



ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA
TEGUCIGALPA HONDURAS
MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

SEPTEMBER 1955.- It is gratifying to note the trend toward vocational training in agriculture throughout tropical America. New schools are appearing here and there, and in some of the older ones programs are being revised with a view to achieving a better balance between the practical and theoretical sides.

Many questions arise, many problems are faced. We are frequently asked to recount our experience in connection with some of these latter. Everyone realizes, for example, that selection of candidates for admission is a matter of prime importance. In some places this has to be almost wholly on the basis of an entrance examination. In many schools (as in our own) other factors can be given due importance.

When we are asked, "How do you choose your students?" we answer about as follows: In the first place, we do not have to hunt for them; we have many more applications each year than we need, as has been pointed out in previous News Letters. Some applicants are automatically eliminated because they are over age, or are not "native-born citizens of a Spanish-speaking tropical American republic." Hearing arguments over the radio as to whether or not an American born abroad can run for the presidency of the United States brings up the question: what do we mean by a "native-born citizen". As far as we are concerned, if a boy is born in Paris of Honduran parents, he is a Honduran; our only problem arises when, for example, a boy is born in Honduras of two French parents. We have adopted the rule that an applicant must have at least one Latin American parent to be eligible for admission. Regarding the age limit again, a boy cannot enter the school until he is 18 years old; many boys therefore have to be told that they must wait.

Applicants who look promising must satisfactorily pass two tests--the Examen de Capacidad, which, to all intents and purposes, is an intelligence test; and the physical examination, which must be made by a qualified physician approved by the school. The intelligence test is the most useful tool we utilize in choosing new students. If a boy passes this with a high grade, it is almost certain that he can do well here in classroom work if he tries. But does he always try? Occasionally a bright boy is urged by his parents to make application; he does, and he passes an excellent Examen de Capacidad. But he did not really want to come here and he does not study, so before long he fails in his classes and goes home. Or again--and this is a very common occurrence--a boy has good intelligence but he has never learned how to study. On the old basis that you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink, it is oftentimes very difficult for us to teach boys how to study. We get them too late.

In our earlier days we thought a good deal of importance could be placed on personal interviews with applicants, but we found that intelligent boys not really interested in agriculture could easily talk themselves into a scholarship, especially if papacito, who saw an opportunity to get his son a free education, was sitting close by. Wherever possible, we like to have recommendations from friends who know what we are looking for and know the applicant well. In this connection, it should be mentioned that our own graduates are some of our most useful friends, for they have been through the mill.

We do our best, in advance, to check up on a boy's character, which is not always easy at long range. Sometimes we get a lad who has been told by his father (this is one of the standing jokes in a certain Central American country): "Now, see here, son, if you keep on misbehaving and making trouble, either I'll send you to the military academy or 'I'll send you to Zamorano".