

MINUTES

State Advisory Committee On Agricultural Education

October 21, 1953

Byron J. McMahon

A regular meeting of the State Advisory Committee on Agricultural Education in California was held October 21, in Lodi Union High School, Lodi.

Committee members present were:

Carl Avrit, Chico
Robert Couchman, San Jose
George Emde, Lodi
Joe Russ, Ferndale
A. J. Thille, Santa Paula
Waldo Weeth, Coalinga

Those absent were:

Harvey McDougal, Collinsville
Keith Mets, Holtville

Others present were Byron J. McMahon, Chief, Bureau of Agricultural Education; E. W. Everett, Assistant State Supervisor; George P. Couper, Special Supervisor; Howard F. Chappell, Regional Supervisor; H. Diekman, instructor in agricultural education at Lodi Union High School; and Paul R. Bowers, Principal of Lodi Union High School. Arthur W. Mellor, also an instructor at Lodi Union High School, was present during a part of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Weeth at 9:30 a.m. The minutes of the meeting of May 12 and 13 were read and approved.

At the suggestion of Mr. Weeth, Mr. Diekman outlined the program of instruction in vocational agriculture at Lodi Union High School. He said his department had always received the fullest cooperation from the school administration and Board of Trustees. The department has an enrollment of about 150 boys, and every boy is required to carry a supervised farming program. Each boy wishing to enroll in vocational agriculture is required to have a conference with and the approval of the department head. Mr. Diekman then outlined the content of the courses given in the four years of

school. He described the activities of the Future Farmers of America Chapter and reported on the successful establishment of a Young Farmers Chapter. Mr. Diekman reported that several years ago a survey was made of the occupations of graduates who had been enrolled in the department. Of the 856 former students listed, 75% were found to be farm owners or renters, or were employed in agriculture or an allied field. Past F.F.A. leaders, he said, are now community leaders.

Mr. Bowers joined Mr. Diekman in welcoming the Advisory Committee to Lodi, and then spoke briefly of the school's counselling program. He said high school counsellors, in talking to the eighth graders in the seventeen elementary schools of the district, described the courses of instruction given in vocational agriculture and the occupational opportunities in agriculture.

The meeting was then recessed to permit the Committee members to observe classes in session, including the farm mechanics shop classes.

Upon resumption of the regular Committee meeting, Mr. McMahon reported that Mr. E. J. Peters of Wasco had submitted his resignation as a Committee member. At Mr. McMahon's suggestion, members submitted the names of several men whom they thought would be qualified to serve in Mr. Peters' place. On motion of Mr. Thille, seconded by Mr. Avrit, the Committee voted to turn this list of names over to Mr. McMahon, with the request that he get in touch with these men to gain their consent to serve on the Committee.

Mr. McMahon then reviewed the purposes to be served by the Committee. He said that for 35 years, funds had been provided for aid to Vocational Agriculture under the Smith-Hughes Act, and that the Future Farmers of America have been organized for 25 years. He cited the recent recognition of this program by President Eisenhower and members of his cabinet, who were guests at the recent National F.F.A. Convention held in Kansas City.

Members of the Bureau staff believe that there is room for improvement in the program. He mentioned particularly the problems posed in getting the boy back into agriculture after four years of training in vocational agriculture, followed by several years of military service, or by employment in another occupation. He mentioned the difficulty of securing finances to get started in farming.

While federal aid funds were once a stimulus to improvement in the program, he said, these have not increased and an increasing burden has fallen upon the local community, lessening their relative importance. The proposal has been made to shift the entire burden to the states or local communities, he said.

He took note of the Congressional support for restoration of federal aid funds under the George Barden Bill after the appropriation had been cut. He also mentioned the support given the program by commercial firms that had contributed some \$150,000 toward awards for Future Farmers.

Mr. Everett explained that the original Smith-Hughes Act provided funds to stimulate all types of vocational education, not only agriculture, but the trades and home-making also. Under the George Barden Bill, aid was granted in addition for distributive education.

The Committee then took under consideration a proposed Handbook for Guidance in the Establishment and Conduct of Local Advisory Committees for Vocational Agriculture in California Secondary Schools. This was read to the Committee and discussed in detail.

Upon motion of Mr. Couchman, seconded by Mr. Russ, the Committee recommended to Mr. McMahon that local advisory committees on vocational agricultural education be established in as many California secondary schools as possible.

Upon motion of Mr. Couchman, seconded by Mr. Russ, the Committee recommended that this Handbook be used as a guide in setting up such local advisory committees.

The Committee then discussed the procedure for presenting this program to local school authorities. Upon motion by Mr. Emde, seconded by Mr. Russ, the Committee approved a letter to be sent by regional supervisors to local

school superintendents informing them of the advisability of setting up local advisory committees.

Mr. McMahon then presented for the Committee's consideration, a leaflet on Standards for Evaluating Departments of Vocational Agriculture prepared as a result of a Committee request at its May meeting. This was read and discussed by the Committee, along with the Rating Scale heretofore used by the Bureau in determining the quality of instruction offered by each department receiving Smith-Hughes funds.

Regarding the evaluation form, it was the consensus that, "this is good, now how can it be applied?"

On motion by Mr. Thille, seconded by Mr. Russ, the Committee voted that it was the sense of this meeting that Mr. McMahon be asked to bring in for the Committee's consideration at its next meeting, a procedure for appraising and evaluating the various agricultural departments in the high schools of California.

A general discussion of this problem followed, with various of those present commenting upon particular aspects of it. Mr. Emde mentioned the personnel problem, and Mr. Russ the likelihood that a local advisory committee might be helpful in solving local problems. Mr. Everett stressed the importance of proceeding through proper channels, Mr. Chappell commenting that the "approach is most important." Mr. McMahon observed that "if we have the right personnel, we wouldn't have some of these problems." Mr. Weeth stated that he would discuss the matter of procedure with the teacher group with which he had already conferred.

After some discussion, the Committee agreed to hold its next meeting at Sacramento in the new State Education Building housing the Department of Education, starting at 9:00 a.m., April 22. For those wishing to observe

another department in operation, it was suggested the visits might be made on April 22 to either Dixon High School or Woodland High School.

Mr. Chappell then gave a detailed report on the recent trip to Kansas City to the annual national Future Farmers of America Convention. With five other teachers, he accompanied 62 California Future Farmers to the convention.

Chairman Weeth then expressed the Committee's appreciation for the hospitality shown by Lodi Union High School and the Agriculture Department. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 o'clock p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Couchman
Secretary