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A HISTORY OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH DAKOTA
FROM 1940 TO 1953 INCLUSIVE

by

Arden R. Gronlund

A problem submitted to the Faculty of South Dakota State
College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Science (Plan B)

September 1954.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express his appreciation and thanks to Associate Professor Stanley Sundet of the Agriculture Education Department of South Dakota State College for his valuable advice and criticism.

Acknowledgment is gratefully made of the materials made available by H. E. Urton, State Supervisor of Agriculture Education.

110951

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
I Introduction	1
II Procedure	2
III Statement of Problem	4
IV Development of the Vocational Agriculture Program	5
V Food Production War Training Programs	15
VI Tables and Figures Showing Development of Vocational Agriculture	19
VII Outlook	27
VIII Bibliography	29

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Installation of Vocational Agriculture Departments	20
II. Number and Enrollment of Vocational Agriculture Departments in South Dakota	24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Number of Vocational Agriculture Departments in South Dakota 1940-1953	25
2. Enroliment in Vocational Agriculture Departments in South Dakota 1940-1953	26

INTRODUCTION

The Vocational Agriculture Program in South Dakota has been in operation for thirty-five years. Mr. H. E. Urton, State Supervisor of Agricultural Education, wrote The History of Vocational Agriculture in South Dakota as his thesis. This thesis recorded the first twenty-one years of vocational agriculture history in our state.

The following fourteen years have seen vocational agriculture progress, drop back as a result of a great war, and progress again to new heights. This writer feels that the events of the past fourteen years warrant the writing of a History of Vocational Agriculture from 1940 through 1953.

PROCEDURE

The records, containing the information necessary to make this study, are in the Office of the State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture located at Pierre, South Dakota. These records, for the most part, are a part of the State Supervisor's permanent file and cannot be removed from his office. This made it necessary to go to the State Capitol at Pierre, South Dakota and visit the State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture's office to examine said records.

The records that yielded the information necessary for the writing of this history include:

1. Annual Report State Supervisor of Agricultural Education to State Board of Education, school years 1940-1941 through 1953-1954.
2. Report of Agricultural Education in South Dakota to the Federal Office of Education, school years 1940-1941 through 1953-1954.
3. Descriptive Report of the South Dakota Board of Vocational Education to the U.S. Office of Education as of June 30, 1945, Food Production War Training Program.
4. Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1942 to June 30, 1944.
5. Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1944 to June 30, 1946.
6. Rural War Production Training Program, Final Report, Federal Security Agency, U.S. Office of Education, Bulletin 1946, No. 11
7. The School Laws of the State of South Dakota 1953.

In this report, when a year is referred to as 1940, it is the intent of the writer to refer to the school year

1940-1941.

The data collected were compiled and certain conclusions were reached. They are reported in this study.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The vocational agriculture program in South Dakota has had many interesting developments during the past fourteen years. Interest in these developments have led the writer to feel a need for a history of vocational agriculture in South Dakota from 1940 to 1953 inclusive.

The writer has made no attempt to trace the development of the Future Farmers of America, as one study has already been made in this field and another is in the process of being written. Also omitted from this study is the development of the teacher training program. It is felt that this is a complete study in itself.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

There were a total of seventy approved departments in 1940 as compared with sixty-eight the previous year. New departments were added at Faith, Parker, Tyndall, and Wilmot; while the departments at Monroe and White River were discontinued. Several schools sponsored courses under provisions of the National Defense Training Program. This program will be discussed in another section.

Farming conditions were generally improved in the State during the year. A large number of land sales were reported by the Federal Land Bank, the Rural Credit Department, and insurance companies.

There were some reports of a shortage of farm labor, due to the number of young men who entered the armed services or were employed in the defense program. This situation also made uncertain the number of teachers who would be available for the next year.

The year 1941-1942 saw another new high in the number of vocational agriculture departments in the State. There were seventy-three departments at the beginning of the year. Departments were discontinued at Dupree, Hill City, and Wakonda. New departments were established at Buffalo, Colton, Hoven, New Effington, South Shore, and Winner. Bridgewater and South Shore were forced to discontinue the work during the school year as their instructors moved to other positions, and they were unable to secure qualified men.

Improved prices for farm products and generally increased production due to more favorable weather conditions caused a decided upturn in the farmers' income. There continued to be a shortage of farm labor.

