

*Migrant labor  
(1953)*

*✓*

# MIGRATORY WORKERS

The Mobile Tenth  
Of American Agriculture

By Lowry Nelson

AN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE REPORT

PLANNING PAMPHLETS

NO. 82

50c

NATIONAL PLANNING ASSOCIATION

INSTITUTE OF

MAR 17 1953

# NATIONAL PLANNING ASSOCIATION

*A Voluntary Association Incorporated under the Laws of the District of Columbia*  
1606 NEW HAMPSHIRE AVE., N. W., WASHINGTON 9, D. C.

NPA is an independent, nonpolitical, nonprofit organization established in 1934. It is an organization where leaders of agriculture, business, labor, and the professions join in programs to maintain and strengthen private initiative and enterprise.

Those who participate in the activities of NPA believe that the tendency to break up into pressure groups is one of the gravest disintegrating forces in our national life. America's number-one problem is that of getting diverse groups to work together for this objective: To combine our efforts to the end that the American people may always have the highest possible cultural and material standard of living without sacrificing our freedom. Only through joint democratic efforts can programs be devised which support and sustain each other in the national interest.

NPA's Standing Committees—the Agriculture, Business, and Labor Committees on National Policy and the Committee on International Policy—and its Special Committees are assisted by a permanent research staff. Whatever their particular interests, members have in common a fact-finding and socially responsible attitude.

NPA believes that through effective private planning we can avoid a "planned economy." The results of NPA's work will not be a grand solution to all our ills. But the findings, and the process of work itself, will provide concrete programs for action on specific problems, planned in the best traditions of a functioning democracy.

NPA's publications—whether signed by its Board, its Committees, its staff, or by individuals—are issued in an effort to pool different knowledges and skills, to narrow areas of controversy, and to broaden areas of agreement.

All reports published by NPA have been examined and authorized for publication under policies laid down by the Board of Trustees. Such action does not imply agreement by NPA Board or Committee members with all that is contained therein, unless such endorsement is specifically stated.

---

JOHN MILLER: *Assistant Chairman and Executive Secretary*  
VIRGINIA D. PARKER: *Editor of Publications*

# *Migratory Workers :*

THE MOBILE TENTH OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

by

Lowry Nelson .

prepared for

The NPA Agriculture Committee on National Policy

*[National planning association.]*

PLANNING PAMPHLETS

NO. 82

FEBRUARY 1953

[Washington, D.C.]

## CONTENTS

BACKGROUND, <i>by John Miller</i> .....	iv
STATEMENT ON "MIGRATORY WORKERS" .....	v
AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEMBERS SIGNING THE STATE- MENT .....	viii
MIGRATORY WORKERS, The Mobile Tenth of American Agriculture .....	1
I. The Problem .....	1
II. The Situation of Migratory Workers .....	8
III. What Can Be Done? .....	18
NPA OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES .....	34

## BACKGROUND

Members of the NPA Agriculture Committee believe that better public understanding of solutions required for our farm problems will be achieved by broadening areas of agreement on agricultural policy. The Committee has consistently tried to do this, at the same time indicating those points on which farm leaders disagree.

In order to illustrate various possible approaches which can be taken in solving this dilemma, the author invited Committee members to express their opinions on specific aspects of his report. Signed comments by some Committee members appear as footnotes throughout his text.

The Committee's effort is carried forward in *Migratory Workers—The Mobile Tenth of American Agriculture*, written by one of its members, Dr. Lowry Nelson. Dr. Nelson, Professor of Rural Sociology at the College of Agriculture, University of Minnesota, analyzes the acute social problems existing among migratory workers, points out that these problems are national as well as local, indicates that too little has been accomplished, and recommends both private and public action.

In addition, and as is customary, the Agriculture Committee adopted its own statement to accompany the report, which recommends Dr. Nelson's work as a contribution to information, discussion, and study, urges an aroused interest in the problem by farm people and the communities affected, and stresses the need for future work on the economic aspects of this complex problem. Here also, Committee members had the opportunity to express individual opinions on the statement of the Committee as a whole. One such footnote appears following the statement.



John Miller, Assistant Chairman  
NPA Board of Trustees

February 1953

# STATEMENT

by the

## NPA AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

NPA's Agriculture Committee on National Policy has considered the report entitled *Migratory Workers—The Mobile Tenth of American Agriculture*, prepared by Lowry Nelson.

The Committee is in agreement that hired farm workers, particularly the migratory workers, constitute an important and a neglected portion of the farm population which should be brought under careful study. Some members of the Committee disagree with particular parts of the report, and stress the need for broader and more vigorous efforts to find solutions for the problem. The Committee presents the report, however, as a contribution to information on the subject and as a basis for further study and discussion. The Committee is fully cognizant of the acute social problems inherent in the existing situation. These are the features stressed in Dr. Nelson's analysis. Legislation and administrative action can correct some of the abuses, and should be used where they are appropriate and practical. At best, however, they are only partial answers to problems stemming from underlying economic and social maladjustments. The greater need is for an aroused interest in the problem by farm people themselves and by the communities affected. It is a matter of vital concern to all farm people, including the large group who are neither employers nor employees.

The problem is not the same for all areas or for all types of farm labor. The most serious defects are in those areas which now use large numbers of migratory and seasonal workers. The fact that these workers can be used only for short periods is in itself a principal cause of the difficulty.

Without stability of residence the other undesirable conditions follow almost inevitably—insecurity, short work periods, low incomes, poor social opportunities, inadequate schooling, poor housing, and so on. These in turn lead to the perpetuation of an underprivileged group, often one of foreign nationality. Yet many, if not most, of the children of these migrants will be American citizens of the coming generation. The general interest demands that they be capable of taking their place as responsible citizens.

But this situation will not come about merely by passing laws. Some fundamental changes must be made in the methods and structure of agriculture itself. Urban industries generally have sought to overcome seasonality of employment and to avoid the costly process of recruiting a labor force for a few months work in each year. Yet many kinds of agriculture have continued to be highly seasonal partly because of the timing of biological processes. It is not a problem that can be solved merely by a change in the size of farms. Seasonality is almost as much a problem on many small farms as on large ones—though here it may take the form of concealed underemployment in one place, instead of migration from area to area in search of work.

Solution of this problem will require much time and more active study than has been given it thus far. Both farmers and research agencies should push aggressively their efforts to find ways to increase the proportion of year-round workers and to decrease the proportion of migratory and seasonal workers. Where seasonal work is necessary, the possibility of using local help with its roots in the community should be thoroughly explored. The more fully local help can be used the greater will be the income to the community and the more effective the local labor force, while at the same time the need for migratory labor with all the problems it involves will be lessened.

NPA's Agriculture Committee contemplates further study of this complex problem. It also urges that farmers and

farm organizations take the lead in seeking ways to bring about improvement, and that research agencies intensify their efforts to find ways of stabilizing the work load, of doing away with the need for casual farm workers, and of creating incentives and ways for farm employers to improve conditions. In many places individual farmers, working alone, are unable to better the situation materially. Real improvement will require cooperative effort and aroused community interest, as well as individual action by farm employers.

We are convinced that American agriculture does not want a quarter of its labor force on a basis of second-class citizenship. We are convinced, also, that the best solution will be achieved only if farm people themselves recognize the problem and take the lead in solving it, and if the public participates in a constructive way, providing legislation and restraint where these are needed and effective, and, at the same time, stimulating and encouraging vigorous effort by the industry to meet the problem through voluntary action.



## AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEMBERS SIGNING THE STATEMENT

- DONALD R. MURPHY, *Chairman*  
Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*
- ARTHUR MOORE, *Vice Chairman*  
The Washington Bureau, McGraw-Hill Publications
- FRANK APP  
President, Northeastern Vegetable and Potato Council
- MURRAY R. BENEDICT  
Professor of Agricultural Economics, College of Agriculture, University of California
- JOHN D. BLACK  
Professor of Agricultural Economics, Harvard University
- D. W. BROOKS  
General Manager, the Cotton Producers Association
- ROBERT K. BUCK  
Ainsworth, Iowa
- HARRY B. CALDWELL  
Master, North Carolina State Grange
- HENRY P. CARSTENSEN  
Master, Washington State Grange
- HARRY CLARK  
President, Mountain States Beets Growers' Marketing Association
- HARRY W. CULBRETH  
Vice President, Farm Bureau Insurance Companies
- AUGUST DAHME  
Mina, South Dakota
- JOSEPH W. FICHTER  
Farm Consultant, Oxford, Ohio
- OSCAR HELINE  
President, Farmers Grain Dealers Association of Iowa
- E. W. KIECKHEFER  
Farm Editor, *The Louisville Courier-Journal*
- JAMES G. MADDOX  
Assistant Director, American International Association
- C. CLYDE MITCHELL  
Chairman, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska
- LOWRY NELSON  
College of Agriculture, University of Minnesota
- R. J. ODEGARD  
O. J. Odegard Potato Company
- \*JAMES G. PATTON  
President, National Farmers Union
- QUENTIN REYNOLDS  
General Manager, Eastern States Farmers' Exchange, Inc.
- PAUL D. SANDERS  
Editor, *The Southern Planter*
- MRS. RAYMOND SAYRE  
President, Associated Country Women of the World
- THEODORE W. SCHULTZ  
Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Chicago
- THAD SNOW  
Van Buren, Missouri
- LAUREN K. SOTH  
*The Des Moines Register and Tribune*
- MARCEL J. VOORHIES  
Vice President Emeritus, American Sugar Cane League
- FRANK J. WELCH  
Dean, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky
- OBED A. WYUM  
Chairman, North Dakota Farmers Union Policy and Program Committee

\*See footnote on p. ix

## FOOTNOTE TO THE COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT

*James G. Patton:* I am disappointed that the Committee cannot agree on a stronger endorsement of Dr. Nelson's report and of the report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor. I have some minor reservations, of course, with respect to both of these reports. But I also know that an aroused public conscience will be required if we as a nation are to make progress in solving these problems. These distressing implications must be brought to public attention repeatedly and forcefully. To this end, I am joining in the issuance of this Committee Statement approving the publication of Dr. Nelson's report.

However, I cannot sign it without adding several comments—some general, some specific:

1. The Statement completely omits any recognition of the role which organized labor has taken, and should take, in seeking solutions to the problems of migratory workers.
2. The principal cause of the difficulty, which is not mentioned in the Statement, is that the types of farming where migratory workers are used are not now paying all the costs of production. When a U. S. consumer buys an automobile, he fully expects the price he pays for the car, plus tax, to cover all the costs—the cost of decent wages, unemployment insurance, and decent working conditions for labor; the cost of needed supplies and materials and of good salaries to management; and to return a fair profit to the owners. Can we as a nation long afford to offer less than such costs to farm operators and farm workers? Wages of migratory workers should be high enough to support the workers during idle periods as well as employed periods, providing a level of living that would include schooling for children and adequate medical care. Such wages would largely obviate the disadvantages attributed to instability of residence.
3. If all agricultural price structure, including farm price support legislation, were revised to enable family farm operators to earn enough to pay the full costs of farm labor (as discussed above), many of the industrial agricultural enterprises would not present nearly as great a competitive threat to family farm operations as they now do. Family farms could diversify and pay decent wages and provide decent working conditions for needed seasonal workers. Migratory labor problems as we know them *are* problems that ultimately will be solved largely by appropriate changes in the size and type of farms.

4. The Committee calls for positive efforts to solve these problems by farmers, farm organizations, and research agencies. But public and private educational services, social agencies, and organized labor especially, also should be enlisted in this endeavor.

5. The availability of "local help with its roots in the community" tends to be greater in areas characterized by family farms than in those areas where large-scale industrialized farm operations predominate.

6. The Statement largely overlooks the important role of mechanization and technological improvements in reducing the need for seasonal peaks of hand labor on farms. For example, the approach of custom-work mechanical cotton harvesters enabled one group of prospective employers to reduce their requisition for contract Mexican workers from 35,000 to 2,800 in one valley in California.

•

---

# MIGRATORY WORKERS

## The Mobile Tenth of American Agriculture

by Lowry Nelson

---

### I.

#### The Problem

The release of the report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor in March 1951 adds another to a long series of reports, investigations, and recommendations by both public and private groups during and since the Great Depression.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there is no major problem in American rural life about which so much has been said and written and so little action taken. With pitifully few exceptions the large body of legislation enacted in the past two decades for "labor" and for "agriculture" deliberately avoided the problem. The most "needy" group in the nation's economy has scant protection by the social security

---

<sup>1</sup>Included are the reports of two Congressional committees—The Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens (House) and the Senate Committee to Investigate the Violations of Free Speech and the Rights of Labor. John Steinbeck's best-selling novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the widely popular motion picture based upon it, dramatized the problem of the "Okies" for the public at large. Continuing reports and studies by agencies of the Federal and State Governments, colleges of agriculture, church organizations, and other private groups, constitute an extensive list, all of which portray the destitution and disadvantages of migratory farm workers.

legislation of recent years. By virtue of their being migratory, workers in this group fall afoul of the settlement laws of the various states which make them ineligible for relief. Few of the states require school attendance of "nonresident" children. The reports and investigations all tell the same sordid story.

Quite frankly, this report is intended simply

- a) to emphasize anew the migratory labor problem by summarizing it in broad outline and
- b) to suggest and urge lines of action which appear practical.

Neither original nor new material is presented. It is not necessary. While the need for continuing research and study of the question is recognized, present knowledge is sufficient to more than justify our finding ways of dealing with it.

### **Why is the Problem Avoided?**

There are several plausible reasons for avoiding this problem. One is our tendency to deal with problems only when a crisis arises. Had the doleful conditions of the depression years continued, it is probable that Congress would have felt compelled to act. But, just as legislation was introduced for consideration by the Congress, the war distracted attention to more pressing problems. By the same token, the unemployed migrants were able to find non-agricultural jobs in war industries while eligible workers were taken into the armed services. Agricultural production expanded and work opportunities in farming improved.

Another reason for our failure to face this problem is that the migrants themselves are an inarticulate group, helpless to bring any pressure to bear upon legislators. Most of them are probably disenfranchised by their migrations. They are a small minority group without effective leadership or voice. Where "leaders" from outside the

ranks of migrants have attempted to organize and lead them, the hostility of the larger communities, dependent on a docile labor supply, has worked against them.

Their position as a minority group of low status is reinforced in the larger public consciousness by the fact that many of them are immigrants—from Mexico, particularly—or they are nonwhite. Legislation in behalf of racial and immigrant minorities has always been difficult to get through.

