

# Children and Youth of Domestic Agricultural Migrant Families

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In early spring every year, hundreds of thousands of American parents take their children out of school and pack them, along with pots, pans, bedding, and other personal belongings, into jalopies or trucks, and trek east or west or north to every state of the Union except two, to cultivate and harvest fruit, vegetables, and cotton. These are called migratory workers. They have not chosen a nomadic life for the joy of it; rather they have been forced to leave their homes because there was no work for them. Their areas had been mechanized or industrialized, or imported labor had taken their jobs.

Some of these families have contracts with growers for specific work at specified localities; others are on their own, uncertain of their ultimate destination or whether they will find work, gambling against time, weather, and crops. Some are on the road only a few months and travel only a few hundred miles; others are moving for 5 or 6 months and may travel several thousand miles; some have no home at all but travel 12 months a year from one part of the country to another as crops ripen and hands are needed.

There are no accurate figures on the number of children in migratory families. The best estimate is 320,000 to half a million under the age of 18. About half accompany their parents as they move from job to job, and many work long hours with their parents in the fields, during school sessions and vacation periods. Some are as young as six. Children over 9 are usually considered working hands.

## Who are our domestic agricultural migrants?

There are three cultural groups of American agricultural migrants and three basic migration routes or patterns. Along the Atlantic Coast, Negroes from Florida work their way up the eastern seaboard to New York and sometimes into New England. A small part of these migrants filters into the Great Lakes states. Since 1953 an increasing number of Spanish-Americans (of Puerto Rican and Texas-Mexican background) have entered this east coast stream.

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These migrants usually travel in crews numbering as few as 20 to as many as 300, and many are accompanied by their children and older adults. Crew members operate under a crew leader who recruits them, supplies transportation, contracts work for them, arranges housing, and may provide other services as well. In return, the crew leader receives a percentage of each worker's earnings either in direct deductions or in commissions from the growers to whom he furnishes labor. Many crew leaders are honest and fulfill their contracts with their members fairly; other exploit their workers, misrepresenting wages and living conditions, providing unsafe transportation, and collecting fees both from the grower and from the worker. These conditions exist despite Interstate Commerce Commission regulations governing interstate transportation of migrant workers -- regulations designed to protect the worker but actually poorly enforced.

The second stream (the largest of the three) originates in south Texas. These migrants are usually of Spanish-American descent; they travel in complex family groups -- parents, children, grown children, grandchildren, and often grandparents and other relatives. During the winter they work in vegetables in the Texas Valley or in cotton in the Panhandle; during the summer they follow the sun northward. Some of them move only within the bounds of Texas, but the majority work their way up into the Mountain, Great Plain, and Great Lakes states and back to the cotton fields of West Texas. Some go on to Florida during January, February, and March for the citrus and vegetable harvests.

Merging into this central stream are Anglos from our South Central States. Some of these are small farm owners; many are displaced sharecroppers.

The third major stream, including many Spanish-Americans, originates chiefly in California. The majority move from county to county within the state of California, but a large number work their way up the west coast into Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Many of these also bring their children with them.<sup>1/</sup>

The majority have had their roots in the soil for generations. Agricultural work has been the means of their livelihood for decades. They are at home in the fields, in the vineyards, and in the orchards; and they have skills in planting and harvesting that nonagricultural people do not. Farm work is their way of life. Most of them have not had training or education or opportunity to do anything else.

### **Family life of agricultural migrant children**

The family is the basic unit of our society. Parents have prime responsibility for the care, nurture, and rearing of their children. However, in our interdependent society parents cannot provide everything their children need for healthy growth and development. They must have adequate community resources to aid them, such as good neighborhood influences; enough regular income to provide a minimum standard of living; housing conducive to privacy, health, and decency; resources for health protection and medical care; education; religious guidance; recreation, and leisure time pursuits. Adequate community resources not only help parents in rearing children, they also influence the stability and relationships in family living.

Migrant families, by and large, have within them family strengths, warmth, and closeness. Many (especially the Spanish-speaking) maintain the cultural custom of unilateral authority in family life and zealously guard their family units. However, the conditions under which the majority live undermine the strengths of their family lives.

Mobility. -- The short time most migrant children spend at home between migrations is not long enough to allow them to sink roots in schools, social organizations, and friendships. They and their families may lose the sense of home. On the road, the migrant family is barred from participation in the community not only by the shortness of its stay in any one place,<sup>2/</sup> but also by the attitude of many local citizens and officials who do not want migrants anywhere near their communities, much less right in their own institutions and social groups.

Low income. -- Migrant children live in families that suffer from the insecurity that goes along with unpredictable and unusually low incomes. The average migrant worker

handicapped in serving a temporary influx of migrants. Few communities have discovered ways to extend health services to families who live in the area for only a short time. Moreover, migrant families often differ from other residents in health knowledge, attitudes, and customs, so that the best-intentioned efforts of local health workers may founder on misunderstanding.

Some communities have shown great ingenuity in overcoming these handicaps and in planning ways to extend local health services to migrants. But the efforts in one community are seldom linked to those in another. As a migrant family moves from place to place, it finds wide differences in services and the conditions under which they are offered, as well as differences in the readiness of local physicians and public health workers to serve them.

Physical and mental health status. — Although the migrant family's health problems and its disadvantages in obtaining health protection and medical care are widely recognized, specific facts are meager concerning the results in terms of the physical health of family members. They generally share the health problems of other families handicapped by poverty, minority group status, lack of knowledge, and geographic or social isolation. Poor nutrition, diarrheal disease, impetigo, respiratory infections, and other ailments are often reported. A study of migrant health in a western state in 1950 found that the infant mortality rate among migrants was nearly twice that for the state, and that more than a third of the births in a five year period were not attended by a physician. A Fresno County study points out the higher diarrheal disease rates among children in a labor camp situation where housing is poor and water supplies are inadequate.

The mental health hazards of migrant living are usually unrecognized. The alcoholism and occasional outbreaks of violence in labor camps are looked upon as reflecting low moral standards or lawlessness rather than as indicating possible mental illness directly related to the suppression and tensions of migrant living.

Mobility chosen for recreational purposes is a healthful outlet for families. The effect on mental health of mobility created by economic and social factors beyond the individual's control, on the other hand, can only be conjectured. Rejection or open hostility toward the migrant family also contribute to insecurity that can only be emotionally disturbing. The child brought up in such an atmosphere can hardly be expected to have a healthy, wholesome, outlook conducive to good social adjustment.

Role of Federal agencies. — The Federal Government plays an indirect role in the migrant health situation. Through the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau, it makes grants-in-aid to assist states in conducting their public health, maternal and child health, and crippled children's programs. Residence requirements are not imposed. Each state develops its own basic plan of service in which Federal funds will be utilized. This plan must conform to certain general requirements set by the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau for their respective grants-in-aid programs. However, plans vary greatly from one state to another. Even within states there is wide variation, since counties or multicounty health districts have wide latitude in planning their local public health services and expenditures.

In addition to financial aid to the states through the grant programs, the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau play an advisory role, encouraging state public health agencies to look at their own situations and to adjust their programs, if necessary, to meet identified problems. The two agencies also provide information and advice to voluntary groups interested in promoting health improvement among migrant families.

The Federal Government has no grant-in-aid program for general assistance, the welfare program through which indigents normally receive financial aid including medical care. This program is wholly a state and local responsibility. Under the general assistance program in most localities, residence of at least one year is required to receive more than emergency medical and hospital care.

## Spiritual and religious needs of migrant children

Migrant children lack the opportunity our resident children have of establishing close ties with their home churches and of regularly attending church and Sunday School. On the road, community apathy and hostility make it difficult for them to relate to the churches. Even in localities where they might be welcome in churches, they often have to work on Sundays, or they don't have transportation, or they don't have shoes or adequate clothing. Consequently, most migrant children have little religious instruction and spiritual guidance. Many have only what they receive from their parents.

