, due probably in part to conditions favorable to poultry culture, and the very urgent need of reformed methods.

Previous to this time the Poultry industry of the Island Province had been in an almost deplorable condition, and, with the exception of some efforts which had been made by the Prince Edward Island Poultry Association to introduce pure bred stock, nothing had been done to improve conditions. The farmers were entirely in the hands of a few local operators who purchased their eggs through the medium of the local stores and travelling buyers, all eggs being purchased on the flat rate or case count basis,—quite regardless of quality, and payment being made in trade, or due bills given as payment. At certain seasons it was even quite impossible for the farmers to sell their eggs at all. The reputation of the Island egg was so bad, even as recently as 1912, that the Montreal and other dealers were unwilling to purchase them in some instances, unless compelled by shortage to do so. In the autumn of 1912, after some further investigation, the work of organizing was taken in hand; but owing to the fact that winter eggs were not generally considered a possibility, or even profitable, shipping was not commenced until the spring of 1913; but by September of the same year eleven Associations had been organized, all of which shipped eggs at intervals right through the following winter, realizing in some instances as much as 14¢ per