

1960

Ohio's Health

THE MANY-SIDED PROBLEMS OF THE AGRICULTURAL MIGRANT IN OHIO



PLANNING WITH HIM OR FOR HIM ?

THE PATTERN of migrant employment in Northwestern Ohio agriculture dates back to the years following World War I when Belgians and other Europeans made up a sizeable number of vegetable growers. Sugar beet production was entirely a hand operation and this crop had become increasingly important through the war years.

The Belgians, working side by side with local families, were excellent workers, thrifty and energetic. In time they became large landowners themselves.

Tomatoes, though a short-term crop, were found to be especially profitable. Soon, Northwestern Ohio, ever a productive area for tomatoes, became part of the chain of crops harvested by migrant workers.

As the Belgians became permanent residents and the demand for seasonal workers continued to be felt, the Spanish-speaking people from the southern states began picking strawberries in Arkansas, moving north for pea harvest and small fruits, and into Ohio for

tomato and sugar beet picking. The pattern of migrants' travel has now become so fixed that the Wood County Employment Office can locate about 60 per cent of the workers at any time of the year, depending upon the harvest.

What is industry doing to meet needs other than immediate employment?

According to E. E. Richard, manager of the H. J. Heinz plant at Bowling Green and a member of the Governor's Committee on Migrant Labor, this industry does not feel that supplying camps for the workers always accomplishes the purposes hoped for. Housing of individual migrant families on the farms of their employer has resulted in better use of facilities provided. The employing farm family is valuable as an example-setter. The migrant family usually receives more individual attention and tends to be closer to the community when not set apart in specialized camps or groups.

One may wonder if migrant

agricultural workers are happy with their nomadic life. Some do choose to become permanent residents as soon as they save enough money to settle in one place. Others, states Mr. Richard, when offered jobs in industry or other occupations, refuse them or stay only a short time, for many of them prefer working as a family as they do in agriculture. Others, he reports, although satisfied with wages and living conditions, quit jobs and move on because they like to move around and seem to have a need to get this yen for traveling "out of their systems".

"Planned entertainment? We have tried it," says Mr. Richard.

"However, when we've staged fiestas, even though migrant planners have been involved, the agricultural workers felt that the fiestas were taken over by Spanish-speaking city workers from other places. Outdoor picnics without fanfare seem to work out better."

Mr. Richard makes a plea for an understanding of... and an appreciation for... individual differences. "There are so many of us who want to do something for the migrant, but are we planning with him or for him," he asks, "without taking into consideration his desires and interests? This is vital."

HOUSING OF THE MIGRANT

THE SPANISH-speaking migrant agricultural worker of Northwestern Ohio typically occupies a small housing unit in a migrant labor camp. There are about 265 such camps in the area, having among them some 1500 housing units. The housing units accommodate from 2 to 10 persons, many of whom are children. The housing units are commonly owned by a company engaged in processing farm products from the surrounding area.

Both factory and field workers are needed. The camps housing primarily factory workers are usually sizeable and located near

the processing plants. In some instances, such camps are supplied with municipal water and may have a service building with showers, laundry facilities, and flush toilets connected to a sanitary sewer. Although the occupants of these larger camps may comprise 20 per cent of all migrant workers and their families, the large camps constitute less than five per cent of all camps. A representative camp generally consists of from 6 to 12 housing units located relatively close to the actual fields where sugar beets or tomatoes are grown.

Since the creation in 1959 of the Governor's Committee on Migrant Labor, increased attention has been directed toward this problem. Ohio Department of Health staff members serving on this committee are Dr. Louis Mueller, health officer of the ODH's Northeast District, and Edward A. Graber, Bureau of Local Services, and chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and Housing. They have met with representatives of the sugar beet and tomato industries, with health commissioners of the counties concerned with migrant labor camps, with farm placement personnel, district and local health department personnel and others in an effort to bring about recognition of the responsibility on the part of all to improve the sanitation of the migrant labor camps.

The ODH's Northwest District Office has sponsored several meetings for local health department personnel at which Dr. Thomas W. Mahoney, Northwest District health officer, district engineers, and sanitarians have endeavored to assist local health departments in planning migrant camp sanitation programs.

The Ohio Sanitary Code's regulations for camps provide for local health department issuance of permits to operate migrant labor camps, providing the sanitary conditions are satisfactory. These sanitary conditions include

(a) a suitable camp site; (b) an adequate and safe water supply; (c) approved toilet facilities; (d) control of garbage and other refuse; (e) control of liquid wastes; and (f) adequate housing.

Most camps still fail to measure up to the standards of resort or recreational camps. Most of the housing units are old, rather shabby both inside and out, and generally too small for the number of occupants. Sometimes the migrant workers themselves contribute to the untidy appearance of their camp by carelessly and indiscriminately throwing litter, household slops, tin cans, etc., on the grounds even though proper receptacles have been provided by the camp operators. Camp operators have often failed to assume their responsibility for maintenance of good sanitation in the camps.