### **Wetback Versus Domestic Labor**

The problem of migratory farm labor in the United States has in recent years been complicated by the illegal entry into the country of approximately half a million workers from Mexico—commonly called Wetbacks—who cross our inadequately patrolled border. The illegal entry of the wetback is facilitated (for a fee, of course), according to the report of the President's Commission, by "the smuggler, the labor contractor or the agent of the farm employer," but the majority of them drift across alone or in small groups. The wetback is pitifully exploited by the "middlemen" who facilitate his entry and transport him to jobs. Since he is a fugitive, he has no rights at law and can be easy prey to all sorts of rackets. The over-all effect of his presence in such numbers is to depress wages, particularly near the border. He is a threat to the security of the domestic worker, because he is willing to accommodate himself to a lower level of living and may, because of his illegal status, be made to accept lower wages because he can be turned over to immigration authorities for deportation.

The President's Commission on Migratory Labor recommended that legislation be enacted to control this traffic from Mexico, by providing additional personnel and authority for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, by setting penalties for those harboring aliens, and securing

active cooperation of the Mexican government. Mexican authorities are quite anxious that the wetback traffic be stopped, and that their nationals be brought into the United States only under protection of official agreements. Although Congress has shown some reluctance to pass adequate legislation, an act (S. 1851) was approved by the President on March 20, 1952, which provides a fine (not to exceed \$2,000 or imprisonment for not more than five years) for transporting or harboring alien workers. The law contains no provision for increasing the personnel of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Nevertheless, the establishment of penalties should have a salutary effect in discouraging this traffic.

The report of the President's Commission was the basis for extended hearings, during February and March 1952, by a subcommittee, under the chairmanship of Senator H. H. Humphrey, of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Several proposed bills now under consideration are designed to implement some of the recommendations of the Commission. Among these are the following:

1. A Bill to impose certain restrictions upon the importation of a foreign contract labor into the United States for agricultural employment.

*Section 2*—Provides that foreign agricultural laborers shall not be admitted to the United States for employment unless the Secretary of Labor finds that:

- (1) Efforts have been made to attract domestic workers at wages and hours offered foreign workers; [A Committee Member comments on the next page.]
- (2) Domestic workers are not available;
- (3) It is not feasible to obtain citizens of the United States residing in Puerto Rico;
- (4) Agreements prescribing terms and conditions of employment with any one country shall conform

substantially to the terms and conditions prescribed in any such agreement with any other country.

2. A Bill to regulate private employment agencies (contains essentially the provisions mentioned later in this pamphlet).
3. A Bill to provide housing for migratory workers, by making Federal financing available to state and local public agencies for constructing migratory labor centers.
4. A Bill to provide for a Federal Committee on Migratory Farm Labor, composed of three members from private life and one each from the Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, Department of State, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Federal Security Agency, and Housing and Home Finance Agency. Chief duties would be to coordinate Federal and state efforts and advise the President and affected departments on policies relating to migratory farm labor.

It is probable that a bill will also come before the Committee dealing with the question of minimum wages in agriculture.

### **A National and Local Problem**

The migratory labor problem is national as well as local. California, Arizona, Florida, or New Jersey may be major employment areas for these people but they may come from all other states of the Union. During the 1930's, when the plight of these workers aroused for the first time in our

---

**QUENTIN REYNOLDS:** *This program would establish wages in agriculture on a scale lower than those in other enterprises, thus making it unnecessary for employers of farm labor to bid competitively for domestic labor, and encourages a disparity which would contribute profoundly to the social problems for which this report seeks a solution.*



history the concern of the entire nation, California was the focus of trouble. But the problem was not alone one of California's making. As the migrants told Paul Taylor and Dorothea Lange, when asked why they came to California, they were "blowed out," or "tractored off," or they were pushed off by the "Triple A" and the "plow-up" of cotton.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it was disaster in other areas which *pushed* people out, as much as the hope of jobs which *pulled* them to California. Moreover, because migrants move across state lines to find employment, in case of need they are not the legal responsibility of any state; and no one state can set the standards of wages and working conditions for the other states. Their problems, therefore, must be considered from the national viewpoint. [See Committee Member's comment below.]

### Conflicting Employer-Employee Interests

The farm employer's concern is that a labor force be available *at crucial times* in his production year to perform the necessary tasks with minimum loss or damage to his crop, and at *wages he can afford to pay*. For example, he must have enough help to harvest a field of lettuce after the crop is ready and before deterioration, which would rapidly reduce the year's returns. He is bound to be more comfortable if there is a surplus of labor available than if there is a shortage; too many workers are far better than

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *These problems of migratory workers are national as well as local in scope for several more reasons than those correctly mentioned by Dr. Nelson. Working farm families all over the nation are concerned that these problems be solved because the poor incomes and low standard working conditions of migratory workers allow industrial type agricultural enterprises to compete unfairly with family farmers. Family farmers are*

---

<sup>3</sup> Paul Taylor and Dorothea Lange, *An American Exodus*. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939.

too few. Wages will not be "bid up" in the former situation, and may actually be reduced. His "comfort" is further enhanced if the workers are docile to the extent that they will continue to work without interruption until the job is done. For the employer is conscious of his extreme vulnerability at the few crucial weeks of harvest or planting. Any unsettling circumstances, especially the threat of a strike, make him apprehensive. He wants, above all, to prevent work stoppages at such times.

The worker, for his part, wants work at wages *which he can afford to work for*, a place to live for himself—and for his family if he has one—and he wants the work to be steady. He has to provide daily maintenance for himself and family, and transportation to get to the job—often from a great distance. Because he is transient, he hazards his health and that of his family, unless employers or the public accept the responsibility of seeing that sanitary water supplies and adequate living conditions are provided. He is vulnerable also, to the extent that the recruiting of labor has been so successful that there are too many men for the available jobs. Then he faces unemployment—or, at best, reduced wages—and may become dependent on charity.

Thus, while employer and employee are mutually dependent, there are points at which their interests conflict. It is upon these points of conflict that measures for stabilization and adjustment need to be concentrated.

---

*required to sell the products of their productive efforts into the same markets where the agricultural industrialist sells. This means that the wives and children of family farm operators are in direct competition and are endangered by the exploitation of both domestic and imported migratory workers. I feel that industrialized farm enterprises should be required to maintain a decent American standard of wages, working conditions, and living facilities for their workers. To do less is to subsidize unfair competition against more than four and one-quarter million working farm families in our nation.*

## II.

### The Situation of Migratory Workers

Since so much has been written and said about the "plight" of agricultural labor which "follows the crops," it is not necessary to enter upon an elaborate description here. Even so, a summary statement of their situation is desirable. Preliminary to such a summary, these assumptions or conditions should be presented:

1. Production, on large farms, of fruits, nuts, and vegetables—requiring many seasonal laborers—is now a part of our economy. Whether large-scale farming will increase in proportion to the total agriculture cannot be foretold. It is enough for us to deal with the existing situation. [See comment below.]

---

**JOHN D. BLACK:** *A major factor in this situation is that these types of farming are not now bearing the full costs of their production. They should pay enough wages to support migratory workers during their idle periods, plus the costs of their migration; also wages enough to enable these families to send their children to school and provide adequate medical care. At present, the burden of this idleness is borne by the migratory families, and by the public in the form of public relief, this latter often in counties other than those in which they do their work. If these systems of farming had to pay the full costs of such labor, some of them would not have comparative advantage where they now are, and some of them would be modified so as to provide employment in other seasons of the year, as is beginning to develop in tobacco and cotton areas in the South. It would seem as if some form of unemployment security suited to these conditions will be needed in the end.*

2. The mutual interdependence of employer and employee on such farms is especially close. The large-scale farmer must be able, at planting, harvesting, or other crucial times, to depend upon an adequate supply of labor, at wages he can afford to pay, if he is to be able to operate at all. In a free society such a dependable labor supply can exist only if the social and economic incentives are provided to encourage it.
3. Because of this crucial interdependence, employer-employee relations in large-scale agriculture are especially important and need to be stabilized by measures outlined later in this report. These include such possibilities as state and Federal regulation or participation, union organization of workers and collective bargaining in good faith, and educational programs.

