

THE POLICY AND WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WITH REGARD TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION*

CONSIDERABLE progress has been made in recent years in the organization and development of agricultural education. It is the policy of this Department to provide to the utmost within its means facilities for training the youth of the country in more profitable and scientific methods of agriculture. The scope of that training is wide and provides for the needs of the gentleman farmer and of the peasant cultivator. It is the Department's purpose to take the results of scientific research, improved methods and better schemes of agriculture right through to the villages. The full development of the Department's policy must take time especially under present conditions; but the final aim is to cover the countryside with a network of practical farm schools in which all instruction will be given through the medium of practical agriculture.

The School of Agriculture, more popularly known as the Farm School, Peradeniya, is the premier institution for agricultural education. The school was founded in January, 1916, for the purpose of teaching the principles and practice of agriculture to sons of landowners and to others who intend to adopt agriculture as a profession. Up to March, 1939, 300 students had passed through the course for the Certificate of the School, and 256 vernacular teachers and 38 village headmen through the one-year course in Sinhalese.

While this School provides for the training of the gentleman farmer it also has a major object, the improvement of village agriculture. There are at present four courses of instruction; the two-year course for the Certificate of the School, a special two years' course for the training of Agricultural Learners intended for service as Instructors in the Department, a one-year course in Sinhalese, and a practical farm course instituted this year. In addition 6 apprentices are trained every year on the School Farm, while practical training in poultry farming and dairying or in other subjects are afforded to those who seek a short course for special purposes.

Owing to limited accommodation in the School hostel our members in the past were limited to a maximum of 22 students in any

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year. Recently there has been an increased demand for agricultural training, and it is an encouraging feature that this has been from sons of landowners who expect to return to the development of their own lands. We have met this demand by improvised hostels; and there are in residence to-day 44 men in the English courses and 12 men in the Sinhalese course making a total of 56 students. In addition there are 6 day students following the Practical Farm Course, 6 apprentices working on the School Farm and 4 young men receiving a special training in poultry farming and dairying with the intention of starting commercial poultry and dairy farms. This makes a total of 72 men in training.

The Agricultural Learners' class was instituted in 1937 in order to select and train men of a higher standard of general education for service as Instructors in this Department. Their training lays special emphasis on village agriculture. During School vacations they are drafted to outstation centres of the department to enable them to acquire experience of village agriculture under a wide range of conditions.

The syllabus of instruction in the two-year course conducted in English is comprehensive. The principles and practice of agriculture applied to the major and minor crops of the Island, horticulture, and animal husbandry are three principal subjects in which all candidates for the Certificate of the School must qualify. These are supplemented by allied science and general subjects such as chemistry and soil science, agricultural botany, agricultural engineering, surveying and levelling, plant pests and diseases, veterinary science, principles of plant breeding, economics, beekeeping, climatology and farm and estate accounts. Practice is also provided in carpentry and smithy work.

The practical training for these students is supplied on the Experiment Station which in recent years has assumed the character of a School Farm. The Station is eminently suited for this purpose by reason of the large variety of crops which it supports. In addition to the plantation crops tea, rubber, coffee, cacao and coconuts, there are 30 acres under rotational crops and 23 acres under fodder and pasture grass. A ten-acre block is being laid down for an orchard and is already partly planted. A dairy and a milk room fully equipped with modern appliances have been built and the dairy and poultry farms have been transferred to the station. All students devote the mornings to practical work on the school farm and receive ample training in the major and minor crops. They are required to complete a full-time training in poultry and dairying during the vacations.

New buildings for the school consisting of class rooms and laboratories, and hostels for 50 students of the English courses and 20 students of the Sinhalese course are fast reaching completion on the station. A school of agriculture situated on its own school farm completely equipped for the proper instruction of students in all aspects of tropical agriculture will soon be an accomplished fact.

The Research Officers of the department including the veterinary branch contribute to the training of the students in special subjects. The permanent staff of the school was strengthened in 1937 by the recruitment from India of two officers with wide experience as demonstrators in cultivation, and in horticulture and plant propagation respectively. The growing of minor crops and implemental cultivation are practised on an extensive scale in India. The demonstrator in cultivation has already rendered definite assistance in introducing dhal cultivation and its curing on a commercial scale.

The Practical Farm Course instituted this year meets the demand for a course in agriculture by students who are not sufficiently qualified to join the Certificate course in the School. The course will be of 18 months' duration and a certificate will be issued to students who complete the course satisfactorily.

The school fulfils to-day the threefold purpose laid down for it in Sessional Paper III of 1935; which are firstly, the training of those who would eventually take charge of the management and development of their own lands; secondly, the training of such as would seek salaried agricultural employment either under Government or under private enterprise; thirdly, the training of a sufficient supply of students who would at the end of their course be qualified to impart in other schools the instruction they have themselves received.