Many migrant parents have held to their religious beliefs and faith in God, and pass them on to their children as best they can. Lack of delinquency among migrant children is sometimes attributed to the religious precepts and concepts of moral conduct held by their parents, plus the authority parents exercise.

Since migrant children usually cannot go to church, the church goes to them. In some situations, ministers are members of the migrant group, serve as "shepherds of the flock," and hold religious services in camp. The desire of some groups of migrants to have their own church has led to the erection of chapels in a few camps. The migrants, the community, and the farmers have worked together to build them.

The National Council of Churches, state and local Councils of Churches, and Councils of Church Women representing Protestant churches work together in the migrant ministry in 33 states. The ministry encourages the inclusion of migrants in the fellowship of the churches in each community and develops religious services in the camps, counsels families, and ministers to them in times of trouble. It trains students and sends them to work with migrants. Mobile Bible units travel from camp to camp.

For Catholic Spanish-speaking migrants, the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish-Speaking, priests, Catholic colleges, and the National Councils of Catholic Men and Women have extensive programs throughout the country. These usually are on a parish basis in the local areas where migrants work and under the direction of the local pastor, although often supplemented by personnel from outside the parish. The Ordinaries of some Dioceses employ Spanish-speaking priests and religious orders from Mexico, who understand the language and the customs of the Spanish-speaking migrants, to help in Diocesan migrant programs. Although these programs are primarily of a spiritual and religious nature, they also include educational summer schools, recreational activities, and family health and welfare services.<sup>23/</sup>

However, all these efforts combined reach only a small proportion of migrant children. A spot check of 133 local areas in 24 states shows that only about 35 percent were reached in those areas where there was any religious ministry at all.<sup>24/</sup>

Although these programs, in the areas where they are conducted, help keep migrant children from growing up in a spiritual vacuum and help dissolve prejudices among parish and other community groups, they do not eliminate their spiritual and religious problems. Only when society itself recognizes and aggressively works on the basic problems of migrant health, education, spiritual guidance, housing, transportation, wages, hours, and community services will migrant children have a chance to attain their full potentialities.

## Summary

Child deprivation continues to be associated with family migration to work in agriculture. Major sources of this deprivation include:

The double jeopardy endured by many migrant children by reason of their color or ethnic origin and by reason of their parents' occupation and enforced mobility.

an apathetic acceptance of his apparent worthlessness. Such a child becomes virtually uneducable.

(3) Lack of financial support to enable local schools to provide for the children of migrants often makes them an unacceptable burden. Underlying this difficulty is the lack of a tax base for raising needed funds. Although migrant families admittedly add to the wealth of a community through their actual work and direct spending, the school coffers usually are not enriched in proportion to the increase in migrant school-age population. It is not uncommon for the number of school-age children in a community to increase to three or four times the resident school population during the crop peaks. <sup>14/</sup>

(4) Many school boards and school personnel are apathetic about recognizing the education of these children as a civic and moral responsibility. School leaders in communities where attitudes of residents are negative and financial support is strained often find it more expedient to close their eyes to the presence of migrant children of school age in the neighborhood, rather than to take the lead in bringing them into school. There are, however, notable exceptions to this pattern. Some local communities, usually aided by foundation funds, have made great progress in educating some migrant children. Also several state departments of education are attempting to find ways to finance educational programs.

In some instances, voluntary agencies, such as the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Catholic Women, provide nonpublic educational experiences within the limitations of their resources. These are usually in the nature of summer schools. Of note are seven summer schools for migrant children in four rural counties in southern Michigan, sponsored by the Detroit Council of Catholic Women. Six of these are staffed by Marygrove College, Detroit; and the seventh, by Siena Heights College, Adrian, Michigan. During the 6 years this program has been in operation, more than 2,000 migrant children have attended. Attendance increases yearly due primarily to efforts by the sponsoring group to convince migrant parents of the value of education for their children. In the summer of 1959, 440 migrant children were enrolled in these 7 summer schools. In September, the parents of 102 enrolled them in the public and parochial rural schools for the duration of their stay in the areas. <sup>15/</sup>

An outstanding vocational-type summer school is in New Jersey, developed by the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches. It involves boys and girls of two adjacent migratory labor camps. During the time they were not in the fields, the boys were taught to build, under supervision, a 12 by 12 cabin complete with doors, windows, screens, hardware, and painted inside and out. The girls, in a cabin nearby, were taught homemaking, health and sanitation habits, sewing, nutrition and cooking. They made curtains for the cabin, clothing for themselves, and prepared and served supper every evening to all the children working on the two projects during the five weeks period. <sup>16/</sup>

Through interest, encouragement, and grants by the National Child Labor Committee, <sup>17/</sup> and through grants and efforts of local units of the National Council of Churches, Catholic organizations, colleges and volunteer groups, summer schools for migrant children are conducted in other areas of the country. These measures, although valuable, include relatively few children, and these groups cannot begin to cope with the problem permanently. Also, summer schools are not adequate substitutes for regular attendance at school during the scheduled school year.

(5) Many schools and teachers fail to understand and provide for the special educational problems of migrants. Even when the migrant children are welcomed into the school, there is the problem of gearing school experiences to their immediate needs. The school is faced with the problem of identifying the academic achievement of each migrant child and placing him where he can make the most progress. The teacher, whose classroom may already be crowded, is challenged to do everything possible to help these children, as well as the regular pupils, live happily in the school. This requires much individual teaching and personal attention. When hundreds of these children come and go in a school year, educators are expected to deal with almost insurmountable problems. The teachers in such situations must be highly qualified and truly dedicated to the welfare of children.

care of an older child; others bring them along to the fields. In some few and scattered sections of the country, day care centers provide for the children. A growing number are being developed through the efforts of the Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches and by some state child welfare agencies (some of the latter with Federal welfare services funds). One state child welfare agency in Pennsylvania has developed a program of foster family care for infants.

In this state, a child welfare agency has placed workers in counties where there are large numbers of migrant families, with services to this group their total function. These workers help parents to understand, locate, and use the resources in the community, such as well baby clinics, day care centers, etc. They work with parents to get children registered in school. They give casework services to individual families, and they encourage other social agencies to extend services to migrant families. Among the problems they deal with are unwed motherhood, emotionally disturbed children, desertion, frustration, and discouragement of parents.<sup>11/</sup>

Public assistance. — Migrant families are generally excluded from eligibility for public assistance.<sup>12/</sup> Under the state public assistance programs (which are financed by Federal and state and/or local funds) financial assistance, medical care, and social services may be made available to needy families. However, the great majority of states have established at least one year's residence as eligibility requirement. Some states or localities have an emergency fund that may be used for very short periods (even as short as one day) in cases of dire need. In certain instances the public agency will pay to return the family to its state of legal residence, if it has one. However, if illness is the problem, the family may not be in a condition to be returned.

The migrant child at his home base. — The problems of migrant children during the months they are at home are in many ways similar to those while they are on the road — poverty, poor housing, discrimination by local community groups because of color or national origin. Many families are not even eligible for welfare aid in what might be considered their place of residence because they have voluntarily been away for longer than a specified period during the year.

A report of the President's Committee concludes that the "statelessness" of many migrants is an effective barrier to their obtaining services. Also the nature and extent of financial assistance offered and the conditions under which it may be available to the migrant family differ so widely from locality to locality and from state to state that the migrants hardly can realistically expect help from their government in a period of need or crisis. There is "no common denominator of service."<sup>13/</sup>

## **The education of migrant children**

The lack of educational opportunities for the children of migrant families perpetuates a threat of illiteracy of serious proportions for the migrants as individuals, for the states and regions where they live, and for the nation as a whole. Relatively few attend school regularly.

Studies show that most of these children are far below grade level and that their school achievement generally is under fourth grade (the attainment established as a minimum standard for literacy in the United States). The U. S. Office of Education reports that the migrant group has the lowest educational attainment of any group in our nation.<sup>13/</sup>

Many factors work against school attendance of these children:

(1) School attendance often does not seem worthwhile to them or their parents in view of the fact that they do not stay long in any one place. The child who moves from place to place, often with little or no advance notice, is constantly a stranger to the school, usually bringing no record and having little chance for continuity in his school experiences.

