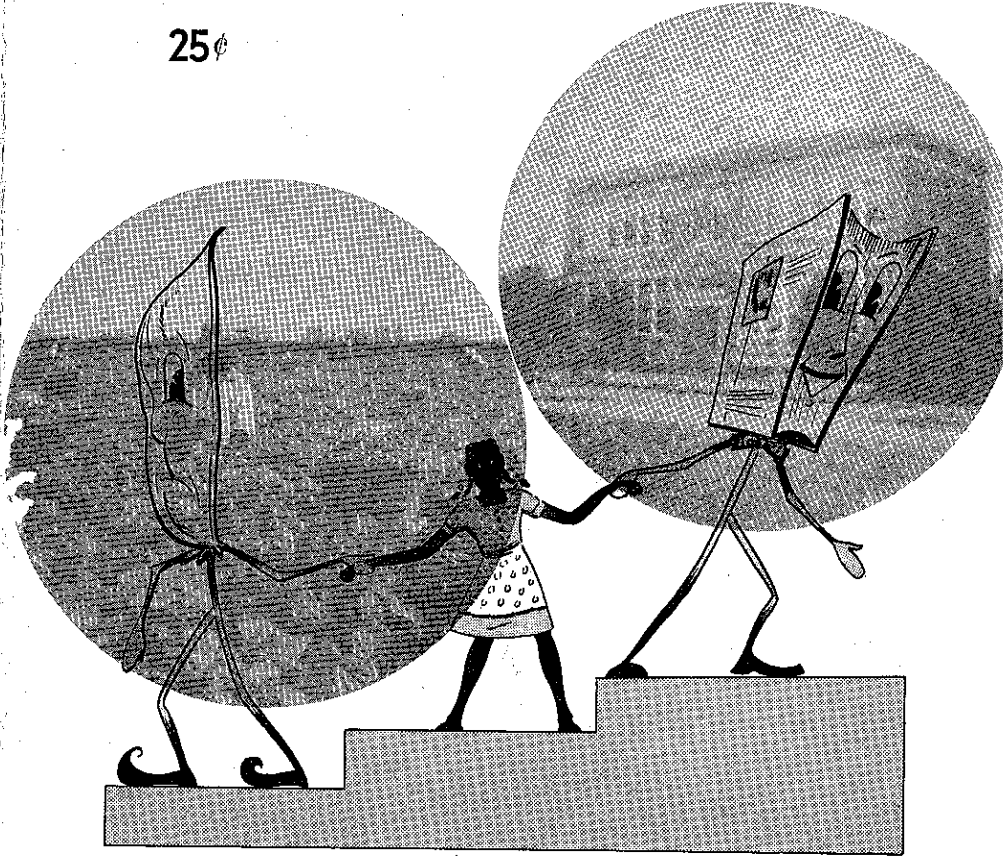


Children of Misfortune

By Shirley E. Greene

25¢



*A Study of the Education of Migrant Children*

The research project on the Education of Migrant Children which is reported in this pamphlet was sponsored by the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor. NCALL is a non-profit council composed of national, regional, and state organizations, and individuals. Its purpose is to work for the improvement of the living and working conditions of low-income farm families, seasonal and migratory agricultural workers.

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## Foreword

Equality of educational opportunity is an accepted American ideal. But there is a hiatus between profession and performance. The quality and amount of schooling received by several million children are below the accepted American standard of the equal chance. Among these millions are several hundred thousand children who follow the crops.

The study reported here is a forthright effort to find the facts concerning the education of one of the most disadvantaged groups of children in American life, the children of migratory agricultural workers, and to initiate a program of action that will at least alleviate some of their worst handicaps. It is not a cure-all for a poignantly important and complex economic and social problem. It is primarily an enterprise in cooperation with responsible local and state people to improve the educational opportunities of children in most need of attention.

What is said here is in no sense a disparagement of the goodwill and the efforts of the local citizens and school personnel who have direct responsibility for the education of these disadvantaged children. Those local people face not merely a theory but a real and complicated condition. They have welcomed the opportunity to discover ways and means of realizing the worthy ideals they accept. They need the understanding, cooperation, and assistance of the people of other communities, and of their state and national governments.

Views expressed in the report here presented are the responsibility of the Migrant Research Project Board. It is not to be assumed that these views in all instances reflect official policy of the co-sponsoring organizations whose representatives constituted the Project Board.

Among the needs pointed up in this study that give direction to future action are: more adequate attendance supervision; special "helping teachers"; opportunity rooms; some teachers who speak the language of foreign-language groups; more and better health examinations, inspections and services; additional classrooms; special instruction in the use of the English language, especially oral English; more attention to personal hygiene, grooming, and manners; activities that increase the migrant's sense of belonging, self-respect and confidence; emphasis on the contributions of various cultural groups to American life; and the offering of better adapted general and technical vocational education.

Rev. Shirley E. Greene, the author of this article, is an ordained minister in the Congregational Christian denomination, with training and experience in social research. At the time he was directing this study on education of migrant children, he was employed as Agricultural Relations Secretary of the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action. He is presently the Director of Inter-group Relations of the National Farmers Union.

I commend this report to all people of goodwill.

—HOWARD A. DAWSON

Dr. Dawson is Executive Secretary of the Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, Washington, D.C.

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## Children of Misfortune

Nancy Lou was born in Allentown, Florida, November 12, 1938, the youngest of nine children. She started to school in Pineland, Georgia, at the age of six, and continued for two and one-half years. Her parents moved to Hoboken, Georgia, and Nancy Lou was placed in the second grade at the age of nine and completed the second grade. In November, 1948, her parents migrated to Belle Glade, Florida. Nancy Lou did not enter school until her parents had migrated "up the road" in April, 1949, and returned in November. She entered the third grade in Belle Glade in December, 1949. She remained in school approximately three and one-half months during the 1949-50 school year and went back "up the road" in April, 1950. She returned to Belle Glade in November but did not re-enter school until December, 1951. She went to school about six weeks in 1952 and hasn't been in school since. Mother says Nancy Lou is planning to go back soon. She is presently fourteen years old and classified as a fifth grader. (From a Case Study taken in January, 1953)

Nancy Lou and her fragmentary school career are representative of more than eighteen hundred migrant children whose educational problems are the subject of this study.<sup>1</sup> These 1862 school-age children are, in turn, a cross-section sample of several hundred thousand American children who, with their parents, "follow the crops" as agricultural migrants. As a Federal Inter-agency Committee pointed out in 1947:

The chief victims in the families of migratory workers . . . are the children. They are not only robbed of normal home and community life but are universally handicapped by too early employment and by lack of educational opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

1. This article is a condensed version of the full report of an eighteen-month field study conducted between July 1, 1952 and December 31, 1953 under the direction of the author. The full report, entitled "The Education of Migrant Children," will be published about September 15, 1954. It may be ordered from the National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C. (Paper cover, \$2.50; cloth cover, \$3.00)

2. "Migrant Labor — A Human Problem," Report of Federal Inter-agency Committee on Migrant Labor, March 1947, p. 22.

