

NOTES BY THE WAYSIDE

By J. J. Inskeep, County Extension Agent

What are the problems facing American, and Oregon farmers? Pick up a copy of almost any newspaper these days and you read about the horrors of the farm surplus. Actually the percentage of surplus is small. Actually we are faced with the necessity of further increasing production by another 40 percent or more by 1975 if we are to feed our growing population.

Following are excerpts from a most important talk by Paul C. Johnson, Editor, Prairie Farmer. It was made to the Extension workers of Oregon assembled in annual conference in Corvallis recently.

"Agricultural extension work, backed by research, residential teaching and the cooperation of farm groups, has succeeded over the years because it has been responsive to the needs of rural people. This educational system of ours—I speak of extension education rather than classroom teaching—is the envy of the world. It is important that we understand why and preserve the elements of that

success even as we adapt extension work of the fast-breaking needs of our time."

Let me review with you some of the perplexities and urgencies of today, especially as they affect agriculture and rural life.

"At the top of the list is the great dilemma created by our abundance. Is our agricultural plant actually over-expanded? Will we be able to meet the food needs of the future, Will the movement of workers out of agriculture be permanent? How do we learn to live with the new large-scale, highly-competitive, technological agriculture which seems to be

upon us? If we are to make wise decisions in the face of this fundamental change, we will need economic literacy and sociological perspective far beyond that which we have been called on to supply in the past."

What is more, for those who want to continue farming, technology, and managerial skill have become suddenly a matter of economic life or death. We can't afford to take 10 years to change our ways of farming. Knowledge is needed at once. Expansion must be plotted boldly and intelligently. Suddenly you must be a good farmer or you are not a farmer at all. This puts a tremendous responsibility on our research and extension program.

At the same time, we cannot abandon overnight the many good people who are working their way out of agriculture. A great many will remain as part-time farmers or rural residents who rub elbows daily with the remaining commercial farmers.

In fact, we find ourselves confronted with a new kind of rural community, composed on-y in part of fulltime commercial farmers. The rest are part-time and rural residents who do their work in business, in the professions, or in skilled or unskilled labor.

Farming is no longer primarily a way of life. It has grown into a business comparable to running a hardware store, a garage, or a clothing store in town. The new custodians of the rural way of life are not farmers alone, but a composite of people who earn their living in many ways.

While the need for technology and farm management skills has been intensified for a smaller number, there is no decline in the number of rural people and their desire for the extension type of education

A great decision is being forged in our generation—whether education can keep the rank and file of people up to the task of dealing wisely with new problems, within the framework of democratic freedom, or whether we will resort increasingly to regimentation. This issue is especially acute in our nation's agriculture.

We are short of time. We are short of research. We are short skilled educational workers.

Sometimes we are even short of vision.

The adversary in this educational role is the authoritarian who is more interested in making people obey than understand. The authoritarian always has a crisis and a timetable. He is always in a hurry and his purpose is to get people to act according to a preconceived pattern.

For education to adapt the methods of this adversary would be fatal. For our goal is understanding an rational decision, not indoctrination or short-term action. The purpose of education is to develop the full, unpredictable scale of human imagination an capability, not to regiment the thought and action of the individual.

We want no brainwashing, not even with our own kind of soap.

Sound research and useful information are still the heart of all extension education. We can never turn extension work over to professional communicators. I have found that in my work, which is the publication of a farm magazine, we can be more effective if the majority of our staff members are scientists who know how to write. As yet our journalism schools are not turning out people adequately trained for educational journalism. Perhaps some day we can find the proper ingredients for a good agricultural communicator or writes. I am sure that when we do we will find that a sound education in subject matter is the first need and that the communication skills are supplementary, although important.

During the war when I was an extension editor, I felt that our extension message was often too superficial, that we were exhorting our people to action but not always supplying them with information with which to act intelligently. This superficiality is the pitfall of the mass media of our day. Superficiality and brevity are not the same. By continually nagging we can establish immunity to an idea rather than plant it and cause it to grow and bear fruit.

Let's take a quick look at mass media.

People are hungry for a sane, analytical press and radio. I believe they are tired of hysterical headlines and souped-up radio presentations. I have noticed that many city people like to listen to farm programs and like to read farm papers because they like the constructive tone and the calm approach

I keep thinking how much easier it would be to teach soil conservation to farmers who really loved the land. How surpluses would melt if the older farmers who have money in the bank would store productive capacity in the land instead of hauling it off to the government bins. How much easier it would be to keep our farms in good hands if everybody would lend a hand to the young couple starting out. How much better off farmers would be in the future if we accept self-discipline and market discipline now in place of government discipline and questionable security.

Mr. and Mrs. Del Gant, Mr. and Mrs. William Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Larry Meade celebrated the birthdays of Vernita Gant, Del Gant and Larry Meade with a dinner at the Old Towne Crier in Portland on Friday evening of last week. Afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Gant and Mr. and Mrs. Meade attended the wrestling matches at the National Guard Armory in Portland and witnessed the sensational bout between Kurt Von Poppenheim and Bull Montana.

ENGAGEMENT IS ANNOUNCED THIS WEEK
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph P. Thomas announce the engagement of their daughter Alice Darlene to Wallace E. Shepard, Jr. of Molalla, Oregon. No wedding date has been set. Alice is a graduate of Estacada Union High School and is a student at Phagan's School of Hair Design at Portland. Wallace graduated from Molalla High and recently receive his discharge from the Air Force.

The many friends of Louie Leonhardt were glad to see him again as he returned to Estacada this week for a few days visit. Louie who now lives at Longmont, Colorado, has also been visiting in California

Mrs. Marie Fontana thanks her friends for their kind and thoughtful expressions of sympathy during her recent hospitalization.

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