(2) Migrant children are often rejected by resident children and their parents. A child who is constantly made to feel that he is not worth bothering about, or is of no real concern, may regress from bewilderment to belligerence or, even more tragically, to

usually are not accepted by the communities as human beings of dignity and intrinsic worth or as fellow citizens endowed with the same rights and privileges as all others. The attitudes of communities are often those of rejection and hostility. Signs, "Migrants not admitted," are displayed in the windows of some restaurants, shops, and movie theatres in some areas.

Children and young people are the chief victims of loneliness and lack of community roots. They are deprived of the sense of belonging to something and prevented from participating in community activities that might contribute to their growth and development as persons and citizens.

It is hard at best to adjust to a new community. Having to adjust several times a year (with stay limited to a month one place, six weeks another, and often at most three months) presents almost insurmountable difficulties in establishing meaningful contacts with any individuals or groups outside of the immediate family. Children and youth who work in the fields from early morning until late in the day have little time or energy for leisure.

Little opportunity for group participation. — Some organizations and agencies have developed service projects that offer opportunities for leisure time activities and group participation.<sup>2/</sup>

However, few (with the exception of some church groups) have provided opportunities for membership or activities designed to meet the special needs and situations of migrant children. The nature of these special needs is highlighted by the questions raised by the Girl Scouts when that organization undertook a project to determine how its program could be made available to migrant girls:

"With the families on the move and in isolated living quarters, how could an on-going program be made available? Would this experience contribute to their security, adjustment, and preparation for citizenship? With children living on scattered farms and far from other children, would it be possible to get a group of them together? Where could meeting places be found? Could the children pay the \$1 national membership fee? How could discrimination and prejudice be met? How would the language difference affect the project? Could indigenous leadership be recruited and trained? With what local, state, regional, and Federal agencies and organizations could the Girl Scouts work to serve the needs of migrant children? How could they keep track of this traveling membership?"<sup>10/</sup>

In this pilot program, the Girl Scouts have discovered ways both of involving migrant girls in meaningful club life and of giving continuity to membership. The experience offers clues to effective methods of providing recreational and community participation. The Girl Scouts point out, however, that the need is great and that the challenge to give these youth the opportunities that are part of the growing-up process for youngsters is one that needs the concerted efforts of voluntary and public agencies and organizations.

Lack equipment for leisure activities. — Church groups, voluntary organizations, and government agencies working in migrant camps report that not only are the children deprived of the benefits of participation in group play and organized community activities, but, because of the basic poverty of their parents, they also have to do without toys, games, and sport equipment, which other American children have in such abundance. Nor do they own or have access to books, music, and art.

Child welfare services for migrant children. — Child welfare services from public agencies are usually available to children and their parents without regard to residence, but payment for foster care, day care, or other costs are generally limited by residence restrictions. Child welfare services are generally not available to migrant children because some local communities in which they stay do not have such services. In others, limited staff cannot absorb the increased number of children for the short period migrants may be in the community; or by the time a service gets started, the family has moved on. Often residents have no concern for the welfare of migrant children and make no provision for services to them. Nevertheless, some communities have made specific efforts on their behalf.

Adequate care of infants and young children while both parents are working in the field is a major problem facing migrant families. Some parents leave the children to the

earned a mere \$859 a year in 1957.<sup>2/</sup> The average family earnings were probably less than \$1,800.<sup>3/</sup> Adequate family living cannot be sustained when incomes are low and subject to uncertainty. The necessity to sustain a family by stretching inadequate income earned during a seven-to-nine-month period over an entire year requires a competence that most people do not have.

Housing. — The children often live with their parents in shelters of poor construction; overcrowded; without running water, screening, refrigeration, or provision for garbage and trash disposal. Toilet facilities provide for neither decency nor essential sanitation. Cooking facilities are inadequate, and grounds are poorly drained.<sup>4/</sup> Whole families frequently live, cook, and sleep in one room. Such housing can rob everyone in the family of self-respect. Parents can't give their children home backgrounds that protect and nurture them.

Less than half the states have mandatory legal standards for migrant labor camps, and only a few of these are adequate. In addition, a few states have advisory standards which do not authorize enforcement. Provisions for enforcement, that are as important as the standards, include the requirement of a license or permit to operate and provision for inspection.<sup>5/</sup> At times the only spur to action toward more adequate and healthful housing is the outbreak or threat of an epidemic such as typhoid.<sup>6/</sup>

Unattached children — In addition to migrant children traveling with their families, there are also unattached children in some migratory labor groups. They are usually teenagers, who may be related to adult members of the group but who are traveling without their parents or legal guardians. These children present social and legal considerations of serious concern. An adult in the group may have physical custody of the child because his parents gave permission for the child to travel with that adult. However, no specific person is responsible for the child's care, education, guidance, and supervision, when there is no legal guardian.

These unattached children lack protection from exploitation and abuse. No one has legal responsibility to act in their behalf in matters of employment, wage and hour protections, illness, accident, or legal difficulty. Many may be actually neglected; some are delinquent or pre-delinquent, and others runaways.

Local health and welfare authorities have no clear responsibility for these children, should they become indigent or delinquent, ill, or in need of special care. Also, they impose additional burdens on the migrant families with whom they travel and live.

Transportation and effect on family life — Vehicles used to transport migrant families are frequently mechanically unsafe to the point of being potential death traps, severely overcrowded, and often without any kind of seats.<sup>7/</sup> Distances traveled without permitting time for a rest stop are excessive. Families often travel all night without a stop. Rarely are there available rest-stop accommodations suited to the needs of family groups, even if time were allowed. Only a few local communities have provided decent rest center facilities. Only a few states have and enforce regulations on vehicles, driver qualifications, maximum hours of travel, etc.<sup>8/</sup> In the absence of state regulations, some individual crew leaders take responsibility for the safe condition of their vehicles, give attention to distances traveled, and plan their itineraries to take advantage of adequate rest centers along the way.<sup>9/</sup>

Such conditions are very harmful. The father is powerless to shield his family from utter lack of privacy, to find a way to feed and bathe babies and young children, to control the environment in any way, even if a child takes sick. He is robbed of his importance in his own eyes and those of his family. The effect on the children's feeling of security is obvious.

### **The migrant child's status in community life**

Resented and rejected. — Migrant children are often forbidden to play in community playgrounds or swim in community pools. Their families are often not welcome in community churches. They have been described as the "displaced persons of America," "stateless citizens," and the "most forgotten and neglected people in our land." Although they are often essential to the economy of the rural communities in which they work, they



The rural setting of the work done by migrant families and the inadequacy or unavailability of some services in rural areas, not only for migrant children and their parents but for permanent residents.

The typical inflexibility of local service programs which are planned, organized, and financed to fit the needs of local residents usually do not fit the needs of transients, especially persons who differ in cultural background from local residents.

Associated handicaps include the social and economic instability of migrant family living with its potential risks to physical and mental health; the frequent necessity for a child's economic contribution because of family poverty; the lack of opportunity for the migrant child and his family to feel accepted and to participate in community life; the lack of opportunity for experiences through family living and continuous and satisfying relationships outside of the migrant group to prepare them for adequate functioning and participation in our society. Moreover, few communities have a feeling of responsibility toward migrants similar to their feeling of responsibility toward permanent residents. And few community service programs — even those well staffed and equipped — have sufficient flexibility in laws, regulations, and operating policies and methods to accommodate readily to the needs of migrant children and their families even if the community willed that they do so.

Certain issues constantly recur in any discussion of migrant children and their families, whether the concern is with family living, health, education, employment and child labor, or some other aspect of the migrant situation. The following are some of the recurring issues:

1. The continued inequality of migrant children and their families as compared with other citizens in the protection, opportunity, and services offered under law in the fields of —

Employment conditions (minimum wage, unemployment compensation, child labor protection, workmen's compensation).