No one knows with any degree of accuracy how many Nancy Lous and Willie Joes are caught in the migratory pattern of life. Informed estimates range up and down from 600,000. By far the majority of them face the handicaps of minority group status as well as transiency and poverty.

Spanish American and Negro families make up the great bulk of the nation's migratory workers. They follow four major streams of migrancy with innumerable minor variations. The "home base" or starting point of the eastern route (predominantly Negro) is in south Florida. This group of migrants flows northward with the season along the Atlantic seaboard all the way to New York, New Jersey, and New England.

Out of Texas, two streams of Spanish Americans flow northward, one into the fruit and vegetable harvests of Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois; the other up the western plains area for work in sugar beets, fruit, and potatoes in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota. The fourth and oldest stream moves up and down the west coast. Spanish Americans predominate here also.

### *The Study Described*

The study reported here dealt specifically with the educational opportunities and experiences of the school-age children involved in the migratory labor stream. It was a field research study sponsored by the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor (NCALL) and directed by the author of this report. Policy direction was given by a seven-man board representing NCALL and six co-sponsoring agencies.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Howard A. Dawson, Executive Secretary of the Rural Department of the National Education Association, was chairman of the Migrant Research Project Board. The study was financed

3. The co-sponsors: American Friends Service Committee; Council for Social Action, Congregational Christian Churches; Department of Rural Education, National Education Association; Division of Home Missions, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; National Catholic Rural Life Conference; National Child Labor Committee. The original proposal for this study came from the Council for Social Action.

primarily by grants from the Committee on Relief and Reconstruction of the Congregational Christian Churches, with supplementary assistance from the General Alliance of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women, the National Child Labor Committee, the American Friends Service Committee, and Florida State University.

The statement of study objective early adopted by the Project Board makes clear that the project was action-oriented from its inception: "... designed to provide a factual, objective basis for *plans and programs to improve* the educational opportunities and experiences of the children of migratory agricultural workers."

Field research was conducted in four local areas, selected to reflect various types of migratory situations. The four centers were:

"Glades" Area, Palm Beach County, Florida. A winter vege-



**FUTURE CITIZENS**

"The chief victims . . . are the children . . . robbed of normal home and community life . . . handicapped by too early employment and lack of educational opportunities."

table area, employing four to five thousand migratory workers, Negro in the fields and white in packing sheds, during the months, November to May.

*Northampton County, Virginia.* A vegetable-growing county employing up to 5000 Negro migrants in June-July and up to 1000 during the school months, September and October.

*Seguin Independent School District, Guadalupe County, Texas.* A cotton-growing area employing upwards of 2000 Spanish American migrant workers during September and October and serving as home base for more than 450 Spanish American migrant families during the off season, December to April.

*Hoopeston-Milford-Rossville School Districts, Vermilion and Iroquois Counties, Illinois.* A limited vegetable-growing area delivering to four local canneries which recruit and house a Spanish American migrant labor force of about 150 families from the end of May to the end of August.

In these four centers interviews were conducted with 665 migrant families, 197 school principals and teachers, and about 75 other informed persons. School records of 1719 migrant pupils were examined, and numerous group discussions were conducted to gain insight into the problem. In each local center an advisory committee of 15 to 35 persons was created to give guidance to the study. In Florida 428 children were given a series of achievement and adjustment tests for purposes of comparison between migrants and non-migrants.

One concrete result of the field study has been the launching by the Migrant Research Project Board of a two- or three-year demonstration project in migrant education in cooperation with the school boards of Palm Beach County, Florida and Northampton County, Virginia. Funds have been contributed or pledged by the Doris Duke Foundation, the National Sharecroppers Fund and the Alliance for the Guidance of Rural Youth (the latter two organizations have become additional co-sponsors with

representation on the Project Board), making possible the employment of a supervisory specialist in migrant education to devote full-time to this problem in the two counties. It is expected that findings of this demonstration project will be published at a later date.

### *The Uneducated*

The central findings of this field study are virtually summarized in a paragraph from *The Uneducated*, a study by Eli Ginzberg and Douglas W. Bray, published in 1953 as part of a Columbia University research project on Conservation of Human Resources, established by Dwight Eisenhower during his presidency of that institution:

The obstacles to school attendance for these children are almost insurmountable. The migrant family leaves home before the end of the school year and returns after the beginning. Even if children were to attend school while the family is away from home, travel time and the constant changing of schools would have a serious effect upon the efficacy of instruction. In any case, they rarely attend school when outside of their home state, and frequently are absent when at home. While most states and localities no longer specifically exclude the children of migrants, few make any serious effort to compel school attendance. The determining factor is the attitudes of parents and children toward education. The need for the wages of the children, the general poverty of the family which prevents the purchase of adequate clothing and food supplies, the reluctance of the children to attend classes in which they are older than the others, and the social ostracism that usually meets the migrant—all contribute to the obvious result. On the basis of sample studies, it appears that only a small percentage of the school-age children of migrants actually attend school when they are outside of their home state, and those who do are usually between two to five years behind the resident children. It is indeed questionable whether the educational problem posed by the children of migrants can be resolved short of a successful attack on the problem of migratory labor itself.<sup>4</sup>

4. Reprinted from *The Uneducated*, by Eli Ginzberg and Douglas W. Bray. Columbia University Press, New York, 1953, p. 178.

### *The Subnormal Is Normal*

Let us move from these generalities to the specific experiences of the Nancy Lous, the Willie Joes, the Manuela Estrellas, and the Francisco Joses of our study.

The outstanding facts of their educational experience are *retardation* and *frustration*. The normal American child enters school at the age of six or seven, completes one grade each year, and graduates from the twelfth grade at the age of seventeen or eighteen. There are, of course, exceptions. An occasional child will advance more rapidly through the grades; an unfortunate percentage fall behind for a variety of reasons. Many drop out before completing high school. The twelve year-twelve grade pattern, however, is the general norm.

