

REPORT OF THE  
SENATE FACT FINDING COMMITTEE  
ON LABOR AND WELFARE

**CALIFORNIA'S FARM LABOR PROBLEMS**

**PART II**

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ings and it was therefore necessary to obtain a complete and accurate record of each employee's earnings. While many industrial and commercial employers were already keeping the necessary records, it was believed that farmers would find this task particularly burdensome."<sup>10</sup>

"The farmer, the casual, and the domestic were not taxed in this bill because we knew that the House and Senate would not keep it in the bill."<sup>11</sup>

In the United States in 1960, it was estimated that 2,100,000 farm and farm-product-processing employees were not covered by unemployment insurance. This number represents about 15 percent of the wage and salary workers in the country who were not covered by U.I. and constitutes the third largest group of noncovered employees (see Figure 2). Farm workers in California are estimated, in Figure 3, to comprise the second largest noncovered employee group, numbering 290,000, approximately one-quarter of all noncovered workers in the State.

#### PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Farm employees, statewide and nationally, represent not only a significant proportion of all workers exempted from the protection of unemployment insurance, but also comprise a group which experiences a very high rate of unemployment and underemployment. According to the United States Department of Labor, approximately 300,000 of this country's hired farm workers were out of work for more than 15 weeks during 1960 and that "... the rate and duration of unemployment were greater for farm workers than for wage and salary workers in nonagricultural industries."<sup>12</sup>

FIGURE 3

Unemployment Insurance Coverage of Wage and Salary Workers, California, 1961<sup>1</sup>

	Number not covered	Percent not covered
State and local government.....	632,000	57.9%
Farm workers.....	290,000	28.6
Domestic service.....	116,000	10.6
Nonprofit.....	53,000	4.9
Total not covered.....	1,091,000	100%
Total covered.....	3,943,000	---

<sup>1</sup> Based on average annual employment estimates.  
SOURCE: California Department of Employment.

<sup>10</sup> Greenfield, Margaret, *Unemployment Insurance for Farm Workers*, University of California, Bureau of Public Administration, 1958 Legislative Problems: No. 8, Berkeley, May, 1958, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, April 17, 1935, 79: 5902-03.

<sup>12</sup> Goldberg, Hon. Arthur J., Secretary of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor, in testimony to the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Hearings on S. 1189*, Vol. 2, Washington, D. C., 1962, p. 659.

There is no comparable up-to-date data revealing the unemployment rate of California agricultural employees. The most recent study of the subject was made in 1950-51 by the State Department of Employment.<sup>13</sup> This report estimated that unemployment among both seasonal and permanent hired farm workers was extremely high. Eighty-eight percent of all seasonal workers reported some periods of seeking work unsuccessfully during the 12-month period studied. The average unemployment period was 16 weeks, and nearly 70 percent of the permanent hired workers reported being unemployed for an average period of 12 weeks.

Several factors suggest that unemployment among agricultural employees is much more severe and poses many more problems currently in California than in most other parts of the country.

The ratio of hired farm workers to family labor in this State is twice that of the nation's (see Figure 37, p. 50, Part I).

The bulk of the demand for hired farm labor in California is generated by short-term harvesting activities rather than the relatively more stable cultural operations (see Figure 38 (A), p. 51, Part I).

Larger farms and greater crop specialization have resulted in extraordinary demands for hired seasonal farm labor (see Figure 39, p. 52, and p. 13, Part I).

These major factors, together with other less direct causes, have created a continuing need in California for a large, mobile force of seasonal farm wage-workers. Data and opinion collected and analyzed by the committee concerning the workers' wages (both annual earnings and hourly, daily, and monthly rates of pay), and the operation of the California farm labor market strongly indicates the lack of economic protection for these workers from the certain privations caused by the equally predictable cycles of involuntary unemployment.

#### SOLUTIONS TO UNEMPLOYMENT

The only alternatives open to the seasonal agricultural employee and his family when he cannot obtain employment are to seek work in other nearby industries, live off his savings, migrate to an area where the supply of and demand for farm labor are more in his favor, or apply for public welfare benefits.