## Numbers and Characteristics

Various estimates place the number of migratory workers at around one million. This is about one-tenth of the total labor force in agriculture, including unpaid family workers, farm operators, and nonmigratory wage laborers. A survey on a national basis, made in 1949 by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, found that 31 percent of the migratory workers were females, 45 percent of males and females combined were under 25 years of age, with nearly half of these in the age group 14 to 17. Another 45 percent were in the age group 25 to 54, and the remaining 10 percent 55 years of age or older. Negroes and Orientals made up 28 percent of the total. War veterans made up about the same proportion of migratory as of nonmigratory farm workers, approximately 12 percent.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Ducoff, "Migratory Farm Workers in 1949." Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 25*, 1950, pp.3-5.

## Employment and Earnings

The uncertainty of employment and the low annual earnings of this labor force are well known and need no elaborate discussion. The most recent data, from a survey in 1949, show half of the migratory workers were employed in farm and nonfarm wage work for fewer than 75 days of the year, and for 60 percent of them the annual cash earnings were less than \$400. The average time worked per year was 101 days and the average earnings \$514. These averages are for both male and female workers. For the male workers the average days worked per year were 116 and the average earnings \$655. Only eight percent of the migratory workers in that year of relatively high prosperity in the national economy worked 250 days or more.<sup>2</sup>

There are more migrations when jobs are harder to find. Metzler and Sayin in their study of labor conditions in the San Joaquin Valley, California, reported migration to be much greater in 1948 than it was during the war when there was greater opportunity to secure work near the workers' places of residence. The shortage of gasoline during the war, the lack of housing which deterred workers from giving up a cabin or camp already occupied, the greater tendency of employers to use the farm-placement program, which emphasized the use of local labor, and finally, the improved incomes led some workers to invest in building material and to build cabins for themselves. In spite of the increased mobility following the war, the authors conclude from their study of this locality that "the workers are basically more settled than before the war."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> William H. Metzler and Afife F. Sayin, "The Agricultural Labor Force in the San Joaquin Valley, California, 1948." United States Department of Agriculture cooperating with the University of California. Washington: U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1950, (mimeo.) p. 51.

During the slack season for employment these workers live in their own houses (those that have them) usually clustered at the edge of towns and cities; or in "Government camps," operated by local associations of growers; or in "commercial" farm labor camps; in cabins rented from individual growers; while others will rent accommodations in the towns and cities. About one-seventh of those interviewed lived in trailers in camps, and nearly two-fifths regarded these as their permanent homes. One-fifth lived in tents in camps, and 30 percent of them regarded these as their permanent homes. In all, 56 percent of those interviewed consider their permanent habitations to be those in which they were living at the time of the survey.<sup>4</sup>

This report of developments in one area of California is most encouraging. No doubt there are other areas also where mobility is being reduced. On the other hand, for some sections it may be more difficult to achieve such a reduction. Sugar beet companies in the upper midwestern states recruit thousands of workers for seasonal employment. Most of these are Spanish-Americans, mainly from Texas, who come north for the season and return to their permanent homes in the South after the harvest. The Henleys estimated that in 1950 there were 8,000 migratory workers, representing possibly a total population of around 15,000 in Minnesota.<sup>5</sup> They worked not only in sugar beets, but also in peas and beans. The authors estimated the average gross income for the six months spent in Minnesota at around \$600, for a "mature man and a good worker." (The estimate was based upon those figures given the investigators by a "group of field men" of various processors—sugar beet companies, canning companies, etc.)

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. and Mrs. David E. Henley, "Minnesota and Her Migratory Workers." Minneapolis: The Migrant Committee of the Minnesota Council of Churches, 1950.

## Housing

This is a persistent and difficult problem for people on the move. Some employers provide adequate places for the workers but others do not. "Of 166 farm labor camps inspected by the California state housing division in January 1950, 17 were classed as good, one-third as bad."\* Between jobs, workers may be unable to obtain or to pay for places in which to live. With the development of the labor camp program of the Federal Government beginning in 1936, in California minimum camping facilities were made available which accommodated most of the workers. Those camps were supervised by the Farm Security Administration but the 80th Congress passed legislation designed to transfer the camps to local groups, public or private. Two of the camps were sold at 10 to 20 percent of their appraised value to local nonprofit associations. By terms of the Housing Act of 1950, the responsibility was transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Public Housing Administration, with authority to turn them over to local housing authorities for administration. The projects transferred comprise 1,500 standard dwellings and 8,000 other accommodations. These camps and facilities have in the past served well to provide at least minimum facilities and conveniences. As long as the need for such accommodations exists, public authority has a responsibility to see that the need is fully met. [See Committee Member's comment below.]

The proposal to establish more permanent housing for the families of laborers while the working members migrate in the course of employment has not been fully implemented, although progress has been made as noted above.

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *When such housing is provided by public agencies, full payment should be required of employers.*

---

\* *Editorial Research Reports*, No. 15, April 19, 1950, p. 286.

The "decasualization" of farm employment remains as the problem to be solved before such permanent residences can become the general rule.

## **Health**

This problem is closely related to that of housing and general sanitary facilities. But it is also part and parcel of the generally low economic status of the migrants. Poor diets too often reduce vitality and resistance to disease. Unless medical care at least in emergencies is provided at public expense it would not be accessible to people in the income brackets in which migratory farm laborers fall. Federal, state, and local governments in some places and at certain times have provided some minimum medical care for migrants. Above all, the public health services for prevention of sickness should be made available. Counties which have public health departments may need to add additional personnel during peak seasons. State clinics are provided in New York and New Jersey. The Public Health Service during World War II maintained 250 clinics for migrants. However the responsibility since the war is entirely with the state and local governments, and no consistent program is provided in all areas. [See comment below.]

## **Education**

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the migratory labor problem is the effect upon children of being moved from area to area during the school year. Obviously it is in those states where climatic conditions make farm work possible during the normal school year from September to June that school attendance is most difficult. Children of

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *Employers of migratory workers should be required to carry all of the costs of this type of agricultural production, including health and medical care.*



migrants to some southern states may receive very little education because of the practice of giving "crop vacations" from school during the fall and early spring, and by the time the migrant family has reached the northern states, school is no longer in session. In spite of compulsory attendance laws in the various states, it is possible for children of migrant families to grow up in a state of semiliteracy. Only California, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia require attendance of nonresidents. A survey by the Children's Bureau in Hidalgo County, Texas, revealed that only one-half of all children 6 to 15 years of age were in school.<sup>7</sup>

The National Child Labor Committee found that a third of the children of migratory strawberry pickers studied in Arkansas and Kentucky had not been in school at all during the previous year and attendance of those who had gone to school was so irregular that, if continued, the education of those children would be less than that of their parents who on the average had completed only the fourth grade.<sup>8</sup>

There is plenty of additional evidence to show that children of migratory farm workers are greatly handicapped in the matter of education. At best, they are retarded in their school progress; at worst, they get no schooling at all.

## Other Community Disadvantages

Migratory workers and their families need recreational facilities, day nurseries where young children can be cared for while parents are at work, and health services. In some

---

<sup>7</sup>A. A. Warburton, H. Wood, and M. M. Crane, "The Work and Welfare of Children of Agricultural Laborers in Hidalgo County, Texas." U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 298. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943.