Such is not the case with Nancy Lou and her migratory companions. There is a serious question, first of all, whether the



**FACTORY-IN-THE-FIELD**

Long rows typical of industrialized vegetable production. Children have been largely eliminated from this picture where community attitudes support enforcement of federal law.

migratory child will get started in school at the proper age. One-eighth of the children in our sample first entered school after their eighth birthday. More than a third of these enrolled first at age nine or ten and in a few cases even older. The proportion of delayed entries was considerably larger in the Spanish American than in the Negro or white Anglo groups. Spanish American parents almost never enrolled their children until age seven, while many of the children in the other groups entered at six.

Once enrolled in school, migrant children find the going slow and uncertain. By their second year in school over a third of them were found to be retarded, *i.e.*, held back in the first grade. By their fourth school year over half were retarded one to three years. The proportions of retardation mount steadily with every additional year of schooling. At the ninth year, 75.0 per cent of the migrant children were retarded from one to five years. The median retardation at this point fell between two and three years. After the eighth year in school the numbers of migratory children enrolled fell very rapidly and the proportions of extreme retardation fell also, reflecting the heavy drop-out rate in the more retarded group.

Another way of measuring migrant retardation is to compare the ages of these children with those of their classmates who are following the normal pattern. This is of great psychological importance, because the over-age child in a school room easily becomes, in turn, conspicuous, embarrassed, discouraged, defeated, —and eliminated. By this measure the migrant child appears in an even more unhappy light. Now the late start is added to the slow progress. Thus, while approximately half of the children were retarded by the grade progress standard, two-thirds were found to be over-age by the age-grade status measurement.

By definition, six- and seven-year-olds cannot be over-age for grade. At the eight-year level, however, we found just under half of the children to be one year over-age. The next year, two-thirds were over-age. Again the index of retardation mounted steadily to age fifteen, the last-year of compulsory attendance.

At that age, 9 out of every 10 migrant children were over-age for grade. The median fifteen-year-old was three years over-age.

All this evidence reflects a dark picture indeed, but the full story has not yet been told. A growing tendency in modern educational practice is to promote slow-learning children frequently enough to keep them more or less abreast of their chronological age-mates despite their comparative failure to master the work. Cogent psychological arguments may be advanced in support of this practice, but it does complicate research studies dealing with rates of scholastic progress.

We sought to appraise the significance of this factor by asking teachers to indicate the grade in which they thought each of their children really belonged on a strictly scholastic attainment basis. Tabulation of these informed judgments revealed that, as early as the second grade level, 30.0 per cent were regarded as placed too high. Once again the rates mounted sharply to the sixth grade where more than half the migrant children were regarded by their teachers as placed from one to three grades above their actual academic achievement level.

There is no mechanical way of adding together these various percentages into an over-all index of migrant retardation. The conclusion is inescapable, however, when all the evidence is considered, that our fourteen-year-old Nancy Lou, who belongs chronologically in the ninth grade but finds herself with a fifth-grade rating, is typical of the vast majority of the children who follow the crops.

### *"Planning to Go Back Soon"*

Nancy Lou reflects yet another aspect of our problem. When her mother was interviewed in the middle of the 1952-53 school year, Nancy Lou was not enrolled in school, but she was "planning to go back soon." It is a real question, at age fourteen, whether she ever will go back. If she does, the probability is very high that her school days are numbered and that she will never get beyond the sixth grade.

One of the brighter spots in our study was the discovery that most of the "home base" children (Florida and Texas) who fell within the compulsory school age range, seven to fifteen years inclusive, were enrolled in school. The actual figures were Florida, Negro, 88.0 per cent; Florida, white, 87.4 per cent; Texas, Spanish Americans, 89.0 per cent. These high rates are attributable (a) to the employment in these communities of aggressive attendance officers of the same racial and ethnic background as the migrants; (b) to the amended (1949) Fair Labor Standards Act which prohibits the employment of children under 16 in crops moving in interstate commerce during periods when schools are in session in the district; and (c) to a growing appreciation by migrant parents of the importance of education for their children.

Some of the brightness of this picture fades, however, when we look at two related facts. One is that rates of school enrollment "on the road" are very much lower than those at the "home base." In our Illinois study area, although one of the communities involved has become nationally known for its special efforts to enroll migrant children in school, only 62.4 per cent of the migrants of legal school age were enrolled. In Northampton County, Virginia, which employs no attendance officer and has made no special effort, the rate of enrollment among migrant children of legal school age is only 13.0 per cent.

The other gloomy factor is the sharp drop-out rate at the sixteenth birthday when legal compulsion is removed. For the whole sample of 1862 children the rate of enrollment was 78.0 per cent for the seven- to fifteen-year-olds, but only 14.9 per cent for the sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds. By separate centers enrollment among sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds was as follows: Florida, Negro, 26.2 per cent; Florida, white, 10.0 per cent; Virginia, Negro, none; Texas, Spanish American, 13.0 per cent; Illinois, Spanish-American, 5.2 per cent. For the United States as a whole, according to the 1950 census, 74.4 per cent of all sixteen- and seventeen-year-old youth were enrolled in school.

Of 632 children for whom reasons were given for non-enroll-

ment in school, about a third were cited as "working in agriculture." Eighty of these were within the compulsory school age range. If actually working, these eighty were employed in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. A sixth of the non-enrollees were reported as having arrived in the community too late or too recently to enroll in school. Other reasons given included: too old, too young, no interest, sickness or physical handicap, caring for younger children, married, working at home, and no clothes.

### *Books Vs. Beans*

It is one thing, we discovered, to be on the school roll; another to be in one's seat when the school bell rings. Especially when the bean fields are ripe unto harvest! Our Negro field staff had the curious experience of finding that no matter which sunny day they visited a classroom, it was always a day of "unusual" absences. Classrooms with enrollment rating of 35 to 40 would commonly contain no more than half that number of children.

This was particularly true of the Florida Negro schools where the bean fields bordered the school yards and temptations were great. Many non-migrant children, it appeared, joined their migrant classmates in illicit excursions to the fields. As they became better acquainted with our staff, several teachers and principals admitted that they frequently wrote excuses for children to regularize this traffic. One principal stated that he pleaded with parents, who felt they must keep their children out of school to do the family washing or house cleaning, to do so on Friday. In that way every day would not be disrupted by such absences. The attendance officer reported that the day before our interview he had brought in 33 children from the fields. This did not include those who had written excuses and were consequently passed by.