The lack of education and vocational skills of most of these workers initially limits their employment potential in other industries (see p. 76 *et seq.*, Part I). They are, quite literally, among the "last to be hired, the first to be fired." Secondly, in many areas of California there is only one industry—that of agriculture. Where other industries exist, they are generally farm-oriented (e.g., food and fiber processing and shipping, container manufacturing) and ex-

<sup>13</sup> *Estimated Costs of Covering Agricultural Employment Under the California Unemployment Insurance Act*, Research and Statistics Section, California Department of Employment, mimeographed, Report 421 No. 25, Sacramento, April 20, 1953.

## CHAPTER III

# MEDICAL CARE

One of the three basic problems facing the individuals and families who earn their livelihood as seasonal hired farm workers is that of securing minimally adequate medical care. The causal relationship of the health needs of this group to the two other basic problems—economic insecurity and inadequate housing—is direct and definitive. And as in the latter two areas, even long-term recognition of the health problem has not lead to significant remediation.

"... in the review of the impressive volume of reports which have appeared in different places on this health subject over the last many years, we were impressed with the similarity and consistency of the findings of conditions and recommendations which had been noted. Frankly we were amazed and puzzled by the almost consistent apparent lack, in most areas, of action taken on the strikingly similar recommendations to improve the conditions." (Jessup, R. Bruce, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, School of Medicine, Stanford University, representing the Task Force on Health Services for Seasonal Agricultural Workers, California Department of Public Health, p. 174, Dec. 16, 1960.)

"... we look at the problem (of the health of seasonal farm workers and their families) as evidence of about a half-century lag in the application of existing knowledge to a sizeable population. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

Both economic instability and poor housing in themselves create poor health conditions and deter adequate medical care for seasonal farm workers. Additional factors which have contributed to the health problems of this group over the years are:

1. **Cultural factors.** The lack of knowledge of health and disease due to cultural background and limited education affect the utilization of health and medical facilities. While much is known about these particular barriers to good health, more must be learned in order to do an effective job of handling the problems they present.

2. **Early diagnosis and treatment.** Medical care is usually sought by farm workers only in emergency

situations. Less severe ailments, which can have damaging consequences, are more or less ignored. Often when emergency care is rendered, adequate followup is not possible.

3. **Availability and accessibility of facilities.** The location of hospitals, doctors' offices, county health departments, and other health and medical facilities are generally distant from the areas where seasonal farm employees work and live. There has been little decentralization of these services. Financial and residential requirements make county public facilities unavailable to many of those who need them most. The time of day at which most health services are offered seldom coincide with the time farm families can use them. Public transportation is virtually nonexistent in outlying rural areas, and usually the use of a family's car for such trips entails a loss of work.

4. **Cost of medical care.** Seasonal farm workers rarely carry health or accident insurance and must, therefore, meet the entire expense of each separate treatment as well as the costs of transportation and medicine.

5. **Lack of co-ordination of existing services.** Many of the people in the seasonal farm labor force are known to a variety of public and private agencies in the community and represent "multiproblem" families. There is, however, a lack of consistent, co-ordinated planning by these agencies which results both in service gaps and in unnecessary duplication of effort. <sup>25</sup>

The California Health Survey, conducted by the State Department of Public Health in 1954-55, showed that, "... agricultural workers have low levels of hospital admissions and medically attended conditions as well as higher levels of infective and parasitic diseases, circulatory diseases, and accidents. Their stays in hospitals are long, both as a group and per admission. The unfavorable immunization status of farm workers' children in regard to smallpox, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and poliomyelitis was also demonstrated." <sup>26</sup>

Complicating the prompt resolutions of these problems has been the serious state of the overall health and medical care situation in many rural areas.

<sup>24</sup> Shafer, James K., M.D., Chief, Division of General Health Services, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, in speech to the Conference on Families Who Move With the Crops, San Jose, California, October 24, 1960, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Health Conditions and Services for Domestic Agricultural Workers and Their Families in California*, California State Department of Public Health, Berkeley, Oct. 1960; and *Agricultural Labor in the San Joaquin Valley*, Final Report and Recommendations of the Governor's Committee to Survey the Agricultural Labor Resources of the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento, March 1951, pp. 46 and 226 et seq.