<sup>8</sup>"Children in the Crops." Washington: National Education Association, 1948, p. 21.

places where migrants are heavily concentrated, such facilities are often lacking or extremely inadequate. In others, where such facilities do exist, migrants are not allowed to use them because of local prejudice.

Migratory workers are excluded from participation in practically all of the protective social legislation of the past two decades, including the Fair Labor Standards Act (except as amended in regard to child labor); Old-Age and Survivors Insurance; Unemployment Insurance. The labor market is uncertain and largely unregulated. The workers may find themselves in such large numbers in a given time and place as to make unemployment for many an inevitable consequence. At the best, uncertainty of employment is greater than in most other industries, yet the risk is not insured for this group which is subjected to the greatest hazards.

Because of the relatively low annual earnings of migratory workers and the uncertainty of employment, it may safely be presumed that a high proportion of them are in need of public assistance during a portion of the year. Metzler and Sayin estimated that after the harvest is over in the San Joaquin Valley, 80 percent of the workers are not needed for a period of several months. Forty percent of those interviewed reported some employment in nonfarm jobs during the year.<sup>9</sup> What the other sixty percent did after the farm work was over, was not reported. Obviously, they would have to live on the earnings during the crop season, with or without supplementary public aid.

For many migratory workers it is impossible to qualify for public assistance because of their inability to meet the "residence" requirement. Under these conditions private welfare agencies are the usual recourse. The experience of James Adams is typical of those in this category:

---

<sup>9</sup> Metzler and Sayin, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

James Adams, white, 45; home, Arkansas; agricultural laborer, applied for aid. Started from home one month ago with five children and wife to pick peas in Illinois. Worked one day, 65¢ an hour and job ended. Moved on to work peas in Wisconsin, found "No Workers Needed" sign. Heard there was work in tomatoes in Indiana, found crop would not be ripe for week but promised work then on piece-rate basis. Asked loan to tide family over till then. Family worked 85 days previous year, earned about \$600, nothing left. Property, 1931 Ford pickup truck. Application denied, no legal settlement.<sup>10</sup>

We have thus the spectacle of somewhere in the neighborhood of a million agricultural workers, many of them married, with their wives and children, who make a precarious living by moving from place to place according to the demand for workers to plant, care for, or harvest the crops. This mobile tenth of the American agricultural labor force is perhaps the most disadvantaged segment of the rural—if not the total—population of the country. At the same time, these workers are indispensable to intensive large-scale agriculture. Because of their indispensability it is desirable from an economic point of view that their working power be maintained and increased through being adequately fed, housed, and trained; because of their existing social disadvantages, they need to be helped to participate more fully in the community life of the nation. Thoughtful and responsible leaders cannot ignore the fact that these, too, are in large part American citizens; their children will form an important part of the next adult generation and will perforce help to determine the policies of the country.

Yet this large body of our citizenry can scarcely be said to "belong." Many of them have no permanent legal resi-

---

<sup>10</sup> *Life and Labor Bulletin*, No. 109. Washington: National Women's Trade Union League of America, February 1950.

dence. They move from community to community without getting acquainted with many people. They seldom join the local churches or lodges, or the American Legion, or the Grange, or the Farm Bureau. Generally, they have no union. Their women do not belong to any Ladies Aid, or Legion Auxiliary, or P.T.A., or bridge club. Their children are fortunate, indeed, if those of school age attend school for the whole term. Their sons and daughters are not likely to be 4-H Club members or belong to the junior farm organizations, or a Boy or Girl Scout troop.

In short, the migratory workers are *in* the community but not *of* it.

### III.

## What Can Be Done?

Because the problem is a complex one, there are many approaches to its solution. These approaches may be grouped into two main categories: (1) private or voluntary, and (2) public or governmental.

### Voluntary or Private Measures

In the final analysis, the group which can do most toward the improvement of conditions is the employers themselves, whether they act voluntarily or under pressure of legislation. [See Committee Member's comment below.] New legislation at any governmental level could be largely obviated if employers act on their own initiative, either as individuals or through their organizations. The employer should take responsibility for the following:

- a. Abide by existing statutes, Federal and state, concerning employment of children, school attendance of children of worker's families, etc.
- b. Provide adequate housing, either individually or in co-operation with other employers.

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *I do not agree that the group which can do most toward improvement of migratory farm workers is the employers themselves. I am convinced that we need Federal legislation that will require these employers to pay adequately.*

- c. Maintain acceptable standards of hours and conditions of work.
- d. Improve the management of farm operations to the end of providing as far as possible for year-round employment.
- e. Cooperate with churches and other private organizations of citizens in the local community in extending to the workers and their families community services of recreation, education, and health maintenance.

What local communities can do is well illustrated by the experience of Hollandale, Minnesota (pop. 360), where school officials, church leaders, employers, farm recruiters, and others, joined forces to see that school-age children of the migratory population of 800 were not employed during school hours and that they actually attended school. Initial resistance of the community to taking migrant children into the schools was soon overcome by the appeals of local church leaders and others. Through cooperation with the State Board of Health a mobile X-ray unit was sent to Hollandale which examined both migratory and local children and adults, and improved sanitary and housing conditions in the migrant labor camps.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all that some employers may do, however, it is often necessary to have legislation which will protect their interests from being undermined by those who refuse to abide by approved standards. Possible action at the state level should be considered next.

## State Legislation

In recent years there has been a commendable increase in the assumption of responsibility by a number of states

---

<sup>1</sup> *Labor Information Bulletin*. Washington: United States Department of Labor, August 1951, p. 8.

for the improvement of migratory labor conditions. State governments can be especially effective in:

- a. Establishing minimum standards for housing.
- b. Providing health clinics.
- c. Extending compulsory school attendance laws to cover children of migratory workers (in those states where such legislation does not exist), and seeing that the law is enforced.
- d. Maintaining adequate services for recruitment and placement of labor and providing supervisory control over private labor contractors in cooperation with Federal agencies.

[See comment below by Committee Member.]

An illustration of state action in the matter of housing is the Migrant Labor Code of the State of New Jersey, passed in 1945. This code defines a migrant labor camp as "one or more tents, vehicles, buildings or structures, together with the tract of land appertaining thereto, used as living quarters by seasonal, temporary or migrant workers." The code sets out in detail the standards for sleeping, living and cooking quarters; furnishing and lighting; water supply; toilet, bathing and laundering facilities; garbage disposal, fire protection; health examinations and disease

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *I have no faith in the probability that states acting alone can assume the responsibility of correcting the problems of migratory workers. I differ with Dr. Nelson on his points (a), (b), and (d). Establishment of minimum standards for housing of farm workers should be done by the Federal Government. I object to the subsidization of industrialized agriculture even in the form of health clinics. Let the wages paid cover the cost of medical service. Private labor contractors should be eliminated, not just put under "supervisory control."*

control; and for camp supervision. The enforcement of the act is in the hands of the State Department of Labor and Industry. Other states have similar legislation, but the New Jersey code illustrates the type of legislation needed.

## **Federal Action**

Partial remedies for some of the problems can be met by existing federal agencies, through more effective administration and by the coordination of effort among the various agencies. The President's Commission recommended the establishment of a Federal Committee to be composed of three public members and one member each from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, Department of State, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Federal Security Agency. It would, as the report says, "coordinate and stimulate the various agencies of the Government in their activities and policies relating to migratory farm labor." Such a committee should be able to accomplish a good deal, provided the various bureaus would cooperate and provided they have the personnel to work with.