The administrators and teachers in the Florida white schools reported no serious attendance problems. This may be due in part to the fact that white migrant labor in the area is confined to the packing sheds where children are not eligible for employ-

ment. In Virginia, "since very few migrant children enroll in school, the problem is one of securing original enrollment more than of maintaining attendance. However, with no attendance officer employed, rates of absenteeism among the few enrolled migrants were among the highest in the study.

There is no agricultural work available in Seguin, Texas, during most of the time that migrant children are in school. Yet a considerable amount of absenteeism was reported. This was due not so much to the competition of outside work as to indifference on the part of parents and children to regularity of attendance and to bad attendance habits acquired on the road. No serious attendance problems appeared in the Illinois situation. The migrants there are compactly housed in camps controlled by the canning companies, making attendance enforcement relatively easy.

### *"Rolling Stones . . ."*

There is no indication that Nancy Lou attended school at any time while she and her parents were "up the road" on their migratory trek. In this respect she was typical of 62.0 per cent of her school-attending migrant mates. That proportion reported having attended only one school during the preceding twelve months. A third of the children who attended at all were in two schools during the year. Only a negligible fraction attended more than two schools. Yet every one of these families was resident in more than one community, and over half of them were resident in more than two communities during the year prior to the interviews.

It can be argued with truth that some of these moves occurred during the summer vacation period. The limitations imposed by migrancy on continuous schooling, however, may be seen from the fact that 78.9 per cent of the families reported their longest continuous residence to be less than thirty weeks. Obviously none of the children in these families could have completed a full 36-week school term in one community. The combination of early spring departure, late fall return, little schooling on the



road and some failure to enroll promptly on return to home base produces a situation in which less than half (40.5 per cent) of the children who attended school at all were enrolled as much as thirty weeks. A slightly larger percentage (42.0 per cent) reported 20-29 weeks of enrollment. The remaining 17.5 per cent were in school less than 20 weeks. The number of weeks in school tends to decline in the higher age groups.

### *Mental and Emotional X-Ray*

Because she was out of school, Nancy Lou failed to participate in one of the most interesting aspects of our study. In an effort to get at some scientific measure of the effects of migrancy on the inner life of the child, we secured the cooperation of Florida State University's School of Education to conduct a testing program in the Glades Area schools. The grade Nancy Lou should have been attending (fifth) was selected for one



### ROLLING STONES . . .

Where will their  
next home be?  
When will they see  
the inside of  
a school again?

testing level; the eighth grade furnished the other. The program involved 428 children, both Negro and white, at these two grade levels. Both migrant and non-migrant children were tested because our purpose was to compare the scores as between these two groups. Dr. Hazen A. Curtis, Professor of Education at Florida State University, directed the testing program and conducted a thorough-going scientific analysis of the results.

A battery of five tests<sup>5</sup> was administered to each child. The scores achieved, together with analysis of the ages of the children, gave us six points of comparison between migrant and non-migrant children. These six comparisons dealt with the following significant elements in the personality growth and development of these children:

1. Age in relation to school progress.
2. General operational ability in school-related activities.
3. Achievement in reading comprehension and vocabulary.
4. Achievement in arithmetic, including vocabulary and fundamental usage, whole numbers and fractions, and problems.
5. Life adjustment, covering an analysis of the factors of self-reliance, sense of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belonging, freedom from withdrawing tendencies, freedom from nervous symptoms, social standards, social skills, freedom from anti-social tendencies, family relations, school relations, community relations.
6. Listing of problems felt by the child in the areas of health and physical development; school; home and family; money, work and the future; boy and girl relations; relations to people in general; self-centered concerns.

The size of our sample, when broken down by grades, race, and migrancy status was uncomfortably small for comparative analysis. We regard the findings as clues to further research

5. The tests used in this program were: Kuhlmann-Finch Intelligence Tests; Iowa Every Pupil Test of Basic Skills in a) Reading and b) Arithmetic; California Test of Personality; and the Mooney Problem Check Lists.

rather than firm conclusions upon which to base programs of immediate action.

Our major finding, from analysis of the scores made by the 143 white children, is that where migrant children constitute a small minority of a given student population, their migrancy is associated with poor school progress, retarded achievement in the fundamentals of reading and arithmetic, below average general ability to handle school-related work, and unsatisfactory emotional adjustment and personality growth. By using a quartile method of distribution of the test scores, we found ourselves at the conclusion of the analysis with 78 points of comparison. With the white group 70 of these 78 comparisons indicated inferiority on the part of the migrants in comparison to the non-migrants. Although not all of these comparisons proved statistically significant when submitted to "level of confidence" analysis, the overwhelming tendency of the total study among the white children was to pile up massive evidence of the deleterious effects of migrancy on the inner life of the child.

Our Negro sample of 285 children returned a much less conclusive picture. Except in the matter of chronological age, in which the migrants showed definite retardation, this group yielded no clear-cut differences between migrant and non-migrant children. On 45 points of comparison the migrants showed slight inferiority to their non-migrant classmates, but on 33 points the relationship was reversed; and on only 11 points were the differences between the respective scores wide enough to prove statistically significant.

Two cultural factors seem to be principally responsible for the disagreement of the Negro findings with those of the white sample. First, our definition of migrant specified that to be so classified a child must have "followed the crops" within the preceding twelve months. But most of the resident Negro families of the Glades Area came there originally as agricultural migrants. Analysis showed that 33 of our 116 so-called "non-migrant" Negro children had at some earlier time followed the

crops. It is obvious that the line between migrant and non-migrant in this group is neither clear nor fixed.

A second factor is the great relative size of the migrant group in the schools included in the Negro sample. Characteristic of the whole Negro school situation in the Glades is the fact that the 169 migrant children in our sample were a distinct majority in their respective fifth and eighth grades. This means that these schools are inevitably geared in large measure to the migratory cycle. When school opens in the fall, the teacher knows that less than half the children on her ultimate roll are present. Throughout September, October, November and December the migrant children will drift in. January and February usually witness the peak of enrollment, more than double the opening number. It can hardly be doubted that in this situation the teacher arranges her teaching plan and program to intensify the learning process during those middle months of maximum migrant participation. Weighing these two factors, we recovered from most of our surprise over the unexpected discrepancy between the white and Negro findings.