<sup>26</sup> *California Health*, Vol. 18, No. 15, February 1, 1961, p. 116.

California code today, if you stick to it strictly, the square footages for each human being that is going to live in that house, you can't come out with housing for under \$5,000 a unit. I require, for instance, 20 grape pickers for 1 month when I harvest my table grapes. In addition to that I have five year-round employees that I house. If I had to put 20 families to pick those grapes, if I had to build 20 units at \$5,000 a unit, that is \$100,000 capitalization on a 40-acre vineyard. How crazy can you get? No bank would loan you that." (Yost, Leland J., farmer and General Manager, Coachella Valley Farmers' Association, Riverside County, p. 34, Jan. 15, 1960.)

"We have found it impossible to tie up a considerable amount of capital in the construction of new homes and still maintain normal ranch operations. . . . I have talked with prefabricated housing men in the Bay Area and also in Los Angeles and we haven't come up with anything yet. My own feeling is that we can't do anything less than \$5,000. We have some big families and you are going to have to have room." (Bartindale, Roger E., Manager, Industrial Relations and Personnel, Coit Ranch, Inc., Fresno County, pp. 388 and 396, Jan. 28, 1960.)

2. The farm employer's difficulty in maintaining existing housing in terms both of cost and of the misuse of it by some domestic workers:

"About housing, I'd like to say that when housing is given, people don't take as good care of it as when it belongs to them or they have some responsibility in keeping it up. There's a camp behind where I live and the cabins get very cold in winter. I suggested to one person that she put some linoleum down on the floor to keep the cold air from coming in the cracks. She replied, 'It (the cabin) doesn't belong to me.' . . .

"It's true that some people don't know how to take care of good housing when they have it. When people have lived as if they were camping out for generations, they don't change being told a few times." (Hernandez, Mrs. Frances, farm laborer and housewife, Kings County, p. 7, Dec. 15, 1960.)

3. The lack of seasonal labor because of the lack of housing:

"Adequate housing, in camps properly equipped for serving the number of persons so housed, and within financial limits of the income of migrant farm families, is basic to maintaining the essential labor supply, county by county." (Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 360, Jan. 28, 1960.)

"Now, one of the real problems in attracting or trying to attract migratory skilled domestic labor is housing. The lack of family-type housing and accommodations has declined rapidly in the State of California since World War II. Most of the housing is being converted to either single men's housing or torn down and not kept up, and this discourages the families that used to come to California and harvest the crops." (Tieburg, Albert B., Chief, Division of Public Employment Offices and Benefit Payments, California Department of Employment, p. 214, Nov. 17, 1959.)

### FARM EMPLOYEE'S PROBLEMS

Perhaps the chief cause of housing problems for seasonal farm workers is their inability to afford even minimal rental fees or purchase prices.

"Housing for transient workers and their families is completely substandard. When they can get a job, they'll take almost any kind of housing because they know there's probably nothing else available to them. Rents are too high that people can't afford a place of their own . . . ." (Esparza, Andrew, farm laborer, Santa Clara County, p. 21, Dec. 15, 1960.)

"Let us recognize the fact that even if farm workers' wages are increased to a level sufficient to again build up a dependable domestic supply, the level of agricultural wages will still be among those received by the Nation's so-called low-income group. This means only one thing for housing; namely, conventional methods for financing adequate housing for farm labor families are out of the question." (Simcich, Walter, Research Economist, California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, presenting prepared statement by C. J. Haggerty, Secretary-Treasurer, p. 484, Jan. 28, 1960.)

In many areas, on the other hand, housing for families simply does not exist.

"We have no housing there (Ventura County) for domestic workers." (Guajardo, Rachel, Field Representative, United Packinghouse Workers of America, AFL-CIO, Local No. 78, Ventura County, p. 298, Jan. 27, 1960.)

"Present housing facilities for the domestic worker with families are severely restricted. In many cases the housing shortage forces the domestic farm worker to quit his employment and move on in search of housing." (Huerta, Mrs. Dolores C., representing the Community Service Organi-

zation, San Joaquin County, p. 158, Dec. 15, 1960.)

