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In latest report -
Write: Mr. Edwin W. Kirk,
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Comm. on Farm and
Food Processing
Labor
Albany, N. Y.



N. Y.

Report of
New York State Interdepartmental
Committee on
Farm and Food Processing Labor
1954

FOREWORD

The Interdepartmental Committee on Farm and Food Processing Labor was established in 1943 by the Governor. Its primary objective is to improve the living and working conditions in New York State of those people who come to this state to help in the harvesting and processing of the farm crops.

The Committee includes in its membership representatives of nine State departments or agencies concerned in some way with the seasonal farm laborer and his family. These agencies are the New York State Departments of Agriculture and Markets, Education, Executive (State Police), Health, Labor (Division of Employment and Division of Industrial Relations, Women in Industry and Minimum Wage), and Social Welfare; also, the Extension Service of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University and the Youth Commission.

The Interdepartmental Committee attempts to improve the effectiveness of each of these State agencies by providing an opportunity for joint planning, mutual assistance and communication, improved understanding, study and evaluation of programs and problems.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON FARM AND
FOOD PROCESSING LABOR

GOVERNOR ALFRED E. SMITH STATE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK

Elton K. Hanks, Chairman

Harry N. Haight, Executive Director

Committee Membership and Their Representatives

AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS.....C. Chester DuMond, Commissioner
(Harry N. Haight)

EDUCATION.....Dr. Lewis A. Wilson, Commissioner
(Bruce E. Shear, Robert Minnich)

EXECUTIVE

State Police.....Albin S. Johnson, Superintendent
(Captain Eugene F. Hoyt, Sergeant Eugene V. Foster)

HEALTH.....Dr. Herman E. Hilleboe, Commissioner
(Dr. Walter C. Levy, Miss Eleanor Gochanour, Dr. J.J. Quinlivan,
Earl Devendorf, Andrew F. Allen)

LABOR.....Edward F. Corsi, Commissioner
Division of Employment
(Nelson F. Hopper)
Division of Industrial Relations,
Women in Industry, Minimum Wage
(Mrs. Emily Sims Marconnier, Daniel A. Daly)

SOCIAL WELFARE.....Raymond W. Houston, Commissioner
(David S. Hurwitz, Bernard Shapiro)

EXTENSION SERVICE OF THE NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
at CORNELL UNIVERSITY.....L. R. Simons, Director of Extension
(Elton K. Hanks, Howard E. Thomas)

YOUTH COMMISSION.....Lee C. Dowling, Executive Director
(Lincoln Daniels)

Report of the
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON FARM AND FOOD PROCESSING LABOR
1954

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The office of the Executive Director of the Interdepartmental Committee on Farm and Food Processing Labor is so closely allied to that of the Farm Labor Coordinator of the Department of Agriculture and Markets that this contribution may serve as the report of both offices.

The Executive Director served as such through the courtesy of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets who permits the expenses of this office to be carried in this budget. The work of the Executive Director includes liaison between employer, employee and the department or agency concerned. He has endeavored to keep informed regarding the laws and regulations, both federal and state, affecting these operations and on occasion aided in reaching a solution to problems. He also acted as a representative of New York State at the meetings of the Continuing Committee, composed of representatives of the East Coast States interested in migrant labor. While the accomplishments of such a committee are sometimes intangible, it is felt that a better understanding regarding the mutual problems of these states resulted.

The Executive Director also attended meetings of the Home Missions Division of the National Council of Churches and served on its Advisory Committee concerned with migrant problems. He also presented talks before lay groups and on the radio, giving information on the subject of migrants. He visited more than 100 migrant camps and, in many cases where problems had arisen, made return inspections.



