

Needs of California's Migrant Farmworkers: 1985

A Proposal to

California Rural Legal Assistance Corp.

by

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May 16, 1985

Conceptual Framework

We view the opportunity to participate in assessing the needs of California's migrant farmworker population with enthusiasm. At the same time, as an agency that is completely independent of California Rural Legal Assistance we feel that we must conduct the process with the kind of autonomy and scrupulous care that an auditor would use in examining the books of a business or agency. That is, we believe that we can supply both the necessary expertise to successfully perform the required task as well as the requisite objectivity to assure that our assessment will be independent of pre-judgement. It is a positive reflection on CRLA that such an independent determination should be actively sought.

Central Role of Field Investigation in Determining Migrant Farmworker Needs

There is a vast literature purporting to describe the past and present conditions of migrant farmworkers. However, a surprisingly small portion of the published material has been based on direct field investigation of actual living and working conditions. The nature of farm employment, particularly the great majority of the work that is seasonal in character, is such that rapid changes can and do occur in the composition of a particular local work force in a relatively short period of time. An important consequence of such rapid, and often unanticipated, changes may well be that programs designed for a labor force with a particular set of demographic characteristics may become quickly outmoded by changes in the work force itself.

To illustrate how such rapid changes in the nature of the labor force can lead to fundamentally different program requirements consider the case of citrus workers in Ventura County. In the mid-1970's this labor force was mainly organized through harvest and packinghouse associations of growers, mainly cooperatives such as the Coastal Growers Association. Labor contractors were rarely used. According to some sources, labor contractors had not been used in Ventura County citrus since the late 1930's. The largest two such associations in the mid-1970's were CGA, with about 1,000 harvest time workers, and S & F Growers, with about 400 harvest workers. By 1978 successful organizing drives by the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, had led to stunning victories in both associations. The victory at CGA was by a margin of 897 to 42. In reaction to these union balloting victories growers began to withdraw from the associations. Large scale growers such as Gus Ferro, with about 1,000 acres of lemons, turned to labor contractors after leaving CGA. By early 1981 S & F Growers voted to dissolve and go out of business as a result of losing an actual majority of its former acreage.

Changes in the composition of the Ventura County citrus labor force are directly traced to the switch to labor contractors. Despite the relatively constant acreage

of citrus the number of Ventura County labor camps decreased from 22 in 1963 to only 5 by 1981. Families with roots in community institutions such as schools and churches have been largely replaced with single, young, male workers. Most frequently, these very young workers are recruited at the border. At the same time workers are, in most cases, no longer transported into the orchards in buses clearly labelled with the employer's name. Today, most workers come to the job in cars, presumably less obvious targets for INS agents. According to one field investigation among such workers, the CGA crews have an average age of 38.2 years, have worked an average of 8.9 years in the citrus harvest, and are nearly all legal residents of the U.S. In contrast, the crews of labor contractors have an average age in the range of 23.8 years to 28.6 years, have worked between 2.5 and 4.0 years in the citrus harvest and about three-quarters are undocumented workers.

It should be clear that the kinds of changes that have occurred in the labor force of the Ventura County citrus industry lead to important shifts in the kinds of services needed to serve that labor force. Significant reductions in such services as child care, domestic relations and possibly landlord-tenant relations would be expected. Correspondingly, there would likely be significant increases expected in demands for services connected with INS problems and Workers Comp related issues.

The changes in labor force composition described above occurred in about four years. That means that assumptions based on data gathered at the outset of the period were no longer valid by the end of it. It should be obvious that published data suffers from the handicap that it can be so quickly outdated in this field. Therefore, field interviews are essential to obtaining an accurate and up-to-the minute determination of current conditions.

This Project

We propose to conduct field interviews of key personnel who are affiliated with private or public agencies having responsibilities to serve the needs of migrant farmworkers. In addition, we plan to interview certain other persons with special knowledge of current conditions. The latter include attorneys in the fields of immigration law and workers comp law.

Interviews would be conducted in the counties served by five CRLA field offices: Coachella, El Centro, Fresno, Oxnard and Salinas. The personnel would cover the fields of legal services, health, housing, education, employment and consumer fraud.

Since agriculture is the primary employer of the workers of interest to us in this project it will be necessary to examine current conditions and trends in the fruit and vegetable industries from the standpoint of employment. For example, there has been a significant reduction in lettuce plantings in Imperial County over the past several years. This, in turn, has resulted in a corresponding reduction in demand for workers in the Imperial Valley lettuce industry. Field interviews with staff of the California Crop and Livestock Reporting Service as well as County

Agricultural Commissioners would be required. Interviews would also be conducted with trade association and other industry sources.

Field interviews would be supplemented with recent demographic data and material from standard published sources, e.g., EDD farm labor data. In this context, it is of some significance that the 1980 Census of Population showed that six of the ten metropolitan areas of the U.S. with the highest proportion of the population supported by general assistance payments were in California - and all six are in the Central Valley. The leading metropolitan area in terms of fraction of the residents receiving welfare was found to be Visalia.

Conditions and Limitations

This Project would commence at a time mutually agreed upon by Don Villarejo and a suitable designated representative of CRLA. A final report would be submitted no later than eight weeks after commencement on the mutually agreed upon date. CRLA field personnel would assist in setting up field interviews in the areas served by the Coachella, El Centro, Fresno, Oxnard and Salinas field offices. Where necessary, CRLA would provide a Spanish-English interpreter. Don Villarejo would provide all materials and equipment and would have sole responsibility for establishing a suitable travel schedule and making all field interview appointments. Tape recordings and written transcripts of notes of all field interviews as well as all notes produced in the course of this project shall remain the property of the California Institute for Rural Studies and shall become part of the public collection of the CIRS library.

