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THE HOUSING PROBLEM OF THE MIGRANT WORKER IN MARYLAND

see pp. 6-7-8

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The housing problem of the migrant worker is not a new phenomenon. Various studies have been made and much has been written concerning the complexities of the subject. In order to determine the extent of the problem in Maryland a comprehensive survey has been made of the housing and sanitary facilities in migrant labor camps throughout the state to assist in developing a plan for improvement of living conditions for migrant families. This, in turn, will be advantageous to the localities in which they are housed.

This study is a direct outgrowth of increasing concern on the part of various official and non-official agencies, and religious and civic groups which have been involved in seeking a solution to a major social, economic and health problem. The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Council of State Governments, State Department of Labor and Industry, State Department of Employment Security, State Department of Public Welfare, State Department of Education, Maryland State Police, The Council of Churches of Maryland and Delaware, and the Maryland State Department of Health are a few of the agencies and groups that are interested in the problem.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine the size and scope of the housing problem as it relates to the migrant. Primary factors for consideration in the survey were provision and maintenance of facilities necessary for decent, safe and healthful living and determination of overcrowded conditions.

METHODOLOGY

Inspection forms were developed for recording pertinent facts concerning each camp. These forms, along with instructions for their use, were sent to the Health Departments in those Counties where migrant labor was housed. The sanitarians of the local health departments visited each camp, completed the forms, and returned them to the central office of the State Health Department for processing and analysis.

The survey was conducted during the late summer and fall of 1957. Information obtained from these inspections has been tabulated and included in this report.

FINDINGS

The camps are located in 15 of the 23 counties of the State. A total of 134 camps were inspected which contained 2,803 dwelling units, housing 7,930 people. The Eastern Shore of Maryland employs the majority of the State's migrants. See Map on Page 4. The following counties in the order named utilize the preponderance of workers: Dorchester, Somerset, Worcester, Caroline, Kent, Wicomico and Talbot. These counties employ approximately 6,629 workers which represent approximately 82% of the total migrant population.

On Page 5 is a table showing the distribution of the camps, the number of units and persons accommodated in each county.

Ninety-seven items were checked in each camp included in the study. They covered such characteristics as camp site location, construction, sanitation, safety and maintenance.

The water supplies were checked for adequacy, protection, maintenance, distribution and availability.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT CAMPS BY COUNTIES

Number of units and number of occupants with accompanying percentages.

County	No. camps per co.	% of total	No. units per co.	% of total	No. occupants per county	% of total
Dorchester	27	20	658	24	2,238	28
Somerset	15	11	429	15	1,479	19
Worcester	18	14	406	15	893	11
Caroline	14	10	270	10	586	7
Kent	10	7	221	8	551	7
Wicomico	16	12	126	5	475	6
Talbot	8	6	237	8	417	5
Frederick	2	1	90	3	333	4
Harford	5	4	62	2	214	3
Washington	6	4	67	2	171	2
Carroll	3	3	66	2	169	2
Cecil	1	1	62	2	150	2
Baltimore	7	5	50	2	141	2
Prince Georges	1	1	50	2	89	1
Montgomery	1	1	9	0	24	1
Totals	134	100	2,803	100	7,930	100

Toilets were investigated to determine the types used, adequacy, maintenance, sanitation, convenience, and provisions for segregation of the sexes.

Washroom, bath and laundry facilities were checked for availability, convenience, adequacy and maintenance.

Central cooking and eating facilities were considered from the standpoint of adequate provision for proper refrigeration and storage of food, washing and sanitizing of utensils and other sanitary aspects of this function of the camps.

Beds and bedding were inspected to determine if proper provisions were made for minimally adequate sleeping conditions and inquiries were made regarding methods of cleaning and sanitizing bedding between usages by changing occupants.

Garbage and refuse disposal facilities and methods were investigated to gain knowledge of the effectiveness of the control of offensive wastes.

Fire protection and safety measures were considered as well as equipment and provisions for effective fire prevention and control.

The chart on page 7 delineates some of the results of the survey with reference to major items of housing, sanitation and safety. Percentages are projected for each item.

In analyzing the results of the study 66% of the water supplies were found to be unprotected and unapproved; and 72% of the sewage disposal systems were unapproved.

Fifty-one per cent of the camps contained shelters of unsound construction and 44% had structures with insufficient window areas. Dual egress was lacking in rooms of 51% of the camps. Ineffective screening was noted in 81%.

In 74% of the camps toilets were in poor operating condition, while 81% of the camps had insanitary toilet facilities.

Fifty per cent of the camps surveyed had insufficient wash basins, and 72% had improperly drained floors in the washrooms and baths, while 78% had insufficient laundry tubs or trays.

Sixty-two per cent had unsafe food storage and 81% had inadequate and improperly handled garbage and refuse disposal facilities.

Sixty-nine per cent of the camp areas were unsafe and insanitary.

Bedding was not regularly inspected in 60% of the camps.

Ineffective insect and rodent control was noted in 72% of the camps.

No first aid equipment was available in 85% of the camps and 86% had no fire extinguishers.

CONCLUSIONS

The housing of migrant workers in Maryland is an important social, economic and health problem. Migrant labor is necessary for the harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops especially on the Eastern Shore.

Sanitation facilities are inadequate and unapproved in a high percentage of the camp areas.

Housing is generally unsound and in a dilapidated condition. Very little protection is provided against flies and other insects.

Washing, bathing and laundry facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the campers.

Emergency first aid equipment should be provided and placed in responsible hands for dispensing. Fire-fighting equipment should be placed at strategic spots throughout the camp areas and measures adopted for proper supervision of its use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An intensive educational program should be initiated to orient the migrant to better living conditions. The implementation of such a program should be at the county level, executed in a manner best suited to the needs and facilities of each area.

Appropriate minimum state-wide housing regulations should be adopted to serve as a standard for the development of improvements needed in the migrant camps.

The development of a hygiene of housing program for migrant workers in Maryland should include the cooperation of all interested groups so that the goals of such a program may be met as quickly and with as much economy and effectiveness as possible.

The problem of poor housing and sanitation for the migrant worker is not peculiar to or limited to the State of Maryland. It exists in varying degrees in all the states which employ this type of labor. Some states on the east coast, particularly New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware have developed regulations affecting the construction, maintenance and sanitation facilities of these migrant labor camps. Realizing the great need in this direction proposed "Regulations Governing Construction, Equipment, Sanitation, Operation and Maintenance of Migrant Labor Camps" for the State of Maryland have been prepared.