The year saw an enrollment of 2464 boys in vocational agriculture.

It was necessary to discontinue courses in vocational agriculture in thirty-two departments during the year 1942-1943 because of the shortage of instructors. There continued to be a decrease in enrollment in both the elementary and high school levels in our school systems. As a result of these factors only 1434 boys were enrolled in vocational agriculture that year.

In his report for the year 1942-1943, Mr. Urton reports,

A definite effort has been made throughout the past year to gear the vocational agriculture work to the war effort. Instructors have attempted to adjust their teaching to meet the immediate demands and at the same time to have the boys develop a long time farming program adapted to local farming conditions. They are drawing on the experiences that the boy has gained in the supervised practice program and his work on the farm and in the community.¹

Another drop in enrollment occurred in the school year 1943-1944, with only 1049 boys enrolled in vocational agriculture.

Because of induction of instructors into the armed

¹H. E. Urton, Report of Agricultural Education in South Dakota to the Federal Office of Education, 1942-1943; p. 2.

forces and a few of them going to other positions, there was a great shortage of qualified instructors. To add to the seriousness of this situation, there were few, if any, trainees in the Teacher Training Department of South Dakota State College to provide replacements. As a result of the above situations, thirteen schools found it necessary to temporarily discontinue departments, leaving only thirty-two vocational agriculture departments in operation at the beginning of the school year.

Enrollment in vocational agriculture was still on the decline for the school year 1944-1945, with only 803 boys taking the course. Eight more schools were forced to discontinue departments, bringing the total number down to twenty-four. This made a total of fifty departments that had been forced to close due to the shortage of instructors. It was interesting to note that the departments that remained open showed a slight increase in enrollment.

Salaries for the past year showed a marked increase, the average being \$2818.26, including mileage as compared with \$2493.87 for the previous year.

The scope of the supervised farming program of the boys had increased considerably. Many of the boys had developed quite a sizable farming program and were ready to enter the business of farming when they finished high school. Both the boys and the instructors had taken an active part in the community affairs and cooperated with other agencies

to carry out various activities in connection with the war effort.

When school opened for the 1945-1946 year, only seventeen schools had secured instructors to qualify as active vocational agriculture departments. During the course of the year, four schools secured instructors and reopened their departments. Three of these instructors were returned service men and one had been with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These twenty-one departments of vocational agriculture enrolled 801 boys.

Plans were formulated to give training in agriculture to returning service men.

Mr. Urton reported thus on the quality of work being done by the vocational agriculture instructors,

Despite the decrease in the number of departments, the quality of the work of the instructors and the boys is showing constant improvement. A large number of the boys have developed extensive farming programs and as a result are not only making considerable money but are also making considerable progress toward becoming established in the farming business. The total project income for the farming programs carried on by the boys the past year was \$110,529.06. This is an increase of approximately \$12,000 over the previous year with about the same number of boys participating.²

This year, 1946, Mr. Stanley Sundet returned from the service and took over the duties of Vocational Agriculture Teacher Trainer at South Dakota State College.

²H. E. Urton; Annual Report, State Supervisor of Agriculture Education to State Board of Education, 1945-1946; p. 2.

The school year 1946-1947 saw a return of more qualified instructors from the service and eight more departments were able to reopen. This brought the total to twenty-nine departments with 1082 boys enrolled.

Particular efforts were made to encourage more students to complete the work in the Agriculture Education Department of South Dakota State College in preparation for vocational agriculture teaching.

Efforts were also made to strengthen the farm shop program. This was done when many schools were able to secure considerable amounts of equipment through the Government Surplus Property Program. Many schools made definite plans to construct new shop buildings or improve the existing facilities.

The George-Barden Law, also known as the Vocational Education Act of 1946, was made law August 1, 1946. This act was an authorization for appropriations for vocational education. Section 3 of the act states:

(a) For the purpose of assisting the several States and Territories in the further development of vocational education, there is authorized to be appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1946, and annually thereafter--

(1) \$10,000,000 for vocational education in agriculture, including supervision by the vocational agriculture teachers of the activities, related to vocational education in agriculture, of the Future Farmers of America and the New Farmers of America, to be apportioned for expenditure in the several States and Territories in the proportion that their farm population bears to the total farm

population of the States and Territories, according to the last preceding United States census;...³

The year 1947-1948 saw 1252 boys enrolled in vocational agriculture in a total of thirty-three departments. This was an increase of four departments over the previous year, and also an increase in the average enrollment per department.