"Another problem area . . . is the lack of housing or shelter facilities for migratory workers." (Tieburg, *op. cit.*, p. 221, Nov. 17, 1959.)

Housing for migrants and their families is in short supply for several reasons. The great urge of the migrant to settle down often leads to permanent occupancy of facilities which were initially intended for seasonal, nonlocal workers.

"Less housing, inadequate as it is, is available to the migrant worker, because it has already been taken by the family who 'stays over' or the industrial worker. When a fairly adequate house is available to a family beyond the harvest season, this is often the enticement for them to try to stay over, and become a permanent resident." (Esparza, *op. cit.*, p. 21, Dec. 15, 1960.)

Farm employers, with limited capital to invest, have generally put a much greater emphasis on providing accommodations for single persons rather than building facilities for families.

"Contributing to the problem is the fact that individual farmers often consider the costs of family housing for seasonal workers to be excessive in relation to the brief period of need. Community undertakings, although the subject of much consideration, have resulted in little material accomplishment. What new facilities have been provided in recent years have been principally to accommodate single workers." (Tieburg, *op. cit.*, prepared material submitted, Nov. 17, 1960, see p. 221.)

Often when labor camps do not meet the prescribed standards, remodeling costs are prohibitive and they are torn down rather than repaired.

"I think it's right that the camps should come down, but something nice and decent should go up in its place. Three big camps in Corcoran came down this year. I know of people who are living worse than before because there isn't any place for them to live or they don't have the money to live in a nice place. I know of one family that can't even afford to have their electricity or gas connected; they cook over a kerosene stove and see by a kerosene light. There are many shacks which only have a screen door; in the winter they cover up the screen with a blanket or a piece of plastic." (Hernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 7, Dec. 16, 1960.)

And even when family housing facilities exist, they are often of substandard quality.

"My family and another family lived in a storage barn provided by the farmer. It was a building about 30 feet x 60 feet. It housed 6 adults and 17 kids; all in the same room. We'd rig up a blanket for privacy." (Burgess, Leroy, farm worker, Kern County, p. 17, Dec. 15, 1960.)

"I am concerned particularly in our area with the conditions in which a lot of these people live in the towns, within city limits, or on the fringe areas of towns. They are far worse than a lot of people live in in so-called agricultural cases." (Bergon, Frank, diversified grower, Madera County, p. 348, Jan. 28, 1960.)

"Twenty-eight counties, about half in the State, do not have a building code, and in those that do there is, except in rare cases, an agricultural exemption." (Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 254, Nov. 17, 1959.)

"Housing for families has always been a problem; cabins provided have always been terribly small and inadequate, especially for a sizeable family." (Esparza, *op. cit.*, p. 21, Dec. 15, 1960.)

The housing problems of the single men are especially difficult.

"Where are the single transient farm workers to be housed during the seasonal farm work? We know that there has been a revolution in the method of recruiting farm workers in the lower San Joaquin Valley since World War II. No longer do most of the seasonal laborers live on the vast acreages which are now in production. For the most part, farm laborers are recruited in the centers of population and transported to and from the farming operations by labor contractors in huge buses. It is true that some of the older ranch operations have family housing and bunkhouses for single men, but on the newer large farms, we find that only the year-round help lives on the premises; the harvesters of the crops come from the cities in buses and return there after the day's work is done. Not all of these city dwellers who work on the farms are single men, but many of them are. They are the single man who follows the harvests up and down California—men who have no 'roots' in our cities.

"In our particular area, we find that these single men congregate on our small skidrow district to catch labor buses for the fields during the early morning hours. We find that many of them now sleep in the 'jungles' in the Kern River bottom adjacent to our city. . . . The 'aristocrats,' who have a cheap auto, camp in their jalopies along highways, only to be moved on by law enforcement officers. Some try to make public parks a sleeping place.

