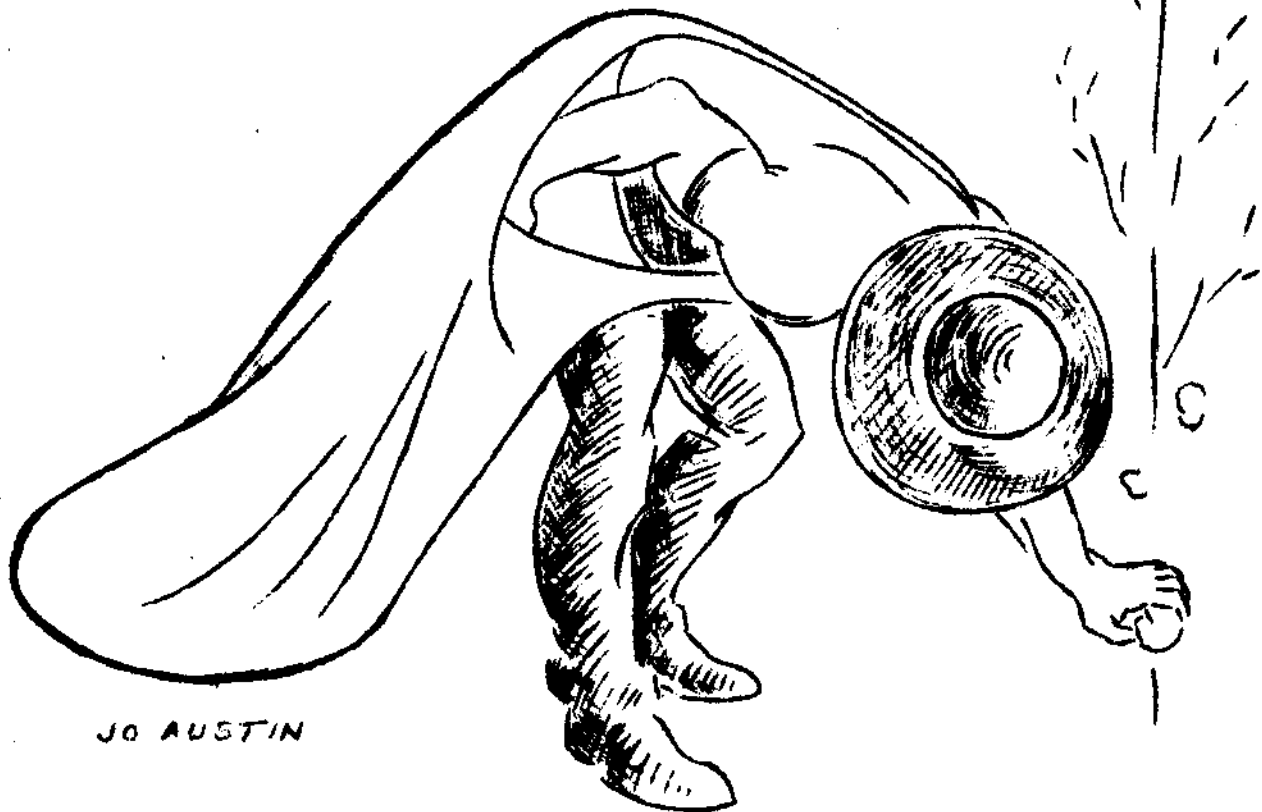


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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

farm
labor
project



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A STUDY OF THE

PROBLEMS OF DISABLED FARM LABORERS

AND THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE
FOR PEOPLE WHO FOLLOW THE CROPS

State of California
Department of Education
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

ITINERANT FARM LABOR PROJECT

In the fall of 1955 the California Vocational Rehabilitation Service embarked upon a three-and-a-half year project concerned with the rehabilitation of disabled farm laborers in the San Joaquin Valley. The project was made possible by a federal grant from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and matching funds from the State of California.

The first phase was an assessment of the extent and seriousness of disability among farm laborers, particularly the itinerant laborer. This was accomplished by choosing representative farm labor communities and labor camps in Fresno and Kern Counties where houses and cabins were selected on a statistical sampling basis for rehabilitation counselors to contact the occupants and check on whether disabled adults were included in the living group.

Ten separate areas were selected for sampling, and 31.6% of 2,389 dwellings were contacted. People were interviewed in a total of 756 dwellings. It was found that 2,692 working age adults were involved, and 20.1% claimed to be disabled, making a total of 542 disabled adults out of 756 residences. Of these 542, only 79 or 14.6% were capable of working full time. There were 55.7% (302) who stated they could work part time while 29.7% (161) were unable to do any work. Considering only those workers who were disabled to the extent that they could not work or could work only part time, 20% of all the people interviewed were found to be disabled to the extent that their earning abilities were seriously affected.