#### *Educational Pioneers*

If Nancy Lou's father and mother were educationally typical of the median parents in our sample, we could say with confidence that Nancy Lou has already been an "educational pioneer" in her own family for at least a year. For the median father of our sample the highest grade attended was the third; for the median mother, the fourth. When Nancy Lou passed into the fourth grade, therefore, she was entering into an area of educational experience unknown to her father, and at the fifth grade level; she was soaring into an educational stratosphere unfamiliar and undreamed of by either of her parents.

A fifth (20.1 per cent) of the fathers and 13.1 per cent of the mothers in our sample reported no formal schooling at all. Fifty-five per cent of the fathers who entered school dropped out before entering the fifth grade; of the mothers reporting some schooling, 43.5 per cent were limited to fourth grade or

below. Very few parents went beyond the eighth grade. The educational achievement of parents was definitely lower among the Spanish American migrants than among either Negroes or white Anglos.

A special problem in the Spanish American group arises from the fact that from necessity or choice these parents habitually speak Spanish in their homes. The children also, although they learn English at school, customarily speak Spanish with their parents and to each other in the presence of the parents. Thus their progress in English is seriously retarded.

In view of these sharp limitations of background, it is a tribute to the concern of these parents that over four-fifths of them expressed their desire that their children, both boys and girls, should finish high school.

Typical of the attitude of many parents was the comment of a Florida white mother, herself just recovering from an illness and trying to support an incapacitated husband and two children:

I'll stay and eat salt and bread to keep them in school. Their schooling means more than all the world to me. Money will be gone. Their education won't.

Kindred sentiment was expressed by a seventy-four-year-old Negro woman who was caring for two children and two grandchildren:

I never had no learnin'. Farmed all my life. These kids in school today are learnin' fast and they teach me a lot. As times change they're goin' to need more and more education.

### *The Shadow of Poverty*

Nancy Lou and her mother live alone in a fairly clean, one-room cabin. Nancy Lou's eight older brothers and sisters have all left home. Whether their family ever had a permanent male head is not clear from the record. During the year preceding our study the estimated income of this family was \$1710. This income was derived from 150 days of work by the mother in vegetables in Florida and 120 days of work by both mother and daughter in the Maryland bean harvest.

This report places Nancy Lou's family considerably below the median of our sample in respect to income. About forty per cent of the families who reported fully on income, estimated their total annual earnings at less than \$2000. Fifty-six per cent of the families reporting earned less than \$2500. The extreme range was from 29 families who earned less than \$1000 a year to 13 families (several of them crew leaders) who reported incomes of more than \$5500.

From inquiries into the work history and earnings of these families certain general observations can be made about the bearing of economic factors on the educational opportunities of migrant children.

A major economic and sociological, as well as moral, problem in the Negro migrant group is the widespread tendency to casual sexual intimacy, which produces many families with no permanent or responsible male head. About one-third of the Negro families interviewed in both Florida and Virginia were of this type. This situation places an extreme economic burden upon the mother. In such families sheer economic necessity becomes a sharp competitor to schooling early in the life of the child.

Spanish American migrant families tend to be larger than those of other migrant groups. This increases the family manpower available for work in the fields. The contribution of children to family income is clearly reflected in our Illinois sample where almost two-thirds of the families earned above the \$2500 median. In the Seguin community of Texas, the value of the larger family is apparently cancelled by long periods of unemployment at the home base where no winter crops are grown. Family income levels in the Texas center barely exceeded those of Florida and fell below the Virginia record.

Rates of earning are so low that it is entirely out of the question for a single field worker to earn enough to support, even at subsistence, a family of children. These families must and do rely upon the labor of the children, at least during vacation periods, to supplement the earnings of the parents.

There is evidence that, whether strictly necessary or not, the opportunity now and again—and again—to keep the children out of school for a day's work is an overpowering temptation. It is further clear that the prevailing custom in up to 85.0 per cent of the cases is for children to drop completely out of school at, soon after, or even a little before their sixteenth birthday. They will then either leave home to strike out in the world for themselves or—especially among the Spanish American families—remain with the family, working in the fields or in other occupations to supplement the family income.

### *The Latin Touch*

*Manuela* was a skinny, undersized girl who looked younger than her eleven years. Her size and poor or missing lunches were evidences of malnourishment. She had a third-year reading ability. Her sense of rhythm was remarkable and she proved to be a leader in the group singing without being noticeably so. She was high strung and under great nervous tension.

Manuela was one of 22 Spanish American migrant children from Texas who attended an experimental summer school near Waupun, Wisconsin, last summer. The Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction and several other groups, including NCALL, sponsored and financed this six-week school as an experiment in curriculum adaptation to the needs of migrant children.<sup>6</sup>

Manuela's school-mates ranged in age from five to twelve years and in English reading ability from none to two or three years. The most general conclusion reached by the staff of this project was stated in these words:

Spanish-speaking migrant children . . . are no different from any other children in their make-up and in their behavior. One finds among them evidences of maturity and immaturity, consideration and selfishness, independence and dependence. Simply,—

6. Instructors in this school were Miss Marian Hull of Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa, and Miss Dolores Brown of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. A complete report may be had from Dr. William C. Kahl, State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin.

they are children. Yet this should not imply that their pattern of living is like that of a child who lives in one community during his school years and whose family has a relatively assured place in the economic and social set-up. These children *are* different. It isn't just their being migrants that makes them different; it isn't just their being working people; it isn't just their being Spanish-speaking. All these facts and many more create the need for re-considering the whole approach to migrant education—the attitude of other citizens, isolated living in rural camps, inadequate living accommodations, the unproductive drought-ridden Southwest, the illegal entrance of "wetbacks," the weak enforcement of child labor laws, and others.

Because of the unusual conditions surrounding their childhood and youth, these children have certain needs, by no means unique to them, requiring special attention and special effort on the part of teachers and others who would help them. These special needs are summarized as follows:

- A. Their need for the *feeling of security* is great. It is hard for any child to make the adjustment necessary when moving to a new community. He must become acquainted with new teachers and new classmates, new regulations and requirements. But when a child must make this adjustment three to ten times a year and to a different culture group, how his feeling of security is shaken! This feeling of insecurity may bring about a great lack of confidence in his own ability and so make the child appear slower than he really is. The child must know that he is accepted and liked just as he is. The classroom must attempt to supply a security which he is not receiving elsewhere.
- B. The child must be given a feeling of *belongingness*. Much can be done to prepare resident children for the arrival of the migrant children. An understanding of what the migrants contribute to the economy of the community will help. A study of Spanish and Mexican culture will give them an appreciation of their worth. The teacher must strive to see that each child feels that he is a part of the activity and belongs to the group.
- C. The need to *know or acquire information*. Perhaps this need must be aroused. The parents of these children are apt to be

very busy and may stifle the natural curiosity of the child even more than many other parents do. There is often little felt need for the acquiring of information. They do not see the necessity for learning.