The necessity for a type of farm school for the training of the peasant cultivator in more efficient methods of cultivation has been raised from time to time. This need has been supplied by the inauguration of practical farm schools at several centres in the provinces. There are seven such schools at Labuduwa, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Wariyapola, Wagolle, Mapalana and Karadianaru, while buildings for another are nearing completion at the Horana experiment station.

The courses of instruction at these schools vary to some extent. The Farm School at Tinnevelley, Jaffna, was run for many years on the same lines as the School at Peradeniya for the benefit of educated sons of landowners. Owing to insufficient demand from that class of Jaffna student they are now accommodated at Peradeniya. The courses at the Jaffna School are now of the same type as at the other Practical Farm Schools.

The schools at Jaffna, Labuduwa, Anuradhapura and Wariyapola are attached to major experiment stations while those at Wagolla, Mapalana and Karadianaru are attached to minor stations. Each of these schools conducts a practical farm course of a year's duration designed to supply a thoroughly practical training to sons of peasant cultivators who intend to adopt agriculture for their livelihood. Students are selected whose general education would enable them to take an intelligent interest in the instruction given and of an age not too high for them to enter employment sufficiently early. The first trial made in the establishment of these practical schools is the "Farm Boys' Course" at Anuradhapura started in January, 1933, and the standard for admission there is the 5th standard in Sinhalese. The students at these schools are paid 50 cents a day for the work they do. This enables them to run their own mess. They are encouraged to develop thrifty habits by depositing small savings in a Savings Bank. 20 students can pass through each of these schools yearly.

The course of instruction at these schools is mainly practical. Demonstration is the chief method of instruction, with short talks as required. Cultivation of paddy and other food crops, fruit culture and vegetative propagation, conservation of the soil including the construction of anti-soil-erosion works, maintenance of soil fertility and the use of cover crops and green manures, use of implements of cultivation, rotation of crops, compost making and manuring, fodder grasses, elementary knowledge of pests and diseases, management of cattle, dairy and poultry keeping, bee-keeping, co-operation, carpentry and masonry work are among the subjects taught. Special subjects are emphasized in different localities, such as irrigation at Jaffna. At Labuduwa and Wagolla training is supplied in the field operations on rubber, coffee and coconuts. Students read vernacular agricultural literature published by this Department.

The Jaffna school has in addition a four months' course for vernacular teachers. The students from two vernacular training colleges in Jaffna also receive instruction at the Jaffna Farm every Saturday for one year. Students from Jaffna secondary schools attend the farm on Saturdays from January to March each year, while local vernacular schools which teach rural science send their pupils on appointed days to receive instruction in such subjects as bee-keeping, vegetative propagation of fruit plants, and compost making. This year there are 7 vernacular teachers following the four-months' course, 28 teachers from the Training College who attend on Saturdays; and 229 students from secondary schools and 322 from local vernacular schools have visited the Farm for instruction between January and March.

The total number of students who are undergoing training at present in the Practical Farm Courses at the 7 schools mentioned is 110.

The students who have passed out of these schools are employed as follows. Ten students from Wagolla school were settled six months ago as colonists at Dambulla in the Kegalla District with $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres each, and they are reported to have made appreciable progress. Six other students have been appointed conductors on departmental farms, and 5 students as instructors in peasant settlements and in colonization schemes. The rest of the Wagolla students are engaged on their own lands.

Between January, 1937, and June, 1939, 32 students passed out of the Labuduwa school. Of these 5 are instructors on settlements, 2 at departmental stations, 2 on private estates, 2 are velvidanes who take an active interest in village agriculture, one even running a dairy, while the others have gone back to their own lands. Two students from Karadianaru are employed in rural scheme schools, while others have returned to cultivate their paddy fields or their lands. Two students more enterprising than others are engaged, one in raising budded nursery plants for sale and the other in making bee hives and Burmese harrows.

The students from the Jaffna school are chiefly engaged in farming and a few in teaching. The lads who pass out from Anuradhapura all go back to the land. They are given 2 acres of mud land and 1 acre of highland in their villages on a payment of 25 cents per acre per annum.

The Department's efforts in this direction are not confined to its schools. In each field division the department has selected a number of villages for special development. The Agricultural Instructor devotes much of his time to these villages and trains the cultivators in the use of better implements, in the introduction of new crops, in the preparation and use of compost, and in general in developing their agriculture. The Propaganda Division which works in close liaison with the Research Divisions conducts numerous field days when demonstrations are given on departmental farms or else in the villages themselves. Agricultural leaflets on a large variety of crops and topics have been published under the direction of a publications committee. All these along with the schools form the department's organization for carrying new ideas and improved practice to the village cultivator.