The California State Department of Employment estimated that at the time this survey was made there were 136,400 local seasonal workers and 72,400 non-local workers in California farm labor. These figures were taken at the peak of the agricultural period, and it was estimated that there were approximately 20% of the local workers and 10% of the non-local workers who were temporarily on the labor force. On these premises it is estimated that there were in the state 175,000 farm laborers, and approximately 93,000 were employed in the San Joaquin Valley.

Applying this information to the sample in which 20% were found to be disabled to the extent that their earning abilities were affected, it is estimated that statewide there were 35,000 disabled farm laborers. Since 30% of the disabled were unable to do any work, it would appear that 10,500 persons were a total loss to farm production in California because of disability, and an additional 17,500 could produce only part of the time.

Rehabilitation Service

After the initial survey, the major phase of the project was devoted to stimulating activity in regard to rehabilitation of farm laborers and the development of whatever services seemed to be necessary to get these people into the employment market and off relief rolls or away from dependency upon their families.

In determining individuals to be included as part of the study, the following definition was used:

"An itinerant farm laborer is an agricultural worker who is intermittently employed as a casual laborer and performs unskilled agricultural labor for relatively short periods of time for many different employers over a wide geographic area and is usually paid on a piece-rate or hourly basis."

These workers fall into three classes: (1) those who have a single residence and travel to and from the various jobs; (2) those who change their residence with each job; (3) those who have a permanent headquarters residence but establish a temporary residence at each job. When accompanied by their families, all physically able members, including children, seek employment. Thus, the family, rather than the individual, tends to become the earning unit. Therefore, any adult disabled member of the farm labor family was considered as a farm laborer.

Project work was carried out by one full-time and two half-time rehabilitation counselors. Some farm labor cases living in areas of the San Joaquin Valley not easily covered by these three people were served by other counselors.

During the project, 598 disabled farm laborers were considered for vocational rehabilitation. These people were located through various means:

328	were new referrals stimulated directly or indirectly by the farm labor project.
176	referrals through public welfare
28	from private physicians
30	from tuberculosis sanatoria
20	from public health departments
10	from the State Employment Service

and the remainder from a variety of sources.

Of those, 292 were accepted for service. Due to the itinerant nature of many of these people, a number of the 306 who were not accepted for service were not accepted because contact was lost or they seemed to be totally disinterested. However, certain information was obtained from all of the 598 people, and considerable information was obtained from the 292 who were accepted for service.

I

Findings in Regard to
The Total Group of 598 Farm Laborers
Who Were Referred for Rehabilitation

Residence: 118 were found in labor camps
297 were living in small rural towns
23 lived on small farms
160 lived in urban areas
(most of these were in "fringe areas")

Literacy: Most people claimed some education, but a closer evaluation in the interview indicated that
31% were illiterate. Many could not write their names.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ the group had less than a 6th grade education.

Ethnic Origin: 399 White
53 Negro
82 Mexican
9 Other
55 Unknown

Dependents: Most of the people interviewed had others dependent upon them.
49% had three or more dependents.

Age: Under 20 years 22 or 3.7%
20 to 29 years 100 or 16.7%
30 to 39 years 119 or 19.9%
40 to 49 years 180 or 30.1%
50 to 59 years 132 or 22.1%
Over 60 years 39 or 6.5%
Age Unknown 6

Place of Birth:

The majority of people interviewed had moved to California from other areas.

Those born in California 54
made up only 11%

The largest single contributor to the pool of disabled farm laborers appears to be

the State of Oklahoma with 136
Arkansas was next with 79
followed by Texas with 75

The above states,
Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas,

contributed 62%
or 290

of the total whose residence was known cases.

Other states represented were:

Arizona 13
Missouri 24
Mississippi 9

And from

Mexico 30
Philippine Islands 5

Thirteen other states and
two other nations totaled 46

Unknown 130

II

Findings - Cases Accepted for Service

Substantial information was obtained in regard to the 292 people who were selected for service. The following information applied to these cases:

Education:

142	<u>had less than a 6th grade education</u>
17	had no formal education
39	claimed 1 to 3 years of school
86	had 4 to 6 years of education
118	had 7 to 9 years of education
32	went through the 10th grade or above

Intelligence Test Results:

A Total of	208	clients were given vocational guidance tests. The primary test used to assess intelligence was the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. Others used were the Army Alpha Beta, AGCT, and the Otis.
These tests revealed that	74	or 35% had an I.Q. score below 80
	70	or 34% were between 81 and 90
	49	or 23% were between 91 and 100
	15	or 8% were over 100

Age:

Under 20 years	14	or	4.8%
20 to 29 years	64	or	21.9%
30 to 39 years	70	or	24 %
40 to 49 years	86	or	29.4%
50 to 59 years	53	or	18.1%
Over 60 years	5	or	1.7%

Housing:

In many cases housing was provided by the employers.	64	or	22%	lived rent-free in farm labor camps.
	228	or	78%	paid rent in private housing.

