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4-H CLUB WORK A NATIONAL ASSET

A radio talk by Dr. C. B. Smith, Assistant Director, Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H Club Radio Program, April 6, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 59 associate NBC radio stations.

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In these times when millions are without work, 4-H club work gives every one of its youthful members something to do, something that is constructive and worth-while, something that occupies their minds and their bodies, and something that helps the individual, the family, the community, and the nation.

The motto of each club member is to "make the best better," and, when you do a thing in a better way, you interest the mind, and when you interest the mind you grow.

It is an asset to the nation to have each year a million rural boys and girls 10 to 20 years old doing pieces of constructive work, acquiring habits of industry, a right attitude toward work, learning the virtue of thrift, doing creative things, dealing with the soil and the work of the home, all in a better way. It is a significant thing to the nation when a million rural youth meet monthly in clubs of 10 to 20 members and discuss with each other and with the group the things they are doing, the difficulties they are meeting in carrying on their work, the steps they are taking to overcome these difficulties, the results they are getting.

It is a significant thing to the nation when a million rural youth meet in their clubs and sing wholesome and inspiring songs together, conduct their meetings in accordance with Parliamentary law, play wholesome games, acquire something of the social graces, and learn modesty and generosity in success or defeat.

Our statisticians tell us that the birth rate of the nation is slowing up, that in practically all of our larger cities deaths already are exceeding births. Only in the smaller towns and on the farms are births exceeding deaths. Life in the cities is strenuous. The fierce competition of men and women there to earn a living, the turmoil, noise and confusion, the temptations and excesses tend to wear out all but the strongest within about 3 or 4 generations of time.

That means that if our cities are to maintain their population and keep from decay they must draw on the surplus population of the rural areas. It has been estimated that in normal times a fourth to a third of the young people of rural areas migrate to the towns and cities, there to engage in industry, commerce, trade, the law, medicine, politics, and all the things that concern men and women in life.

How important to the cities and the nation that the stream of population that flows into the cities from rural areas be clean, virile, wholesome, competent, with ideals of thrift, religion, honesty, integrity -- men and women who remember the hills, who have associated with the soil, the fields, with forests -- who know what work and self-denial are -- men and women who have drunk from living water. Four-H club work helps rural youth develop in these fields.

There needs to be mutual understanding between rural and urban groups and good will toward each other for the prosperity of each is bound up in the success of the other. Agriculture will prosper over the years only as industry, commerce, and labor prosper; and industry, commerce, and labor depend for their prosperity in large measure on the efficiency and financial success of agriculture. Four-H club work is one of the significant agencies that are helping establish understanding and right thinking of city groups toward the great basic industry of agriculture.

Four-H club work is an organization of rural youth that seeks, not only to teach rural youths efficiency in agriculture and homemaking, but to teach them the fundamental place of agriculture in the national economy, to acquaint rural boys and girls with its beauty and poetry, its healing power, things that will stand by them and give them strength when the trials of life begin to press.

Yes, 4-H club work is an asset to the nation, just as schools and churches and Sunday schools and Scouting and forests and mountains, streams, and plains are assets to the nation.

Four-H club work is an asset to the nation because it does these things:

It helps develop the creative powers of rural youth, both of boys and girls.

It helps the mind to perceive and understand, develops the skill of the hand to execute, and the ability of the eye to see.

Club work promotes play and social life. It develops ambition, and character.

It teaches persistence and accomplishment.

Four-H club work gives vision to youth. It teaches service to men and nation.

Four-H club work builds men and women.

Yes, it is an asset to the nation.

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