Typical scenes at child care centers

	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
No. of centers	8	10	10	14	14
No. of children	490	500	575	724	680
Under 2	140	143	155	222	218
2 to 6	216	225	245	324	329
6 through 9	109	103	135	143	112
10 to 14	25	29	40	35	21
No. of child days	11,832	13,800	15,725	19,285	19,003
Cost of Operation	\$41,022.11	\$53,393.90	\$55,705.68	\$57,371.60	\$59,845.47*
Cost per child per day	\$3.47	\$3.87	\$3.54	\$2.97	\$3.15*

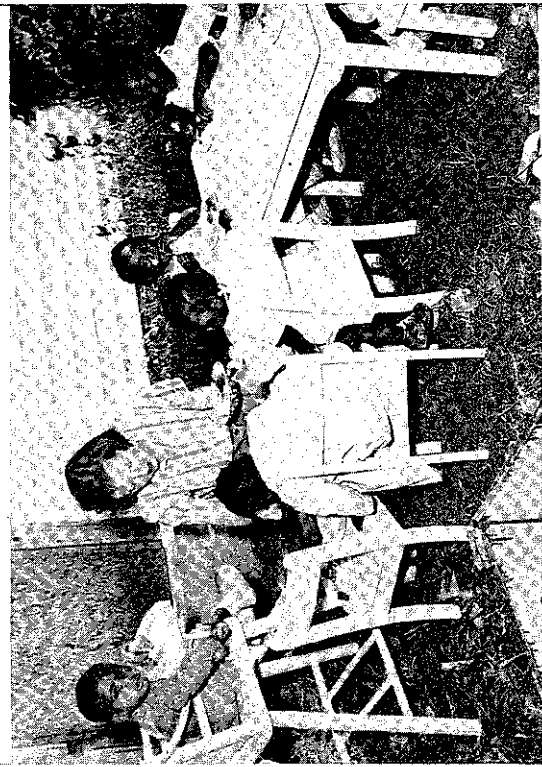
*Estimated

There was a decrease in the number of children in child care centers as compared with the preceding year, particularly in the older age group, although the number of child care centers remained unchanged.

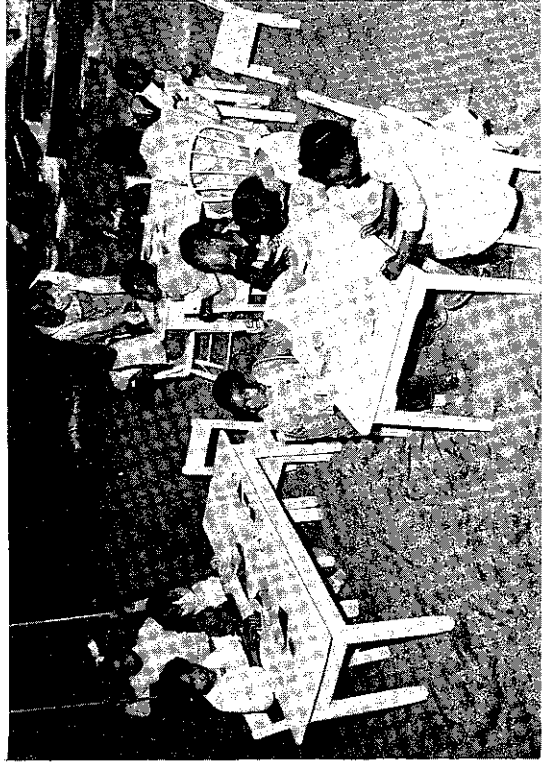
EDUCATION

Problems of planning for the provision of educational opportunities for migrant children are extremely difficult for a variety of reasons. Even the problem of placement (where they belong in the school in order that they may gain the utmost advantage therefrom) is difficult for little, ordinarily, is known about their previous educational attainment. The New York State Education Department assisted in developing a two-way attack on this problem. State progress tests in reading and mathematics were supplied to a number of schools desiring to use them in an effort to learn what progress had been made by our migrant children in these areas. In addition, transfer and record cards, supplied by the U. S. Office of Education, were distributed to local schools enrolling migrant children. The reports were given to migrant children when they left for other schools and will be of considerable help to receiving schools in serving these children.

