

JOURNAL  
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RURAL SCHOOL EXPLORATION

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The second meeting of the Council on Rural Education was held at Atlanta University on January 4, 5, and 6. Since the preceding meeting, held in September, the twelve explorers have been stationed in three states in the South, living in rural communities and working with the school and other local agencies in an attempt to add to the already existing knowledge of the rural South.

These twelve were stationed thus:

Arkansas

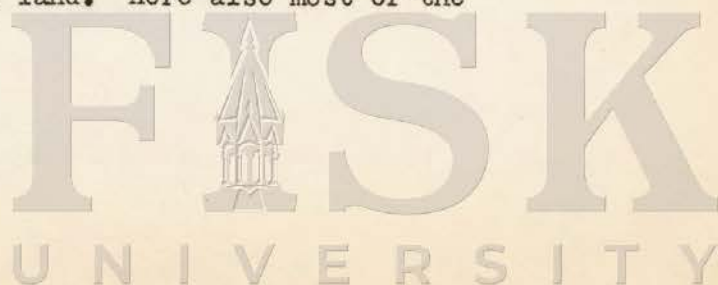
Mr. and Mrs. Morgenroth have been at Hermitage, a small lumber town in the hill section south of Little Rock.

Miss Beatty and Miss Purifoy worked some fifteen miles south of Pine Bluff at Poynter, a typical plantation settlement of the delta region, in connection with a demonstration school of the Negro State College.

Louisiana

Mrs. Riddle's station was at Mineral Springs School, twenty miles northeast of Monroe, in a sub-marginal hill section where most of the Negroes own their farms.

Mr. and Mrs. Bond lived in a community of Washington Parish in the eastern part of Louisiana. This was also a definitely sub-marginal hill section of cut-over pine land. Here also most of the people own their own land.



Georgia

Mrs. Cannon and Mrs. Duncan served as the actual teachers in the school at Red Oak, a community in Henry County about twenty-five miles south of Atlanta. The soil of this gently rolling country varies from a reddish clay to a sandy loam overlying a rocky subsoil, and thus is exceedingly poor and unproductive. Few of the Negroes in this community own their own farms.

Mr. Junker lived in Perry, about one hundred miles southeast of Atlanta. This town, the center of a large farming community, boasts of a new industrialism in the form of a large cement plant.

Miss Lockman and Mr. Wilson were attached to a white school at Fairplay in Morgan County sixty miles east of Atlanta. Here a relatively small group of families has retained possession, for a great many years, of the better portion of surrounding sub-marginal areas.

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The explorers were sent into the field without specific instructions as to what they should observe and were asked to make their reports in any way they thought best. While it was realized that this procedure might result in a good deal of waste effort and duplication of findings, it was felt that this very result would be valuable in covering the entire field from fresh viewpoints, and would serve as a basis for later pointing the work in such specific directions as might be indicated by the problems of the given community or the interests or ability of the given explorer.

The detailed and profuse reports of the explorers by the very iteration of certain observations and the omission of very much interpretation, crystallized the problems as probably no other procedure



could have done. After listening to the reports and discussing them for two full days, the Council agreed upon the following procedures in the future ordering of the explorations:

1. Elaborate notes must be kept. This is true because in their oral reports at Council meetings, the explorers do not have time to give complete reports, and also because permanent written records must be available.
2. A guide, or suggested form of note-taking, is to be provided each explorer. Dr. Charles Johnson and Dr. Lloyd Warner have agreed to prepare such a guide or outline.
3. In a few cases, it seems advisable for the explorers to concentrate their efforts on the study of one particular phase of their community.
4. The complete notes of each explorer are to be sent to the central office of the Council in Chicago, where they will be currently studied and analyzed.
5. The importance of observation by the explorers as contrasted with immediate reform was again stressed, and the explorers were counseled to feel that their most valuable contribution to the study is a clear and accurate picture of their given community. It is quite as important from the point of view of this particular study to find out that a school cannot be painted as to find out that it can.

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The Council originally intended each explorer group to change its base of operations on an average of once in three months, it being felt

that a saturation point would quickly be reached in any active program of observations. Variations in the methods of approaching the problem have indicated variations in the length of time spent in individual communities. In all but the following exceptions the explorers have returned to their previous stations:

Mr. and Mrs. Morgenroth have been transferred from Hermitage to Fitzhugh, in north Arkansas. This plantation community has been fortunate in having Mr. John Gammon, a Smith-Hughes worker, as principal of the school. Mr. Gammon's efforts in behalf of improved farming methods, cooperative marketing, and better living have been so highly successful during the past three years that it was thought advisable to study his methods and the extent of his accomplishments.

Miss Beatty and Miss Purifoy have been shifted from Arkansas to northern Louisiana. Miss Beatty is attached to the Central School in Caldwell Parish about four miles out of Columbia. This five-teacher brick school building with a shop in process of construction is in a Negro community claiming 90 per cent ownership of farm property. She will also study the Kelly School community ten miles south of Columbia. Miss Beatty is the only explorer working in a county which has no Jeanes supervisor.