"These lonely transient men, the ones who are willing to work and stay reasonably sober, are dumped out of labor buses in the city at night. They will go to a cheap restaurant for the evening meal, and after the repast, what will they do? What type of recreation is offered to the single men who frequent our skidrow? He can go to a bar and spend his money on drink. He can walk the streets—stand in hallways. He can go to his poor room (if he has one) and read a newspaper under a weak lamp. Usually cheap hotels have little or no lobbies for tenants to sit and read or visit with other roomers. He can go to a honkey-tonk type sex movie on skidrow, or if he likes to play pool, he can spend some time in a smoky pool hall so long as he keeps playing and spending his money. Skidrow missions will let him in if he listens to religious sermons. Some cities allow transient workers to spend some time in seats of bus stations, but they are soon moved on by police. In the winter time, or in wet weather, he cannot sit on park benches in our city parks. In his usual nondescript clothing, our single skidrow man would look and feel out of place in a public library. He can buy a schooner of beer and watch a 15 minute T.V. show in a bar, but unless he keeps a drink in front of him, he will soon be unwelcome. So, unless he does one of the above-mentioned past-times, he must go back to his room, if he has one, or find himself a make-shift place to sleep for the night."

(Gunn, Lee, City Manager, Bakersfield, Kern County, pp. 32-3, transcript of hearing by this committee on "Problems of the Single Skidrow Transient," Stockton, California, Dec. 5, 1960.)

### SOLUTIONS

A variety of solutions have been offered to meet the mutual problems of farm worker and farm employer in providing and securing more adequate housing. Recommendations were made that emphasis should be placed on governmental loans, insured loans, and grant programs to assist the workers in purchasing their own homes (Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 464, Jan. 28, 1960; Simcich, *op. cit.*, pp. 483-4, Jan. 28, 1960). Suggestions have been made that the Federal Government assist individual farm employers or farm labor associations by special tax relief and loan programs to

finance employee housing for families (Bartindale, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-9, Jan. 28, 1960; Yost, *op. cit.*, p. 34, Jan. 15, 1960; Wyckoff, *op. cit.*, p. 273, Dec. 16, 1960). Assistance to local housing authorities and other civic groups or to grower co-operatives in financing seasonal rental facilities has been propounded (Still, *op. cit.*, p. 106, Jan. 15, 1960). And the great advantages that group action has over individual attempts have been stressed (Bergon, *op. cit.*, p. 348, Jan. 28, 1960).

It would seem particularly important that replacements for substandard housing facilities which are destroyed be provided because, otherwise, the people using such housing often end up in even worse living quarters. Studies must immediately be undertaken at both the State and national level to determine the most appropriate and feasible methods to provide substitute housing.

The continued use of grossly defective housing cannot be tolerated or condoned. However, conscious and pragmatic efforts must be made in drafting and administering seasonal employee housing standards of a minimum nature so that the already deficient supply of such facilities is not compounded by forcing the closure of usable quarters or by driving the costs of new facilities to a point beyond the farmer's ability and willingness to pay. The standards currently used, therefore, must be re-evaluated to insure an equitable balancing of the needs of both farm employer and farm employee.

All of these recommended solutions appear to be of value. However, just as one of the principal causes of quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate housing for the seasonally hired farm worker is his lack of income, the most important solution to poor housing is that of increasing the worker's ability to buy or rent shelter. The committee has already discussed the means by which this can be accomplished (page 151 *et seq.*, Part I). These include mechanization to increase worker productivity and, thereby, facilitate payment of higher wages; crop diversification to flatten labor demand peaks and extend work periods; and pooling of workers in order to maximize employment opportunity. The success of whatever else is done to alleviate the problems of insufficient and low quality housing will depend largely upon accomplishments in increasing the value of the worker's labor and the number of days he can work. In essence, other solutions are merely attacking the symptoms of the problem and not the cause of the problem itself.

## CHAPTER VI

# EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WELFARE

For years farmers and agricultural representatives have voiced their belief that many persons who work seasonally on California farms are not a qualified part of the farm labor force. Additionally, it is maintained, many seasonal workers are destitute, in poor physical and mental health, and are victims of other social and economic ills *not* because they work seasonally on farms, but rather it is *due to* these problems that they enter the fringe of the farm labor force.