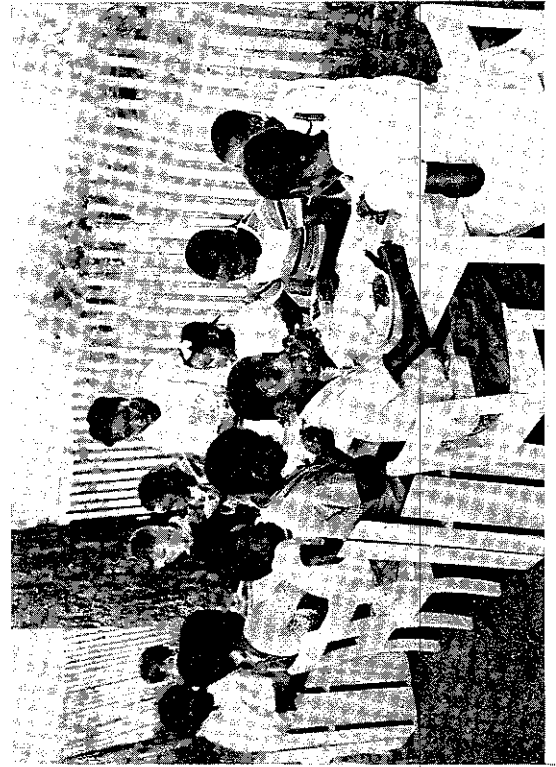
The New York State Department of Education representative participated actively in a meeting of the East Coast States Group called by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Prior to this meeting he had undertaken a careful study of problems of transfer and had developed a sample transfer record which received considerable interest and acceptance at the meeting and served as the basis for a new form now to be used by a great number of other states. Much favorable publicity regarding the migrant problem centered around this meeting. It is expected that considerable benefit to migrant children will result from the acceptance of the transfer record and the use of practices related thereto.



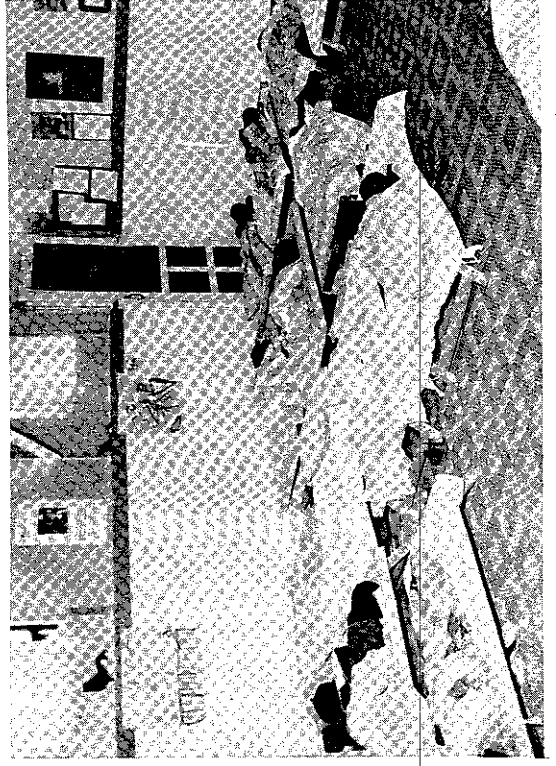
Feeding time for the "small fry"



Older children enjoy well-prepared meal



Nursery school instruction



Rest period

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT FARM CHILDREN
by
AGE AND GRADE, 1954

GRADES	AGES												TOTAL	
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		16
Special				1	3	6	3	5	5	6	2			31
K	17	66	30	3										116
1	2	30	130	62	15	6	1							246
2		3	35	87	61	22	7	8	2					225
3			2	26	77	55	37	11	4	2				214
4				1	30	75	55	34	16	5	1			217
5						24	57	51	19	11	14	1	2	179
6						3	20	68	52	22	17	6	1	189
7							1	19	51	34	33	10	1	149
8									15	34	26	11	4	90
9									1	6	27	17	7	58
10										3	5	9	9	26
11												4	9	13
12														0
TOTAL	19	99	197	180	186	191	181	196	165	123	125	58	33	1,753

The Education Department continued its practice of supervising employment certification and mailing letters to camp owners and local administrators urging cooperation in making education possible for all migrant children. The function of local visits was considerably curtailed by the resignations of two of the three supervisors in the attendance section. It is hoped that, following filling these vacancies, more attention can be given to this responsibility.