Schools were slow in completing plans for the reopening of closed departments of vocational agriculture and the establishing of new departments. This was due largely to the fact that the financial situation of most of the independent school districts was critical and the schools were hesitant to incur additional expense.

The George-Barden Act made provision for the reimbursement to the schools for the purchase of shop equipment. The State Department established the policy that they would reimburse schools for the purchase of such equipment in an amount not to exceed \$500.00. Eighteen schools purchased much needed equipment because of this assistance. There was still a need for a building program, but the schools were hesitating to attempt a very extensive building program.

The South Dakota Veterans Department was designated by the Governor as the Approving Agency for all veterans' training programs in South Dakota. The State Department of Agri-

³ 79th Congress, 2nd Session, S.619 (Report No. 2658); p. 3.

cultural Education acted in an advisory capacity and worked closely with the Veterans Administration in developing the Institutional on-the-Farm Training Program. A few classes were organized this year.

There were forty-four schools operating approved vocational agriculture departments for the year 1948-1949 with an enrollment of 1721 boys. This was again a substantial increase in the number of departments as well as in enrollment.

All available qualified instructors, who were interested in teaching in the State, were able to secure positions. The average salary paid instructors this year, including mileage, was \$3809.26.

There was a decided improvement in the quality and scope of the farm shop program. A number of schools improved their shop facilities and added considerable new equipment as a result of the reimbursement that was available for the purchase of equipment for shops.

Interest in vocational agriculture continued to grow. In 1949-1950 there were fifty-four schools operating approved departments with an enrollment of 2099 boys. A few more schools may have opened departments that year, but were late in taking action and the supply of qualified instructors was exhausted. Some of the qualified men took jobs as instructors in the Institutional on-the-Farm Training Program.

More interest was shown this year in adult farmer classes. Six schools organized such classes and held from ten to fifteen

meetings.

A committee of instructors developed a "Guide for Teaching Vocational Agriculture". This guide was sent to every school in South Dakota operating a department of vocational agriculture.

The lack of sufficient federal funds made it necessary to prorate the reimbursement of schools this year. The prorated figure represented approximately 44.44% reimbursement rather than the usual 50% reimbursement of the instructors' salaries.

The 1950-1951 year saw sixty-two schools operating approved departments enrolling 2438 boys. This approached the 1941-1942 school year which set an all time high for South Dakota with seventy-three departments and 2464 boys. The "Instructors Guide" distributed during the last year, proved to be a great help to the men in getting a well organized and uniform program in each community.

There was still a sizable list of schools desiring departments, but unable to establish them due to financial reasons and building conditions.

Many of the men graduating from South Dakota State College with majors in Agricultural Education were called into service, lowering the number of qualified teachers.

Schools were reimbursed 38.285% for teachers' salaries rather than the usual 50%.

Enrollment in vocational agriculture reached an all

time high in the school year 1951-1952, with 2517 boys enrolled. Another indication of the growing interest in vocational agriculture was evidenced by some schools building new buildings for agriculture and others improving existing facilities.

Five additional schools were approved for departments for the coming year. Several other schools showed interest in opening departments in the near future.

The 1952-1953 school year was highlighted by another all time high in enrollment in vocational agriculture and more schools increasing and improving farm shop facilities. Enrollment reached 2787 boys in 67 vocational agriculture departments.

The supervised farming programs, as carried out by the boys, showed added strength. Many of the boys had long term farming programs planned that would allow them to enter full time farming upon graduating from high school.

The 1953 State Legislature provided for a reorganization of the State Board of Education,

15.0804 Powers and duties of board; co-operation with federal agencies; vocational agriculture, home economics, trades and industries, distributive education and guidance, reimbursement of local schools for teaching. The State Board shall have necessary power to co-operate with federal agencies in the administration of the federal act referred to in the third preceding section, and in the administration of the act providing for vocational rehabilitation of persons disabled in industry, which was accepted by the Governor on behalf of the State of South Dakota as authorized by the Legislature under date of November 27, 1920.

