A PLEA FOR EXPERIMENTAL WORK IN CROPS TEACHING.\(^1\)

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My interest in this subject dates back to the time when, as an instructor in an agricultural college, I vainly attempted to place crop teaching on a sound pedagogical basis. In time, I passed on to my successor this problem, still unsolved. Later on, as opportunity came, I made random observations on crop teaching as done at some twenty-six of the agricultural colleges. I talked with instructors, I talked with the students, I studied catalogs. I compared crop courses with soil fertility courses, likewise with courses in what is called fundamental science. Opportunity has never come to make such a study of the subject as is warranted by its importance. My conclusions, however, frankly based upon the above-mentioned more or less random observations, are as follows:

1. Crop credits are generally recognized by students as being cheap credits. The amount of time required outside of class is relatively low; the intensity of attention in the class is seldom high.

2. The mental training value of crop courses is open to question. They certainly do not compare favorably in mental training values with courses in science.

3. Observation training values are fair, although oftentimes not correlated with mental training.

4. The work required, at those places where the credit hour in crops has a real significance, is largely routine in its nature.

5. Crop courses as taught are oftentimes not founded on science. Men without the scientific training advertised as prerequisite have no difficulty in keeping pace with students who have taken the so-called fundamental science prerequisites.

6. In some rare cases, where a real attempt is made to found the work on science, there is duplication of effort inside of the institution, in that the science itself rather than its use as a tool is taught, under the guise of technical subject matter.

While the foregoing are merely statements of opinion, they are susceptible to proof or disproof. To determine the facts on the first three points, we must go directly to students who have taken or are taking courses in crops. The testimony of their instructors

\(^1\) Paper read at the meeting of the Society held at New Orleans, La., November 8, 1921.

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