

THE RURAL ROUTES

ESTELLE SCROGGIN SMITH

THE BUSY DAYS of a rural school supervisor come to life on these pages as Estelle Scroggin Smith, Cherokee County supervisor in Alabama, describes her part in a six-county program aimed at improving rural living. School people, with all county agencies cooperating, began the program in 1939. Already much has been accomplished as indicated by better nutrition, effective soil erosion control, and improved livestock on the farms.

July 12 *Conference to plan county study program for year.*

Thirteen members of committee crowded into two cars for thirty-five-mile trip to college. Conversation in car could be summarized by remark of one teacher, "I am convinced more and more that our schools should accept their part of the responsibility in county life."

Conference opened at 10 A.M.; problems for discussion: How can a study program give teachers help in improving life in the country? What contribution can the teachers college make?

As background of information, short resume was given of work being done and outstanding problems being met. Goals suggested for emphasis: sanitation (ordinary rules of health); food (adequate supply of milk and vegetables); natural resources (live-at-home program and soil conservation on each farm, beautification of homes); recreation (more and better reading, music, pictures, an appreciation of nature).

It was decided to inaugurate study courses in county to help teachers in meeting above goals.

"How can we lead teachers to see the relationship between soil conservation on each farm and adequate supply of milk

and vegetables?" asked a member of our group. Miss X— was selected to visit in county and to lead teachers in study of this and related problems.

Much interest was manifested in recreational reading. Miss Y— was asked to guide group on book selections for various age groups, arrangement of attractive reading centers, etc.

Plans were made for three college faculty members to spend one whole day in county each month, mornings visiting schools to help teachers and pupils on specific problems, afternoons at county-wide meetings to lead study groups on county problems.

Incidental to main purpose of trip, arranged for registration of four girls in college, secured part-time work for them, negotiated a loan for one and room reservations for all.

July 14 *Meeting of teachers to plan program of work.*

"Those Jones children don't come to school regularly," said one teacher. "That's nothing—not one of the six Smith children came last year," said another. Reasons for this situation found to be: inadequate food in many homes; unbalanced diet even in better homes; lack of recreation; farm tenancy and improper use of natural resources. "What can an elementary-school teacher do about these things?" asked one. Discussion led to specific suggestions for improving these conditions.

Community goals which were chosen for emphasis: (1) health—study of food, rest, recreation; (2) conservation—preserving wild life, wild flowers, preventing soil erosion wherever possible; (3) beau-

tification—classrooms more comfortable and attractive. Bits of conversation during discussion: "If we work on these problems how will I ever get subject matter taught?" "That's easy," said another. "In upper grades learn to read by reading about soil erosion control, or the proper feed for livestock. Science is taught on a field trip when you notice the beginnings of soil erosion or a place where the soil has been washed away. In social science, show how we can have a better standard of living by taking care of the land. Giving attention to health, recreation, and rest at school will help solve our attendance problem."

Decided to hold faculty discussion groups on specific problems mentioned above. "A good beginning," said the principal. "Goals set up for the year, study group selected, faculty discussions planned for."

January 20 *Consultant visited us to help with science program.*

"Do you realize how much of your good rich soil is being carried away by this river?" asked Mr. C—, a consultant, as we drove over a muddy stream to a consolidated school he was scheduled to visit. "What is being done in the county about this problem?" I told him of Miss K—'s group of county teachers studying science for better living. Mr. C— visited school, had lunch served by members of Community Council (chicken, turnip greens, potatoes, pie, and milk for 15¢—and good, too!); took children on excursion in afternoon and answered all questions about trees, leaves, soil erosion, etc.

Conference of teachers with Mr. C— after school.

January 21 *One local school and general county meeting.*

To the office at 9 A.M. for meeting with state teachers college instructors, Mr. C—,

and principal of school where we were to work in morning and where general county meeting was to be held in afternoon. Helped first- and sixth-grade pupils and teachers in planning and making a field trip; worked with fifth grade on problem of destruction of forest trees; made suggestions to fourth grade about books to buy with money they had earned and how to establish an attractive reading center.

12:30—children dismissed for half holiday; luncheon for visitors and officers of Community Council.

1:30—gathering of all county teachers; tour of inspection of classrooms.

2:30—discussion groups on art, literature, and science.

3:30—tea; short program by students.

4:30—lecture "How Man Has Controlled His Environment" by Mr. C—.

February 15 *Attending artist concert.*

Saw president of county music club to arrange trip to Gadsden twenty-five miles away to attend artist concert. At least one person from each community went, six teachers, five parents, and ten children, all enthusiastic over hearing symphony concert, first ever to be attended by some.

September 4 *Busy day with routine activities.*

Up early because soil technician was to bring fish from state hatchery for new fish pond at my home. Off to a good start with thoughts of fun of catching bass next summer.

At office, conference with superintendent about two children in Cedar Bluff whose eyes needed attention (parents tenant farmers, knew of eye condition but had no money); arranged to take children to have eyes examined and called Lion's Club which would provide glasses if necessary.

Stopped to pick up material at county library and county farm agent's office for group studying work of TVA. Delivered material and became one of group discussing electricity and labor-saving devices for farm people.

Quick visit to all other teachers in school, helping to solve these problems: two 10-year-olds in the first grade; attendance of the Smiths; easy reading material for certain groups.

Then to meeting of Community Council for discussion of how to have better livestock.

May 20 *Open-air dinner meeting of County Cooperative Council.*

Took care of last-minute details for dinner: assigned specific duties in serving meal; checked with band master on music; checked with social committee on members being there to meet guests; conference with director of Planning Commission on our county program as back-

ground for use in his lecture at meeting. 7 P.M., dinner for seventy guests (members of Department of Education, county health officer, county judge, two members of board of revenue, county agent, director of public welfare, pastors of churches, principals and classroom teachers, students who were heads of organized groups, mayors of two incorporated towns, chairmen of six community councils). Lecture and discussion on nature of State Planning Commission by Mr. D—, executive director of State Planning Commission. According to him, Commission focuses attention on soil analysis, possibilities in way of forestation, condition and location of roads, possibilities of markets, and similar matters.

Group discussion of these and other community problems.

Question for thought: Will the Cherokee County Cooperative Council take the next step and become one of the units of the Alabama Planning Commission?

Keeping Up on Militraining

CONGRESS IS EXPECTED to begin hearings on compulsory military training measures early this year with the convening of the new session. *Now is the time to write your Congressman*, expressing your views on this important matter.

To aid you in understanding the issues involved, we should like to refer you to the October number of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP which was devoted exclusively to the question, Shall We Have Compulsory Military Training After the War? Following is a continuation of a list begun in last month's EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP of other sources of material dealing with militraining.

"Shall We Have Compulsory Peacetime Military Training?" by Paul E. Elicker in the *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals*, November 1944.

"Shall We Have Compulsory Military Training After the War?" A Symposium, *Parents' Magazine*, November 1944.

Conscription? May be ordered for 1 cent (\$1 a hundred; \$10 a thousand) from Fellowship of Reconciliation, 2929 Broadway, New York 25, N. Y.

"Compulsory Military Service," *Write Now*, Bulletin No. 58, Council for Democracy, 11 West Forty-second Street, New York 18, N. Y.

"Report of the Dean," preprint of a statement by William F. Russell, Dean of Teachers College, Columbia University.

"Conscription for Peacetime Training," Federal Council of Churches of Christ, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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