Farm Youth Speaks Out

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THE YOUNG PEOPLE who will some day take over the land of Germany's Wuerttemberg-Baden flocked to three Rural Youth Leadership Training Conferences during April and May, and took such a vital interest in them that officials made enthusiastic plans for a fourth conference which was held in June.

More than 200 young people, ranging in age from 20 to 30—of whom 40 percent were girls—turned out for the initial conferences, held at the Hohenheim Agricultural College.

Planning officials—the staff of the Community Activities Section—were frankly astonished at the turnout. Original planning called for one meeting for some 30 invited rural youth leaders. It was with considerable foreboding that the first invitations were dispatched. Observers said that rural youth would not come: they were too busy.

But the first round of invitations brought 300 acceptances.

The conferences had the following objectives:
1. To bring rural youth leaders together for acquaintance and planning.
2. To hear firsthand their problems and give them opportunities to discuss them.
3. To bring them into closer contact with their agricultural college (for 90 percent, it was the first visit to Hohenheim).
4. To add to their prestige by recognizing their efforts as youth leaders in their respective communities.
5. To provide an opportunity for them to hear what visitors to other lands had learned about youth work.
6. To afford opportunity for agricultural and public school teachers as well as rural community leaders to meet, exchange experiences and decide upon program objectives, especially those which emphasize self-help. (Teachers as well as young farm leaders participated in the conferences.)

THROUGH ALL THIS, the intention of the HICOG planners was to inspire the youth to greater efforts on behalf of the groups with which they worked.

The conferences were not run on enthusiasm alone. Planning for them involved discussion with the youth leader of the Farmers' Association of Wuerttemberg-Baden and with the youth adviser who works with the Agricultural and Home Economics Extension Demonstration Program at Hohenheim Agricultural College. Kathlene R. Shankland, youth leadership training adviser with Community Activities Section, skillfully pulled together the threads of interest and ideas to present a strong and well-knit program.

The young people's observations on the value of the conference, as well as their reports quoted below, indicate some very definite ideas on the part of young people from nearly every county in the state.

Speaking of migration from rural to urban areas, the youth said: "We must show rural youth what advantages they have over urban youth. The mental and cultural interests in the community must be encouraged; we think of community evenings, with parents, recreation, amateur dramatics, libraries, youth meetings, etc., in the sense of rural youth."

On the question "How can rural youth achieve better co-operation with other youth groups," the youth replied: "Farmers must be trained toward independence. Farm youth should be united in a community group on an entirely voluntary basis. If more such groups exist, the first requirement is mutual respect and recognition. There should be a friendly attitude between the individual groups and their aims should be incorporated with other professional organizations."

Another group discussion revolved around a problem pertinent to Wuerttemberg-Baden, where many persons in rural jobs live in predominantly industrial areas:

"If many other youth groups are already established, no separate rural youth groups should be organized, but our interests are to be included in the existing groups. If there are no groups, one should be established and the professional aspects must be included in a wise and careful manner."

APPRENTICE TRAINING was also discussed, and there was this significant statement in a report submitted: "Every young person should be away from home for a certain period of time, for professional as well as educa-
tional reasons. It is therefore requested that this exchange of young people in agriculture be expanded. This will result in agricultural training on a much broader basis than before, and it will be a topical matter in the community... Each apprentice should conclude his training period with an examination. This will give him an aim toward which he can work during this period. This will also eliminate the exploitation of apprentices because the farmers' own children will be in the same position on another farm."

It is interesting that the young people recognized this ever-present evil—exploitation of apprentices.

Another group discussing apprenticeships had this to say:

"Rural youth should, like youth in the cities, get the benefit of an apprenticeship. The question arises whether the apprenticeship can be served on one's parents' farm. At least a part of this period should be spent on a well-managed farm elsewhere.

"Apprentices should not be given monotonous work. Training them toward independent thought and action is necessary and this can be achieved by assigning them work in the form of a project. They should be provided decent housing. Their washing should be taken care of."

The question of expellee youth brought forth these rural comments:

"Expellees should be contacted and their interest aroused. They should be accepted in the community and closer ties established between them and the local citizen.

"We are willing to take expellees into our groups at any time, if they actively co-operate. We are sorry to say that up to the present expellees have shown little interest in our rural youth activities."

