

Student Helpers

Brooklyn College Experiment Cited as Possible Solution of Problem

To the New York Herald Tribune:

On the home front is there any topic which takes precedence in importance over the farm labor shortage? We know that farms are losing regiments of production labor to defense industries, to the Army and to other Federal service. We are informed that thousands of farms are being sold because needed workers are unavailable. As to proposed remedies, we read of price ceilings, wage ceilings, freezing farm labor, drafting men for farm work, drafting women for the farms, deferment from military service of farm labor, increased mechanization of farms to replace labor, et al.

That many able men are making every effort to discover some formula or formulae by which the critical situation may be remedied we may be sure. We must hope so because for most of us there is little else we can do. For the sake of making some aspects of this farm labor more meaningful, however, some concrete facts are offered here, together with suggestions based on observations made during the last few months, and also on an interest in farm problems which is nearly forty-five years in duration.

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On a farm in central Missouri two workers employed by the day, when weather permitted, received during the first part of this year \$1.25 and \$1.50, respectively, for eight-hour days. What would happen if a defense plant were to be opened in that neighborhood, in which pay at the late of 85 cents an hour would be the return for any one who knew the end of a monkey wrench from

ing distance from Poughkeepsie where defense industries are paying \$40 a week for unspecialized work. The farmers of the Hudson River counties will have to do one or more of several things: (1) raise their rates of pay to compete with industrial wages; (2) restrict their crops to such as can be raised and harvested by a few workers using machinery; (3) get higher prices for their products; (4) obtain state or Federal subsidies; (5) be given drafted labor with ceiling wages; or (6) obtain seasonal labor from the cities in the form of volunteers who are willing for patriotic reasons to work hard for little pay. The chief source of such volunteers would be the older pupils of the city high schools, college women, and the younger college men.

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That this group of young people constitutes the only available large reservoir for summer harvest work seems unquestionable. It is not suggested that such vacation work will serve as a panacea for curing the farm labor shortage, nor that this summer labor need is co-ordinate in importance with the year-round requirements of farming. But that the recruiting of considerable numbers of student workers can make a substantial contribution toward lessening labor shortages during harvest seasons has been fairly well demonstrated, not only during this year, but during the first world war. Then for the "Boys' Working Reserve", organized under the Department of Labor I know that hundreds of high-school boys were recruited from New York City; that one Brooklyn high school, (Bush-

day, with their fellows, combined with actual days of farm work, seems certain; for them such work-camp experience would be the only avenue of introduction to any part of this enriching education.

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It cannot be too strongly urged that college and school authorities will need to assume the responsibility for the development of work-camp for city youth. The United States Volunteer Land Corps should expand its activities to include states now involved for placements and supervision to be seen. But for the purpose of enrollment and orientation placement with suitable employers, for the continuation of the farm work and for the guidance at the living centers the agency can completely replace educational authorities nor substitute for them.

An analysis of the various of the farm work-camp projects they revealed themselves in the Hook experiment is being prepared by a faculty committee at Brooklyn College. A copy will be furnished to any one interested to see.

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Brooklyn, Nov. 2, 1942.