The fee for this Project is \$6,000. plus full reimbursement for all necessary travel expenses. Travel reimbursements shall be only for travel, overnight accommodations and meals under guidelines in effect for State of California employees. The final report will be prepared by CIRS and furnished to CRLA and will include an executive summary, main text with chapters on employment, housing, legal services, immigration, education, consumer fraud, health services and agricultural trends, respectively. In addition, the report will have chapters on each of the five regions served by the five aforementioned field offices with a summary of findings of special interest to those offices. Finally, a complete list of sources and field interviews will form a reference bibliography. Copies of field interview tapes and written transcripts of notes will be furnished to CRLA. Final payment under the proposed terms of this Project would be due within 30 days upon completion of the final report.

Significant Related Experience

Co-author, with Paul Barnett and others, of Labor's Dwindling Harvest: The Impact of Mechanization on California Fruit and Vegetable Workers. This report, published in 1978, was completed by CIRS under contract with the U.S. Department of Labor. CIRS maintains a small research library that includes a special collection on Farmworkers.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Don Villarejo

Born: January 17, 1937. Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Married to Merna Villarejo, Associate Professor of Biochemistry & Biophysics,
University of California, Davis

Children: Amy, 21 and Susan, 17

Home address: 2530 Whittier Dr., Davis, CA 95616

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Education:

B.S., Physics, The University of Chicago, 1959

M.S., Physics, The University of Chicago, 1960

Ph.D., Physics, The University of Chicago, 1968

Research Assistant, Department of Physics,

The University of Chicago, 1960-62; 1966-67

California Research Foundation Fellow, 1962-63

Gulf Research and Development Fellow, 1964-66

Elected to Sigma Xi scientific honorary society, 1961

Positions held:

Research Associate, Department of Physics, The University of Chicago, 1967-68

Assistant Professor, Department of Physics,

University of California, Los Angeles, 1968-75

Visiting Lecturer (50%), Department of Physics,

University of California, Davis, September 1975 - March 1984

Executive Director (50%), California Institute for Rural Studies

January 1978 - March 1984;

on leave, April 1984 - December 1984;

(100%) January 1985 - Present

Scientific Publications:

1. Report No. AFCRL 64-106, Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories, Office of Aerospace Research, United States Air Force, Bedford, MA (1964)
 - a. "Vacuum Ultra-Violet Light Sources," with F. Elder and M. Inghram.
 - b. "Photoionization Experiments Using Photoelectron Energy Spectrum Information," with M. Inghram.
2. "Electron Affinity of Oxygen," J. Chem. Phys. 43, 758 (1965), with F. Elder and M. Inghram.
3. "Spectroscopic Study of the Early Afterglow in Helium: Visible Bands and Hopfield Continuum," J. Opt. Soc. Amer. 56, 1574 (1966), with R. Herm and M. Inghram.
4. "Measurement of Threshold Electrons in the Photoionization of Ar, Kr and Xe," J. Chem. Phys. 46, 4995 (1967), with R. Herm and M. Inghram.
5. "Measurement of Threshold Electrons in the Photoionization of Small Molecules," Bull. Amer. Phys. Soc. 13, 39 (1968), Abstract BF 14, with R. Stockbauer and M. Inghram.

6. "Photoionization of CO₂ and the Franck-Condon Principle for Polyatomic Molecules," J. Chem. Phys. 48, 3342 (1968), with R. Stockbauer and M. Inghram.
7. "Vibration-Rotation Interaction Effects in Calculated Franck-Condon Factors for the Ionization of H₂," Bull. Amer. Phys. Soc. 13, 424 (1968), Abstract DD8, with M. Inghram.
8. "Large Vibration-Rotation Interaction Effects in Calculated Franck-Condon Factors," Chem. Phys. Letters 2, 11 (1968), with R. Stockbauer and M. Inghram.
9. "Measurement of Threshold Electrons in the Photoionization of H₂ and D₂," J. Chem. Phys. 48, 4014 (1968).
10. "Vibration-Rotation Interaction Effects in Calculated Franck-Condon Factors. I. The Ionization of H₂ and D₂," J. Chem. Phys. 49, 2523 (1968).
11. "Vibration-Rotation Interaction Effects in Calculated Franck-Condon Factors. II. Hydrogen Lyman and Fulcher Bands," J. Chem. Phys. 50, 1754 (1969), with R. Stockbauer and M. Inghram.
12. "Measurement of Threshold Electrons in the Photoionization of Methane," J. Chem. Phys. 50, 4599 (1969), with R. Stockbauer and M. Inghram.
13. "Can Physics Survive the Modern Student?" Bull. Amer. Phys. Soc. 17, 1187 (1972), Invited Paper of the Forum on Physics and Society.

Member, American Physical Society, 1960 - Present

Recent publications:

Getting Bigger: Large Scale Farming in California, California Institute for Rural Studies, Davis, CA, March 1980.

Research for Action: A Guidebook to Public Records Investigation, California Institute for Rural Studies, Davis, CA, September 1980.

New Lands for Agriculture: The California State Water Project, California Institute for Rural Studies, Davis, CA, December 1981.

Relevant experience:

Trained community workers & attorneys of California Rural Legal Assistance in techniques of public records investigation, 1980.

Trained all attorneys and field investigative staff of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board in techniques of public records investigation, 1981.

Consultant, ALRB Investigation of Sun Harvest, Inc., 1982.

Consultant, ALRB Investigation of Tex-Cal Land Co., Inc., 1983.

Consultant, California Assembly Office of Research investigation of landowners and farm operators in San Luis Drain area of Westlands Water District, 1985.

Member, Western Growers Association

Member, Rural Economic Alternatives Project Committee, Stockton, CA

Member, Concilio of Yolo County, Woodland, CA