Decided improvement was noticeable in 1954 in farm labor camps. The newer buildings of concrete block usually include modern kitchen facilities.



Volunteers from local communities or field workers from the Council of Churches find women and girls interested in their handicraft projects.

HEALTH

In 1954, only one outbreak of gastroenteritis was reported as having occurred among the migrant labor camp population. Communicable disease problems are handled by county health department or district health office staff in the same manner as for the population outside the camps. Local health units provided treatment for venereal disease cases for which reports were received, as follows: Early syphilis, 21; late syphilis, 63; gonorrhea, 117.

An important accomplishment was the establishment by the Public Health Council of a new chapter of the Sanitary Code, Chapter XV, regulating farm and food processing labor camps. Arrangements were completed to place the program of enforcing the new chapter in operation on the effective date. The new chapter includes certain specific requirements which the Public Health Council was authorized to establish under legislation enacted in 1954. One of the objectives of the new program is an improvement in the quality of housing.

Fires occurred in several camps during the year. Fires also occurred in other properties which had been camps and in which a few persons were still living. Several deaths occurred and several persons were seriously burned. The chief causes of fires are reported to be smoking in bed and the overturning of oil burning portable heaters. In no case did the inspection prior to the occurrence of the fire disclose any violation of the requirements for fire protection or escape from fire.

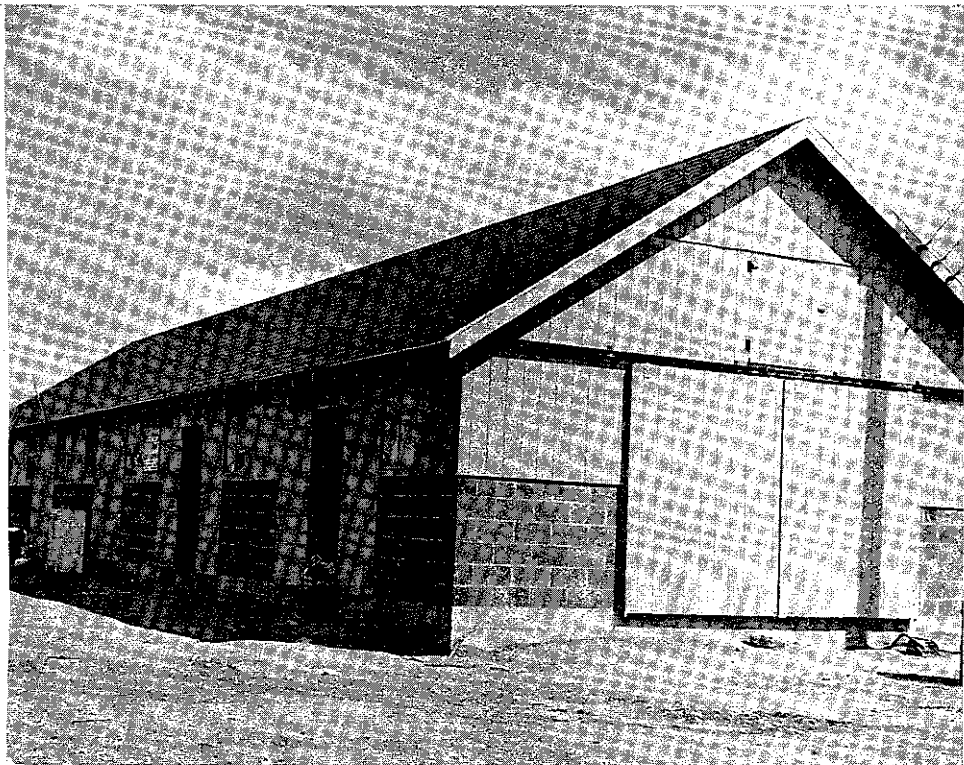
This report is based upon information from thirty-five of the forty reporting field administrative offices, supervising about 88% of the camps. The following data are, therefore, not entirely comparable with the data for previous years.

