

MINUTES
STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
May 12-13, 1953

The first meeting of the State Advisory Committee on Agricultural Education in California was held May 12 and 13 in the Library Building, California State Polytechnic College, San Luis Obispo. Committee members present were:

Carl Avrit, Chico
Robert Couchman, San Jose
Harvey McDougal, Collinsville
E. J. Peters, Wasco
A. J. Thille, Santa Paula
Waldo Weeth, Coalinga

Those absent were:

George Emde, Lodi
Keith Mets, Holtville
Joe Russ, Ferndale

Also present were Byron J. McMahon, Chief, Bureau of Agricultural Education, E. W. Everett, Assistant State Adviser, George P. Couper, Special Supervisor, and J. I. Thompson, Livestock Specialist, representing the Bureau of Agricultural Education.

Mr. McMahon welcomed the group and explained briefly that the Advisory Committee had been appointed to assist the Bureau in keeping in closer touch with agricultural developments in the field, and in solving problems arising in vocational agriculture departments in the various high schools.

Mr. Thompson gave a brief biography of each member of the committee to familiarize the committee members with their associates.

Mr. Couper outlined the legal setup under which the Bureau operates, explaining the relation of Smith-Hughes and George Barden Acts, the California State Plan for Vocational Education, and the local school district to the vocational agriculture program. He stated the minimum standards of the department briefly and explained the chain of command and method of operation, and then listed the administrative personnel of the Bureau.

Mr. Everett then discussed some of the problems confronting the Bureau, for which the Bureau felt the Advisory Committee might be helpful in eventually arriving at a solution. In further remarks on behalf of the Bureau, Mr. McMahon stated that the purpose of the Bureau was to provide the best educational opportunity for boys in vocational agriculture, and he defined the education he had in mind as that by which the individual learns to work as well as play, to produce as well as to consume, and to create as well as appreciate.

The committee then proceeded to organize, and the following officers were elected:

Mr. Weeth, Chairman
Mr. McDougal, Vice Chairman
Mr. Couchman, Secretary

The members were then informed that they were to serve three-year terms, and in order to provide for continuity of the committee, the terms of the initial members

would be staggered. A drawing was held and the following were the terms of the nine committee members:

One year terms: Messrs. Couchman, McDougal, Weeth
Two year terms: Messrs. Emde, Mets, Thille
Three year terms: Messrs. Avrit, Peters, Russ

After some discussion of the period that committee members might be expected to serve, it was moved by Mr. Thille, seconded by Mr. McDougal, and carried, that no committeeman who has served two three-year terms should be asked to serve again as a member of the committee.

Mr. McDougal moved, seconded by Mr. Thille, and carried, that the committee's year of service date from May 1 to April 30, and that this first year of service shall end April 30, 1954.

Mr. Avrit then stated that he felt the committee might serve an important purpose in developing procedure by which teachers of vocational agriculture, who are not doing satisfactory work and who have tenure, might be removed from the program or their programs would be improved. The committee discussed this situation at considerable length, it being the consensus that tenure provided a difficult barrier to improvement in local school programs if the instructors were not inclined to be cooperative. It was moved by Mr. Couchman, seconded by Mr. McDougal, and carried, that the committee request the Bureau of Agricultural Education to secure the assistance of the administrative staff and regional supervisors in developing objective criteria, by which the work of the various vocational agriculture departments might be evaluated. It was the committee's feeling that with such criteria at hand, it might then proceed to deal with the problem Mr. Avrit had outlined by first evaluating the programs at the various schools and then being in a position to point out specifically the deficiencies of departments carrying on inadequate or unsatisfactory programs.

Mr. Thille then presented the problem of stimulating greater interest among students in vocational agriculture in horticulture and field crop projects. He felt there was a need to glamorize feed, field, and fruit crop projects, and that these should not be considered as supplanting livestock projects, but supplementing them. Discussion brought out that one of the principal handicaps in carrying on a suitable project program in these fields is the securing of a proper arrangement between the boy and his father for a block of trees or a piece of crop land for the project.

It was explained to the committee that the opportunities for instruction are not limited to the home projects, that the student in vocational agriculture has access to the school shop, is taken regularly on field trips, and receives classroom instruction in the whole field of agriculture. The emphasis on livestock projects, it was pointed out, does not reflect the subject matter of the classroom and shop instruction.

Representatives of the Bureau informed the committee that one of the Bureau's major problems is in developing additional capable teachers of vocational agriculture, and persuading the ablest teachers in the field to stay in teaching. In the discussion of this problem, the committee considered the possible incentives that might be offered to encourage students to enter the teaching profession and those now teaching to remain in it.

The Tuesday session was then recessed to be resumed on Wednesday morning.

The committee met Wednesday morning with all in attendance who had been present Tuesday. Mr. Weeth proposed that the committee discuss at length the advisability of encouraging formation of local advisory committees on agricultural education. He outlined in some detail the setup at Coalinga High School, where he formerly served on the School Board of Trustees. The Coalinga Advisory Committee consists of seven farmers and two Board members who are ex officio members of the Advisory Committee. He said the committee assisted in the purchase of farm equipment and livestock with which the school farm was equipped, and made recommendations and suggestions to the instructors in vocational agriculture. This proposal was discussed at length by the committee, and it was moved by Mr. Couchman, seconded by Mr. Thille, and carried, that the committee request the Bureau Chief to direct regional supervisors to contact School Boards and agriculture teachers in each district to determine the attitude of the School Boards towards local or area advisory councils or committees.

Mr. Weeth then presented for committee discussion the importance of expanded instruction in agricultural mechanics. He cited the tremendous increase in the use of farm machinery in recent years, saying that on his own place since 1942 there had been a 66 per cent increase in the investment in farm machinery per acre on a dollar basis. The committee discussed at length the general problem of adequate instruction in agricultural mechanics skills. They also discussed the advisability of additional instruction in the use of credit and money in the farming operation. The committee suggested that Mr. McMahon send a bulletin to all agricultural teachers, announcing the appointment of the committee and explaining its purposes.

The committee then set its next meeting tentatively for October 21 and 22 at Lodi Union High School. It was proposed that the committee spend the morning attending various classes in agriculture, and that the formal committee session would be held in the afternoon and evening.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Couchman
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