But the picture is not all black. Progressive operators are replacing shabby huts with attractive two-room cabins. Migrant workers are learning to appreciate a clean environment and to do their share in maintaining it. Health department sanitarians point happily to new wells, new privies, and new garbage containers. The change for the better is slow, but the course is charted and a cleaner, more healthful environment for the migrant worker must follow.

April 1960

MIGRANT CLINICS- PUTNAM COUNTY,

PUTNAM COUNTY migrant clinics have been in operation for four years, beginning in 1956. At the start, the Rev. Joseph Beitz, pastor of the Catholic Church in Ottawa, contacted Dr. J. F. Holtzmuller, Putnam County health commissioner, about the possibility of using the health department facilities for holding clinics. Pediatric clinics had been available to the migrants at St. Rita's Hospital in Lima, but none of the families had availed themselves of the opportunity of attending them.

After Dr. Holtzmuller had secured the consent of the county medical society, a meeting with the administrator of St. Rita's brought her promise to send student nurses to the clinics each week. The health department nurses made the calls to the homes in the camps to tell the people about the time and location of the clinics. At the start, women of the church brought the children to the health department office.

The clinic provided an examination for each child from birth to 15 years of age, as well as the necessary immunizations, vaccination, etc. Vitamins were provided as well as necessary prescriptions. St. Rita's Hospital provided many of the drugs that were dispensed. Some of the voluntary agencies furnished some

of the prescriptions, and dental care was given to a few through the Salvation Army.

The same arrangements were followed in 1957 and 1958. During the 1959 clinics, prescription costs were no longer taken care of by the voluntary agencies.

In 1957, a patch testing program was done on both adults and children. The results were interesting: number patched, 684; number negative, 425; number positive, 167. Of the 271 chest X-rays taken by the Ohio Department of Health, 16 were suspicious of tuberculosis and 7 indicated other pathology.

Some of the migrants left for Michigan before the patch tests could be read. Most of the rest had left for Texas before the X-rays were read, but health department referrals were made to their home towns and to the state health departments of their respective states.

In 1959, the clinics continued as before, but the church women were not as active in getting the young migrants in. However, some parents themselves brought their children in. Attendance ran as follows: 1956, 370; 1957, 295; 1958, 403; and 1959, 207.

There were numerous referrals to other clinics, primarily the obstetric clinics at St. Rita's and Memorial Hospitals at Lima.

There was at least one referral to the tumor clinic at Lima, but this patient was lost on follow-up. One child with a congenital cataract is still being followed, with the possibility of having a corneal transplant.

The interest the migrants show in immunizations is really quite remarkable, and in general their immunization status is as good as that of the residents. It is hoped that polio vaccine can be added in this year's program.

Calls made to the camp homes of the migrants run into the hundreds each summer. For the

past couple of years, school was held during June and this necessitated many more calls. Pediculosis is a frequent finding.

The school which includes a nursery school had an enrollment of over 70 which, of course, varied from day to day. An amusing yet pathetic sight is that of a nursing bottle sitting upright in the hole in the desk meant for an ink well... and a very young child seated with an older sister. But that is the only way, of course, that the older child is able to attend the school.

NUTRITION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

IN AN OVERALL picture of the nutritional status of migrant workers and their families, their origin and native food habits must be considered.

We will evaluate here only the Texas Mexicans, as other migrants employed in the northwestern part of Ohio are generally from groups populating southern states and have availed themselves of the educational facilities of those home states. This is not true of Texas migrants, for they spend the longest periods in Ohio, arriving in May and early June and often not leaving until mid-October.

The problem, then, is this: how to teach sound nutrition patterns

to persons with extremely limited educational backgrounds. Seeing is believing, so efforts have been toward exposing the migrant children at school to foods needed to supplement their basic food patterns.

Starting with familiar foods such as beans, tomatoes, hamburgers, and citrus fruits, apples, and bananas, other foods are added.

In 1959, schools for migrant youngsters were conducted on a three-week basis in Fort Jennings, Leipsic, and Fremont where the noon meal was served by volunteer workers from the community. The meal was balanced to meet the nutritional needs. Milk was obtained

April 1960

from the federal milk program, as were commodities such as rice, nonfat dry milk, and butter. For these schools, the parish priests and staff stood sponsor. At Fort Jennings and Fremont it was possible to continue this as part of the school lunch program since it was done in June following the regular parochial school session. The school held at St. Marys in Leipsic in August was sponsored by the parish, but obtained reimbursement for milk served.

At Allen Township School in Ottawa County where the term lasted six weeks, excellent educational work was done in teaching the young migrants the names of foods used in the lunch program. The menu was discussed before lunch-time and the children were encouraged to eat well. Considerable improvement was shown during the term as foods became familiar by means of drawings for art classes, spelling lessons, etc.

Nutrition information was incorporated into regular periods and it became a part of the total educational experience.

The community extended its efforts to parents; at Fremont and Leipsic, tortillas were included on the menu... migrant mothers showing community volunteers how they are made. Involving migrants themselves in the food picture aroused their interest and helped with other phases of the health program.