Education (school attendance).

Basic economic support (aid to the indigent including the medically indigent).

Housing and sanitation.

Transportation including opportunities for overnight or other rest stops.

Local police protection.

2. The continued sporadic local efforts on behalf of migrant children and their families with little or no consideration of —

The need for integrating the services in one locality with those in another — health, education, religious, etc., and other services which require continuity to realize their potential benefit.

The need for integrating one type of service with other related services — e. g., medical

and hospital care may be made available to migrant families with little concern shown for the poor housing and poor sanitation, mode of transportation, and occupational risks that give rise to illness and accidents.

The need for migrant children and their families to become part of -- not separated from -- local communities. Question: How can community services be extended to migrants without setting them apart from the community?

3. The continued inadequacy of services in many rural areas not only for migrant children and families but also for other residents. Among the services that are poorly developed or nonexistent in many rural areas are protective health services, child welfare services, and organized recreational programs for children and adults.

4. Continued reliance on migrant labor in agriculture without guarantees of minimum wage or continuity of employment, and continued utilization of people readily subject to exploitation because of their minority group status, lack of education, and lack of employment alternatives.

To what extent can the need for migration be reduced?

How can dignity and a sense of personal worth be given to workers whose labor is necessary and of value to all consumers, as well as to the particular localities where the work is performed?

To the extent that migration is necessary, how can its handicaps for children and families be overcome?

How can children and family service agencies -- public and voluntary -- coordinate their services within and between communities so there will be an integrated program to meet the special needs of migrant children and families without setting them apart from the communities where they live temporarily?

What knowledge is available and what knowledge is needed for this purpose?

What varieties of educational or training experience can be planned to prepare professional leaders?

What laws can be applied and what adaptations of laws or new laws are necessary?

How can enterprises such as child care centers, summer schools, and recreational projects aid in eliminating undesirable child labor?

(6) Many migrant parents show lack of interest, initiative, or knowledge about getting their children into school. Parents who have been deprived of normal educational and social experiences, who need the income the children may earn, or who need the older children to care for the younger ones cannot be expected (without special guidance) to understand how essential education is in modern society, both for their own children and for civic welfare.

These factors add up to deprive the children of agricultural migrants of educational privileges equal to those of other children. As a result, children of migrants enter school later, attend fewer days, show greatest retardation, achieve the least progress, drop out of school earliest, and constitute the largest single reservoir of illiterates.

## Employment and child labor of migrant children

Migrant children at work. — Agriculture is the only "big business" in the nation today that employs large numbers of children and that depends to any great extent on the labor of children. The work of children in agriculture is the greatest unsolved child labor problem in the country. A substantial segment of the labor force that cultivates and harvests the nation's crops consists of children. In July 1957, an estimated 457,000 children 10 to 15 years old — more than half were 10 to 13 — did paid agricultural work.<sup>18/</sup> Many of these child laborers are migrants.

Although no complete figures are available on the number of migrant children who work, experience in local areas shows that many are hired along with their parents. For example, a study of migrant workers in Oregon in the summer of 1958 shows that at least one-fourth were working out of roughly 800 children under 12 who accompanied their parents.<sup>19/</sup> In recent years, findings of the Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions show that about 40 percent of all children under 16 found working in agriculture during school hours are migrants.<sup>20/</sup> In 1958, Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions' investigators found 4,491 children under 16 years of age employed during school hours on 1,944 farms. Of these, 1,297 (29 percent) were 14 and 15 years of age; 2,361 (52 percent) were between 10 and 13 and 833 (19 percent) were 9 or under. Sixty-one had never been in school at all.

Legal protection. — Children who work in agriculture have little legal protection, compared with those who work in industry or other commercial occupations. While the Fair Labor Standards Act sets a minimum age of 16 for employment during school hours, it sets none for outside school hours or vacation employment. The Sugar Act sets a minimum age of 14 and an 8-hour day for minors 14 and 15. Only 10 states set a minimum for outside school hours employment in agriculture. These range from 10 to 14 years. Fewer than one-third of the states set a minimum age for employment in agriculture even during school hours. In a number of states where the minimum age in the law might be presumed to apply to employment in agriculture, in practice, employment certificates are not required, and the law is not enforced on farms. Lack of protective legislation is one factor that makes child labor profitable.

Hazards of agricultural work. — The hazards of employment in agriculture are well known. Migrant children work in an industry that ranked fourth among all industries in 1958 in the total number of disabling accidents. In the same year, 3,300 agricultural workers were killed — more fatalities than in any other major industry. While complete data on the extent to which children are involved in these accidents are not available, scattered reports indicate that children under 14 were involved in more than 43 percent of the recorded farm accidents to youngsters under 18 in 1958.<sup>21/</sup>

Vocational future. — Most migrant children have few opportunities to prepare for other occupations than those in agriculture. In most schools, vocational guidance programs are scheduled over the whole school year. Migrant children who attend school for only a brief period cannot receive the training, testing, group guidance, and individual counseling that are normally spread out over the total period. Because they are always behind other children who have had all the services, and because they do not know how they could carry out any plans they made, they tend to feel that vocational planning is impossible or useless. Migrant children seldom reach the last year in high school,

where they could utilize the year-round program for seniors which the public employment service offers in employment counseling, aptitude testing, registration, and placement.

Earnings needed. -- The earnings of migrant children are often considered essential to family survival, because parents earn so little. This is one of the reasons for the high incidence of child labor. There will be little prospect of keeping the children out of the fields until provision is made for their care and schooling while their parents are at work, until they are covered by child labor laws, and particularly until the economic level of the family is improved.

### **Health of migrant children and their families <sup>22/</sup>**

A child who lives in a single community throughout the year shares the health protection and services afforded all local children. Most incorporated communities have public water supplies and sewage systems to safeguard local families against diseases caused by poor sanitation. In many, local public health clinics promote immunization programs to control communicable disease, advise expectant mothers on the protection of their own health and that of their unborn child, and make other services available to protect and promote the good health of local families.

Added to these protective services for the resident child are the remedial services of local physicians and hospitals and the financial assistance provided by local welfare agencies when the family itself cannot meet the costs of needed medical and hospital care.

Health problems of the migrant child. -- The migrant child, on the other hand, may live with his family at the end of a country road in a one-room cabin, tent, or barracks in a labor camp. His temporary "home" may be outside the jurisdiction of any agency with responsibility for safe drinking water, approved waste disposal, and maintenance of other health and safety standards. His opportunities to benefit from such protective services as local immunization programs are usually haphazard. One community may include him in a local immunization program. A health record may be carried by his family to the next community. But the next place may be unprepared to follow through.

Migrant parents may take a young child with them to the fields or leave him to play by himself in the camp all day. An older child may be charged with the care of several younger children. Too many news reports record the results: children injured by farm machines or burned to death in a locked cabin where they had been left for the day. An amputation and several cases of mangled hands occurred among migrant children during the potato harvest in one western county in a single crop season.

Such services as public health and crippled children's clinics may be open to the migrant child, but his family may be unaware of them or may be shy about requesting health assistance. Moreover, these and other local health services may be scheduled at times and places inaccessible to a family with no means of transportation of its own and with a pressing need for both parents to work in order to earn as much as possible during the short crop season.

The family's lack of the usual protective health services, its delay in caring for minor ailments, and the special hazards of living and working conditions lead to a rather frequent need for medical care. The purchase of medical care, however, may cause the family severe deprivation, since the community public welfare resources to assist low-income residents are not generally available to transients, including members of migrant families. Neither are such organizations as the United Fund present in most rural communities. Thrown thus on its own resources, the migrant family may go without medical care except in an extreme emergency when free care may be provided by a local physician or some other individuals or groups. Church groups, civic clubs, and other voluntary organizations have played an important role in bridging the gap between migrant families and local health resources.

Community health resources. -- At best, local physicians, hospitals, and public health agencies equipped and organized to serve year-round residents are likely to be

What are the complementary roles of voluntary and public agencies, including agencies at different levels of government?

