Brooklyn College Promotes Farm Work

Develops Program to Enlist Students for Summer Jobs With Useful Collegiate Study on the Side.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—SIR:

Two recent editorial articles in The Sun have been of particular interest to me in connection with the development of a program for the enlistment of college students as emergency farm workers; "Quest for Farm Workers" and the earlier, "Both Work and Study." In fact, the latter is most apposite as a title for the Brooklyn College plan on which faculty committees have been working for four months and which we hope to have fully formulated and ready for operation early in March.

Using last summer's experience, when the college had special interest in three camps in the Hudson River Valley, comprising nearly 100 workers, we hope to send out several hundred workers for the summer of 1943. Our plan calls for the enlistment and selection of class-sized groups, each with a teacher-leader, selected not only for capacity to teach a subject, but also to help these city students to an interpretation of country living, and, moreover, to sponsor these student workers in a rural community.

For courses of study we have three types in mind: (1) Standard, required courses; (2) special correlating courses, like "farm biology" and "rural sociology;" and (3) "war service" courses, of special value at this time to both men and women students. Brooklyn College has a good many young men under 18, so that we believe we shall be able to provide "platoons" of quick-fingered girls and also of stronger-backed young men for heavier tasks.

There are many college courses which, with a qualified teacher, can be presented during the summer season without special equipment. In this case, we hope to have a number of followers of Mark Hopkins, balanced by ten to twenty students at the other end of the log.

In preliminary discussions the question has sometimes been raised whether city youth will be physically able, after arduous days of farm labor, to pursue studies in higher education. Last summer's experience in the Brooklyn College camps, and the experience of others, gave ample evidence in the affirmative.

For one thing, in fruit and vegetable areas, where we believe our groups will be most effective, the hours for harvesting are not usually over long; trucks for the New York market had to be packed and rolling fairly early in the afternoon. For general, dairy farms, hours are usually much longer, but even there workers do not forgo evening divestiture.

Our students, even after longer than usual hours, had recuperating powers so that a cold shower and evening meal found them "fit as a fiddle and rarín" to square dance or hike to the nearest swimming hole, or engage some local farm workers' soft ball team. Actually many city students are mentally more fatigued after days of city employment, but are still able to do creditable work in the evening sessions of the local colleges. Furthermore, summer farm employment includes occasional days of enforced idleness, so far as farm work is concerned, due to rain or wet ground.

Our first objective in this planning is to afford our students the opportunity to render patriotic service by volunteering on the critical food front, to help "feed a fighter in forty-three," as one of the slogans of the Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture phrases it. Our special objective, based on Brooklyn College's 1942 summer camp experience, is to accent college responsibility, first, for the recruiting, orientation and selection of serious-minded workers; second, of like-minded teacher-leaders; and, third, for doing all possible to insure acceptable conditions of housing, living, working and community relationships.

We know that green city boys and girls can be immediately useful in the simpler harvesting tasks of fruit and vegetable areas, while it takes three weeks to "break in" an untrained city youth for effective help in general dairy farming. More is to be gained by accenting college responsibility, our plans are designed to make the summer volunteer service as educationally valuable as possible; these boys and girls will be leaving more comfortable homes, opportunities for better pay and the chance, through attendance at regular summer school to earn two or three times as many college credits as can be offered through our "work and study" plan.

Our experience last summer in northern Dutchess county left many very pleasant recollections of community interest and co-operation in the labor camp ventures. Farmers found, some much to their surprise, that green city youth could learn quickly and work effectively and persist even at tedious jobs month after month. Our students found that farmers and townspeople could be informal, pleasant and hospitable to a degree which city life had not prepared them to expect.

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We shall be ready to start negotiations for 1943 camp placements in the near future. For this phase of our planning we have a special committee of farmers' sons on our faculty, all of whom have continued in touch with farm conditions. Any one interested to learn more about our plans is requested to address the undersigned, or to telephone to the Brooklyn College Placement Office.

A copy of the report of our 1942 experience will be forwarded if requested. In all our planning, we are keeping in touch with State and Federal agencies concerned with emergency farm labor projects.

RALPH C. BENEDICT,
Chairman, Committee on Employment, Brooklyn College.
New York, February 20.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1943.

We're All Farm Neighbors.

Governor Dewey's address formulating a State plan to help the farms of New York produce the maximum amount possible this year was directed to the enlightened self-interest of the people of the State. More important than details of the plan was the Governor's insistence that the State's problems, however difficult, must be mastered by New Yorkers. How responsive the people will be to the call to volunteer for farm work, either on a full-time or part-time basis, remains to be seen, but the Governor has done the people the service of reminding them that if they do not come forward, nobody else will. The man or woman or youth who says, "Let George do it," has been told, if he did not already know it, that George is in the Army or working in a war plant.

Elsewhere on this page is published a letter which tells of a Brooklyn College program which combines volunteer farm work with continued study. This program, small as it is, illustrates the strength of local planning and local organization. Massive and magic schemes cover the whole country in an instant, embracing in one fell swoop every variety of farm activity. Less imposing but more promising is such a plan as Governor Dewey submits. It actually incorporates several plans, but its actual strength lies in two of its features: its dependance upon voluntary effort and its organization from the locality up. We may discover, in our attempts to bring this plan to fruition, that some of the old-fashioned neighborliness that used to inspire barn raisings still lives.