Camp Near City For Study and Farming Urged

Report on Brooklyn College Volunteers To Be Sent to Higher Education Board

The Board of Higher Education should study the feasibility of setting up a work-study summer school camp in some fruit-growing area not far from New York. It was suggested in a report by Professor Ralph C. Benedict, of the department of biology, Brooklyn College, which Dr. Harry D. Gideonse, president of the college, will submit to the board. Professor Benedict's suggestion was the result of his own activity in such work and particularly contact last summer with a large group of Brooklyn College students engaged in farm labor in New York State.

Offered as a broad base for the program is the idea of combining work in a fruit-growing area with selected relevant study, such as agricultural economy, economic botany and marketing, with work in languages, literature and landscape art.

Last summer three groups of Brooklyn College students engaged in farm labor. Seven girls, under the leadership of Miss Gertrude Greg, then of Brooklyn, now of Wellesley College, worked at Germantown, New York. Fifteen men helped at the farm of James Kilbrath, near Red Hook, N.Y., and forty girls and twenty-four boys worked at other Red Hook farms.

Patriotism Chief Factor

"A distinctive quality of these farm workers needs to be touched upon," according to Professor Benedict's report. "The personal elements of motivation which lead them in the first instance, to enlist for laborious and unknown work under strange surroundings, and later to persist after it had become obvious that earnings would not at any time be large and after the first interest in novel surroundings and work had worn down, are worthy of note.

"It is true that a few did not endure, but returned to the city in short order with harrowing tales of unsatisfactory work, living conditions and food. For the remainder a prime factor which led them to enlist had been a patriotic desire to serve on this defense front. Supporting this desire as the weeks wore on was a growing enjoyment of the group-living features, an experience which, despite obvious drawbacks, none the less carried an appeal compounded of many different psychological factors.

"I am convinced," Professor Benedict said, "that the ranks of college and older high school youth offer an immense reservoir of potential farm labor which only requires a proper presentation of the problem and a moderate financial return to volunteer in large numbers."

While approving of the idea of sending individual students to work on farms, Professor Benedict sees the greater value in the group. He hopes that authorities will "provide for our young people through private and public ventures the values of country work-camp experience where those who are more hard-conditioned may also gain insight and experience in conditions outside of cities."

To Expand Program

Support of Professor Benedict's idea came from Dr. Gideonse, who has long favored the labor-camp idea for all college students. "During the last two years I have drawn the attention of the Board of Higher Education repeatedly to the desirability of adding summer work experience to our educational program," he said. "While others were talking about the idea, Professor Benedict and his colleagues have actually had a sizable group at work during last summer.

"Few people realize the number of difficulties involved in such an innovation. There are problems of health and housing, as well as of supervision and business administration. We are examining our summer's experience with great care, and for the summer of 1943 Brooklyn College will present a more ambitious program in line with Professor Benedict's recommendations. Personally, I hope that they will lead to a permanent enrichment of our program, with a broad educational importance as well as a limited economic interest."
COLLEGE OFFERS
FARM LABOR PLAN
Brooklyn Professor Would
Combine Field Work and
Summer School Study
ITS MOTIVE IS PATRIOTIC
Experience of 66 Who Helped
With Crops Up-State Is
Basis for Proposal

A plan to combine farm labor with Summer school study for municipal college students was outlined in a report yesterday to Harry D. Gideon, president of Brooklyn College, by Ralph C. Benedict, the Department of Biology. The program will be submitted to the Board of Higher Education for consideration.

Offered as a broad base for the plan is the idea of offering selected courses, such as agricultural economy, economic botany, marketing, together with work in languages, literature and landscape art, to a group of students engaged in Summer agricultural work in some fruit-growing area not far from New York City.

Professor Benedict's suggestion comes as the result of a long period of study of agricultural problems and in particular after his contact with a group of Brooklyn College students who helped to cultivate and harvest fruit crops this year.

