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SOME CHALLENGES FOR THE 60'S

(A. G. Bullard, State Supervisor - Presented at 1960 Conference)

Vo-Ag's challenges for the 60's are rooted in the fact that Agriculture is North Carolina's No 1 industry - An industry with many important segments:

The first segment is our farms which number over 200,00 and produce a gross cash income to farm families of approximately 1 billion dollars with a potential income much higher with proper utilization of our agricultural resources and "Know-How". It is well to note also that in 1957 over 450,000 workers were employed in farming, including more than 260,000 farm operators.

The second segment is the hundreds of manufacturing and processing industries which are "Consumers" of raw products produced on our farms. Their continued operation and expansion depend not only upon a strong consumer demand for their products but also upon an efficient and profitable farm economy.

The third segment of which we should remind ourselves and others is the thousands of small and large businesses in our state engaged in providing important services necessary to keep our farms going.

These are the major segments of our Number 1 industry - Agriculture.

It is the first segment, our farms, where vocational agriculture has its primary responsibility, so we might take a look at this segment for the challenges that are ours during the 60's.

As one of our national leaders said a few weeks ago, it is much easier to score 20-20 vision on hindsight than on foresight. Never-the-less, a study of changes which have occurred and which are occurring and the use of information obtained will help us to improve our score on foresight.

And I believe you will agree with me that foresight is essential in planning and executing an effective program of Vocational Agriculture. Whether or not we like the changes which are occurring in both agriculture and education we can not afford an attitude of complacency. The alert educator is one who will acknowledge the fact of change, analyze the forces causing the change, and develop programs which will help individuals to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to solve their problems in a continually changing environment.

Two or three months ago your district supervisor distributed copies of a publication entitled "North Carolina's New Agriculture in A New Age". This publication presents in a very effective manner some of the major changes or shifts occurring in farming and rural living in North Carolina. It should be required reading - or rather study - for each of you. In addition, I would urge you to study your own community to identify the shifts that are taking place there because these shifts have implications for adjustments in the content of courses as well as methods of teaching Vocational Agriculture.

As I have observed and studied the changes in agriculture and education which have occurred during the past decade and which shall continue during the decade ahead, and have examined them for implications related to Vocational Agriculture, I have reached the conclusion that there are three major challenges for Vo-Ag in the decade ahead. I invite you to think with me for a few minutes concerning each of these challenges:

1. A reappraisal of each Vo-Ag Course in the high school program, including the role of the NFA.

As a basis for this reappraisal I would urge each of you to study your local community - more thoroughly, perhaps, than most of you are accustomed to do - to ascertain the sociological,

agricultural, and educational changes in your community and the implications these changes have for adjustments in the instructional program for high school Vo-Ag students. May I suggest the following questions for our study and consideration during the months immediately ahead:

- * Are our specific objectives for each high course consistent with our major aims, up-to-date, and clearly defined to the extent that we can evaluate both pupil and teacher performance?
- * Is the content of each course appropriate to the needs of the individuals enrolled and challenging enough to motivate superior effort?
- * Are we using in our teaching the most modern agricultural technology in developing the individual's ability to solve problems in his farming programs and in his community.
- * Are we giving enough emphasis in our teaching:
 - (1) to vocational guidance and counseling, particularly concerning the careers in agriculture
 - (2) to farm mechanics, particularly the selection, operation, and maintenance of farm tractors and machinery and the selection of farm structures
 - (3) to farm business management
 - (4) to marketing agricultural commodities, particularly an understanding of how our agricultural products get into and move to the consumer through modern marketing services?
- * Are we making the most effective use of Supervised Farming Programs - real and potential - in carrying learning to the doing level?

~~On Thursday~~ [✓] your district supervisor, with the help of several teachers, ^{will} present~~ed~~ to you a publication developed by the State Staff. This publication is entitled "A Guide in Planning Courses of Vocational Agriculture". It was prepared with the idea that it might be valuable to you and to school administrators in planning a Vo-Ag program for the future.