But even assuming that administration of the present agencies was fully brought to bear on the problem, there would still remain the need for new legislation by the Federal Government. Three specific proposals are discussed below.

- a. Minimum wage-fixing machinery.
- b. The regulation of labor recruitment.
- c. The extension of Social Security legislation to cover farm workers.

Emphasis is placed upon the first of these proposals for the reason that in June 1951, the International Labor Conference, of which the United States is a member, approved a draft convention and recommendation calling for the



member countries to consider its ratification. This proposal will come before the Congress of the United States for consideration. If it should be ratified our Government will be expected to provide the necessary legislation for implementing the proposal.

The problem of setting minimum wages for agricultural workers will require much careful study to determine the most effective means of solution. It is complicated by a number of factors. Chief among these are (1) the variation in conditions by regions of the country; and (2) the fact that prices of fruits and vegetables—in the production of which most migratory workers are engaged—are subject to rather wide market fluctuations. There is no “floor” under the grower of these commodities. [See comment below.]

Regional variations in conditions surrounding the production process make it necessary to provide flexibility. The market hazards which growers of perishables now face must likewise be a concern in the setting of minimum wages. The only experience to date in the determination of minimum wages in the United States is in the field of sugar production. In this case, the Secretary of Agriculture holds hearings in the various producing areas and promulgates the minimum rates of compensation for various labor operations. But this is done by virtue of the fact that the Government compensates the growers by direct payments to the tune of 60 cents per hundred pounds of refined sugar produced.

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *This statement underlines the importance to the general public interest of having fully adequate farm price support legislation that will assure farm operators of receiving full parity prices for all of the commodities they have to sell. Through appropriate farm price support legislation, the wide fluctuations in product prices can be eliminated, thus eliminating “market hazards” as an argument against minimum wages for workers.*

While these are real difficulties they should not deter Congress from taking action. What are the alternative approaches? There are at least three.

The first consideration might be given to the possibility of amending the Fair Labor Standards Act to cover agriculture. The objections to this proposal which have been raised by students of the problem arise mainly from the fact that the original act was designed solely to cover non-agricultural workers. Conditions in agriculture are so widely different from those in industry that amendment of the act would probably involve rather complete rewriting without achieving entirely the desired results. A chief difficulty arises from the wide diversity of methods of payment for agricultural labor, including piece rates, shares, and wages—hourly, weekly, monthly. Perquisites, such as housing, board and room, etc., are also common in agriculture and involve special consideration. [See comment below.]

A second proposal for Federal legislation is the creation of an Agricultural Wages Board, as introduced in the 77th Congress by Senator La Follette in 1942. According to this bill, the Agricultural Wages Board would be set up in the Department of Labor to consist of five members, two representing employers, two the employees, and one representing the public. The board, acting with the advice of local wages committees, would have power to set "fair and reasonable wages" for specific regions or with respect to specific agricultural commodities. The board and committees should consider "among other relevant circumstances, (1) the cost of living; (2) local economic conditions; (3) such considerations as would be relevant in a court in suit for value of services rendered where services are rendered at

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *These objections are in the nature of manufactured excuses, not valid reasons for objecting to extension of minimum wage legislation to farm workers.*

the request of any employer without contract as to the amount of wage to be paid; (4) the wages established for work of a like or comparable character by collective labor agreements negotiated between employers and employees by representatives of their own choosing; and (5) the wages paid for work of a like or comparable character by employers who voluntarily maintain fair wage standards in the occupation to be subject to the order recommending such fair and reasonable wage." There would, of course, be right of appeal to the courts from decisions of the board by any aggrieved person and the provision for penalties for violation of the law. [See Committee Member's comment below.]

There is a considerable body of experience in other countries with this kind of legislation. The most outstanding example is perhaps the United Kingdom, where, during World War I, a central agriculture wages board was established to determine minimum wages for agricultural workers after consultation with local advisory committees. When wartime arrangements expired in 1921, a number of local conciliation committees were set up and were given the right to request the Minister of Agriculture to make any agreements reached by them binding on all employers and workers in the district concerned. This system was

---

**JOHN D. BLACK:** *This analysis of wage rates and of the basis of their establishment leaves out of account what should be a major factor in determining their level, namely, how much travel and how much idleness is associated with the particular employments. Perhaps this could be handled by ascertaining the usual sequence of employment for workers in each area and the average period of idleness during the year and allocating wages accordingly. If this made wages high in some type of farming in an area, more local labor would be attracted, and also the farming would tend to become more diversified. This, however, may not be as good a program as adjusting employment security rates on this basis as suggested in my note on page 8.*

superseded in 1924 by the Agricultural Wages Act which provided for a central Agricultural Wages Board and 47 county committees, each of which was composed of a chairman and impartial member appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and representatives of employers and workers in equal numbers.

While conditions in the United States are admittedly far different from those in Britain, the experience in Britain and other countries should be thoroughly explored for suggestions in arriving at suitable legislation in our own country. It should be observed in passing that the United Kingdom has moved in the direction of centralizing authority in the national board, with a diminution of the functions performed by the local committees. Legislation in 1940 gave authority to fix a national minimum wage for whole-time adult male workers, taking into consideration general and agricultural economic conditions. This evolution represents a significant development, and leads to consideration of another alternative approach.

The third alternative involves the setting of a statutory minimum for the country as a whole, as is done in the case of industrial workers, rather than leaving the decision to the discretion of a wages board acting on the advice of regional or commodity committees. This approach would have the following obvious advantages: (1) It would tend to protect workers in areas of traditionally lower wages from further depression of wage levels, and may—probably would—raise the general wage level and eliminate the gross inequalities which now exist; (2) it would tend to place employers in various regions on a more satisfactory competitive basis, by (a) making their labor costs more nearly comparable, and (b) ensuring greater stability in their labor supply in discouraging the movement from low to high wage areas. To the extent that it would discourage excessive migration, it would also be of benefit to the workers themselves.

The most obvious objections that may be raised to this proposal are that, (1) regional variations in conditions affecting agricultural production make it difficult to prescribe a fixed national minimum wage without setting the minimum so low as to be largely ineffective in bringing about the advantages enumerated above; and (2) a fixed minimum may leave the producer in a hazardous position in the market place in case of a sudden drop in prices. [See first comment below.]

It can be safely presumed, however, that any legislation Congress enacts would provide for needed flexibility in administration as regards these two points. However, these provisions for administrative flexibility should not be made so broad as to result in the vitiation of the principle of minimum wage determination. In other words, the objections, mentioned and unmentioned, should not deter us from acting. Ways can be found to achieve the goals desired. In the recent past, we have garnered sufficient experience in labor and agricultural legislation to overcome many of the difficulties which a decade ago seemed insurmountable. [See comments by Messrs. Black and Reynolds.]

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *I disagree. These objections are neither obvious nor valid. An hour's labor is an hour's labor. Why ask the migrant worker in one area to subsidize difficult operations in other areas. Also, the way to eliminate the hazard of the producer is the enactment of fully adequate farm price support legislation.*

---

**JOHN D. BLACK:** *Compulsory minimum wages have serious objections in nearly all employments. They are acceptable in industrial employments as being about the only easily workable way of dealing with some bad situations. In agriculture they are pretty sure to do more harm than good. Employment in agriculture is so diversified that it is vital to maintain high flexibility of employment and wage rates to fit the wide differences in*

The question of administration of any proposed legislation in the field of minimum wages will doubtless be raised by many interested individuals or groups. The proposals indicated above presuppose that this administration will be in the Department of Labor. This is probably the logical branch of Government to do the job, rather than the Department of Agriculture. The basis for saying this is that the Department of Agriculture is, and always has been, oriented in its policies and activities to the service of farm operators, rather than farm laborers. It has had practically no experience in designing and administering legislation concerning labor.