Miss Purifoy is at the Egypt School, a four-teacher Rosenwald school built in 1923. The school is located about ten miles from Mangham in Richland Parish. About a third of the colored people in the community own their property.



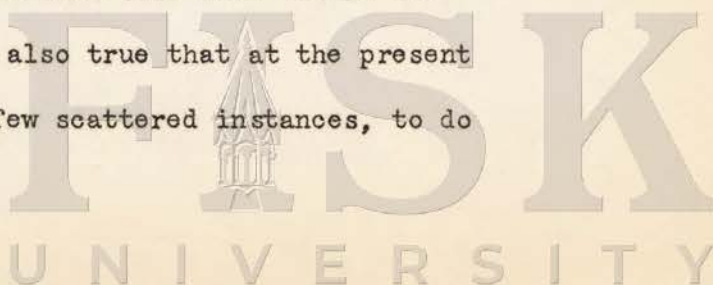


Mr. Lewis W. Jones, a graduate of Fisk University in the Department of Sociology, has been added to the group of explorers. The plan is for Mr. Jones to be located in an almost purely Negro community, where there are schools varying from the one- and two-teacher type to a large consolidated building. Mr. Jones will work under the immediate direction of Dr. Charles Johnson.

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In general discussion it was agreed that while it is necessary to continue the present form of exploration for some time to come, there already emerges need for intensive study of certain phases of the problems, and that in the not distant future active programs may properly be started in one or more items. Thus the exploration may, within the near future, include (a) general observation and study of specific problems, (b) experimentation with new procedures in certain schools, such as that conducted by Mrs. Cannon and Mrs. Duncan and in other local schools and normal institutes, (c) definite promotion of certain items or lines of action which, from time to time, are agreed upon as sound and important.

One item was constantly reiterated in the reports <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ discussions: the whole question of the school in rural communities is inextricably bound up with the economic conditions under which the people must live. It is almost axiomatic that if we are to accomplish anything of lasting improvement in the schools, we must at the same time work toward the improvement of living conditions. It is also true that at the present time the school is failing, except in a few scattered instances, to do



its very important part in helping to solve this problem. It was the consensus of the Council that while the school, properly organized, can and should aid materially in improving the economic condition of rural people, something much more drastic than this necessarily slow method is needed. A special committee, consisting of Mr. Embree, Dr. Alexander, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Simon, undertook to discuss the matter further with Dr. Frank Tannenbaum, who has been working upon the extensive material gathered under the direction of Dr. Johnson on southern rural economy. A special journal dealing with this question is enclosed.

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Although the primary business of this meeting of the Council was to hear the reports of the explorers of their three months' residence in these rural settings, it seemed wise to formulate on paper the thinking of the explorers and councilors on the problem which we have set ourselves. A statement was drawn up and after considerable discussion and revision it was approved as follows:

The Julius Rosenwald Fund, as a direct outgrowth of its rural school building program, is attempting to discover means by which it can cooperate with the authorities concerned and with other progressive agencies in contributing to the improvement of rural education and of rural life, especially in the South. To this end the Fund has created a Council on Rural Education.





1. Since the fields of activity are the South and education, the Council is composed of southern officials and educators and of a smaller number of persons interested in education generally. Thus the problems are being approached wholly from the point of view of those intimately concerned.

It has been thought desirable that such studies as are made should be carried on chiefly by persons who will be concerned with the application of any findings that are reached. In order to give perspective, however, persons devoted to education in other communities and especially interested in phases of education other than that in rural areas are included as members of the Council. Since the problems concern rural life as well as the conventional functions of the school, members of the Council were chosen with a view to the breadth of their interest and their statesmanship.

2. It is not expected that any conclusions will be reached in a short period of time. The Council is prepared to carry on the inquiry next year, and the year after, and for whatever time seems necessary.
3. The study must issue, whatever the methods of discovery, in an intimate picture of the rural South - social, political, economic, and educational. Much research has already been done in this very field and is available to the Council since its members have made or participated in the important studies.





The function of the workers who carry on the inquiry at particular points is to revivify the picture by personal living-through of the rural situations; the function of the Council is to correlate the total existing knowledge as illumined by these fresh experiences in typical settings.

4. If the question is asked how the mass of information collected is to be used, the answer is that the future alone can provide the insight necessary to indicate proper lines of action. It is the hope that working through the advice and planning of members of the Council and of workers in the field, the Council may ultimately make a substantial contribution to the formulation of plans and programs of improved education and community organization appropriate to the situation in the rural South. The projects to which the inquiry may lead may be both large and small and may include, for example, the preparation of new materials of instruction, experiments in the preparation of teachers, efforts toward the correlation or reorganization of the educational and other public agencies, and changes in community life and the rural economy.