Agronomic Education: The Importance of Courses in Communications

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I AM delighted to see this panel discussion developed around the theme of “optimum training needed for an agronomist.” One of the major functions of a professional society such as ours should be that of providing continuous scrutiny and evaluation of the training within our profession. It is most appropriate, therefore, that we devote this time to an examination of the training needs within the major subject matter disciplines.

I appreciate this opportunity to consider the importance of training in communications. Few, if any, phases of the agronomy student's curriculum are more neglected than is training in this area.

This deficiency was aptly described by former Dean L. L. Rummell of Ohio State when he said, “We have made phenomenal strides in the physical sciences, but still are creeping in the social sciences, stumbling in our understanding and application of what is known in such areas as ... the communicative process.”

Why is training in communications so important? The answer is obvious. Communication is essential in all human association. The essence of learning is the gaining of new ideas in relation to recognized problems. Communication has to do with the way people get ideas. In order for two or more people to engage in common, cooperative effort, they must be able to communicate with each other.

Someone has said that the basic aim of education is to convert the mind from a reservoir into a fountain. Ideas uncommunicated to others are usually of little value. An agronomy graduate—or a graduate in any field for that matter—must be able to communicate ideas if he is to be an effective professional worker. The better the research worker is able to set forth his findings, the more meaningful his work will be. The county agent, the SCS technician, and the Vo-ag teacher are all in the business of communicating ideas.

Their minds must be fountains instead of reservoirs. The same is true of those people in the business world. The sale of any product depends largely upon creating a desire to buy that product. Effective communications provide the basis for creating that desire.

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