- D. The need to *experience success*. Since these children will often have made less progress than other children of their age, they are deprived of the feeling of success. The teacher has a special task in discovering and creating situations in which the child can succeed.



**EXPERIMENTAL SUMMER SCHOOL**

"The child must know that he is accepted and liked just as he is."

A concrete outcome of this experimental school was the creation of a curriculum unit entitled "Travelling We Go." The unit was developed out of the actual experiences of the children on the road, but designed to enrich their daily experiences with meanings, connections, and relationships not readily apparent to them. Thus, the familiar cotton boll is related to the cotton dress which Manuela is wearing; names of cities and states encountered in travel are given concrete location and relationship on a United States map; and so forth. The authors cite an impressive list of possible outcomes from the use of a study unit of this type with migrant children:

**A. UNDERSTANDING**

1. The need for and the worth of all types of labor
2. The relationship between growing season, soil, rainfall, temperature, and type of crop grown
3. The processes through which various crops grow

**B. ATTITUDES**

1. Appreciation of our United States
2. Appreciation of knowledge to be gained through travel
3. Respect for all types of useful work
4. Respect for the rights and opinions of others

**C. SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

1. Ability to speak English fluently and correctly
2. Ability to comprehend reading material at a higher level
3. Ability to spell the words needed in order to carry on the work of the unit.
4. Ability to interpret ideas through creative work
5. Ability to read maps
6. Ability to use democratic procedures
7. Ability to use correct form in writing letters
8. Skill in using various sources of information
9. Habits of neatness and accuracy
10. Ability to understand and recognize the geographical features of the United States

### *Meet Miss Jones*

Nancy Lou, Manuela, and their parents are not the only human elements in this tragic drama of educational retardation, fragmentation, and frustration. There is also Miss Jones. Miss Jones is the well-trained but underpaid, well-meaning but baffled lady who faces all the Nancy Lous and Manuelas from the other side of the teacher's desk.

Miss Jones, typically, is a graduate of a four-year course in a teachers' college. Nothing in the college curriculum, however, has taught her how to cope with the situation she finds in the schools of the Glades Area or the Seguin District. In either of these areas she will start school in September with 20 to 25 pupils. Each Monday morning from then until Christmas she is apt to be confronted by one to a half dozen new faces. These are the Nancy Lous and the Manuelas and their brothers. They probably have not been to school anywhere since last April or May. They have no records with them to show what work they have done elsewhere. Their grade status is uncertain. But they are children, and Miss Jones is dedicated and devoted to teaching children.

By Christmas, she will have 39 to 41 children of whom at least half are migrants and late entrants. She knows that approved educational theory says that she should have in her class no more than 30 children. Indeed, with such handicapped and retarded children she should have an even smaller group so that more personal attention may be given to each.

What will Miss Jones do? If she is young and inexperienced, she is very likely to develop an acute sense of frustration and make early application for a transfer to another school which does not have migrant children. If she is among the veterans who have learned to live with this situation, she has probably developed numerous ingenious devices to maximize her effectiveness in teaching under these difficult conditions.

Of 197 teachers and principals interviewed, 88 indicated that they make no modifications in their teaching materials,

methods of instruction, daily teaching plans, playground procedures, extra-curricular program or otherwise for the sake of migrant children. Several of these were in the Virginia and Illinois schools where very few migrants enter their classes.

Reporting on their changes of method to meet migrant needs, the other 109 teachers and principals laid stress on easier, simpler, and more individualized material, more personalized instruction with frequent reviews for newcomers, greater flexibility in daily teaching plan, and encouraging resident children to welcome these newcomers into playground and extra-curricular activities. One ingenious suggestion was the giving of status to migrant children by posting their names on the school bulletin board and announcing their arrival over the local radio station.

The problems resulting from the migrant influx which are felt most acutely by teachers and principals are: retardation of the children, overcrowding of facilities, overload on teachers, absenteeism, parental indifference to education, and lack of cleanliness. Happily, they reported very few problems arising from antagonism or belligerence between resident and migrant children.

When asked to rate migrant children in comparison to others on a scale of personality traits, the largest number of teachers and principals marked them "average" on every point. "Slightly below average" was the next most frequent rating on every characteristic. Highest number of "average" ratings were given for truthfulness, cooperativeness, citizenship, and respect for law. The largest number of "above average" ratings were given for self-reliance, ability to adjust, and self-control. Very few "above average" ratings were awarded for mental ability, cleanliness, truthfulness, respect for property or feeling of belonging. "Below average" was frequently checked against the traits of cleanliness and respect for property.

In general, the field staff and director completed their field work with a very favorable impression of, as well as a lot of sympathy for, the Miss Joneses in the classrooms of our four study areas. Only in a very few instances did we detect evidence

of emotional withdrawal because of the migrants' lack of cleanliness. Rarely did we encounter an invidious distinction between "those migrant kids" and "our own children." In the main the teachers and principals accepted migrant children without prejudice or "blame" for their condition. The prevalent attitude was one of sympathy for the child's problem and an earnest desire to do as much as possible for him while he is in the school.

—*And Mr. Martin*

Mr. Martin is an elected member of the School Board. In fact, he is chairman of the School Board. He is on the Board because he is genuinely interested in children and believes in the values of education. Nevertheless, he is a practical businessman with no love for taxes. Moreover, he is under constant pressure from other business acquaintances, property owners, and growers to keep the school tax rate as low as possible. Never yet has a migrant parent approached him with a plea for more adequate school facilities. The Parent-Teachers Association, which sometimes calls for increased school budgets, does not do so with the needs of migrants in mind. In fact, Mr. Martin has some reason to believe that there are those in the P.T.A. who would rather see the migrants kept out of the schools lest some of their "lice, lunacy or laziness" crawl off on the "respectable" children of the permanent community.

