

October 28, 1942

NOV 11

TO: R. I. Grigsby
FROM: F. W. Lathrop
SUBJECT: Benedict Letter

I have read this letter with much interest. Professor Benedict should not be classified as a wild theorist; he knows what he is talking about.

I have thought of the colleges as an important source of farm labor. Qualitatively college students are superior to high school students because they are older.

I have my doubts about a national organization; I do not see a great number of young men going out next year because most college students are 18 years old or more. However, this does not keep girls from farm work.

Last summer I observed girls on farms and heard about other girls on farms. The 60 girls in the Volunteer Land Corps were very successful as farm laborers. Many combined farm work with inside activities like canning.

Some college students with whom I talked were planning to organize farm clubs in their respective institutions for the purpose of recruiting students for next summer and getting some type of training program. I think the Office of Education should encourage this type of activity. As Professor Benedict says, this is not merely a wartime measure; such a project as he describes may well become a permanent feature in the organization of our colleges.

One difficulty with a camp set-up is that in special crop communities there are periods during the summer when there is no call for extra farm labor. This leaves the campers without jobs while the expense of food and lodging continues. The answer is to select a community with diversified farming.

Perhaps all the colleges have persons like Professor Benedict. If not, such a program as he describes would be handicapped.

As I have said, I think he deserves encouragement and any assistance we can give.

Nov. 4, 1942.

Commentary on the Lathrop Memorandum: (by paragraphs)

#1...

#2. Testified to by various farmers, also, as compared with ordinary casual workers. Local workers do not average as high in many respects relating to personality. Some transient labor, white and colored, is very skillful in picking, but may end many weeks in debauch. Some communities refused 'transient labor camps' because of expected personnel.

#3. As for girls, English agriculture now has a high percentage of girls. For some jobs like picking, our girls averaged faster workers; were more careful and neater weeders. Freshmen-elect in moderate numbers or small groups, would add to supply of college men, and in accelerated programs, many colleges could start their freshmen in combination work-study programs, if communities arrangements could be made.

#4. Anticipated in previous comment.

#5. In the preliminary phases of interesting, orientating, training, there could also come what is important, in fact, essential, selection, including some elimination. For post-war period, when there may be a surplus of casual laborers, a summer-school work camp could carry on subsistence gardens, canning, conservation, as did the C. C. C. camps. Vol. Lind C pps makes a special point, and apparently most successfully, in the motivating ~~36x~~ phases of organization, during and after students have worked on farms.

#6. We met this difficulty, as did some of the California camps (See Sat. Eve. Post story, "Dude Harvest".) Alternating class programs would take care of it in part; also advance preparation with farmers, who would have to take responsibility for maintenance of work, and reasonable pay. Sequences of bean planting would be a partial answer, and other planned operations.

#7. As a selling argument, some colleges facing serious losses in student enrollment might be interested in such a program as a life-saver, if not from possible intrinsic values.

#8. We are interested in obtaining publicity for the proposed program for its possible value in this time of labor shortage and for educational values as a program. This means as wide reference as possible in educational, agricultural, and general press.

Publicity in the latter two media would also bring enquiries from favorable regions from agricultural interests and might thus be the means of making suitable connections for establishment of working groups.

Can the Office of Education help toward such publicity, and toward liaison relations with other offices of the federal government which might contribute in promoting an extension, at least interest in the proposed plan. Our camp projects last summer faced great difficulties because there was no provision for overhead, although through Farm Securities office, a transient labor camp installation had been offered to Dutchess Co., in which, according to news reports, housing, a staff of five or six, and other important pre-requisites were set up to take care of as many as 350 workers with families.

The suitability of the U. S. E. S. as an integrating agency seems to be in question from different parts of the country. Can it be reorganized, if necessary, or can liaison relations be established through county agricultural offices which are at present closely in touch with the farmers directly?