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Home Economics of Tomorrow

By Anna E. Richardson

What a delightful task to let one’s imagination take a flight out beyond the facts of today into the land made up of the yet unrealized hopes, dreams and ambitions of those who are at work shaping the future of home economics education.

The only way in which one can successfully suggest future achievement is to check pretty closely the guide posts along the way we have come and to note the trends which point to lines of development. A number of these are outstanding.

Progress in the material things of life has been made at a very rapid rate, for man has been able to apply his knowledge to bend nature to his will in many marvelous ways, but the development of man in his human relations, in his thinking and in his reaction to his fellows, has gone much more slowly. However, progress is being made in understanding some of the more fundamental motives for man’s actions and we seem to be glimpsing the possibilities for enriching man’s personal life, as well as his family and community life, thru the wise application of the knowledge available in the fields of the social and biological sciences.

The home is touched closely by the two great forces of life,—the material, the result of all that man’s skill and ingenuity have invented, and the spiritual and social, which give to family life either its beauty and its balance or which bring to it disaster and failure from maladjustments within or without the home.

Home economics has long been offered as preparation for home making, and yet only within the past few years have we recognized our responsibility to train for other than the physical side of home making, which has to do with food, clothing and shelter. With this wider view of the function of home economics have come broadened college curricula and a challenge to study the less tangible aspects of home and family life. Only beginnings in many of these fields have yet been made.

A college curriculum which aims to give women education which will fit them to meet the many demands which life makes upon them today must offer training along at least three general lines—training for individual fitness, for social usefulness, and for vocational efficiency.

Home economics does not and dares not overlook the first two in its desire to stress the third, for only in so far as the individual is fit mentally and is physically and socially useful will she be efficient in a vocation.

The great majority of our women will always find their chief happiness and usefulness thru their home and family life and so the most important general as well as vocational objective for home economics training will continue to be training for home making. In addition, however, the demand for trained women in many occupations outside of the home is ever-increasing and no home economics department will be living up to its opportunities which does not offer vocational training in some of the many lines of activity for which home economics offers basic preparation.

The various types of occupations demanding college training in home economics may be grouped as follows:

(1) Teaching, both resident and extension. This field has been well covered for a number of years and yet there is an increasing demand for capable women with initiative and personality who are able to fill the many special teaching positions available.

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addition to the standards already discussed is the one that the home be economically sound. To be successful it must be run in the same spirit of successful business as the home is. The total of the expenditures in connection with the home puts homemaking in the front rank of big business. The way to increase efficiency of this business is to increase the efficiency of each individual home. As the home has ceased to be largely a productive enterprise, more leisure has come for the homemaker. This is as it should be, provided she knows how to make effective use of this leisure. The tendency at present is to use time freed by efficient methods of housekeeping, either to enrich the social and intellectual life of the family, or in wage-earning outside of the home. Either one requires more and more efficient methods of carrying on the work of the home. Therefore, one of the important demands which the future will make upon the homemaker will be to choose wisely those tasks which she will relinquish. What are the jobs which can be done better in the home than elsewhere? Which are retained only for traditional or sentimental reasons? What are the cooperative community enterprises which will free the home from unnecessary burdens and give equally satisfactory results? These are some of the questions which have face homemakers in the past and will prove even more pressing in the future.

These suggestions indicate some of the lines of development for a great Home Economics Division which does have as its aim the well rounded development of the individual student, and vocational efficiency in some chosen department. The departments so well represented here at Iowa State College are all working together to make their contribution to the general education of the all-round college woman. As we look into the vista of the years we see this beautiful building filled with fine, clear-eyed, upstanding women, who have learned "to apply their training to every day living," and young women who are eager also to share in the type of training which will fit them for their share in this dual responsibility of homemaking. There are class rooms where teaching based upon individual needs is being offered to interested students. There are laboratories where research is testing out theories and revealing new facts to guide us in our teaching and in our practice, and out beyond I see a state made up of more prosperous, happy homes in which there are fathers and mothers who have learned thru this college training to subordinate the material things of life to the finer duties of parenthood; who have learned to live healthy, happy, useful lives because they have mastered the newer ideals of life and, in return, have helped to educate the arts of life and time for the richer development of personal character.

Let us dedicate ourselves and this Home Economics Hall to the ideals of fine womanhood and manhood and strive thru teaching and thru practice, with ever widening vision, more nearly to achieve our standards.

THE PAST DECADE IN HOME ECONOMICS AT I. S. C.—(Continued from page nine)

always so generous in his appreciation of the development of home economics, talked often with the staff and was so careful in his search for the new leader. He felt the importance of "delivering not the tasks of might to weakness."

When Miss Anna E. Richardson came to us from the Federal Board for Vocational Education at Washington many new policies and plans were needing to be decided. Since then progress has been so rapid that the stories of the development would be irksome here. This progress was made only by careful thought, long, arduous effort, usually not without the help of new facts to guide us in our teaching and in our practice, which is far greater and stronger. To those who have worked in the Home Economics Division it seems sometimes that only the beginnings have been made and that "if you will climb to our castle's top I don't see where your eye can stop."

Fortunately we are to have had leaders of vision and devotion. Vision comes to those who have ideals and ideals are developed from training and experience.

Now there comes as a culmination, as it were, of the efforts of a decade a sight of the castle ahead, a beautiful new building "quite exceeding our longings," some one has said. Perhaps in another decade this building will be far from adequate. Home economics, because of its ideals, must grow. The history of the next ten years will, doubtless, be even greater.

Socrates has said, "The best man is he who most tries to perfect himself, and the happiest man is he who most knows himself and who knows that he is performing himself."

The Home Economics Division always be a happy Home Economics Division.