

FELLOWSHIP OF URBANITES AND RURALITES

(Digest of Article by Rotarian Paul C. Rouzer, Keyser, West Virginia, U. S. A.)

We have all heard the slogan: "Get acquainted with your neighbor, you might like him." Let me paraphrase it as follows: "Get acquainted with the rural people, surrounding your city; you should understand them and they might like you better."

Country folks differ from city people in only two ways; where they live and what they do. They are the original producers of food stuff and we are as much dependent on them for raw materials, as they are dependent on us for processed and manufactured goods. Many rural people have more capital invested in their business than we city folks have in ours, and some have more deposited in our banks than we have. Without them we would not only fail, but starve.

These rural people buy from us and sell to us. Do we go out and meet them in their environment? You can't understand a man, unless you get well acquainted with him; where he lives and works. Mutual understanding comes from contacts and we must not allow these visits to be one-sided.

What are farmers' interests? Their farms, their churches, their schools, their farmers' and farm women's and boys' and girls' clubs, their fairs, their homecomings and reunions are their life.

There are a number of methods for making understanding contacts with farm people. An annual Rotary-Farmer

Banquet, at which farmers and Rotarians talk over their common problems. Good fellowship always pays big dividends, both in cash and friendship.

A merchant may talk before a farmers' organization, telling of his overhead expenses and explaining why his selling prices are so much higher than the price he pays to the producers. Business secrets (so called) are the cause of much unwarranted criticism and misunderstanding.

A city family visiting a farmer with the idea of making a small purchase of a farm commodity, coupled with a real interest in the farmer's mode of livelihood is good business and good Rotary. We trade with people we know and like. We buy from the merchant we like best. It's the human thing to do.

Many Rotary clubs loan money to 4-H club members to purchase seed potatoes, seed corn, pure bred pigs, calves or lambs. Thus a contact between a city family and a farm family is maintained throughout a crop season or the life of the animal and may be extended indefinitely. Frequent visits to see the growing crop or animal and the developing boy or girl make for growth of understanding.

Provincialism can't live long where there are telephones, hard surfaced roads, autos, newspapers and radios. We all have a common interest. Only our vocations differ. We all seek happiness, truth and the greatest good.

As a Wartime Activity

The war has made the farmer more indispensable than ever. He is called upon to produce more—and then more—of the vital foodstuffs that are needed at home and abroad. At the same time the war has brought new problems to the farmer—labor shortages, difficulties in obtaining certain equipment, etc. The city man, of course, has his problems too. The Rotary club which helps to bring about a closer working arrangement between the two groups is doing an effective wartime service.