Problems and Challenges of Agronomy Teaching in the Future

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RECENT events in outer space have focused the spotlight upon the teacher. F. O. Murphy, Chancellor, University of Kansas, and retiring Chairman of the American Council on Education, evaluated the accomplishment of Russia's launching of the first satellite as follows: "The message which this little ball carries to all Americans, . . . in this age of incredible technological change is that nothing is more important than the trained and educated mind." There is no profession more noble nor responsibilities greater than those of the teacher.

An individual learns in two ways: (1) by his own experience and (2) from the experiences of others. Progress has been made because each succeeding generation has been willing to accept the experiences of the preceding one. We would still be driving Model-T Fords if the automobile industry had refused to accept what was learned from each year's experience. Each new model is the result of the accumulated experiences gained from all preceding models plus the results of current research. Progress is being made at an increasing rate in industry and in science because the store of knowledge is large. In other fields, for example in the area of human relations, we are moving ahead less rapidly because our understanding of fundamental principles is more limited.

Knowledge as it influences advancement of a society has two dimensions, which may be termed "vertical" and "horizontal." The high standard of living in America is possible because the magnitude of both dimensions is great—that is, we possess an abundant quantity of knowledge shared by a relatively large proportion of the people. The responsibility of the teacher is to impart the experience of others to the present generation in such a way that it can be understood and built upon. In so doing he expands the horizontal dimension of knowledge. The researcher expands the vertical dimension. The teacher also has some influence on the vertical dimension because the better he educates his students the better they will be prepared to expand the frontiers of knowledge.

In this process there are many problems and challenges for agronomy teaching in the future. We have been bombarded with figures concerning increases in college enrollment. For 1957 this enrollment was 3.3 million and it is predicted to reach 5 million in 1960 and 8 million in 1975. Increased enrollments will...