Mr. Martin and his fellow members face some real problems. Here are the numbers of new teachers needed to provide for all resident and migrant children, in classes of 30 each, in the respective areas of our study: Florida, Negro schools, 20; Florida, white schools, 5; Virginia, Negro schools, 33; Texas, 5; Illinois, 6. But none of these schools has empty classrooms. If new teachers were to be provided, new buildings would have to be erected or new wings added to house the additional classes.

In Florida and Texas, Mr. Martin might make a convincing case for such expansion of plant and staff on the ground that these children are here most of the school year. The Northampton County, Virginia, taxpayers are not likely to greet with en-

thusiasm a proposal to create 33 new classrooms in their Negro school plant, half of which are to be used by migrants for no more than eight or ten weeks each season.

Mr. Martin might argue that this local county or district ought not to have to handle this unusual load alone. When he turns to explore possibilities of state aid, he finds the cards stacked against him. In all four of the states involved in our study, state financial aid is distributed to local schools on the basis of their average daily attendance. Migrants, because of their late arrival, early departure, and poor attendance, are notoriously poor contributors to average daily attendance.

Mr. Martin, who takes his position seriously, has toyed with a number of ideas in his attempt to solve the problems posed by the growing number of migrant children in the district. He has thought about travelling teachers and even portable classrooms which might follow the migrants from place to place. Some inquiry, however, has convinced him that this is not a very practical solution. For one thing, he has discovered that the migrants do not move together in large groups. Several families may move together under a single crew leader, to be sure, but rarely are there enough children in such a crew to constitute a class and justify a teacher. Moreover, his superintendent has reminded him that migrant movements are interstate in character, whereas American educational administration follows strictly state lines.

Mr. Martin has wondered also about schooling these migrant children separately in a community hall, a church basement or an empty barracks at the canning plant.<sup>7</sup> Some of his teachers favor this solution on the ground that migrant children can thus be given maximum attention adapted to their special needs without holding back the progress of resident children. Yet this solution troubles him. It looks like discrimination, which he opposes. Besides, he knows that a lot of his teachers feel that there are great social values which come to both migrant and

7. This latter method is followed for grades 1-3 in one of the Illinois communities.

Many communities facing this relatively new social problem are asking like the Fishers: What can we do? How can we be helpful to these disadvantaged people? How can we make them a part of the life of our community without undermining our own present standards of health, education and social welfare?

This study does not enable us to answer these questions in the general terms of a total community program, except perhaps by broad implication. Our field experience and the recommendations endorsed by the Migrant Research Project Board do provide the basis for some suggestions for local communities who wish to tackle the specific problem of education for migrant children.

### *Study Your Own Situation and Organize to Meet It*

The four widely-scattered areas studied reveal the great complexity of this problem. The local situations differ as to number of migrant children, time of arrival and departure, racial and ethnic background, extent of school facilities available for them, school attendance laws and their enforcement, attitudes of school administrators and teachers, attitudes in the general community, and other factors.

The first step toward intelligent action will be to find or create a group willing and competent to make a careful study of the local situation. Such a local committee might grow out of P.T.A., Church Women's Group, Woman's Club, Chamber of Commerce, Council of Churches, Grange or any other responsible local organization. Or it might be a new creation,—a Migrant Education Committee composed of representatives of all these and other concerned organizations.

For guidance in developing a community self-study program dealing with this problem, we urge the local committee to secure and review a copy of the full field study report referred to in the footnote on page 3 of this article. It contains, in addition to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the field study, copies of the questionnaires used in interviewing migrant families, school principals and teachers, and a copy of the

migrant pupil record card. It also carries a selected bibliography, some items of which may be helpful for the orientation of a local committee. In addition to this report, a local study committee should secure and review carefully the report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor entitled "Migratory Labor in American Agriculture" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951. 75 cents.).<sup>9</sup>

The following list of questions may be suggestive of the area such a local self-study group will wish to cover:

Who are our migrants? Where is their home? What is their customary route of travel?

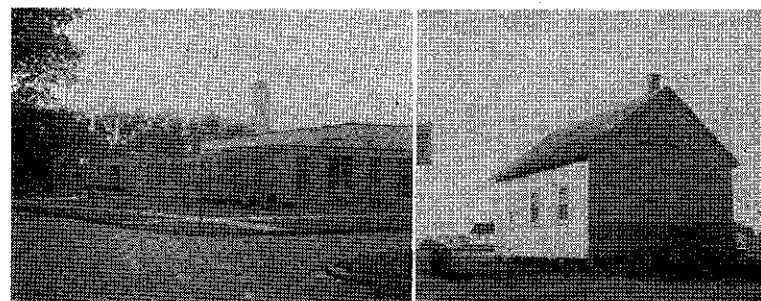
How many families come here? How many school age children does this represent? Is the number stable, growing, or declining?

When do they arrive and how long are they here? Especially, what portion of the school term?

Where do they live in our community and how accessible are the schools to them? Is bus transportation available to them?

What proportion of them, by ages and grades, do enroll in school? How soon after arrival do they enroll?

9. A condensed version of the report of the President's Commission may be found in a pamphlet entitled "No Work Today" by Varden Fuller (Public Affairs Committee, 22 East 38th St., New York 16, N.Y. 25¢).



### STUDY IN CONTRASTS

The survey found migrant children in schools as good—and as bad—as these.



What is their rate of attendance while in our community, and what factors interfere with attendance?

What are the compulsory school attendance laws in our state governing migrant children? How are these laws enforced in our community?

What school facilities are available for them? Do they enter the same classes with resident children? Are separate classes created? Or separate schools? Does their coming overcrowd classrooms and overload teachers? Would this be so if all school-age migrants were brought into the schools?

How is grade placement handled? How seriously retarded are these children?

What problems do teachers and administrators feel in connection with migrant children?

What are the prevailing attitudes regarding schooling for migrant children among growers, taxpayers, resident parents, school authorities?

Let the local committee expand this list.

A natural and desirable outgrowth of such a Migrant Education Committee may be a permanent local or county-wide Migrant Council. This organization should be broader both in representation and in its scope of interest than the educational self-study committee. It should include representation from local offices of education, health, welfare, agricultural extension, farm placement, and highway patrol, together with representatives of farm, labor, religious, educational and other civic organizations. It should be capable of conducting studies, recommending local ordinances and/or state legislation, and initiating action projects designed to improve the economic, social, and educational opportunities of migrant families and their children.