Summer's Work Recalled
Last Summer eighty-six members of the student body were located for farm labor refuge. Most of them worked in the vicinity of Red Hook, New York. One group of forty girls lived in the eighteenth-century Van Ness mansion. The Red Hook workers had the use of the kitchen and cafeteria facilities of the Central High School there, together with the privileges of lockers and cold showers as an accompaniment to the campus and athletic field. Living expenses were pro-rated, and a fund of $250 was raised among the citizens of the community to help ease the burden.

"Although few, if any, of the college students had previous farm experience, the great majority adapted themselves successfully," Professor Benedict said.

"While picking fruit is a task in which skill grows with experience, the processes are not so intricate that insufficient supplies make negligible contributions. Most types of fruit picking are paid for on a piece-work basis, and it does not cost growers more to use slower workers.

"Forty thousand quarts of strawberries were harvested and the students worked also on cherries, raspberries, wild blueberries, string beans, early apples and tomatoes. Some of the stronger boys worked in the hay fields. The weeding and hoeing that had to be done was shared by the college students, and some learned the art of cutting out new strawberry plants and lettuce and other produce."

Student Earnings Moderate
"None of our students grew rich from their weeks at 4 cents a quart in the fields," said Professor Benedict. "Daily returns for strawberry picking ranged from about $1.00 to $4, with $2.20 as an average, not counting rainy days. Weeding, haying and some other jobs were paid for at an hourly rate of 20 cents for eight or nine hours a day. These jobs were most prized because the income was on a steadier basis."

"A distinctive quality of these farm workers needs to be touched upon. The personal elements of motivation with the farmer's wish to have the first instance to enlist for laborious and unknown work under strange surroundings and later to persist after it had become obvious that earnings would not at any one be large and after the first interest in novel surroundings and work had worn down are worthy of note. It is true that a sense of not endurability is not the primary factor that led them to enlist in a patriotic desire to serve their country."

While approving of the idea of sending individual students to work on farms, Professor Benedict, sees far more value in the group idea. He suggests that such a program would be a valuable means of rounding out the usually one-sided education of city-trained students.

Definite Program Suggested
The plan calls upon the colleges and school systems to take the lead in preliminary enlistment, orientation and training. State and local agencies should take definite responsibilities in securing adequate housing, furnishings, recreational space, together with guaranteeing continuity of working opportunity and of minimal remuneration for satisfactory labor. To build such a program, Professor Benedict would make use of the experience of the Volunteer Land Group, the International Student Service, the N.Y.A. and the CCC.

"I am convinced," he concluded, "that the ranks of college students and older high school youth offer an immense reservoir of potential farm labor which needs only a proper presentation of the problem and, in a moderate degree, return to volunteer in large numbers."
Student Helpers on Farms

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE - 11/4/42

Brooklyn College Experiment Cited as Possible Solution of Problem

To the New York Herald Tribune: "The problem of finding a permanent solution to the depression is a monumental task. It requires the concerted efforts of all segments of the population. It is a task that cannot be accomplished by any one group alone. It is a task that requires the cooperation of all segments of society.

One of the most urgent problems facing the nation today is the need for more workers on farms. The shortage of farm workers has been a persistent problem for many years. It is a problem that has only been exacerbated by the recent economic depression.

In light of this, I would like to propose the following solution: the establishment of a program to train students for work on farms.

Such a program could be implemented by colleges and universities. The students would be enrolled in a special curriculum designed to prepare them for work on farms. They would be given practical experience through internships on farms. They would also be given theoretical knowledge through coursework.

This program would not only solve the problem of a shortage of farm workers, but it would also provide a valuable educational experience for the students. It would allow them to gain practical experience in an important field of work. It would also give them a deeper appreciation of the value of agriculture and rural life.

I am confident that such a program would be highly successful. The nation has a need for more workers on farms, and the colleges and universities have the resources to provide the necessary training.

I urge you to consider this proposal. It could be a key component in our efforts to solve the problem of the farm labor shortage.

Sincerely yours,

[Your Name]