AGRONOMIC AFFAIRS

PROFESSIONAL WORKERS WANT COMPRESSED COURSES

THE May issue of the Journal carried a news note with regard to special short courses for professional workers to be made available at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas during the summer of 1940. The interest which was taken in these courses and the indications that were received as to the value of such courses to the professional workers of the country makes it worthwhile to report the outcome of this summer's trial.

Three outstanding conclusions were reached, as follows: First, professional workers want compressed courses which can frequently be accomplished during short or vacation periods. Second, outstanding visiting instructors can frequently be obtained for such short periods. Third, this type of graduate course permits keeping college instruction geared closely to the latest developments in action programs.

There was a total of 98 students enrolled in these special courses, approximately three-fourths of whom were established professional workers coming back for either a refresher course, a service course, or additional work towards their definite graduate program. These men came from a very wide geographical region and from many professional services. College and experiment station workers, vocational agriculture teachers, soil conservation workers, and employees of the extension service and the U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics were represented. The character of students thus assembled created a most helpful atmosphere and made it possible to bring into the class discussions an extremely varied amount of experience and background.

After contacting the instructors who handled these courses, it became rather obvious that even very busy and very prominent men in the educational and administrative fields were occasionally seriously interested in an opportunity to go to some other part of the country and teach some special course which fell within their specialty. Some of them remarked that it was extremely helpful to them to get away from the routine demands of their regular employment, which was frequently administrative, and be able to settle down with a group of stimulating students for three weeks of concentrated effort in collecting, re-organizing, and presenting the subject matter which they have in their minds and in their files but do not have sufficient time to organize under other conditions.

Perhaps of greatest significance was the opportunity such courses presented for bringing into our graduate instruction the very latest information and experience obtained through the operation of the action agencies. The necessity for doing this in connection with those types of agronomic work which these agencies have been developing on a previously unheard of scale has been very clear.

Most agronomists will appreciate the fact that much extremely valuable material is not available for general use because it has not had time to become crystallized in textbook and reference form.