110951

The State Board may upon motion approve high schools which shall maintain departments for the teaching of vocational agriculture, home economics, trades and industries, distributive education and guidance.

Source: Part of Sec. 8, Chap. 138, 1931, as amended by Chap. 51, 1953. ⁴

At the time of this writing it has had no apparent effect on the vocational agriculture program.

The number of vocational agriculture departments increased to 71 for the 1953-1954 school year. New departments were established at Bryant, Buffalo, Lake Preston, Waubay, and Waverly. This year 2850 boys enrolled in vocational agriculture to set another new high.

⁴The School Laws of the State of South Dakota 1953; South Dakota State Legislature; Midwest-Beach Co., Sioux Falls, S. D.; p. 13.

FOOD PRODUCTION WAR TRAINING PROGRAMS

The Food Production War Training Program was conducted in South Dakota through the cooperation of the United States Office of Education and the State Board for Vocational Education. J. F. Hines, State Director of Vocational Education, served as State Director for the school year 1940-1941; C. O. Gottschalk, Supervisor of Trade and Industrial Education, served as Director of all War Production Training Programs for 1941-1942; and H. E. Urton, Supervisor of Agricultural Education, served as Director of the Rural War Production and Food Production War Training Programs from 1942 through 1945.

Objectives

The program as inaugurated in 1940, had for its objective to train men for certain approved industries and occupations. As we advanced into a full scale war it became apparent that a large number of our rural youth had been drawn into industrial employment and into the armed forces. Public Law 146 added the objective:

To train farmers in methods of achieving production goals of those farm commodities designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, and, to train farmers in the repair, operation, and construction of farm machinery and equipment.

The objectives as established under Public Laws 135 and 373 do not mention the idea of training rural people for employment in industry. The objectives during these last two years of the program were stated as follows:

1. To train farmers and other persons in

methods of achieving production goals of those farm commodities designated by the United States Department of Agriculture.

2. To train farmers and other persons in the repair, operation, and construction of farm machinery and equipment.
3. To better qualify persons to serve agriculture through the maintenance and repair of facilities which will increase farming efficiency.
4. To provide necessary farm labor training to meet the increased production demands.
5. To provide training in the production, processing and conservation of food for family use.⁵

Courses Offered

South Dakota enrolled 4225 men in sixteen types of courses during the five year period from 1940 to 1945. The courses taught in South Dakota were as follows: Operation, Care and Repair of Tractors, Trucks and Automobiles; Metal Work; Woodworking; Elementary Electricity; Feed for Livestock; Training Farm Workers; Food Conservation; Poultry Production; Egg Production; Vegetable Gardening; Pork Production; Beef Production; Milk Production; Soybean Production; Sheep Production; and Sheep Shearing.

Schools Participating

There were sixty-three schools offering courses under

⁵Rural War Production Training Program, Final Report; Federal Security Agency; U. S. Office of Education; Bulletin 1946, No. 11; p. 10.

the Food Production War Training Program. Many of these schools offered more than one course. Towns participating in the program were: Alpena, Armour, Beresford, Blunt, Bowdle, Britton, Brookings, Bruce, Bryant, Burke, Canton, Castlewood, Clark, Clear Lake, Colton, Cresbard, Dell Rapids, Delmont, Egan, Esteline, Eureka, Faith, Florence, Garretson, Gettysburg, Gregory, Groton, Herried, Highmore, Hoven, Ipswich, Java, LaBolt, Lake Preston, Lemmon, Lennox, Madison-Eastern, Milbank, Mound City, New Effington, Newell, Onida, Parker, Pollock, Rapid City, Redfield, Roslyn, Rutland, Scotland, Sisseton, Spearfish, Strandburg, Summit, Tripp, Tyndall, Vale, Volga, Wagner, Webster, Wessington Springs, Wilmot, and Winner. Some of these schools also sponsored courses in nearby communities.

Factors That Limited Programs

Farmers were often not able to enroll in classes due to the great distances involved and the scarcity of tires and gasoline. Also as a result of the farm labor shortage, many of the farmers had so much work at home that they could not give the time. About the only time they could attend was during the winter and then bad roads and weather conditions often prohibited attendance.

