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All Out for Conservation

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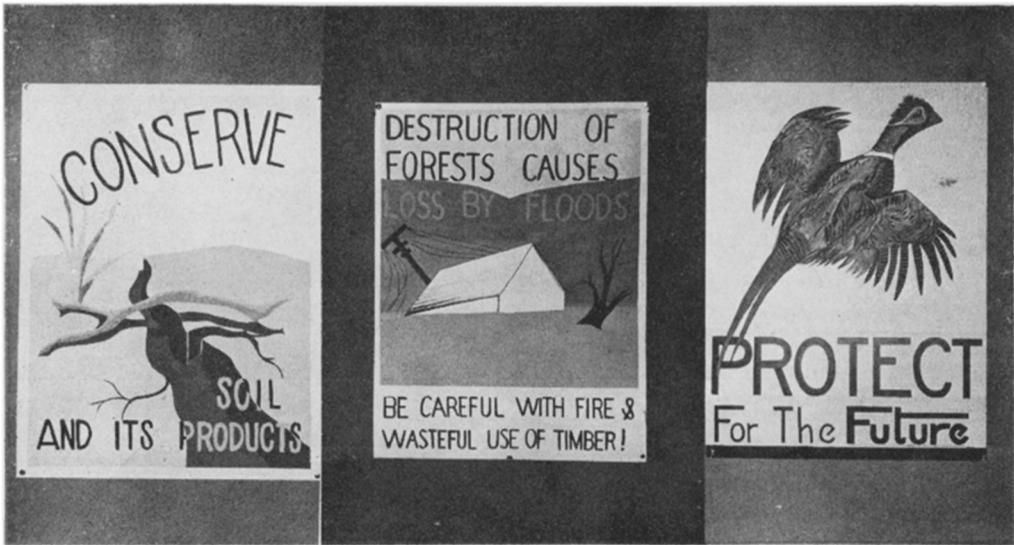
Consideration of conservation of natural resources belongs fittingly in the content of some courses in biology where, in the laboratory, a student can determine the water-holding capacities of different types of soils and can observe the relationship between roots and soil particles. In the biology classroom and on the biology field trip he can discuss and note the distribution and balance of plants and animals in nature; their adaptations and their habitats. What consideration can the student who has elected courses in art, English, speech or in modern dance give in the classroom or laboratory to conservation? The question is being answered on the campus of Elmira College, Elmira, New York, where the entire college community undertook a program on conservation of natural resources.

Dr. Lewis Eldred, President of Elmira College, appointed a committee of two members of the faculty and one member of the city of Elmira to study ways and means of making the student body and the citizens of the community more keenly conscious of the problem of con-

servation of natural resources. The program planned by this committee consisted of three public meetings and of student activities which were directed by members of the faculty. The program required for its success the cooperation of the administration, faculty, library staff, the students, the dietitian and the maintenance staff. Indeed the entire college was included in the program.

The art department sponsored two contests, one in poster work and one in sculpturing. The two weeks that are regularly devoted to poster making in a course in commercial design were used for the designing of posters on the subject of conservation. These posters were entered in a contest and exhibited in the College Library together with plaques which stressed conservation and which had been modeled and fired by students in a course in sculpturing.

Another artistic medium used in the interpretation of the subject of conservation by the students was that of the modern dance. Members of ORCHESTIS, the student modern dance club, originated the choreography and presented



Prize-winning posters.

the dance drama, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* under the direction of the Instructor in the Dance. The music was by Virgil Thompson and the recitative by Pare Lorentz. Records were used for the music and students in speech gave the readings. The barefoot dancers wore long-sleeved, princess-styled dresses of two tones of tan or of two tones of green. The only stage property was an artistic representation of a hand-plow. Like the documentary film entitled *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, the student dance drama of the same name told the story of the happenings to the land area that resulted in the Dust Bowl. Neither the instructor in the dance nor the members of ORCHESTIS had seen the famous film prior to the presentation of the dance exposition. The dance was presented without the documentary film and also in a program composed of a showing of the film followed immediately by the dance. The music, recitative parts and the story were the same in both the film and the dance.

