

EDUCATION FOR OUT OF SCHOOL RURAL YOUTH

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Do rural young people who are now out of school get much further education other than the training that comes from experience? To what extent do they drop out of school before finishing high school or college? Do they want to continue their education? If they had the chance for further education, what would they want? These are questions a recent Randolph county rural youth study carried on by the Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare and the county farm adviser, the Randolph County Rural Youth Group, and AAA committeemen in the county, sought to answer in January, 1941. The study included: years of school, extent of vocational education, and additional training desired. The data were secured from 1,040 farm and nonfarm rural youth, age 18 to 30 years.

Extended Schooling.—The first question naturally asked is, when do these rural youth drop out of school? In Randolph county almost two-thirds of the young men and over one-half of the young women dropped out after finishing the eighth grade. One in five of the young men and one in four of the young women finished high school, but only one in twelve of the young women and less than 2 per cent of the young men went on to college.

Why do such a large number of rural youth drop out of school after finishing the eighth grade? There may be several reasons: Young men feel that they need to get started in farming. Both young men and young women feel that high schools offer them little in the field in which they are interested. The parents of these rural youth may need them at home. They may feel they cannot afford to go on to school, or they may feel that they cannot keep up in dress, manner, or studies with those in high school. Farm young women, especially, may have been

led to feel that an eighth grade education was enough for them.

Doubtless, many of those who went on to high school wished to do something other than farming. This is especially true of the young women. Most of the rural youth who went on to college went for a period of only two years and obviously were preparing to become teachers or to get a business college training.

Vocational Training.—Opportunities in vocational training are limited in Randolph county to agricultural departments in the high schools of Chester and Sparta; home economics is offered in Sparta, Chester, and Red Bud. Of a total of 615 rural young men only one in twelve had taken any vocational training. One in 25 had vocational agriculture and one in 50 had taken a business course. More than nine out of ten young men in the county depended upon experience and training other than in school to fit them for the vocation of farming.

One out of six of 427 rural young women took some form of vocational training. About half of these took a business course; less than one in twenty took home economics. Of those going to high school, one in three had some business, home economics, or teacher training. Evidently most of them were looking toward nonfarm occupations. The majority of the girls who went on to farms had no public school vocational training, yet most of them went into the vocation of home making.

Additional Training Desired.—More than half of the out-of-school rural young men in Randolph county wanted additional vocational training. Over one-fourth wanted additional training in semi-skill vocations, one-sixth in agriculture, and one in twenty in the professions. Only one-third of the out-of-school rural young women wanted additional training; half of these wanted it in home economics, about one in twenty wanted clerical training, and about one in twenty wanted professional training.

Though half of the out-of-school rural young men in Randolph county expressed a desire for additional vocational training only one in twelve was getting it. If a program of training work develops, it doubtless should include both agriculture and the semi-skilled trades. About half of the young women wanting additional vocational training seem to be getting it. Additional training opportunities should, therefore, include training in home economics and training for clerical and professional work.

Expansion in classes and other opportunities for additional training for out-of-school rural youth, should evidently come in the fields relating to agriculture, home economics, semi-skilled trades, clerical occupations and the professions. Ef-

forts to expand the program should recognize the need for coordination of extension work, vocational agriculture, home economics, and other efforts to offer out-of-school training for rural youth so that the program could be developed on a unified basis in the county. This is especially desirable in view of the war needs, and the movement of a large number of rural youth out of the country into the army and into war industries. It will be equally valuable when the war is over, and when the rural youth begin to come back into the county to find jobs. A unified guidance and training program should, and can, be developed for rural youth in Illinois. It will require coordinating the effort of all of those who are now working in the field of training of youth for rural life.