For the 838 actual or potential migrant camp properties there were 5,317 inspections made. This was an average of 6.3 inspections per property. The 634 camps having ten or more occupants were inspected on the average about nine times. As camps are occupied on the average about 100 days, the inspections average about one in eleven days. Besides the inspections mentioned above, there were 1,300 conferences held with owners, operators or occupants, making an over-all average of eight service calls per property under supervision.

The Sanitary Code requires that camps must have a permit to operate. These permits are issued on an annual basis or on a temporary basis for not more than one month. Permits were issued to 624 farm labor camps. Twelve camps, in operation only a short period, were operating under temporary permits at the time they closed. Nine camps were denied permits and operation of the camps ceased. Twenty-three other camps were operating without a permit when they closed. Some camps were not found by the inspectors until just before they closed. The above figures account for more than 634 camps in operation during 1954 as permits were issued to a few properties which never had ten or more occupants even though it was considered likely that they would.



Acee Camp, new in 1953, Westmoreland, Oneida County



Clark Mills Camp, Whitestown, Oneida County
Dual purpose building tp be used later for machinery storage.

If the reports were available from the five counties which have not submitted reports, the number of camps, the number established and the number abandoned would be larger than shown on the table. It is estimated that some 718 camps had ten or more occupants. This would be an increase of about 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ % during 1954. The number for the maximum population is that which occurred about Labor Day and it reflects an increase of 19% as compared with 1953.

The number of new camps established each year varies widely and the number abandoned continues without much change. However, the appreciable number of camps established and abandoned each year are factors of workload involved in the supervision of the camps. The determination of abandonment usually was based on one or more inspections.

In addition to the 634 camps reported in the table, 204 more properties were under supervision during the year as potential camps. Practically all of them were inspected one or more times. A few were issued permits to operate, but none ever became a camp as legally defined, by having ten or more occupants.

The 136 camps established during the year constituted 21% of the camps operated. This is an increase in the percentage of new camps as compared with 1953. These new properties require more supervision than those previously in operation. Frequently, they are initially found to have many violations and account for many of the violations noted in this report.

In the enforcement of the Labor Department's Industrial Code Rule 3, there were twelve cannery labor camps inspected by the Health Department, a considerable reduction in the number of these properties from those considered to have existed in previous years.