ONE OF THE PRESSING needs of agriculture in Wuerttemberg-Baden is the consolidation of farm land which, at present, is scattered in strips and patches across the countryside. Here is one comment:

"In the course of our discussion we came to the conclusion that land consolidation is one of the most important present problems in agriculture. Due to the lack of manpower in agriculture and the necessity for cheaper production in the future, the mechanization of agriculture will have to proceed.

"If we want to exist economically, we can have no more parceling of our land. Most farmers are still very skeptical in this respect. Everyone likes his particular field and is afraid of financial difficulties. We have to be convinced that these difficulties must be overcome for the benefit of future generations.

"Danish agriculture can be considered to be the highest developed agriculture in the world and we can take it as an example. This was achieved by land consolidation, democratic constitution and the Volkshochschulen (adults' evening high schools). It would be desirable for Germany to come to this realization."

Another group said the following about education:

"First, new school reforms have been suggested. We desire to have a village school with a village teacher. The latter should, if possible, be a farmer's son or at least be
familiar with rural conditions and circumstances. The transfer of city teachers to a village as a punishment must stop. Also, the vocational and agricultural teacher should be of rural descent because this will provide a closer connection between theory and practice, which is of great importance to the pupil.

"We would also appreciate an expansion of the Volks- hochschule program so that it would be possible for more young people to attend them. A community library would certainly be appreciated by most of the young people.

"After all, the main thing is that our rural young people should find their way back to agriculture and learn to like and appreciate their profession and to be proud to represent it. This can be achieved by means of a good training and education."

ONE OF THE MOST inspiring sessions of the conferences was a panel discussion, "What we have seen and liked in other lands," conducted by German youths who had been to Denmark, Holland, Sweden and the United States.

Alfred Hetzel, youth leader for the Wuerthemberg-Baden Farmers' Association, spoke on Denmark: "Forty percent of the Danish farmers voluntarily attend Volks-hochschulen, and one of the results of their attendance is the formation of self-help organizations among themselves."

Otto Waggershauser, a former work student, referred to the United States: "Young people over there have their own responsibility in working with projects of their own creation; they become proud of their profession as farmers, conscientious, and self-confident of their abilities."

A. Rude, student at Hohenheim, spoke of Switzerland: "The rural population has a high standard of life, resulting partly from a voluntary program of land consolidation."

Erich Fritschi, a vocational agricultural teacher in Wuerthemberg-Baden, said of his observation of vocational educational methods in the United States: "The principles of... (instruction) in the United States to farm youth in vocational schools and also to those in 4-H Clubs — the close co-ordination of teaching in the schools and practical application through home projects — can and should be applied in Germany."

A panel discussion on agricultural economics and rural sociology aroused much interest among those attending the sessions. Students heard discussions on farm prices and marketing problems, land consolidation, migration from rural to urban areas, and the expellee problem.

Viewpoints expressed by experts on the panel aroused much earnest discussion among the young people, discussion which the sponsors believe will be translated into action in each of the communities from which delegates came.

Hesse Farm Program Being Pushed

A far-reaching program, designed to increase production efficiency on farms and to raise general farm income, is being prepared and sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Branch, OLC Hesse. The program primarily involves encouraging the use of more economical and adaptable power machinery to go hand-in-hand with an effective land consolidation program.

"In addition to the widespread need for land consolidation," stated Eugene Epstine, deputy chief of the Food and Agriculture Branch, "the most important requisite to increase Hessian agricultural efficiency is a light, economical, cheap, fuel-consuming, all-purpose tractor."

Upon initiative of OLC Hesse, the Hessian Agricultural Ministry has applied for technical assistance in the field of agricultural machinery, which will permit German specialists to study technical advancements in America.

The ministry also plans to import four to six complete sets of American agricultural machinery, financed by ECA funds, which will be used for demonstration purposes in Hesse. Mr. Epstine further disclosed that positive achievements in land consolidation in Hesse have been hampered by a lack of state funds and laxity on the part of some program officials.

The fact that present day production of German agricultural machinery is greater than current demand is misleading, he said. Purchase of machinery deemed necessary for fullest requirements has been held to a minimum due to the lack of farm cash and economical farm credit, he added.

The development of a lighter and cheaper tractor, as well as other types of machinery, would go far in bringing machinery prices into line with the farmer's pocketbook, according to Mr. Epstine. The present day German tractor is too expensive and too heavy and bulky for small strip farming and the boggy clay soil in Hesse.

Cheaper machinery and an effective land consolidation program could result in the elimination of one-third of the present horse population, which would directly or indirectly result in a proportionate increase of land food production, Mr. Epstine concluded.