The basic Texas-Mexican diet can be balanced by the introduction of nonfat dried milk to complete the protein furnished by use of beans, peas, and lentils. Greens are already widely used as well as fruits and cereals, so that lack in general is good quality protein.

This program, supplemented with good illustrative material can improve nutrition practices greatly.

SUMMER SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS-OTTAWA COUNTY

OTTAWA COUNTY'S second summer school for migrants' children was held for the six-week period from July 6 through August 14, 1959. This summer session was the co-operative effort of the Genoa Area Board of Education and the Ohio Department of Education through Miss Phila Humphreys.

Located in the Allen Central School, Curtice, it was financed by the Elizabeth S. Magee Educational and Research Foundation, Inc., Cleveland, with the United Church Women of Ohio contributing \$500.

Purposes of the summer school were (1) to help the migrant child

(Continued on page 26)

April 1960

THE MANY-SIDED PROBLEMS. . .

(Continued from page 20)

improve in the academic areas; (2) to help the preschool child adjust to school living by a strong readiness program; and (3) to encourage a deeper understanding by the community of the needs of the migrant worker and his family.

Children in the summer school numbered 74, with an average daily attendance of 35.

Several important observations resulted from the schooling experience:

- The young migrants are *educationally* retarded from 1 to 6 years.

- The young migrants as a group showed evidence of growth both educationally and socially.

- Individual weight gains ran from ½ to 5 pounds during the six-week session.

- Many of the youngsters lacked clothing to attend school regularly.

A free hot lunch was provided the children each day, and the school participated in the special milk program. A nurse with the Ottawa County Health Department visited the school once each week. She tested hearing and vision, and weighed the youngsters at the beginning and end of the summer session.

(Mrs.) Elizabeth Fall, Ottawa County elementary supervisor, reports that many of the children

begged the teachers to visit their parents and a number of visits were made to the camps.

The children enjoyed and profited from the school experience. At one camp where 10 to 14 children boarded the school bus, the 4- and 5-year-olds cried because they couldn't go, too.

"I just received a letter," Mrs. Fall writes, "from a 13-year-old girl who spent two summers in our school. She lives in several states during the year, and is now in Texas. She reads on second-grade level. If only people could know how she must have struggled to write a letter which I could barely decipher, they would begin to realize the terrific need that she and the other migrant children have for better schooling." ◆◆◆

WITH THE LOCAL DEPARTMENTS

Dr. Eugene Wehr is serving as acting health commissioner of Cincinnati until June 30 when **Dr. Carl Wilzbach's** retirement becomes effective.

The address of the Upper Arlington Health Department is 1500 W. Third Ave., Columbus.

On March 15, **Dr. W.C. Hartland** succeeded **Dr. William Edmunds** as Geauga County health commissioner.

The Van Wert City Health Department's street address is 105 N. Washington Street. ◆◆◆

About the author. . .
Joining the Port Commission in 1947 when it was first established, Mr. Beckett became manager of statistics when that agency was superseded in 1956 by the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority. He is an associate member of the U. S. Naval Institute and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Directors of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority submitted a tax levy of .544 mill for a five-year period, it was passed by the electorate. This levy, expiring in December, 1960, has provided the Port Authority with approximately \$600,000 annually for site development, promotion, and administration.

The Port Authority has developed 28 acres of the 65-acre site it purchased at the mouth of the Maumee River, Port Authority Facility No. 1. Two companies have leased property. Toledo Overseas Terminals, Inc., has leased a 5-acre site at the front and built a general cargo facility. The Industrial Molasses Corp. has leased 4½ acres at the rear and built tanks of 6½-million gallon capacity for bulk liquid cargo. In addition, Ohio Foreign Trade Zone, Inc., has leased five acres in the middle of the site for a future back-up warehouse for additional storage facilities. All companies will deed the facilities back to the Port Authority.

The Port Authority has purchased another site of 14 acres on "the middlegrounds", six miles from the mouth of the Maumee. Recently, the Continental Grain Co. signed a lease for 7.3 acres and will build a 3,000,000-bushel grain elevator. The elevator will be financed through the sale of revenue bonds by the Port Authority.

A continuation of the extensive program of port promotion and site development by the Port Authority was assured in the November, 1959, election when the voters approved a \$4,500,000 bond issue for a period of 23 years and a .25 mill operating levy for five years.

The recently approved bond issue will be used for the further development of Port Authority Facility No. I. The .25 mill operational levy will be used for administrative operation of the Port Authority and for continued commerce promotion and publicity.

◆◆◆

CONTRIBUTORS TO OHIO'S HEALTH

In addition to credited contributors, this month we thank *Willis Aukland*, Division of Sanitary Engineering; (*Mrs.*) *Gertrude Bernstein*, Division of Child Hygiene, Northwest District Office; *E. A. Graber*, Bureau of Local Services; (*Mrs.*) *Gail Halferty*, Division of Health Education, and *Miss Dorothy Throssell*, Nutrition Services Unit, Northwest District Office.

◆◆◆