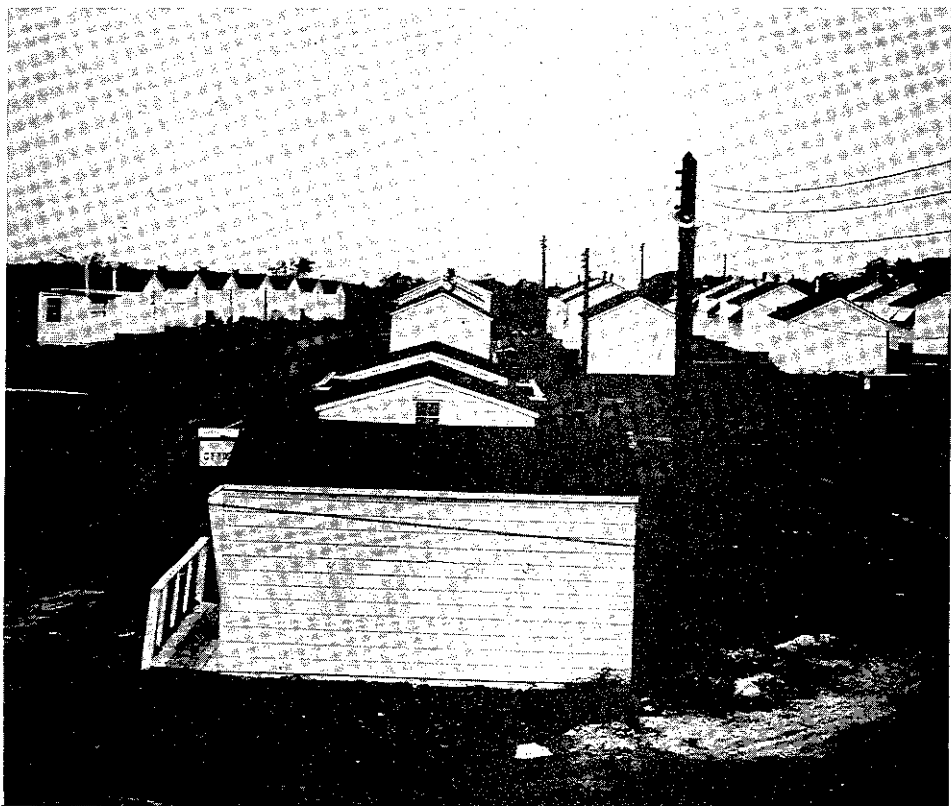
Fourteen man-months of nursing service were used this year. At the beginning of the season, all districts, cities and counties to which a camp nurse could not be assigned were requested to visit the camps in their areas to acquaint the owners with health services that were available and to leave their telephone numbers for emergency coverage. Such services requested varied in different areas. As people became acquainted with the service they were more inclined to ask for help.

Nurses were generally employed to give service in the larger camps as in previous years. This service to migrant workers continued to offer the same programs as those available to the general population with some emphasis on the control of communicable disease because of the crowded living conditions. Prenatal caseload continued to be fairly heavy. Many of the women quite frankly say that although they will not have a full season's work because of their pregnancies, they still prefer to come here since it is possible to obtain hospital care. In a few instances the families were able to pay for a part of this care. The nursing follow-up on venereal disease seemed to create more problems this year. The incidence was not higher but the contacts seemed to be in county population rather than in the camp population which made follow-up difficult.

The distribution of nursing visits according to type of visit shows sixty per cent of the visits were made for health guidance including child health supervision, twenty-two per cent were antepartum visits and postpartum visits and eleven per cent were for the control of communicable diseases including tuberculosis.



Four-family barracks at Ernest Camp, Whitestown, Oneida County



Camp of single-family houses at Williamson, Wayne County

LABOR - Employment Service

Local

Recruitment of local labor was not a problem in 1954. For the first time in many years it became apparent that the hired man who had left the farm several years ago for industrial occupations was willing to consider the security of a year-round farm job. These individuals appeared in increasing numbers in local Employment Service offices as the year passed. Farmers, however, faced with a declining farm income, hesitate to hire the man with a large family and a lack of knowledge of modern mechanized farm equipment. Single men, on the other hand, remained in demand throughout the year.

The harvest season found the local supply of seasonal labor magnified. Local Employment Service offices were by-passed as urban families drove directly to farms in search of harvest work. Many food processors reported a "waiting list" of local women interested in food processing work. Day-haul operations reported surplus labor pools during much of the summer.

Intrastate

Farm Cadets - The increased availability of local labor and the effect of lower incomes on dairy farms in upstate areas was reflected in a decrease of 12.5% from last year in the placement of Farm Cadets. This was a continuation of a trend begun in 1953 when a decrease of 5% from the previous year occurred in the placement of farm cadets.

In 1954, a total of 730 New York City high school youths were placed in 13 counties and supervised by a farm cadet supervisor. An additional 74 unsupervised youths were placed in upstate areas through the Farm Cadet Program.

