

Agricultural Education in France.

(This is the eighth of the series of articles regarding the investigation of European co-operative credit systems now being made by the Diplomatic Service in connection with President Taft's effort to introduce co-operative credit in the United States. It will be appreciated if copies of whatever material you publish regarding this subject is mailed to the Division of Information, Department of State, Washington, D. C.)

Washington, D. C., Sept. 29.—In addition to his study of the means employed in France to finance the farmers of that country, Ambassador Myron Herrick has submitted to the Department of State a report upon the educational work done by the French Government and the French agricultural associations for the promotion of agriculture. Ambassador Herrick is making an exhaustive study of the question of agricultural finances in France in connection with President Taft's effort to introduce some form of co-operative-credit or mortgage-bond system in the United States for the benefit of the American farmer. It is in connection with this investigation that he has submitted his report on the educational work done for the French farmer in order that the complete system may be shown to the American public.

The interests of agriculture in France, reports Ambassador Herrick, are advanced by two methods—officially, by the Ministry of Agriculture, and non-officially, by the great agricultural societies.

The action of the Ministry of Agriculture is threefold—legislative, educational, and financial. In its legislative work it is assisted by the grand committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and keeps in constant touch with the agricultural societies. It is, however, in agricultural education that the Ministry of Agriculture has done most.

At the head of the Agricultural Department stands the Institut Agronome, which corresponds to the French Academy, the Academy of Sciences, and the other great academies of learning which go to make up the Institute de France.

The Institut Agronome consists of fifty-six members, chosen for their eminence in the science of agriculture, and forty associate members. Election to this body is the crown of the career of any man of eminence in French agriculture. From it are turned out the professors of agriculture of the highest class.

Next below the Institut Agronome come the three great schools of agriculture—those of Grignon, Montpellier, and Rennes. These schools have each large farms attached to them, the one at Grignon, for instance, consisting of some three hundred hectares say, seven hundred acres). They are provided with live stock of the best class for breeding purposes and fitted with the latest machinery and chemical laboratories on the most elaborate scale. Every student carries out a large amount of theoretical work, but at the same time the practical side is by no means neglected.

There are at each of these great schools from 120 to 140 pupils. The full curriculum at all the schools is of two and one-half years, divided into three sections. From forty to fifty pupils join these schools each year. The students live in the college as boarders. The fees paid by each pupil at Grignon amount to 1,200 francs (say, \$250) a year; at Montpellier, 1,000 francs (\$200); and at Rennes, 500 francs (\$100). At Rennes, however, the pupils do not board at the college. Pupils enter at the age of eighteen.

Next below these three great colleges of agriculture come the Ecoles Pratiques de l'Agriculture, of which there are eight in France. The course of instruction is much the same, in many respects, as that given at the higher schools already referred to, but more attention is paid to the practical side. Each of these practical schools of agriculture consists of about 140 pupils. The fees vary from 600 to 800 francs (\$120 to \$160) per annum, including board.

Next comes a yet lower grade of school, which is called the Farm School (Les Ecoles Fermes). These consist of private farms on which a certain number of pupils are trained under Government supervision. It appears, however, that this method of agricultural education is showing a tendency to die out.

In addition to these various schools devoted entirely to giving instruction in the subject, agriculture is also taught in every lycee and superior primary school in France. The teaching is in the hands of a very efficient corps of professors. These are divided into two classes—the departmental professors, each of whom is at the head of the agricultural instruction in his department, and the assistant professors, one of whom is attached to each arrondissement, or parliamentary electoral district.

This systematic organization of agricultural education is one of the greatest works of the Third Republic. It has given astonishing results. The value of the annual crops in France during the fifteen years that have elapsed since this educational system was introduced has increased 2,500,000,000 francs (\$500,000,000). This remarkable result is entirely due to improved methods of cultivation resulting from the educational advantages now enjoyed.

So much for the official side of agricultural instruction in France. The non-official organization of agriculture in the Republic is in the hands of two great institutions known as the Societe des Agriculteurs and the Societe Nationale d'Encouragement de l'Agriculture.

The Societe des Agriculteurs de France, which is the more important and older of the two, has its headquarters in Paris. It has a membership of 12,500. Its president is the Marquis de Vogue. The annual membership fee is twenty francs (\$4.00), which gives it a revenue of \$50,000 a year. The society also has the disposal of the income from a large capital which has been left to it in the form of inheritances destined to be devoted to the work of the organization, as well as other sources.

This society devotes itself entirely to advancing the interests of French agriculture, but is in no way a commercial undertaking. It is affiliated with local societies throughout the country of every kind and description—societies for the encouragement of horse or cattle breeding, bee culture, wine growing, poultry raising, corn growing, fruit raising, organizations for the development of dairy produce, and so forth. These provincial organizations number, on the average, eight to each department, some departments possessing only three or four, while others have fifteen or twenty. Each of these societies devotes itself to advancing that branch of agriculture to which it belongs. This is done by organizing cattle shows, arranging lectures, and publishing bulletins and reports giving the latest information on agricultural subjects.

The holding of cattle shows in France is undertaken by the Government as far as concerns the two great national shows which are held in Paris every year—the fat-stock

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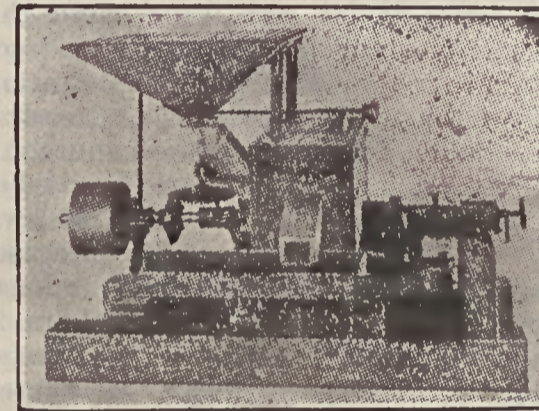
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