Major Disabling Condition:

Amputation of arms or legs or other disablement of extremities	57	or	19.5%
Back disabilities	55	or	18.8%
Tuberculosis	52	or	17.8%
Cardiac disabilities	25	or	8.9%
Blindness and other visual problems	17	or	5.8%
Epilepsy	9	or	3 %
All other	76	or	26.3%

Number of Disabilities:

Many of the clients served had more than one disability.	138	or	47%	had 1 major disability
	89	or	30%	had 2 major disabilities
	45	or	15%	had 3 major disabilities
	10	or	3%	had 4 major disabilities
	9	or	3%	had 5 major disabilities
and	1			had more than 6 major disabilities

County Hospital Care:

Most of these people had been served at some time in their lives through a county hospital in the San Joaquin Valley.	237	or	81%	had been known at a county hospital
	55	or	19%	had not.

Of the 292 cases accepted for service, the following results were re-
corded as of July, 1959:

<u>Results:</u>	115	rehabilitated and returned to employment
	50	were given substantial service but service did not result in employment
	69	cases were never given substantial service because of various reasons, such as leaving the area or lack of interest
	58	cases were still being provided rehabi- litation services

III

Rehabilitated Cases

The following is information concerning the people who were rehabilitated:

<u>I.Q. Scores of the 81 tested:</u>	5%	below 70
	21%	71 to 80
	38%	81 to 90
	23%	91 to 100
	13%	over 100

Considering these figures against all those who were accepted for service, tested, and the cases closed,

	30%	of the closed case group with an I.Q. below 70 were successfully rehabilitated
	42%	of those in the group from 71 to 80
	52%	from 81 to 90
	48%	from 91 to 100
and	73%	of those with an I.Q. over 100 were successfully rehabilitated.

Although it is obvious there was greater success with the more intelligent groups, it also is apparent that those in the lower intelligence brackets are far from hopeless.

<u>Welfare Status:</u>	202	or	69%	were receiving welfare grants as follows:
Aid to Needy Children	135			
General Relief	43			
Aid to Needy Blind	9			
Other types of welfare	15			
	90	or	31%	were not receiving welfare.

Cost of Services Provided
to Those Rehabilitated:

The average cost of the 115 rehabilitated cases
was \$732.21

On the average, the money
was used as follows:

56.34	for diagnosis
212.10	for medical care
124.54	for vocational training
100.51	for tools and equipment
238.70	for maintenance and transportation

The total expenditure for
rehabilitated cases was \$84,204.00

The total spent for all cases
including those who were not
accepted and the unsuccessful
cases

was \$119,872.00

Vocational rehabilitation service
resulted in a discontinuance of
public welfare grants in 65 cases

and the reduction of grants on an
additional 6 cases

The average discontinued monthly
grants amounted to \$157.00 and the total amount of monthly
savings due to discontinued and
reduced aid

was \$10,495.00

The total amount of monthly
savings due to discontinued
and reduced aid if aid were
continued for one year

would be \$125,940.00 and if continued for five years

would be \$629,700.00 and, further, if continued for
10 years

would be \$1,259,400.00

Earnings After Rehabilitation:

Weekly earnings:		7	were earning less than \$25 per week
		41	were earning from \$25 to \$49 per week
		60	from \$50 to \$74 per week
		7	over \$75 per week
Weekly average	\$	50.30	
Median		50.00	
Monthly average		216.00	
Median		215.00	
Yearly earnings, total group		\$298,440.00	

Occupations:

The successfully rehabilitated clients achieved self-support through a wide variety of occupations, falling into fifty-two different occupational classes. While some of the clients were given physical restoration services and returned to farm labor, the majority were rehabilitated into work of higher skill which tended to be substantially more remunerative than farm labor. The fifty-two different job titles are broken down into the following occupational fields, shown in rank order of frequency:

- Service trades (personal service, barbering, shoe repair, etc.)
- Mechanical (machinists, welders, farm equipment mechanics, etc.)
- Clerical
- Skilled farm work
- Industrial jobs
- Retail sales
- Construction
- Technical trades

Conclusion

The foregoing material will be enlarged upon and analyzed in a more complete report. However, certain conclusions based upon the objective findings of the workers concerned with this project can be briefly summarized:

(1) The average itinerant farm laborer in California is substantially below the average population in educational achievement and ability to rank high on intelligence tests.

(2) Due to their standard of living, they are more apt to have serious unresolved health problems and major disabilities.

(3) Because of their limited education and ability, coupled with heavy physical exertion necessary for most unskilled farm work, a disability will more than likely make it impossible for the farm laborer to earn a living, and he must then rely on public welfare for support.

(4) Although the resources of these people are so limited that they find it difficult to overcome serious disabilities on their own, they are basically hardy and, in spite of their limitations, given adequate rehabilitation service, they appear to have a better than average chance of rebuilding their vocational lives.

* * * * *

Report prepared by
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Note:

Other information concerning this work is contained in a 25-minute sound color film entitled "Second Harvest -- A Study in Rural Rehabilitation." The film is available on loan from the

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