Many of the vocational agriculture instructors were in the armed forces; thereby, eliminating a source of trained instructors. The program did employ special instructors on the basis of their capabilities in special fields, but many

of these were already overworked and did not care to take on extra employment. As a result some schools could not operate the program due to a lack of instructors.

Effect on Vocational Agriculture

Mr. H. E. Urton writes:

At the present, it appears that this program will have very little effect on the regular Vocational Agriculture Program except as the course outlines and visual aids can be used to good advantage, and that we hope the schools will be stimulated in their planning for farm shops as soon as finances will permit. We also hope that it will stimulate the adult program both in evening and part-time schools. Approximately two-thirds of the departments are closed due to lack of qualified instructors and the men who will be employed after the war will not be familiar with the war program.⁶

Some schools did gain some excellent shop equipment as a result of the Food Production War Training Program. Also vocational agriculture departments received outlines of courses taught and they helped to stimulate shop programs.

The program did not seem to have the hoped for effect on the adult program of vocational agriculture.

⁶H. E. Urton; Descriptive Report of the South Dakota Board of Vocational Education to the U. S. Office of Education as of June 30, 1945; Food Production Training Program; p. 13.

TABLES AND FIGURES SHOWING DEVELOPMENT OF
VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

The following tables and figures summarize the growth of vocational agriculture in South Dakota for the past fourteen years. It will be noted that with the exception of the World War II years, vocational agriculture has had a steady growth. The decline during the war years was due to a lack of instructors, not a lack of interest in the program.

Judging from the inquiries, as shown by the report of the State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture, we should see a continued increase in the number of departments and enrollment in vocational agriculture.

TABLE I. INSTALLATION OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS

SCHOOL	1940	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
Agar	X	X												
Alcester	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Armour	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				
Barnard	X	X				X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Beresford	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bowdle	X	X												
Bridgewater	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X
Bristol												X	X	X
Britton										X	X	X	X	
Brookings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School of Ag.	X	X												
Bryant	X	X												X
Buffalo		X	X											X
Burke	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Centerville	X	X									X	X	X	X
Chester	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Clark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Colman													X	X
Colome												X	X	X
Colton		X	X											
Dallas	X	X												
Dell Rapids	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DeSmet	X	X								X	X	X	X	X

SCHOOL	1940	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
St. Lawrence	X	X	X											
Salem	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X
Scotland	X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X
Sisseton	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
South Shore		X												
Sturgis								X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tyndall	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Valley Springs	X	X												
Veblen	X	X												
Volga	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wagner	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wakonda	X	X												
Wakpala	X	X												
Watertown								X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Waubay														X
Waverly	X	X												X
Webster	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wessington	X	X							X	X	X	X		
Wessington Springs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
White River											X	X	X	X
Willow Lake												X	X	X
Wilmot	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X
Winner		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Wolsey	X	X								X	X	X	X	X

* Onida discontinued the department September 30, 1952.

TABLE II. NUMBER AND ENROLLMENT
OF
VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

1940 - 1953		
YEAR	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT
1940-1941	70	2423
1941-1942	73	2435
1942-1943	45	1434
1943-1944	32	1049
1944-1945	24	803
1945-1946	21 ^a	801
1946-1947	29	1082
1947-1948	33 ^b	1252
1948-1949	44	1721
1949-1950	54	2099
1950-1951	62	2438
1951-1952	64 ^c	2517
1952-1953	67 ^d	2787
1953-1954	71	2850

- a. Seventeen departments were in operation when school opened in the fall.
- b. Thirty-two departments were in operation when school opened in the fall.
- c. Quinn received reimbursement for July.
- d. Onida discontinued their department on September 30.

