

Education, Rural

V. F.

Preston

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PRAIRIE VIEW STATE NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE
Prairie View, Texas

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE RURAL SCHOOL TO THE COMMUNITY
-By Miss A. C. Preston-

The present unrest and disorder has focused national attention upon the public schools as the country's chief hope and dependence. Our rural schools must make a vital and substantial contribution to the needs of our social order.

In spite of the short terms, low salaries, isolation, and inconvenience, however, the rural schools of the United States, even now, offer some great inducements to trained teachers, if they could only be brought to realize these advantages. One of the greatest of these is the opportunity to render a much-needed social service. The whole nation depends upon the farm for food; it is the mission of the country to feed and clothe the world. Better prepared teachers in our rural schools are growing conscious of these opportunities and obligations of the people whom they serve and are now beginning to render services beyond the classroom.

The following description is characteristic of the average Negro rural family surveyed last year under the auspices of Mr. Gordon Worley, and the Department of Education of Texas. The family lived in a rented three-room unscreened, unpainted and unlandscaped house; it kept 13 mongrel hens that laid 28 eggs each a year; it raised a few collards for fall and winter; it only had ten dollars and seventeen cents as an income from the sales of vegetables, fruits, nuts, berries, poultry, eggs, meat and milk. The cattle and hogs were of scrub stock. These families were subjected to illness without the attention of a physician, and had no hobbies or recreational facilities. They knew nothing of the advantages to be had from cooperative enterprises.

In answering the rural teacher's question, "What shall be the content of my curriculum?" the writer referred to the NEEDS of the people as they can

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be seen in the foregoing paragraph. Units of instruction in the classroom growing out of community needs, when properly taught, will be a salvation to our people. It is all folly for Johnny, living here in rural Texas, to spend a month in school, learning the cultivation of coffee in Brazil. Johnny needs a better home in which to live, food that will balance his diet, a knowledge of live-stock, gardening and orcharding, that will bring a few dollars into the home when dad's cotton fails. His mother, father and other relatives, as well as he need to learn how to protect themselves against illness by following correct health habits. They need to know how to spend their leisure hours profitably as well as recreationally.

Notwithstanding the dreadful handicap of cotton tenancy as it exists and the other factors that enter into the lack of opportunity for rural Negroes, it is the opinion of the writer that it is quite possible to make living in the country a more satisfying and joyous experience. The rural school has a significant part to play in doing this. The rural teacher, if made aware of the resources of her environment and taught to use them, can become an important factor in the reconstruction of rural life.

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