"... (T)hey actually are not a part of a qualified labor force. They are unfortunate people who, for one reason or another, have become derelicts in the scheme of things. They come from all walks of life and it is time that we, as a great State and Nation, recognize them for what they are, a social welfare problem that is everyone's responsibility, not just the farmers who had little or nothing to do with creating their problem. Industry, where they came from will not hire them at any price. Probably many of these people could be rehabilitated and made useful citizens again." (Hayes, Edward F., Manager, Imperial Valley Farmers' Association, p. 145, Dec. 15, 1960.)

"Farmers did not create the social problems associated with some of the present seasonal labor supply. But by using this labor and having some of its living levels and behavior associated with farming, we now have many people seriously working to impose regulations and restrictions to stop what they determine to be exploitation of the farm labor force." (Heringer, *op. cit.*, p. 114, Nov. 16, 1959.)

"The condition of this group of workers, by no stretch of the imagination, can be laid at the doorstep of agriculture. These people are social problems and rightly belong to the general public to care for. They should be removed from the work force, rehabilitated, and permitted to return to society at whatever level their abilities permit. It is about time government, industry, and society in general assumed their rightful responsibility in assisting this portion of our population, instead of turning their respective backs and saying, 'Let the farmer take care of them.'" (Bergon, *op. cit.*, p. 339, Jan. 28, 1960.)

That these contentions seem to be borne out by the facts in many instances, however, does not relieve

farmers as employers from their responsibilities of meeting minimum standards in:

- "1. Transportation of farm workers.
- "2. Farm safety.
- "3. Field sanitation in food harvest.
- "4. Housing for farm workers.
- "5. Working conditions and wages and hours for women and minors.
- "6. Use of domestic labor if employers use the United States Employment Service for imported labor.
- "7. Minimum earnings per hour of employment." <sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the complex of social and economic problems facing many people who are employed as seasonal farm help are not the farmer's alone to help mitigate. The seasonal farm worker himself has the greatest responsibility in efforts to better his life. The general community, also, has a duty in this regard. Two of the chief means of accomplishing this end are public welfare, to meet the economic and social problems today, and education, to improve the prospects for tomorrow.

### ADULT EDUCATION

The level of formal educational achievement of the adult seasonal farm worker is abysmally low. Data from a survey conducted in Imperial, Kern, Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Merced, and Santa Clara Counties of 200 migrant farm worker families shows that 33 of 305 adults—10.8 percent—had no formal education. Of those who did attend school, 61 had no more than three years of school—22.4 percent; 91 had four through six years—33.5 percent; 82 had seven through nine years—30.1 percent; and 38 had 10 or more years—14 percent (see Still, *op. cit.*, p. 87 *et seq.*, Jan. 15, 1960).

California's entire adult (25 years and over) population had a much higher level of educational accomplishment. Only 5.7 percent had, in 1960, less than five years of schooling, 9.0 percent completed five through seven years, and 13.7 percent had a full eight years of formal education before dropping out. Of the total of 48.5 percent of the entire adult population who had some high school, 28.3 percent completed

<sup>64</sup> Resolutions Adopted at the 13d Annual Meeting of the California Farm Bureau Federation, November 9, 1961, p. 21.

four years. And 23.2 percent of the total population had at least one year of college.<sup>55</sup>

Another study, *A Preliminary Report on a Study of Farm Laborers in Fresno County*, showed that 50 percent of the fathers of families interviewed had less than seven years of formal education. The survey also showed that one-third of the group interviewed had no skills other than farm work.<sup>56</sup>

A third study, again in Fresno County, gave the following summary as to the skills of agricultural workers in a small rural village.

"These people are, in general, unskilled workers, engaged in agricultural work.