### **Regulation of Labor Recruitment**

In this proposal we use as a basis for consideration, another bill introduced by Senator La Follette in the 77th Congress, 2d Session, entitled "a bill to regulate employment agencies dealing with agricultural labor and engaged in interstate commerce." The essential provisions are as follows:

1. Every agricultural employment agency would be required to register with the Secretary of Labor, pay an annual fee of \$100, and file a bond with the Secretary in the

---

*types of jobs, age and capacity of the workers, seasonality of work, working conditions, and the like. Much production on farms is supplementary—that is, it uses labor and other input factors that otherwise would be unused, and yet adds to the income of the farm and the workers. Minimum wage requirements would tend to kill off much of such production.*

**QUENTIN REYNOLDS:** *The hazards to the wage earner of minimum wages which are high enough to take effect are yet to be tested in this country. Employers cannot pay wages demanded by Government under certain conditions unless Government guarantees them a market under those conditions for goods produced at those wages.*

sum of \$3,000. At the discretion of the Secretary the amount of the bond may vary for different employment agencies. The registering agency would be requested to file also information on the form of business organization and names and addresses of directors, officers, or other managing officials; the extent to which any agricultural employer or association of employers owns, controls, or has any direct or indirect interest in the business or activities of the registrant; the nature of the agricultural employment agency business carried on and of any other business or businesses carried on directly or indirectly in connection with its activities; the size and extent of the agricultural employment agency business carried on and the aggregate amount of fees received therefrom during the last calendar year. The Secretary may ask for any other information which may be regarded as "necessary or appropriate in the public interest or for the protection of agricultural employees or employers."

2. Employment agencies would be specifically prohibited from giving false or misleading information concerning employers, employees or opportunities for employment. They might not charge or accept, either directly or indirectly any fee other than the fee set forth in the schedule of fees filed with the Secretary, or to use any form of contract or instrument or writing other than that filed with the Secretary, or after any form of contract or other instrument has been prescribed by the Secretary. The agency may not share any fee collected from an employee with an employer or association of employers. It may not procure or attempt to procure the discharge of any agricultural employee. It may not send out any agricultural employee for employment without having first obtained either orally or in writing a bona fide request for an employee for such employment and without furnishing such employee with a true statement in respect of such employment. It may not send out any agricultural employee to any place where a strike or lockout exists without furnishing such an employee with a written statement of the

existence of such strike or lockout and retaining on file for one year after the date of copy of such statement signed by the employee.

3. The employment agency, except as may be approved by the Secretary, may not have a financial or other proprietary interest in any lodging house, restaurant, store, labor camp, dispensary of intoxicating liquors or beverages, or any business pursuit, or facility servicing persons seeking employment. It may not require any employee to subscribe to any publication or incidental service to contribute to the cost of advertising or to pay for any services other than those specified by the Act.
4. Provides for the revocation of registration in case of the failure of the employment agency to comply with the law or the orders of the Secretary. Any revocation would come only after due notice and opportunity to be heard.
5. The Secretary would be the authority to investigate the reasonableness of fees charged.
6. Any person aggrieved under the Act would have the right of appeal to the Circuit Court of Appeals of the United States.

Such are the major provisions of the bill.

The proposal is aimed at correcting one of the worst abuses in the field of migratory labor relations. The labor contractor has undoubtedly performed a necessary middle-man service in bringing employer and employee together, but in performing the service many such agents have exploited workers shamefully. This has been particularly true in the case of foreign workers unfamiliar with the English language or with the services available to them through state and Federal employment offices.

Admittedly, this proposed legislation is by no means adequate to solve the whole problem of labor recruitment, but it will establish control over an aspect of the market in which abuses have been most flagrant.



## **Extension of Social Insurance to Farm Workers**

This matter needs no extensive discussion here because it has already been the subject of hearings before Congressional committees. In the amendment to the Social Security Act passed in 1950, a certain category of farm workers was included but only those who are able to secure more steady employment with the same employer than is possible for the migratory worker. The administrative difficulties of including migratory workers are well recognized but experts in the field of social insurance do not regard them as insurmountable. At the present time an earnest effort should be made by Congress with the aid of technical advisors to provide a means by which this valuable though needy group in our population can be given the benefits of Social Security legislation.

This brief review of the problems confronting this large and much disadvantaged part of the American labor force and some possible ways of doing something about them is admittedly incomplete. Others may seek and find better methods of action than those mentioned here. It may be worth repeating that this problem has been with us a long time, much has been said and written about it, but discouragingly little has been done.

This paucity of action in behalf of migratory workers in the face of the vast amount of legislation enacted in behalf of other workers and of agricultural operators should weigh heavily enough on the American conscience to urge us to action. Humanitarianism in this instance must be the mainspring of action because the migratory workers themselves are largely unorganized, inarticulate, and disenfranchised. Their voting strength is not such as to make any legislator amenable to their interests in an election.

Their indispensability to an important segment of American agriculture and their seasonal visits to many of our communities make their welfare an integral part of the welfare of American agriculture and rural life in general. Nor must we lose sight of the benefits which would accrue to employers themselves when their labor relations are placed on an orderly basis.

It is appropriate in closing this statement to record with satisfaction the 1950 amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which prohibited the employment of children under 16 years of age during school hours. [See comment below.] It should also be recorded, along with urgent disapproval, that several bills were introduced in Congress during 1951 which would strike out this amendment and again make young children eligible for employment. As the amendment itself was hailed as a step forward in American humane legislation, its elimination would be a menacing step backward.

*(Additional comments on the report as a whole  
appear on the following pages.)*

---

**JAMES G. PATTON:** *The violations of the spirit of this law are flagrant. The law is avoided by closing schools and by changing school periods.*

## Further Footnotes to the Report

**FRANK APP:** *Migrant labor should be appraised for the part it contributes, and has contributed in the past, to both agriculture and industry. In the early development of grain farming, we had a substantial migratory labor movement. As the agricultural areas developed, farming was so organized that migratory labor was no longer needed. Many of these migrants became prominent and permanent citizens. They represented nations that were predominant in immigrating to and settling in America.*

*Today migrant labor represents a different group and is an important factor only for a few specific crops and areas of the United States. Consequently it should be appraised for each area in which it is an important factor, its importance and the contribution it makes to the agriculture of the area, and changes that have taken place since the use of such migrant labor for these particular farm commodities and areas. I feel this appraisal should be specific and appraise not only the state legislation that protects the migrant from exploitation, but also a comparison of living conditions and wages the migrant receives with those of the local labor of the neighborhood. The comparison should also include the living conditions from which the migrant comes with those with which he is provided when employed as a migrant. This appraisal should also include the length of time in which he receives employment as a migrant, the total amount of money earned for the number of days of employment, and the perquisite other than wages he receives.*

*This is essential before we can develop a program to improve the economic and social status of the migrant. Furthermore, an appraisal should be made on the progress individual states have made to provide proper working conditions for migrant labor, some of which have already met most of the provisions made by the President's Commission. It is not only undesirable, but wasteful, to duplicate the work the states already are doing or should do. I believe any Federal legislation should be wholly from the national viewpoint and follow the procedure of good government in which the local communities accept and act on their responsibilities.*

**QUENTIN REYNOLDS:** This pamphlet deals principally with symptoms rather than with causes. It assumes that an important fraction of farm work will continue to be performed at sub-standard wages and proposes various means of subsidizing the recipients of such wages.