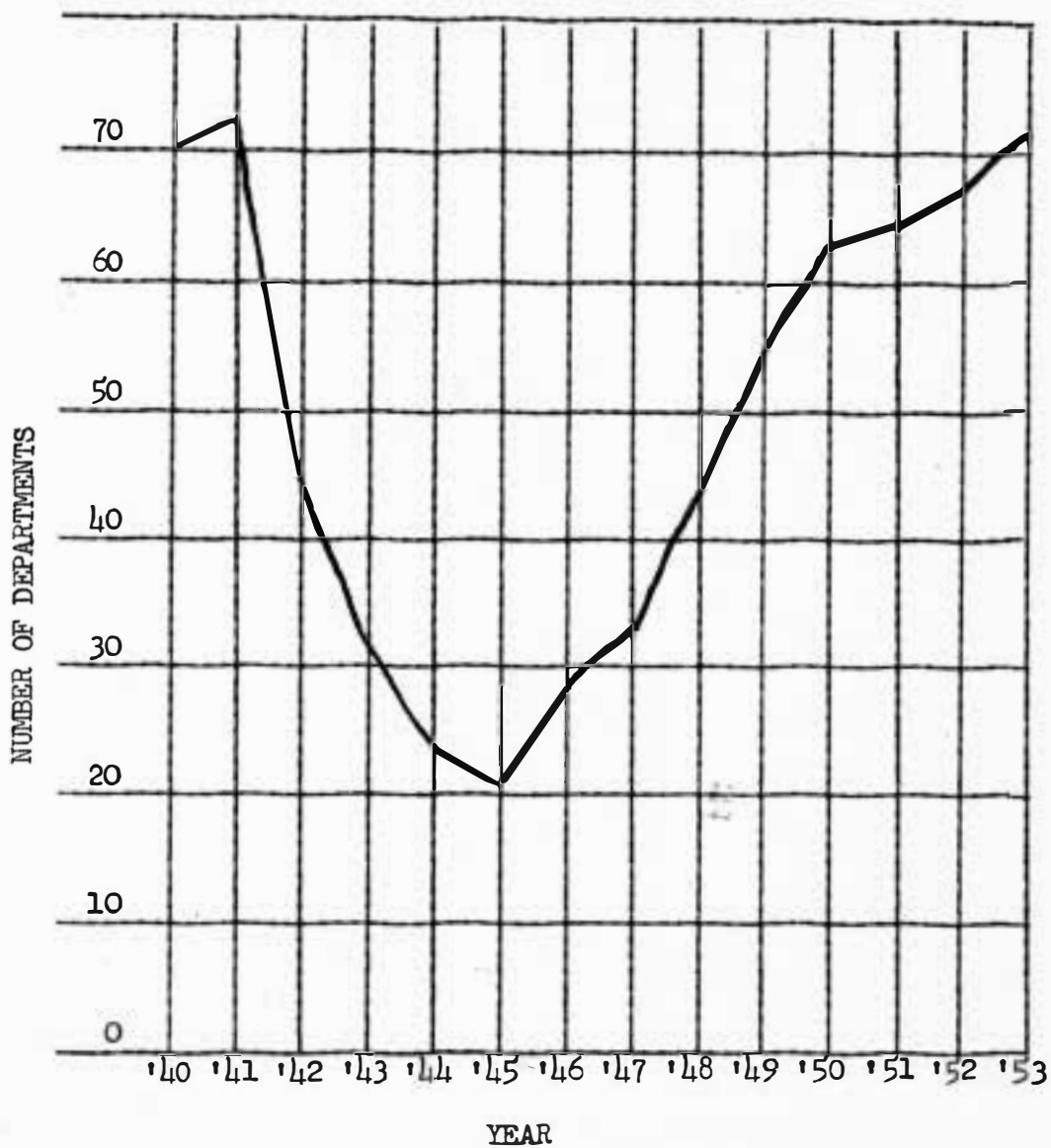


FIG. 1. NUMBER OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS

IN

SOUTH DAKOTA 1940 - 1953*

* by school years.