“Poison”, “I Saw as in a Dream”, “Whiffenpoops”, “National Igno-

rance”, “River Valley Reconstruction” and “We—the Enemies” were the titles of the three prize-winning short stories and prize-winning essays that were chosen from the entries of two contests in creative writing. The Associate Professor of English directed these contests and the Librarian arranged a special reference collection of books and pamphlets on conservation for the students in English. The same books were in active use by students who prepared a debate and a panel discussion under the direction of a Professor of Speech. The question of the debate was: “Resolved that the granting of power to the Northwestern New York Water Supply Commission by the Legislature is to be condemned.” The panel discussion on “Conservation of natural resources is more important to humans for aesthetic reasons than economic” brought together interests from the departments of art, economics and speech.

The first of the three public meetings of the program was an address by Dr. E. Laurence Palmer, Professor of Nature and Science Education, Cornell University, on the subject “Conservation in

New Zealand". The address was illustrated with kodachrome transparencies which Dr. Palmer had taken when he visited New Zealand as Fulbright Exchange Professor. The talk and photographs indicated what has happened without extensive conservation practices in a short time in a country with few complex problems. Overgrazing by sheep was evident; but some conservation practices could be seen in the contour cultivation of the croplands. The subject of the second meeting was "Water". Two sound motion picture films entitled "Water for a Nation" and "Clean Waters" were shown. "Water for a Nation", which was ob-



"The Plow that Broke the Plains" produced by the Orchesis Club.



Prize-winning plaques.

tained from the United States Department of Agriculture, showed how the farmer depends upon water and how the people of the nation depend upon the farmer. "Clean Waters", a film in color, was made by the General Electric Corporation in cooperation with the New York State Conservation Department. The film deals with pollution of water and points out what must be done to check pollution. The third and last of the public meetings was a presenta-

tion of the documentary film, "The Plow that Broke the Plains" together with the students' original dance drama of the same name.

The activity that truly drew "All out for Conservation" was Tree-Planting Day, when 10,000 white pine seedlings were planted on sloping grasslands of the watershed of the Elmira Water Board. The Water Board supplied the mattocks and arranged for the delivery of the trees through the State Forester. The College girls contributed the energy required for the planting. One hundred fifty students were needed for the planting and two hundred and fifty volunteered. The College truck and private cars of faculty and town students furnished transportation. The dietitian provided box lunches for the student body. The time for Tree-Planting Day, a holiday from classes, was available because an extra day had been planned in the college calendar. The night before Tree-Planting Day the General Manager of the Elmira Water Board gave the students instructions for the planting at a special meeting on the campus. For the actual planting the students worked



Biology students conducting experiments in greenhouse plots as part of the all-college program on conservation of natural resources.

in threes. The first girl in a team of three made a hole through the sod and into the soil with a mattock; the second who carried a small carton of seedling

trees placed a tree in the hole; the third pressed the soil around the tree with her heel. It was not necessary to water the seedlings because the ground was very wet. Snakes out for their first sunning of the spring caused the only interruptions to the routine of planting. In spite of distractions, the 10,000 seedlings were planted in just over two hours, after which the students were free for the remainder of the day. Tree-Planting Day was a happy and practical completion of the program on conservation of natural resources. Educationally, it may well have greater value than the public meetings and classroom activities of the conservation program. The trees are a growing, visible evidence of the efforts to make the students and citizens more aware of the problems of conservation. Let us hope that the growing of the trees will be symbolic of the increasing awareness of the student and the citizen to the problem of conservation of natural resources.



Students receiving instructions from the State Forester preparatory to the planting of 10,000 white pine seedlings on the watershed of the Elmira Water Board.