DISTRIBUTION OF FARM CADETS BY COUNTIES NEW YORK - 1954

Columbia	38
Delaware & Otsego	125
Dutchess	9
Greene	112
Herkimer	83
Oneida	17
Orange	57
St. Lawrence	75
Schoharie	79
Suffolk	21
Sullivan	80
Ulster	34
Unsupervised	<u>74</u>
Total	804

TABLE I

Estimated Utilization of Southern Migrants
in New York at Peak Periods by Counties with
Comparison of 1953

	<u>1954</u>	<u>1953</u>		<u>1954</u>	<u>1953</u>
Allegany	130	130	Niagara	450	426
Broome	200	200	Oneida	3309	2260
Cayuga	1785	1650	Onondaga	130	150
Chautauqua	400	375	Ontario	375	175
Chenango	1270	1237	Orange	300	200
Columbia	600	450	Orleans	2300	2300
Cortland	100	100	Oswego	683	625
Delaware	20	20	Otsego	100	100
Dutchess	700	750	Rockland	75	75
Erie	365	300	Saratoga	125	125
Genesee	740	700	Seneca	50	50
Herkimer	748	600	Steuben	2923	2374
Livingston	656	565	Suffolk	6000	6000
Monroe	1400	1050	Wayne	3000	2500
Madison	1670	1879	Ulster	1000	1000
Montgomery	103	50	Wyoming	460	369
			Yates	150	150
			Total	32,317	28,935

Table II (below) indicates the size and number of migrant crews which came to New York in 1954 as compared to 1953. The table does not include all southern migrant workers who came to the State, but is an accurate record of those crews on whom work records were prepared by the field staff throughout the operating season.

TABLE II

Survey of Size & Number of Migrant Crews
Coming to New York in 1953 - 1954

Size of Crews (No. of Workers)	No. of Crews		No. of Workers	
	<u>1954</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1953</u>
1 - 25	217	284	3497	4146
26 - 50	179	156	6458	5551
51 - 75	65	42	4014	2517
76 -100	18	27	1553	2354
Over 100	<u>21</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>3141</u>	<u>2724</u>
Total	500	526	18,663	17,292

Out-of-Country Labor

Puerto Rican - Plentiful supplies of labor from domestic sources in 1954 resulted in a decreased need of both contract and non-contract Puerto Rican workers for farm and food processing. Five farm labor cooperatives and nine private employers requested certification of need for 3,173 contract workers; this compares with requests for 3,802 contract workers in 1953. Actually, an estimated 2,600 were employed in 1954 on farms and in food processing plants.

County post-season reports indicate a less significant decrease in Puerto Rican workers entering the state voluntarily without contract. An estimated 2,300 compared to 2,650 in 1953 were thus employed. It should be noted that the total contract and non-contract Puerto Rican agricultural and food processing workers in the State in 1954 was estimated at less than 5,000 as compared to over 6,000 in 1953.

Employers, ever-mindful of some of the unpredictable characteristics of the Puerto Rican workers, are quick with their praise in their willingness to perform duties no longer acceptable to some other types of workers. They are particularly adaptable to "stoop labor" jobs. As one employer voiced it: "They are capable, learn quickly and each year are more dependable than they were when first employed in the late 1940's."

Efforts in late fall to refer Puerto Rican workers from New York State to job opportunities in Florida produced only negligible results, lack of transportation funds on the part of the workers being the main barrier. However, experience indicates better results could be obtained if opportunities were publicized well in advance of need.

Foreign - During 1954, the Division of Employment received orders from nine employers, requesting 1,498 foreign workers. This represents a decrease of 7 per cent in employers' estimated needs over 1953. These workers were to be employed in 10 counties of the State. Peak foreign labor employment occurred in September when 1,275 such workers were employed.

The foreign labor force employed in New York State during the 1954 season was equally divided between workers from Jamaica and from the Bahamas. About two-thirds of these workers were engaged in seasonal vegetable activities and the balance in fruit activities. Exclusive of Canadians, demand for foreign workers in New York State begins about May 1, with the largest period of importation occurring early in September with the beginning of the apple harvest. The need for these workers continues through the fall with most of them returning home or to other agricultural employment in Florida by November 30.

During 1954 one new cooperative, Mid-Hudson Fruit Growers Cooperative, was organized. Three labor cooperatives now exist in Ulster County, one employing Puerto Ricans in vegetables and two employing foreign labor for fruit harvest and packing activities.