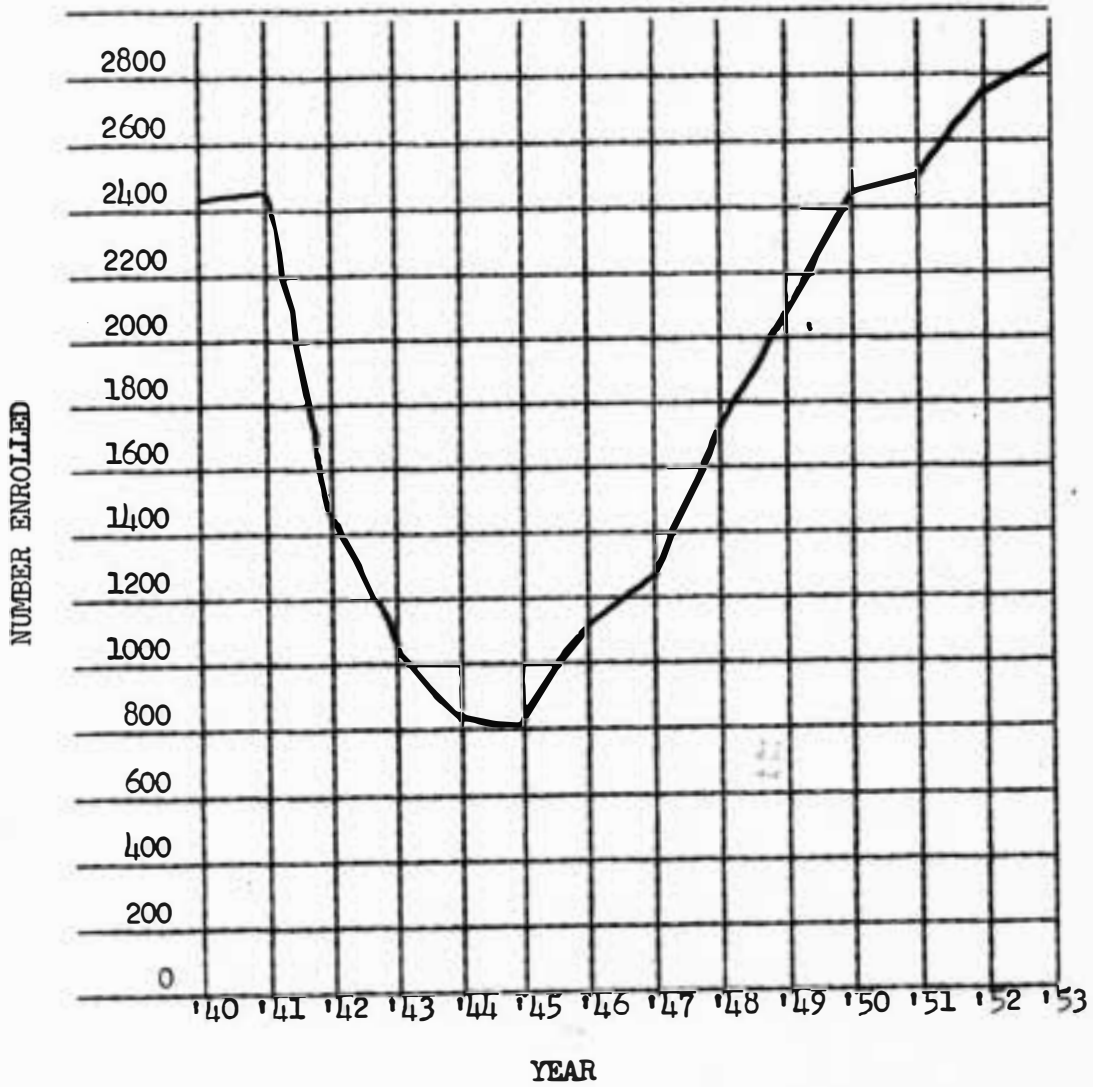


FIG. 2. ENROLLMENT IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS
IN
SOUTH DAKOTA 1940 - 1953*

* by school years.

OUTLOOK

In this study the writer was interested in tracing the events that played an important part in the establishment of vocational agriculture in South Dakota. The past fourteen years, with the exception of the war years, have shown a steady increase in both number of departments and enrollment.

The writer has also noted that the number of boys enrolled in vocational agriculture has increased the scope of their supervised farming programs. Many of the boys planned long term expansion programs that would lead to establishment in farming and ranching.

The study shows that some schools have remodeled or built shop buildings. The schools have also added tools and equipment. This led to better units in farm mechanics being taught in the vocational agriculture departments.

If we can forecast the future by studying the past, the writer believes that vocational agriculture in South Dakota will continue to make progress. Some of the smaller schools may be forced to close their departments due to lack of enrollment, but many of the larger schools with a sizable rural-farm enrollment will build the necessary facilities and open departments.

The extent to which boys will be able to become established in agriculture will depend to a large degree upon the stability of the agricultural economy, weather con-

ditions, and their military status. If these factors are favorable, more boys should be ready to start farming upon graduation from high school.

This forecast would indicate that we can expect vocational agriculture to continue to help improve agriculture in South Dakota.

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