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL MIGRANT FAMILIES  
A Resource Paper for the 1960 White House Conference on  
Children and Youth

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL MIGRANT FAMILIES

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In early Spring every year, hundreds of thousands of American parents take their children out of school and pack them, along with pots, pans, bedding and other personal belongings, into jalopies or trucks, and trek east or west or north to every state of the Union except two, to cultivate and harvest fruit, vegetables, and cotton. These are called migratory workers. They have not chosen a nomadic life for the joy of it; rather they have been forced to leave their homes because there was no work for them. Their areas had been mechanized or industrialized, or imported labor had taken their jobs.

Some of these families have contracts with growers for specific work at specified localities; others are on their own, uncertain of their ultimate destination or whether they will find work, gambling against time, weather, and crops. Some are on the road only a few months and travel only a few hundred miles; others are moving for five or six months and may travel several thousand miles; some have no home at all but travel twelve months a year from one part of the country to another as crops ripen and hands are needed.

There are no accurate figures on the number of children in migratory families. The best estimate is 320,000 to half a million under the age of eighteen. About half accompany their parents as they move from job to job, and many work with their parents in the fields from early morning until dark, during school sessions and vacation periods. Some are as young as six. Children over nine

are usually considered working hands.

WHO ARE OUR DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL MIGRANTS

There are three cultural groups of American agricultural migrants and three basic migration routes or patterns. Along the Atlantic Coast, Negroes from Florida work their way up the eastern seaboard to New York and sometimes into New England. A small part of these migrants filters into the Great Lakes states. Since 1953 an increasing number of Spanish-Americans (of Puerto Rican and Texas-Mexican background) have entered this East Coast stream. These migrants usually travel in crews numbering as few as twenty to as many as 300, and many of them are accompanied by their children and older adults. Crew members operate under a crew leader who recruits them, supplies transportation, contracts work for them, arranges housing, and may provide other services as well. In return, the crew leader receives a percentage of each worker's earnings either in direct deductions or in commissions from the growers to whom he furnishes labor. Many crew leaders are honest and fulfill their contracts with their members fairly; others exploit their workers, misrepresenting wages and living conditions, providing unsafe transportation, and collecting fees both from the grower and from the worker.

The second stream (the largest of the three) originates in south Texas. These migrants are usually of Spanish-American descent; they travel in complex family groups--parents, children, grown children, grandchildren, and often grandparents and other relatives. During the winter they work in the vegetables in the

Texas Valley or in cotton in the Panhandle; during the summer they follow the sun northward. Some of them move only within the bounds of Texas, but the majority work their way up into the Mountain, Great Plain, and Great Lakes States and back to the cotton fields of West Texas. Some go on to Florida during January, February, and March for the citrus and vegetable harvests.

Merging into this central stream are Anglos from our South Central states. Some of these are small-farm owners; many are displaced sharecroppers.

The third major stream originates chiefly in California. Most of these migrants are also Spanish-American. The majority move from county to county within the state of California, but a large number work their way up the West Coast into Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Many of these also bring their children with them. (1)

The majority have had their roots in the soil for generations. Agricultural work has been the means of their livelihood for decades. They are at home in the fields, in the vineyards, and in the orchards; and they have skills in planting and harvesting that non-agricultural people have not. Farm work is their vocational way of life. Most of them have not had training or education or opportunity to do anything else.

#### FAMILY LIFE OF AGRICULTURAL MIGRANT CHILDREN

The family is the basic unit of our society. Parents have

prime responsibility for the care, nurture, and rearing of their children. However, in our interdependent society parents cannot provide all their children need for healthy growth and development. They must have adequate community resources to aid them, such as good neighborhood influences; enough regular income to provide a minimum standard of living; housing conducive to privacy, health, and decency; resources for health protection and medical care; education; religious guidance; recreation, and leisure time pursuits. Adequate community resources not only help parents in rearing children, they also influence the stability and relationships in family living.

Migrant families, by and large, have within them family strengths, warmth, and closeness. Many (especially the Spanish-speaking) maintain the cultural custom of unilateral authority in family life and zealously guard their family units. However, the conditions under which the majority live undermine the strengths of their family lives.

Mobility--The short time most migrant children spend at home between migrations is not long enough to allow them to sink roots in schools, social organizations, and friendships. They and their families may lose the sense of home. On the road, the migrant family is barred from participation in the community not only by the shortness of its stay in any one place, but also by the attitude of many local citizens and officials who do not want

migrants anywhere near their communities, much less right in their own institutions and social groups.

Low Income--Migrant children live in families that suffer from insecurity that goes along with unpredictable and unusually low incomes. The average migrant worker earned a mere \$859 a year in 1957. The average family earnings were probably less than \$1,800.<sup>(2)</sup> Adequate family living cannot be sustained when incomes are low and subject to uncertainty. The necessity to sustain a family by stretching inadequate income earned during a seven-to-nine-month period over an entire year requires a competence that most people do not have.

Housing--The children often live with their parents in shelters of poor construction; over-crowded; without running water, screening, refrigeration, or provision for garbage and trash disposal. Toilet facilities provide for neither decency nor essential sanitation. Cooking facilities are inadequate, and grounds are poorly drained.<sup>(3-4)</sup> Whole families frequently live, cook, and sleep in one room. Such housing can rob everyone in the family of self-respect. Parents can't give their children home backgrounds that protect and nurture them.

Less than half the states have mandatory legal standards for migrant labor camps, and only a few of these are adequate. In addition, a few states have advisory standards which do not authorize enforcement. Provisions for enforcement, that are as important as the standards, include the requirement of a license

or permit to operate and provision for inspection.(5) At times the only spur to action toward more adequate and healthful housing is the outbreak or threat of an epidemic such as typhoid.(6)

Unattached children--In addition to migrant children traveling with their families, there are also unattached children in some migratory labor groups. They are usually teenagers, who may be related to adult members of the group but who are traveling without their parents or legal guardians. These children present socio-legal considerations of serious concern. An adult in the group may have physical custody of the child because his parents gave permission for the child to travel with that adult. However, no specific person is responsible for the child's care, education, guidance, and supervision, when there is no legal guardian.

These unattached children lack protection from exploitation and abuse. No one has legal responsibility to act in their behalf in matters of employment, wage and hour protections, illness, accident, or legal difficulty. Many may be actually neglected; some are delinquent or pre-delinquent, and others runaways.

Local health and welfare authorities have no clear responsibility for these children, should they become indigent or delinquent, ill, or in need of special care. Also, they impose additional burdens on the migrant families with whom they travel and live.

Transportation and effect on family life--Vehicles used to transport migrant families are frequently mechanically unsafe to

the point of being potential death traps, severely overcrowded, and often without any kind of seats. (7) Distances traveled without permitting time for a rest stop are excessive. Families often travel all night without a stop. Rarely are there available rest-stop accommodations suited to the needs of family groups, even if time were allowed. Only a few local communities have provided decent rest center facilities. Only a few states have and enforce regulations on vehicles, driver qualifications, maximum hours of travel, etc. (8) In the absence of state regulations, some individual crew leaders take responsibility for the safe condition of their vehicles, give attention to distances traveled, and plan their itineraries to take advantage of adequate rest centers along the way. (9)

. Such conditions are very harmful. The father is powerless to shield his family from utter lack of privacy, to find a way to feed and bathe babies and young children, to control the environment in any way, even if a child takes sick. He is robbed of his importance in his own eyes and those of his family. The effect on the children's feeling of security is obvious.

#### THE MIGRANT CHILD'S STATUS IN COMMUNITY LIFE

Resented and rejected--Migrant children are often forbidden to play in community playgrounds or swim in community pools. Their families are often not welcome in community churches. They have been described as the "displaced persons of America," "stateless citizens," and the "most forgotten and neglected people in

our land." Although they are often essential to the economy of the rural communities in which they work, they usually are not accepted by the communities as human beings of dignity and intrinsic worth or as fellow citizens endowed with the same rights and privileges as all others. The attitudes of communities are often those of rejection and hostility. Signs, "Migrants not admitted," are displayed in the windows of some restaurants, shops, and movie theatres in some areas.

m Children and young people are the chief victims of loneliness and lack of community roots. They are deprived of the sense of belonging to something and prevented from participating in community activities that might contribute to growth and development as persons and citizens.

