Perspective of an Educational Project for Brooklyn College during the Summer

During the past summer 67 students from Brooklyn College and 10 from the other city colleges had the novel experience of working on farms in the Red Hook section of the Hudson Valley to help relieve the farm labor shortage. The following report presents (1) some of the problems that a project of this kind involves; (2) how these problems were handled during the past summer; and (3) what the Committee on Employment has been considering as possibilities for another summer, and to which it would like to secure reactions and suggestions from members of the Faculty.

1. Selection of student workers
   Last year this was done through personal interviews in the Placement Office. Students to be eligible should be in good physical health and possess personality characteristics that would fit them for group living and the formation of satisfactory work habits.

2. Orientation
   Last spring representatives from the United States Employment Service, the Volunteer Land Corps, and International Student Service addressed interested students on the plans of their respective organizations for student farm-aid projects. Members of the Committee met a number of students individually and in small groups to give additional counseling. Both selection and orientation should be planned and executed more carefully than last year, the experience of the Committee shows, and should not be delegated to an agency outside of the College.

3. Placement and housing
   Most of the students were placed in two large groups and lived under general dormitory or camp conditions, each student contributing his prorated share from his earnings to meet the costs of food and rent. It is in this area where financial aid from the outside is most necessary, inasmuch as suitable housing is difficult to obtain, and when found, is prohibitively expensive for the students with their small farm earnings. The Committee is exploring the possibility of getting federal, state, or community aid for this purpose. The rest of the students lived in 2 smaller groups of 7 and 14 respectively, with housing provided by the two farmers for whom they worked.

4. Administration
   Groups of students living together require supervision. This supervision, the Committee believes, should be in the hands of selected members of the Faculty who would serve as camp directors. Large and small sized groups are
possibilities, each having its advantages and disadvantages. The smaller groups, say, limited in number to 10, could probably be placed under the supervision of one faculty member, and the problem of housing would be less difficult than in the case of larger groups. On the other hand, a large group of 25 or more, may be desirable, in that food and living costs when prorated are less than in a smaller group. For the large groups, however, provisions must be made for recreational space and medical care, and the services of at least two faculty supervisors would be required. Past experience has shown that the complexity of administrative problems is proportional to the size of the group.

5. Is it possible to have a country summer school with college credit?

The inclusion of a summer educational program as a part of the student farm aid project is proposed by the Committee. It might be pointed out that Yale University several years ago instituted a summer school camp with course and field work carrying full academic credit. Although students will be placed in the country primarily to help relieve the farm labor shortage during the period of the war, their registration under College auspices provides an opportunity for an educational supplement and the framework for the development of a country summer school for the city colleges in the post-war period. The Antioch plan of alternating academic study and work experience might be feasible in this country summer school situation.

Faculty members who are appointed to serve as directors could teach courses in their subjects on a summer school basis. The Committee has considered the possibility of offering of three types of courses:

(1) standard courses in the present curriculum, especially the introductory courses in all or nearly all Departments with the exception of the laboratory science courses. Courses in physical education and domestic science would be particularly adapted to the camp situation. The selection and preparation of food for the group might constitute a project within the course in domestic science.

(2) a few special courses the content of which would make them relevant to students living and working in the country. Courses in economic botany, agricultural economics, and rural sociology suggest themselves.

(3) special war courses, such as meteorology and map reading. Undoubtedly the lower classmen will outnumber the upper classmen in the student groups that will be formed next summer. The first group of courses, therefore, would be best suited to the needs of a large proportion of the students. It is also conceivable that many subfreshmen might be members of next summer's groups, so that the offering of the introductory courses would enable them to start their college work under conditions of closer personal faculty supervision than is at present possible in the College.

The offering of the second and third groups of courses might require some modification of the present system of prerequisites in some Departments, so that younger students would be eligible to take them.