The State Farm Labor Advisory Committee recommended during the 1954 fall meeting that over-winter use of these workers be reduced; growers responded with a ten per cent reduction.



For cherry-picking, the southern migrant worker far outstrips local help, say growers.



To make sure that Labor Law regulations are observed, Department investigators regularly visit the fields during both planting and harvesting seasons.

securing registration, was through the field staff of the Division. It had been estimated early in the season that approximately 400 crew leaders and contractors might be registered the first year. At the end of the season, 560 had actually been registered. The aim of the Division was to make personal contacts with as many crew leaders and contractors as possible, so that their obligations under this new law could be inculcated. The cooperation of the growers and of the Farm Placement Bureau was of inestimable value in this whole program.

There has been an increase every year in the number of migrant registrations under Section 212a. In 1954, there were 518 as compared with 392 in 1953. The 1954 registrations covered 27,361 workers.

While the field staff for farm inspections was doubled in 1954, the number of farms visited was practically tripled. Although final statistics are not available, preliminary figures show that the proportion of child labor violations was less than in the previous year. Improved compliance has been observed each year since 1948. This has also been true of the Wage Payment Law and Section 212a of the Migrant Registration Law.

Violations were observed in connection with Section 212b, inasmuch as it was a new law. Most of the violations involved crew leaders and contractors who had failed to register. To a lesser extent there were violations of the Child Labor Law.

During the summer of 1954, there were nine prosecutions all involving child labor. Convictions were obtained in all cases. With the cooperation of the Department of Law, a new procedure was established for handling prosecutions on farm labor cases. Instead of the regular procedure of processing such cases through the main office of the Attorney General, arrangements were made for an Assistant Attorney General in Albany to handle all such cases promptly. In previous years the Division has been handicapped by the fact that witnesses were not available when the cases came up in the ordinary routine. Under this new system, information papers were served within a day or two and the cases brought to court. There were also nearly a hundred calendar hearings on violations of the laws. Calendar hearings were held by the Assistant Commissioners in the districts in which the violations were found.

The Division is now evaluating the effects of the first year's enforcement of Section 212b, so that the program can be planned for next year. There was no attempt on the part of the Division to revoke or suspend certificates during the first year, since it was felt that a year of emphasis on education would have long-term benefits. The list of crew leaders and contractors now in our possession is being cleared with the Bureau of Identification of the Department of Correction to obtain information about misdemeanors and crimes which may have occurred during the summer of 1954, so that we may be guided in planning our program for next year.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Child Care Centers - During 1954 the Department of Social Welfare issued permits to 14 child care centers located in 11 counties throughout the state. The total capacities of the child care centers accommodated approximately 700 children. The day care centers in migrant camps for which permits were issued were operated



Picking the various crops calls for a greater degree of knowledge than many people realize. Migrant workers with experience in judging maturity of fruit and vegetables and in handling them properly are greatly preferred by the farmers.

EXTENSION SERVICE of the NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE
of AGRICULTURE at CORNELL UNIVERSITY

The New York State Extension Service through the Colleges of Agriculture and Home Economics and through the Extension agents in each county became deeply involved in farm labor concerns early in World War II. It has continued to serve farm operators, food processors and farm workers with helpful information on problems of labor.

In addition to its own programs of improved housing, labor and community relations, the Extension Service is in a position to furnish information about the programs of other public agencies. Meetings of growers, radio, newspapers and bulletins are methods used in reaching growers and workers.

The Extension Service has made detailed studies of the migrant worker and his relation to agriculture and to the community. The results of these studies have had wide-spread use.

Growers have been helped to organize and maintain cooperative groups for obtaining and retaining seasonal farm workers. Cooperative groups have been able to provide more stable employment and better housing and working conditions than is frequently possible in private arrangements.

Progress in solving labor problems depends on a proper balance between education and regulation. The Extension Service has been effective in providing much of the needed education.

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