It is hard at best to adjust to a new community. Having to adjust several times during a year (with stay limited to a month one place, six weeks another, and often at most three months) presents almost insurmountable difficulties in establishing meaningful contacts with any individuals or groups outside of the immediate family. Children and youth who work in the fields from early morning until late in the day have little time or energy for leisure.

Little opportunity for group participation--Some organizations and agencies have developed service projects that offer opportunities for leisure time activities and group participation. (10-11-12) However, few (with the exception of some church groups)



have provided opportunities for membership or activities designed to meet the special needs and situations of migrant children. The nature of these special needs is highlighted by the questions raised by the Girl Scouts when that organization undertook a project to determine how its program could be made available to migrant girls:

"With the families on the move and in isolated living quarters, how could an on-going program be made available? Would this experience contribute to their security, adjustment and preparation for citizenship? With children living on scattered farms and far from other children, would it be possible to get a group of them together? Where could meeting places be found? Could the children pay the \$1.00 national membership fee? How could discrimination and prejudice be met? How would the language difference affect the project? Could indigenous leadership be recruited and trained? With what local, state, regional and federal agencies and organizations could the Girl Scouts work to serve the needs of migrant children? How could they keep track of this traveling membership?<sup>(13)</sup>

In this pilot program, the Girl Scouts have discovered ways both of involving migrant girls in meaningful club life and of giving continuity to membership. The experience offers clues about effective methods of providing recreational and community participation. The Girl Scouts point out, however, that the need is great and that the challenge to give these youth the oppor-

tunities that are part of the growing-up process for youngsters is one that needs the concerted efforts of voluntary and public agencies and organizations.

Lack equipment for leisure activities--Church groups, voluntary organizations, and government agencies working in migrant camps report that not only are the children deprived of the benefits of participation in group play and organized community activities, but, because of the basic poverty of their parents, they also have to do without toys, games, and sport equipment, which other American children have in such abundance. Nor do they own or have access to books, music, and art.

Child welfare services for migrant children--Child welfare services from public agencies are usually available to children and their parents without regard to residence, but payment for foster care, day care, or other costs are generally limited by residence restrictions. Child welfare services are generally not available to migrant children because some local communities in which they stay do not have such services. In others, limited staff cannot absorb the increased number of children for the short period migrants may be in the community; or by the time a service gets started, the family has moved on. Often residents have no concern for the welfare of migrant children and make no provision for services to them. Nevertheless, some communities have made specific efforts on their behalf.

Adequate care of infants and young children while both

parents are working in the field is a major problem facing migrant families. Some parents leave the children to the care of an older child; others bring them along to the fields. In some few and scattered sections of the country, day care centers provide for the children. A growing number are being developed through the efforts of the Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches and by some state child welfare agencies (some of the latter with federal welfare services funds). One state child welfare agency in Pennsylvania has developed a program of foster family care for infants. (14)

In this state, a child welfare agency has placed workers in counties where there are large numbers of migrant families, with services to this group their total function. These workers help parents to understand, locate, and use the resources in the community, such as well baby clinics, day care centers, etc. They work with parents to get children registered in school. They give casework services to individual families, and they encourage other social agencies to extend services to migrant families. Among the problems they deal with are unwed motherhood, emotionally disturbed children, desertion, frustration and discouragement of parents. (15)

Public assistance--Migrant families are generally excluded from eligibility for public assistance. (16) Under the state public assistance programs (which are financed by federal and state and/or local funds) financial assistance, medical care, and

social services may be made available to needy families. However, the great majority of states have established at least one year's residence as an eligibility requirement. Some states or localities have an emergency fund that may be used for very short periods (even as short as one day) in cases of dire need. In certain instances the public agency will pay to return the family to its state of legal residence, if it has one. However, if illness is the problem, the family may not be in a condition to be returned.

The migrant child at his home base--The problems of migrant children during the months they are at home are in many ways similar to those while they are on the road--poverty, poor housing, discrimination by local community groups because of color or national origin. Many families are not even eligible for welfare aid in what might be considered their place of residence because they have voluntarily been away for longer than a specified period during the year.

A report of the President's Committee concludes that the "statelessness" of many migrants is an effective barrier to their obtaining services.<sup>(17)</sup> Also the nature and extent of financial assistance offered and the conditions under which they may be available to the migrant family differ so widely from locality to locality and from state to state that the migrants hardly can realistically expect help from their government in a period of need or crisis. There is "no common denominator of service."<sup>(18)</sup>

### THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

The lack of educational opportunities for the children of migrant families perpetuates a threat of illiteracy of serious proportions for the migrants as individuals, for the states and regions where they live, and for the nation as a whole. Relatively few attend school regularly.

Studies show that most of these children are far below grade level and that their school achievement generally is under fourth grade (the attainment established as a minimum standard for literacy in the U.S.A.). The United States Office of Education reports that the migrant group has the lowest educational attainment of any group in our nation. (19)

Many factors work against school attendance of these children.

(1) School attendance often does not seem worthwhile to them or their parents in view of the fact that they do not stay long in any one place. The child who moves from place to place, often with little or no advance notice, is constantly a stranger to the school, usually bringing no record and having little chance for continuity in his school experiences.

(2) Migrant children are often rejected by resident children and their parents. A child who is constantly made to feel that he is not worth bothering about, or is of no real concern, may regress from bewilderment to belligerence or, even more tragically, to an apathetic acceptance of his apparent worthlessness.

Such a child becomes virtually uneducable.

(3) Lack of financial support to enable local schools to provide for the children of migrants often makes them an unacceptable burden. Underlying this difficulty is the lack of a tax base for raising needed funds. Although migrant families admittedly add to the wealth of a community through their actual work and direct spending, the school coffers usually are not enriched in proportion to the increase in migrant school-age population. It is not uncommon for the number of school-age children in a community to increase to three or four times the resident school population during the crop peaks. (20)

(4) Many school boards and school personnel are apathetic about recognizing the education of these children as a civic and moral responsibility. School leaders in communities where attitudes of residents are negative and financial support is strained often find it more expedient to close their eyes to the presence of migrant children of school age in the neighborhood, rather than to take the lead in bringing them into school. There are, however, notable exceptions to this pattern. Some local communities, usually aided by foundation funds, have made great progress in educating some migrant children. Also several state departments of education are attempting to find ways to finance educational programs.

In some instances, voluntary agencies, such as the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Catholic Women, provide non-public educational experiences within the limitations

of their resources. These are usually in the nature of summer school schools. Of note are seven summer schools for migrant children in four rural counties in southern Michigan, sponsored by the Detroit Council of Catholic Women. Six of these are staffed by Marygrove College, Detroit; and the seventh, by Siena Heights College, Adrian, Michigan. During the six years this program has been in operation, more than 2,000 migrant children have attended. Attendance increases yearly due primarily to efforts by the sponsoring group to convince migrant parents of the value of education for their children. In the summer of 1959, 440 migrant children were enrolled in these seven summer schools. In September, the parents of 102 enrolled them in the public and parochial rural schools for the duration of their stay in the areas. (21)

An outstanding vocational-type summer school is in New Jersey, developed by the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches. It involves boys and girls of two adjacent migratory labor camps. During the time they were not in the fields, the boys were taught to build, under supervision, a twelve by twelve cabin complete with doors, windows, screens, hardware, and painted inside and out during the time they were not in the fields. The girls, in a cabin nearby, were taught homemaking, health and sanitation habits, sewing, nutrition and cooking. They made curtains for the cabin, clothing for themselves, and prepared and served supper every evening to all the children working on the two projects during the five weeks period. (22)

Through interest, encouragement, and grants by the National Child Labor Committee, <sup>(23)</sup> and through grants and efforts of local units of the National Council of Churches, Catholic organizations, colleges and volunteer groups, summer schools for migrant children are conducted in other areas of the country. These measures, although valuable, include relatively few children, and these groups cannot begin to cope with the problem permanently. Also, summer schools are not adequate substitutes for regular attendance at school during the scheduled school year.