Farmers and citizens generally should repudiate a national policy which allows for the production and harvesting of farm crops with foreign labor. This policy prevents supply and demand of domestic labor from determining farm wages, thus interfering critically with the development of a sound agricultural program.

Farm labor should be able to demand wages consistent with general labor standards. When it can it will, and then most of the problems discussed in this report will be greatly minimized. Under such circumstances, farmers engaged in the production of products which can be produced competitively will adjust their enterprises to obtain their share of competent workers at real wages consistent with general labor standards—as do employers engaged in other enterprises.

**LAUREN SOTH:** Government programs to raise the level of income of migratory farm families, improve their housing, lift health standards, and provide better schools are all to the good. However, such programs are only stopgaps.

A long-run economic solution would look toward reducing and eventually eliminating migratory labor. This would require the development of off-season employment opportunities in cash-crop areas that now use migratory labor. Research in agricultural technology may be able to reduce further the peak loads for hand labor in some cases. Diversification of farm operations may be possible by introduction of more livestock in many areas.

But probably the most hopeful prospect is the development of manufacturing and other nonfarm industries in areas which require seasonal farm labor. Such a solution takes local planning, and many communities in the South already have demonstrated that planned farm and industrial development can stabilize employment.

## NPA OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**\*H. CHRISTIAN SONNE**  
*Chairman:* Chairman of the Board  
 Amsinck, Sonne & Company

**\*WAYNE CHATFIELD TAYLOR**  
*Chairman, Executive Committee:* Consultant, Mutual Security Agency

**\*MARION H. HEDGES**  
*Vice Chairman:* Special Assistant to Labor Advisors, Mutual Security Agency

**\*FRANK ALTSCHUL**  
*Vice Chairman:* Chairman of the Board, General American Investors Company

**\*CLINTON S. GOLDEN**  
*Vice Chairman:* Executive Director, Trade Union Program, Harvard University

**\*DONALD R. MURPHY**  
*Vice Chairman:* Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*

**\*BEARDSLEY RUMI**  
*Vice Chairman:* New York City

**ARNOLD S. ZANDER**  
*Secretary:* International President, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL

**HARRY A. BULLIS**  
*Treasurer:* Chairman of the Board, General Mills, Inc.

**CHARLTON OGBURN**  
*Counsel:* New York City

**JOHN MILLER**  
*Assistant Chairman and Executive Secretary*

**\*WILLIAM L. BATT**  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**LAIRD BELL**  
 Bell, Boyd, Marshall & Lloyd

**COURTNEY C. BROWN**  
 Assistant to the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Standard Oil Company (N. J.)

**L. S. BUCKMASTER**  
 General President, United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America, CIO

**JAMES B. CAREY**  
 Secretary-Treasurer, Congress of Industrial Organizations

**GILBERT W. CHAPMAN**  
 President, The Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company

**MORRIS L. COOKE**  
 Consulting Engineer, Washington, D. C.

**GUY EMERSON**  
 Samuel H. Kress Foundation

**JOSEPH W. FICHTER**  
 Farm Consultant, Oxford, Ohio

**J. A. FOLGER**  
 President, J. A. Folger & Co.

**WILLIAM C. FORD**  
 Director, Ford Motor Company

**LUTHER H. GULICK**  
 President, Institute of Public Administration

**ALBERT J. HAYES**  
 International President, International Association of Machinists

**\*ROBERT HELLER**  
 President, Robert Heller & Associates, Inc.

**LEON HENDERSON**  
 Chief Economist, Research Institute of America

**ERIC JOHNSTON**  
 President, Motion Picture Association of America, Inc.

**ALLAN B. KLINE**  
 President, American Farm Bureau Federation

**FRED LAZARUS, JR.**  
 President, Federated Department Stores, Inc.

**MURRAY D. LINCOLN**  
 President, Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Companies

**DAVID L. LUKE, JR.**  
 President, West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company

**E. W. PALMER**  
 President, Kingsport Press, Inc.

**JAMES G. PATTON**  
 President, National Farmers Union

**CLARENCE E. PICKETT**  
 Honorary Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

**\*ELMO ROPER**  
 Elmo Roper, Marketing

**\*THEODORE W. SCHULTZ**  
 Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Chicago

**CHARLES J. SYMINGTON**  
 Chairman of the Board, The Symington-Gould Corporation

**ROBERT C. TAIT**  
 President, Stromberg-Carlson Co.

**WALTER H. WHEELER, JR.**  
 President, Pitney-Bowes, Inc.

**JOHN HAY WHITNEY**  
 J. H. Whitney & Company

**DAVID J. WINTON**  
 Chairman of the Board, Winton Lumber Company

**J. D. ZELLERBACH**  
 President, Crown Zellerbach Corporation

\* Executive Committee

## PARTIAL LIST OF NPA PUBLICATIONS \*

### ● The Planning Pamphlet Series

- No. 70 —Federal-State-Local Relations in Agriculture (50¢)
- No. 71 —A Policy for Industrial Peace in Atomic Energy (\$1.00)
- No. 72 —A Framework for Long-Range Agricultural Policy (50¢)
- No. 73 —The Five Percent—*Revised* (50¢)
- No. 74 —Making Western Europe Defensible (\$1.00)
- No. 75 —"Operation Bootstrap" in Puerto Rico (\$1.00)
- No. 76 —Food and Feed Reserves (50¢)
- No. 77 —Underemployment in American Agriculture (75¢)
- No. 78 —Land Reform in Asia (50¢)
- No. 79 —How Farm People Learn New Methods (50¢)
- No. 80 —Staffing the Presidency (\$1.00)
- No. 81 —The American Economy in 1960 (\$2.00)
- No. 82 —Migratory Workers (50¢)

### ● The Special Reports

- No. 27 —The Current Crisis (10¢)
- No. 28 —Renegotiation of Defense Contracts (15¢)
- No. 29 —The United States and the Lesser Developed Countries of the World (10¢)
- No. 30 —Private Investment in Underdeveloped Countries (25¢)
- No. 31 —Monetary Policy to Combat Inflation (15¢)
- No. 32 —Economic Preparedness for Peace (25¢)

### ● Case Studies on the Causes of Industrial Peace

	NPA Members	Others
Nos. 1-15—Complete Set of Case Studies .....	\$9.00	\$12.50
Nos. 1-10—Per copy .....	.75	1.00
Case Studies published to date deal with industrial relations at the following companies: No. 1, Crown Zellerbach Corporation; No. 2, The Libby-Owens-Ford Glass Company; No. 3, Dewey & Almy Chemical Company; No. 4, Hickey-Freeman Company; No. 5, Sharon Steel Corporation; No. 6, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation; No. 7, Nashua Gummed and Coated Paper Company; No. 8, Marathon Corporation; No. 9, Minnequa Plant of Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation; No. 10, The Lapointe Machine Tool Company and United Steelworkers of America.		

### ● NPA Committee of the South Reports

	NPA Members	Others
No. 1 —New Industry Comes to the South.....	\$ .75	\$ 1.00
No. 2 —Disposal of Southern War Plants .....	.35	.50
No. 3 —Why Industry Moves South .....	2.50	3.00
No. 4 —State Planning and Economic Development in the South .....	2.50	3.00
No. 5 —Economic Resources and Policies of the South .....	4.00	5.50

\* A complete list of publications will be provided upon request. Quantity discounts are as follows: 10-49 copies, 10%; 50-99, 15%; 100-299, 20%; 300-499, 25%; 500-999, 30%; 1,000-5,000, 40%.