"Farm laborer—This includes pickers, irrigators, tractor drivers, gin workers	58
Carpenter	4
Domestic work	5
Pensioners (OAS)	4
OASI	2
Grocery clerk	2
Contractor	2
Melon shed worker	2
Warehouseman	2
Store owner	2
Truck driver	1
ANC	1
Dishwasher	1
Mechanic	2
Meat cutter	1
Construction work	2
Box maker	1
Presser	1
Gambler	1
Janitor	1
Landscaper	1
Plumber	1
Small trucker	1"

Little effort has been made in the State of California to provide adult education or retraining for seasonal farm workers.<sup>58</sup> The need for such efforts certainly exists and is generally recognized, but seems to have been overlooked. There are, of course, motivational problems concerning these people. The *Preliminary Report* states that "... the farm worker is eager to learn at one time and flatly refuses to participate in any effort to teach him at another time."<sup>59</sup> Continuing efforts, however, must be made to understand and then overcome these difficulties not only because of the severe limits they place today on the farm worker, but also because of rapidly accelerating mechanical revolution which is sweeping the State's agriculture. Technological displacement, most commonly

thought of in urban industrialized settings, has been a major aspect in California agriculture for over a decade, particularly with the widespread introduction of the cotton harvester. If many of these workers are to have any chance of supporting themselves and their families in the modern western 20th century world, they must be better equipped educationally and vocationally.

"... (T)he main thing that we need more than anything else is education of these people, how to maintain themselves and take care of themselves with what they earn." (Keenan, Monsignor Daniel, Fresno County, p. 151, Dec. 16, 1960.)

### CHILD EDUCATION

In contrast to the general inactivity in the adult educational field related to seasonal farm workers, their children's educational problems have received increasing emphasis and action. Studies have revealed that the problems of the children are as severe as those of their parents.<sup>60</sup> Migrancy, the lot of many seasonal farm workers, itself is perhaps the most serious deterrent to good education. The mobility of children accounts for irregular attendance and the loss of many days at school. These children have low levels of achievement and most are retarded in several areas of schoolwork. Administratively, there is difficulty in obtaining transfers and records from schools previously attended. This difficulty, in turn, causes problems in accurately assessing achievement level and assigning the children to the proper class and grade. Differences in curriculum and in guidance techniques among schools also complicate this problem.

Cultural differences and health and economic problems contribute to the educational difficulties of children of seasonal farm workers. Often their parents are indifferent to their school attendance. This attitude is reflected in the children and they show a lack of emotional stability, interest, and purpose and often exhibit low morale. Lack of proper food and minimally adequate clothing hinders many children in their adjustment to school. Children from homes where Spanish is the native tongue have special learning and adjustment problems. Additionally, poor housing and an overall background of cultural and social deprivation compound problems of learning.

Although the basic responsibility and uppermost function of the schools and school personnel should be that of education, school facilities have been used to advantage in providing day-care and library services to farm laborers' children. This has been done successfully in Gridley, Butte County, at the large farm labor center (see page 43, Part II) in conjunction with a summer academic program during the peach

<sup>55</sup> *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1962*, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, 1962, Table 149, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Beatty, William C., Jr., Patricia Pickford, and Thomas M. Brigham, *A Preliminary Report on a Study of Farm Laborers in Fresno County*, Fresno County Rural Health and Education Committee, Inc., and the Rosenberg Foundation, mimeographed, Fresno, California, 1960, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Who Are They?—A Study of a Fringe Area Community in Fresno County, East Mendota*, prepared by a group of rural area professional workers (under general direction of Fresno County Community Council), mimeographed, Fresno, California, 1959, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Some notable work has been done in isolated instances such as literacy classes being provided by the Santa Clara County Welfare Department and training of tree and vineyard pruners by the joint efforts of Fresno State College and the California Department of Employment. These are by far, however, the rare exception rather than the rule.

<sup>59</sup> Beatty, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> Nance, Afton Dill, *Migrant Children in California Schools*, Bureau of Elementary Education, California State Department of Education, mimeographed, Sacramento, 1961.



harvest.<sup>61</sup> Similar projects in other areas, however, have not been successful.<sup>62</sup> Summer school programs have been highly developed in some states in meeting the educational and day-care problems of farm worker children.<sup>63</sup> They have had limited application, however, in California principally due to the difficulties of financing, transportation, and regular enrollment closing before seasonal workers arrive.<sup>64</sup>

Teacher training material and teaching aids have been prepared to assist in meeting the particular problems posed by these children. The State Department of Education has published a *Teachers Guide to the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children*, and the Fresno Rural Health and Education Committee, with assistance from the Rosenberg Foundation, has made widespread distribution of the handbook *Teaching Children Who Move With the Crops*.

