The food crisis, due to farm labor shortage, has been headline news for more than a year and a half. During the last world war, city youth proved their ability to make a contribution in this field, and during 1942 over seventy Brooklyn College students, as well as thousands of others in various parts of the country, again showed their willingness to serve on the food production front, and their capacity to do effective work, especially in the harvesting of fruits and vegetables.

The much greater food crisis of 1943 has been receiving even more headlines, but it is not being solved by headlines. It cannot be solved by raising farm wages to a point where they compete with industrial pay. It will not be solved by any over-all plan, no matter how beautiful in theory or blueprint. The value of any such plan will be finally determined by their results in bringing city and rural communities together, in making it clear to farmers that green city boys and girls can work productively if given reasonable opportunity, and by showing city dwellers the steps to take in offering their services.

New York State has set up a simple program designed to accomplish both these ends. Through State, County, and Federal agencies, the needs of each agricultural area have been explored, and farmers have been informed of the possibilities of getting city youth for emergency farm work, and the procedures to be followed. In the cities, colleges and high schools are being canvassed, and being informed how they can organize for farm placement. The recent Legislature provided funds for the transportation of working groups from cities to the areas where they are needed. Under this same State plan, provisions are made for ensuring adequate housing, food, working conditions, the earning of at least living expenses, insurance, and other measures to protect the young people.
One of the most obvious factors necessary for the successful use of inexperienced city dwellers in the very different environment of the country is the provision of adequate and understanding supervision. Obvious as this is, attempts were made during 1942 to get along without it, with results which could have been anticipated. In the State program provisions are made for the recruiting of working groups from school units, and the enlistment of supervisors from the same educational systems. State funds have been allocated to pay expenses, not salaries, for such volunteer teacher-leaders.

Brooklyn College planning has been kept in step with State plans as regards the recruiting of students as farm workers and of teachers as supervisors. Not a few teachers have expressed their willingness to serve as camp leaders. But we have also gone farther in our planning, without specific experience in mind, and with needs of our students to accelerate their college work and with the opportunities which months of living and working together must inevitably provide for educational expansion opportunities. The Brooklyn College plan calls for the recruiting of students in working squads, each to organized as a specific college class, and the enlistment of staff leaders to serve as teachers for their appropriate subjects. In effect, each such working squad would be a unit “summer school” class, carried on off-campus, with more than ample time during evenings, rainy days, and weekends for adequate meetings and study. It cannot be too much emphasized, however, that both students and teachers are being asked to “volunteer” with full understanding that the project is designed primarily as a means of contributing emergency farm labor; the educational aspects of the plan are additional and ancillary. It is not overlooked that the long-term possibilities of this sort of plan are such as should receive ample budgetary support, but for the immediate objective and term planning, we hope to see hundreds of Brooklyn College students placed in effective food production.
In the course of months of study and correspondence involved in the ripening of plans, the College committee had tended toward a program inwu which class squads of students would be placed in "cottage-sized" camps, each with a "kitchen" staff member to serve as supervisor and teacher. Recently, however, the College has been offered the facilities of the N. Y. State Agricultural and Technical Institute at Morrisville, N. Y., as headquarters, suitable both for residence and for the conduct of an enlarged educational program. This institution is conveniently located to a large vegetable growing area where thousands of summer workers are needed. The town itself, the dormitory, and cafeteria facilities, and classroom and other facilities, make all combine to make this a superlatively fine location for a Brooklyn College work-study center. To State agencies we are leaving the main responsibility for negotiating adequate working and earning arrangements for the student force. With these ensured, we propose to recruit two hundred student workers, approximately evenly divided as to sex, to offer them a limited series of courses, standard, freshman and sophomore, special natural courses correlated with rural science, and "war service" courses, of special value to the young men and women also in anticipation of military service. The harvest workers will be needed for three months.

For the College staff as a whole and its official bodies we hope that the project will be seconded in every possible way. For general administrative services we can draw upon the Morrisville Institute staff. For teaching service, we already have volunteers sufficient to ensure a good selection of courses but we shall welcome enlistments from others so that eventually the most appropriate selection of courses may be presented. We shall welcome also the enlistment of staff members with who may have the physical stamina and interest to work in the fields as crop production units. The value of such service in what is envisioned as a joint student-staff food production program is obvious.