### *Support Your School Board*

Assuming that your school board recognizes and accepts its responsibility to provide educational opportunity for every school-age child who resides within its jurisdiction for any

period of time whatsoever (otherwise, you need a new school board!), we recommend that organized community groups and concerned individual citizens rally to the support of the school board in an effort to solve this problem.

Below are listed the major lines of action recommended to local school authorities in our field report. Many of them will be possible only if community sentiment is mobilized in support. Not all will be appropriate to any given community. The local self-study should determine which of these, or what other lines of action, should be given priority:

1. Employment of adequate and properly trained attendance supervisors of the same racial and ethnic background as the migrants.
2. Development of a vigorous campaign to call attention of employers of agricultural migrants (a) to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act which prohibits employment of children under sixteen years of age in crops moving in interstate commerce while schools are in session in the district; and (b) to the economic, social and moral reasons for giving their voluntary cooperation in getting migrant children into school promptly and keeping them in school regularly while they are resident.
3. Cultivation of the acquaintance of labor contractors and crew leaders, urging them (a) to handle their itineraries and work arrangements as far as possible with the educational needs of children in mind; and (b) to encourage regular school attendance by the children in families with whom they work.
4. Establishment of kindergartens and nursery schools for migrants, thus extending downward the all-too-limited educational life of these children, as well as releasing school-age children from the obligation of caring for younger brothers and sisters while parents work in the fields.

5. Establishment of accredited summer schools for migrant children to supplement the limited schooling achieved by these children during the normal school year.
6. Employment of adequate teaching staff to handle the influx of migrant children without overloading teachers and with recognition of the fact that these children require skilled individual attention.
7. Review of all remodelling and building programs with adaptation to the needs of migrant children in mind. Multi-purpose type rooms may be possible which can be used as classrooms during peak enrollments, and for other purposes at other times.
8. Provision of hot lunches in schools where migrants are enrolled; and free lunches where needed.
9. Provision of more practical and vocational courses and vocational guidance counselling services for migrant children.
10. Organization and promotion, in cooperation with agricultural extension and home demonstration services, of adult education classes for migrants in such areas as English language (for Spanish speaking), health and nutrition, home arts, practical arithmetic, economic problems, parent education, and other subjects adapted to their needs. Special classes for young adult migrants are also recommended.
11. Inclusion of problems of migrant education as a regular subject for study and discussion at teachers institutes, conventions, workshops, etc.
12. Encouragement and support of special efforts by teachers to meet the parents of migrant children, to interpret to them the significance and values of the curriculum subjects being studied by their children; and to encourage continued and regular attendance at school by the children.
13. Vigorous efforts to secure general public recognition and acceptance of migrants as legitimate members of the community, entitled to services from and participation in all community programs and institutions.

### *Stimulate Legislation*

Migrants constitute one of the most "voiceless" groups in American society. They rarely stay in one community long enough to establish voting residence. Most of them belong to minority groups who have been traditionally disfranchised. They have not ordinarily been members of either farmer organizations or labor unions. As a consequence, they have virtually no political power of their own. Yet in the matter of educational opportunity, as in regard to minimum wages, social security, labor standards, housing, health and safety, there is a necessity for certain special legislation to provide for the peculiar needs of these people. Such legislation is likely to be passed only if concerned groups in many local communities make it their business to support such action in state legislatures and in the national Congress. In the judgment of the Migrant Research Project Board, the following items of legislation should be sought in the states where such legislation does not now prevail:

1. Tightening of compulsory school attendance laws to cover migrants; and bringing state child labor laws into harmony with school attendance laws.
2. Removal, where they exist, of any legal residence requirements or other laws abridging the responsibility of local school districts to provide educational opportunity for every child.
3. Provision of a new basis for distribution of state financial aid to local school districts to relieve the peculiar hardships incurred by districts receiving a substantial influx of migrant children.
4. Provision in budgets of state departments of education for the employment of a supervisory specialist in migrant education to devote full-time to this problem in those states where any considerable number of school-age migrant children are found during any portion of the school year.

In the area of Federal legislation, the recommendations of the Migrant Research Project Board are modest, but we believe

they are practical. They are summarized in the full report as follows:

1. Increased appropriations to the school lunch program.
2. A substantial appropriation to the U.S. Office of Education for work, in cooperation with the states, on problems of migrant education.
3. Special Federal aid to schools facing shortage of facilities and personnel due to influxes of agricultural migratory workers.
4. Inclusion of migratory workers in a Federal minimum wage law and in the Old Age and Survivors Insurance provisions of the Social Security Act.

#### *Work to Minimize Migratory Labor*

When all is said and done, no amount of ameliorative legislation or high-minded local community action is going to give the half million or more Nancy Lous and Willie Joes of the migratory stream an educational experience equal to that of their resident age-mates and school-mates. It simply is not in the cards. As long as Nancy Lou and her mother must follow the crops, her education is going to be interrupted, disjointed, and fragmented. The ultimate solution to the problem of migrant education is the elimination of migrancy among families with school-age children.

The elimination of agricultural migrancy is a long-range goal. It involves adjustments in our land policy and agricultural patterns and practices not to be achieved easily or soon. A discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is a considered judgment of the Migrant Research Project Board that all who are truly concerned with these problems—growers, educators, sociologists, economists, and political and civic leaders,—should unite their efforts toward the development of our national economy in ways which will stabilize employment and minimize the need for the employment of migratory families.

—SHIRLEY E. GREENE

Migrants are children of misfortune. They are the rejects of those sectors of agriculture and of other industries undergoing change. We depend on misfortune to build up our force of migratory workers and when the supply is low because there is not enough misfortune at home, we rely on misfortune abroad to replenish the supply.

Migratory farm laborers move restlessly over the face of the land, but they neither belong to the land nor does the land belong to them. They pass through community after community, but they neither claim the community as home nor does the community claim them. Under the law, the domestic migrants are citizens of the United States but they are scarcely more a part of the land of their birth than the alien migrants working beside them.

The migratory workers engage in a common occupation, but their cohesion is scarcely greater than that of pebbles on the seashore. Each harvest collects and re-groups them. They live under a common condition, but create no techniques for meeting common problems. The public acknowledges the existence of migrants, yet declines to accept them as full members of the community. As crops ripen, farmers anxiously await their coming; as the harvest closes, the community, with equal anxiety, awaits their going.

—From "Migratory Labor in American Agriculture," Report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor, March 1951, p. 3.