Private groups, such as the Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches, the American Friends Service Committee, and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, have in co-operation with local groups and school districts experimented to meet the educational and day-care needs of these children.

Local and statewide conferences devoted to exploring such educational problems and their solutions have been held.

Although these paths are slow and difficult, progress is being made. Furthermore, the availability of federal financial assistance through H.R. 10606 (P.L. 78-543, 76 Stats. 172) should make the furnishing of day-care centers more feasible in the future. Much remains to be accomplished in this field, however, in spite of recent progress.

#### PUBLIC WELFARE <sup>65</sup>

There are no studies or reports to the committee's knowledge which analyze to any comprehensive extent the effects of the farm labor situation on the administration of public welfare services in California. It seems evident, however, that two characteristics of the seasonal farm labor force—inadequate income and lack of integration into the community—create serious problems for public welfare services and increase the need for them both in quantity and quality.

#### INADEQUATE INCOME

"... The domestic migrant usually arrives at his destination without funds or food so that immediate assistance is necessary. Most farm jobs are payable at the end of the day's work but many times the department will be asked for

emergency assistance in the form of gasoline in order for the farm worker to have transportation to the outlying ranches where work is available." (McIntyre, John E., Director, Riverside County Welfare Department, p. 79, Jan. 15, 1960.)

The amount of income received on an annual basis by seasonal farm workers, as well as its irregular receipt, obviously provides only the narrowest of basis for stable self-support (see Figure 80, p. 160, Part I). This is reflected in the rate of seasonal increase in the number of families requiring general assistance (see page 18, Part II). This rate is twice as great for the San Joaquin Valley counties, the most highly agriculturalized area of California, as it is for the State generally. Furthermore, in the periods of agricultural inactivity, the seasonal farm worker has in most instances no resources such as unemployment insurance to fall back upon. General assistance, often limited to vendor payments for rent and utilities and surplus foods in rural counties, represents the only resource available to seasonal farm workers during the winter after they have depleted their summer months' savings, if any. Unless the father is absent from the home for over three months or is incapacitated, the farm worker's family is not eligible for the Aid to Needy Children program.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, the heavy labor aspect of farm work appears to be quite significant in the dependence upon public welfare programs of the aged, blind, and disabled. Every one of the eight San Joaquin Valley counties shows a significant caseload growth in the Old Age Security and Aid to Needy Blind programs, whereas the statewide caseloads of these two programs combined have maintained a steady downward trend.

Lastly, economic problems are created and aggravated by the large numbers of laborers and their families who migrate during the various crop harvesting seasons. Not only are the workers' expenses increased during their period of migration, but for both welfare and health purposes they are often without a county of residence and usually experience difficulty in obtaining needed services.

#### LACK OF INTEGRATION INTO COMMUNITY

Farm labor groups do not have an integral part in community life and do not have available to them community resources to the same extent as other citizens.<sup>67</sup> Part of this is due to the minority status of many of these people—Negroes, Mexican-American, and recent migrants from the Southwest. Part of the deficiency of services is due to the inaccessibility of

<sup>61</sup> Gunterman, Joe, "The Gridley Experiment in Humanity," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1963, "This World," pp. 8-7.

<sup>62</sup> "Growers School for Migrants Complete Failure," *Dos Pales Star*, September 21, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> See various reports published by the Migrant Education Research Project, Colorado State Department of Education.

<sup>64</sup> Third Annual Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, Education Workshop on Summer Schools for Children of Seasonal Farm Workers, March, 1962.

<sup>65</sup> Based primarily upon an office memorandum prepared by the California State Department of Social Welfare, under date of March 30, 1960.

<sup>66</sup> Except when the father is imprisoned or deported, or a filing for divorce or separate maintenance has been made. See W. & L. C. Sec. 1500.

<sup>67</sup> Beatty, *Preliminary Report*, op. cit., pp. 54-5.