We face both an immediate and continuing challenge in this matter of adjusting the content of Vo-Ag courses. Therefore, I would urge each of you working individually, in groups, and with the assistance and guidance of the State Staff - supervisors and teacher-trainers - to the end that our courses in Vo-Ag shall be recognized by all educators for their up-to-dateness, for their quality, and for their effectiveness. To this task we dedicate our best efforts during the months ahead.

2. A reappraisal of Our Young and Adult Farmer Program.

Some of the studies in which ^{we} ~~you men~~ have been engaged during the past year or two have brought out several significant facts concerning our opportunities in young and adult farmer education, among them the fact that farmers need and want instruction in agriculture designed to help them solve the complex problems being encountered in "today's" farming.

It is apparent to me that some new approaches to meeting this need must be tried in order to find more efficient and more effective ways of expanding and improving this educational service. Because of the increasing complexity of obtaining resources for farming, the increasing importance of managerial ability ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ successfully producing and marketing the products of the farm, should we not begin now thinking about and planning for:

- * ~~T~~ Teachers assigned special responsibilities for agricultural education with these groups, with adequate time, travel, and teaching aids to do an effective job?
- * ~~S~~pecial young farmer programs in the area of a comprehensive high school (consolidated high school) designed to meet the special problems of this group as they continue their efforts to become established in farming.
- * ~~S~~pecial young farmer programs within a county area with each teacher employed in the county contributing according to his specialized abilities.
- * ~~A~~ "13th and 14th year" of Vocational Agriculture in the local high school - one-half day at school and one-half day on the farm.

Let us give serious consideration to these and other patterns of more effectively reaching young and adult farmers. Our staff shall be interested in working with you and your school administrators in setting up some pilot programs along these lines in counties where a favorable "educational climate" prevails.

3. A reappraisal of our teaching know-how and the "tools" used in teaching.

The 60's will offer great satisfaction to the agriculture teacher who assumes responsibility for up-grading himself professionally. It will offer little for one who is complacent about this responsibility.

Finding time to do something about this responsibility seems to be a real problem for employed teachers. For most of you it means up-grading while on the job. While a solution to this problem may appear hopeless, to you, I should like to say it is not if you are willing to make the effort. The following are a few suggestions:

- * Take full advantage of the workshops planned for you each summer.
- * If "off-campus" courses in agriculture and agricultural education are available to you in the evenings or on Saturdays consider enrolling.

- * Keep an up-to-date library for personal study and for lesson planning.
- * Take full advantage of the experiments and testing programs at the Agricultural Experiment Stations and at commercial laboratories.
- * Join with your fellow teachers and your district supervisors in using more effectively the group meetings for professional growth by giving major attention to evaluation of instructional programs, to new approaches in teaching, to course planning and the like.

Collectively these activities should contribute much to up-grading our profession. Some of you might have the desire and money to work for an advanced degree. If so, I would encourage you to take time-off to pursue your work full-time.

In our new State Plan which is now being studied by school administrators, our staff has proposed a policy with respect to educational leave for employed teachers to up-grade them professionally. We are hopeful that the State Board of Education will act favorably on this proposal in order that the staff can provide a more efficient and more effective in-service program than is possible under our present Plan.

In conclusion, I should like to say that the decade of the 50's which ended last December 31 recorded many significant contributions by Vo-Ag to improving farming and rural living in the State. Because of many necessary but difficult adjustments, these were difficult years for all of us engaged in agriculture. I cannot promise less difficult years during the 60's but I do have confidence in you men and believe that we can and we will reappraise our programs.

That we will hold on to the good, discard the obsolete, try new approaches to more effective teaching, ^{all} ~~and~~ to the end that we may continue to offer our high school boys, young farmers and adult farmers the best quality agricultural education possible. Let each of us dedicate ourselves to this challenging task.