(5) Many schools and teachers fail to understand and provide for the special educational problems of migrants. Even when the migrant children are welcomed into the school, there is the problem of gearing school experiences to their immediate needs. The school is faced with the problem of identifying the academic achievement of each migrant child and placing him where he can make the most progress. The teacher, whose classroom may already be crowded, is challenged to do everything possible to help these children (as well as the regular pupils) live happily in the school. This requires much individual teaching and personal attention. When hundreds of these children come and go in a school year, educators are expected to deal with almost insurmountable problems. The teachers in such situations must be highly qualified and truly dedicated to the welfare of children.

(6) Many migrant parents show lack of interest, initiative, or knowledge about getting their children into school. Parents



who have been deprived of normal educational and social experiences, who need the income the children may earn, or who need the older children to care for the younger ones cannot be expected (without special guidance) to understand how essential education is in modern society, both for their own children and for civic welfare.

These factors add up to deprive the children of agricultural migrants of educational privileges equal to those of other children. As a result, children of migrants enter school later, attend fewer days, show greatest retardation, achieve the least progress, drop out of school earliest, and constitute the largest single reservoir of illiterates.

#### EMPLOYMENT AND CHILD LABOR OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

Migrant children at work--Agriculture is the only "big business" in the nation today that employs large numbers of children and that depends to any great extent on the labor of children. The work of children in agriculture is the greatest unsolved child labor problem in the country. A substantial segment of the labor force that cultivates and harvests the nation's crops is children, and migrant children constitute a large proportion. In July, 1957, an estimated 457,000 children ten to fifteen years old did paid agricultural work. Of these, more than half were children ten to thirteen years old. (24)

Although no complete figures are available on the number of migrant children who work, experience in local areas shows that many are hired along with their parents. For example, a study of

migrant workers in Oregon in the summer of 1958 shows that at least one-fourth were working out of roughly 800 children under twelve who accompanied their parents.<sup>(25)</sup> In recent years, findings of the Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions show that about forty per cent of all children under sixteen found working in agriculture during school hours are migrants.<sup>(26)</sup> In 1958, Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions' investigators found 4,491 children under sixteen years of age employed during school hours on 1,944 farms. Of these, 1,297 (twenty-nine per cent) were fourteen and fifteen years of age; 2,361 (fifty-two per cent) were between ten and thirteen and 833 (nineteen per cent) were nine or under. Sixty-one had never been in school at all.

Legal protection--Children who work in agriculture have little legal protection, compared with those who work in industry or other commercial occupations. While the Fair Labor Standards Act sets a minimum age of sixteen for employment during school hours, it sets none for outside-school-hours or vacation employment. The Sugar Act sets a minimum age of fourteen and an eight-hour day for minors fourteen and fifteen. Only ten states set a minimum for outside school hours employment in agriculture. These range from ten to fourteen years. Fewer than one-third of the states sets a minimum age for employment in agriculture even during school hours. In a number of states where the minimum age in the law might be presumed to

apply to employment in agriculture, in practice, employment certificates are not required, and the law is not enforced on farms. Lack of protective legislation is one factor that makes child labor profitable.

Hazards of agricultural work--The hazards of employment in agriculture are well known. Migrant children work in an industry that ranked fourth among all industries in 1958 in the total number of disabling accidents. In the same year, 3,300 agricultural workers were killed-- more fatalities than in any other major industry. While complete data on the extent to which children are involved in these accidents are not available, scattered reports indicate that children under fourteen were involved in more than forty-three per cent of the recorded farm accidents to youngsters under eighteen in 1958. (27)

Vocational future--Most migrant children have few opportunities to prepare for other occupations than those in agriculture. In most schools, vocational guidance programs are scheduled over the whole school year. Migrant children who attend school for only a brief period cannot receive the training, testing, group guidance, and individual counseling that are normally spread out over the total period. Because they are always behind other children who have had all the services, and because they do not know how they could carry out any plans they made, they tend to feel that vocational planning is impossible or useless. Migrant children seldom reach the senior

year in high school, where they could get year around program of the public employment service for employment counseling, aptitude testing, registration, and placement.

Earnings needed-- The earnings of migrant children are often considered essential to family survival, because parents earn so little. This is one of the reasons for the high incidence of child labor. There will be little prospect of keeping the children out of the fields until provision is made for their care and schooling while their parents are at work, until they are covered by child labor laws, and particularly until the economic level of the family is improved.

#### HEALTH OF MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

A child who lives in a single community throughout the year shares the health protection and services afforded all local children. Most incorporated communities have public water supplies and sewage systems to safeguard local families against diseases caused by poor sanitation. In many, local public health clinics promote immunization programs to control communicable disease, advise expectant mothers on the protection of their own health and that of their unborn child, and make other services available to protect and promote the good health of local families.

Added to these protective services for the resident child are the remedial services of local physicians and hospitals and

the financial assistance provided by local welfare agencies when the family itself cannot meet the costs of needed medical and hospital care. (28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35)

Health problems of the migrant child--The migrant child, on the other hand, may live with his family at the end of a country road in a one-room cabin, tent, or barracks in a labor camp. His temporary "home" may be outside the jurisdiction of any agency with responsibility for safe drinking water, approved waste disposal, and maintenance of other health and safety standards. His opportunities to benefit from such protective services as local immunization programs are usually haphazard. One community may include him in a local immunization program. A health record may be carried by his family to the next community. But the next place may be unprepared to follow through.

Migrant parents may take a young child with them to the fields or leave him to play by himself in the camp all day. An older child may be charged with the care of several younger children. Too many news-reports record the results: children injured by farm machines or burned to death in a locked cabin where they had been left for the day. An amputation and several cases of mangled hands occurred among migrant children during the potato harvest in one western county in a single crop season.

Such services as public health and crippled children's clinics may be open to the migrant child, but his family may be

unaware of them or may be shy about requesting health assistance. Moreover, these and other local health services may be scheduled at times and places inaccessible to a family with no means of transportation of its own and with a pressing need for both parents to work in order to earn as much as possible during the short crop season.

The family's lack of the usual protective health services, its delay in caring for minor ailments, and the special hazards of living and working conditions lead to a rather frequent need for medical care. The purchase of medical care, however, may seem severe family deprivation, since the community public welfare resources to assist low-income residents are not generally available to transients, including members of migrant families. Neither are such organizations as the United Fund present in most rural communities. Thrown thus on its own resources, the migrant family may go without medical care except in an extreme emergency when free care may be provided by a local physician or some other individuals or groups. Church groups, civic clubs, and other voluntary organizations have played an important role in bridging the gap between migrant families and local health resources.

Community health resources--At best, local physicians, hospitals, and public health agencies equipped and organized to serve year-round residents are likely to be handicapped in serving a temporary influx of migrants. Few communities have

discovered ways to extend health services to families who live in the area for only a short time. Moreover, migrant families often differ from other residents in health knowledge, attitudes and customs, so that the best-intentioned efforts of local health workers may founder on misunderstanding.

Some communities have shown great ingenuity in overcoming these handicaps and in planning ways to extend local health services to migrants. But the efforts in one community are seldom linked to those in another. As a migrant family moves from place to place, it finds wide differences in services and the conditions under which they are offered, as well as differences in the readiness of local physicians and public health workers to serve them.

Physical and mental health status--Although the migrant family's health problems and its disadvantages in obtaining health protection and medical care are widely recognized, specific facts are meager concerning the results in terms of the physical health of family members. They generally share the health problems of other families handicapped by poverty, minority group status, lack of knowledge, and geographic or social isolation. Poor nutrition, diarrheal disease, impetigo, respiratory infections, and other ailments are often reported. A study of migrant health in a Western state in 1950 found that the infant mortality rate among migrants was nearly twice that for the state, and that more than a third of the births in a

five year period were not attended by a physician. A Fresno County study points out the higher diarrheal disease rates among children in a labor camp situation where housing is poor and water supplies are inadequate.

The mental health hazards of migrant living are usually unrecognized. The alcoholism and occasional outbreaks of violence in labor camps are looked upon as reflecting low moral standards or lawlessness rather than as indicating possible mental illness directly related to the suppression and tensions of migrant living.

Mobility chosen for recreational purposes is a healthful outlet for families. The effect on mental health of mobility created by economic and social factors beyond the individual's control, on the other hand, can only be conjectured. Rejection or open hostility toward the migrant family also contribute to insecurity that can only be emotionally disturbing. The child brought up in such an atmosphere can hardly be expected to have a healthy, wholesome, outlook conducive to good social adjustment.

Role of Federal Agencies- The federal government plays an indirect role in the migrant health situation. Through the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau, it makes grants-in-aid to assist states in conducting their public health, maternal and child health, and crippled children's programs. Residence requirements are not imposed. Each state develops its own basic plan of service in which federal funds will be utilized. This plan must conform to certain general requirements set by the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau for their respec-



tive grants-in-aid programs. However, plans vary greatly from one state to another. Even within states there is wide variation, since counties or multi-county health districts have wide latitude in planning their local public health services and expenditures.

In addition to financial aid to the states through the grant programs, the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau play an advisory role, encouraging state public health agencies to look at their own situations and to adjust their programs, if necessary, to meet identified problems. The two agencies also provide information and advice to voluntary groups interested in promoting health improvement among migrant families.

The federal government has no grant-in-aid program for general assistance, the welfare program through which indigents normally receive financial aid including medical care. This program is wholly a state and local responsibility. Under the general assistance program in most localities, residence of at least one year is required to receive more than emergency medical and hospital care.

#### SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS NEEDS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

Migrant children lack the opportunity our resident children have of establishing close ties with their home churches and of regularly attending church and Sunday School. On the road, community apathy and hostility make it difficult for them to relate to the churches. Even in localities where they might be welcome

in churches, they often have to work on Sundays, or they don't have transportation, or they don't have shoes or adequate clothing. Consequently, most migrant children have little religious instruction and spiritual guidance. Many have only what they receive from their parents.

Many migrant parents have held to their religious beliefs and faith in God, and pass them on to their children as best they can. Lack of delinquency among migrant children is sometimes attributed to the religious precepts and concepts of moral conduct held by their parents, plus the authority parents exercise.

Since migrant children usually cannot go to church, the church goes to them. In some situations, ministers are members of the migrant group, serve as "shepherds of the flock," and hold religious services in camp. The desire of some groups of migrants to have their own church has led to the erection of chapels in a few camps. The migrants, the community, and the farmers have worked together to build them.

The National Council of Churches, state and local Councils of Churches, and Councils of Church Women representing Protestant Churches work together in the Migrant Ministry in thirty-three states. The Ministry encourages the inclusion of migrants in the fellowship of the churches in each community and develops religious services in the camps, counsels families, and ministers to them in times of trouble. It trains students and sends them to work with migrants. Mobile Bible units travel from camp to camp.

For Catholic Spanish-speaking migrants, the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish-Speaking, priests, Catholic colleges, and the National Councils of Catholic Men and Women have extensive programs throughout the country. These usually are on a parish basis in the local areas where migrants work and under the direction of the local pastor, although often supplemented by personnel from outside the parish. The Ordinaries of some Dioceses employ Spanish-speaking priests and religious orders from Mexico, who understand the language and the customs of the Spanish-speaking migrants, to help in Diocesan migrant programs. Although these programs are primarily of a spiritual and religious nature, they also include educational summer schools, recreational activities, and family health and welfare services. (36)

However, all these efforts combined reach only a small proportion of migrant children. A spot check of 133 local areas in twenty-four states shows that only about thirty-five percent were reached in those areas where there was any religious ministry at all. (37)

Although these programs, in the areas where they are conducted, help keep migrant children from growing up in a spiritual vacuum and help dissolve prejudices among parish and other community groups, they do not eliminate their spiritual and religious problems. Only when society itself recognizes and aggressively works on the basic problems of migrant health, education, spiritual guidance, housing, transportation, wages, hours, and community services will migrant children have a chance to attain their full potentialities.

SUMMARY

Child deprivation continues to be associated with family migration to work in agriculture. Major sources of this deprivation include:

The double jeopardy endured by many migrant children by reason of their color or ethnic origin and by reason of their parents' occupation and enforced mobility.

The rural setting of the work done by migrant families and the inadequacy or unavailability of some services in rural areas, not only for migrant children and their parents but for permanent residents.

The typical inflexibility of local service programs which are planned, organized, and financed to fit the needs of local residents usually do not fit the needs of transients, especially persons who differ in cultural background from local residents.

Associated handicaps include the social and economic instability of migrant family living with its potential risks to physical and mental health; the frequent necessity for a child's economic contribution because of family poverty; the lack of opportunity for the migrant child and his family to feel accepted and to participate in community life; the lack of opportunity for experiences through family living and continuous and satisfying relationships outside of the migrant group to prepare them for adequate functioning and participation in our society. Moreover, few communities have a feeling of responsibility toward migrants similar to their feeling of responsibility toward permanent residents. And few community service programs--even those well staffed and equipped--have sufficient flexibility in laws, regulations, and operating policies and methods to accommodate

readily to the needs of migrant children and their families even if the community willed that they do so.

Certain issues constantly recur in any discussion of migrant children and their families, whether the concern is with family living, health, education, employment and child labor, or some other aspect of the migrant situation. The following are some of the recurring issues:

1. The continued inequality of migrant children and their families as compared with other citizens in the protection, opportunity, and services offered under law in the fields of--

Employment conditions

Minimum wage  
Unemployment compensation  
Child labor protection  
Workmen's compensation

Education

School attendance

Basic economic support

Aid to the indigent including the medically indigent

Housing and sanitation

Transportation including opportunities for overnight or other rest stops

Local police protection

2. The continued sporadic local efforts on behalf of migrant children and their families with little or no consideration of--

The need for integrating the services in one locality with those in another--health, education, religious, etc. and other services which require continuity to realize their potential benefit

The need for integrating one type of service with other related services--e.g., medical and hospital care may be made available to migrant families with little concern shown for the poor housing and poor sanitation, mode of transportation, and occupational risks that give rise to illness and accidents.

The need for migrant children and their families to become part of--not separated from--local communities. Question: How can community services be extended to migrants without setting them apart from the community?

3. The continued inadequacy of services in many rural areas not only for migrant children and families but also for other residents. Among the services that are poorly developed or non-existent in many rural areas are protective health services, child welfare services, and organized recreational programs for children and adults.

4. Continued reliance on migrant labor force in agriculture without guarantees of minimum wage or continuity or employment and readily subject to exploitation because of their minority group status, lack of education, and lack of employment alternatives.

To what extent can the need for migration be reduced?

How can dignity and a sense of personal worth be given to workers whose labor is necessary and of value to all consumers, as well as to the particular localities where the work is performed?

To the extent that migration is necessary, how can its handicaps for children and families be overcome?

For example--

How can children and family service agencies-- public and voluntary--coordinate their services within and between communities so there will be an integrated program to meet the special needs of migrant children and families without setting them apart from the communities where they live temporarily?

What knowledge is available and what knowledge is needed for this purpose?

What varieties of educational or training experience can be planned to prepare professional leaders?

What laws can be applied and what adaptations of laws or new laws are necessary?

How can enterprises such as child care centers, summer schools, and recreational projects aid in eliminating undesirable child labor?

What are the complementary roles of voluntary and public agencies, including agencies at different levels of government?

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