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# The emergence of federal assistance programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers in post-World War II America

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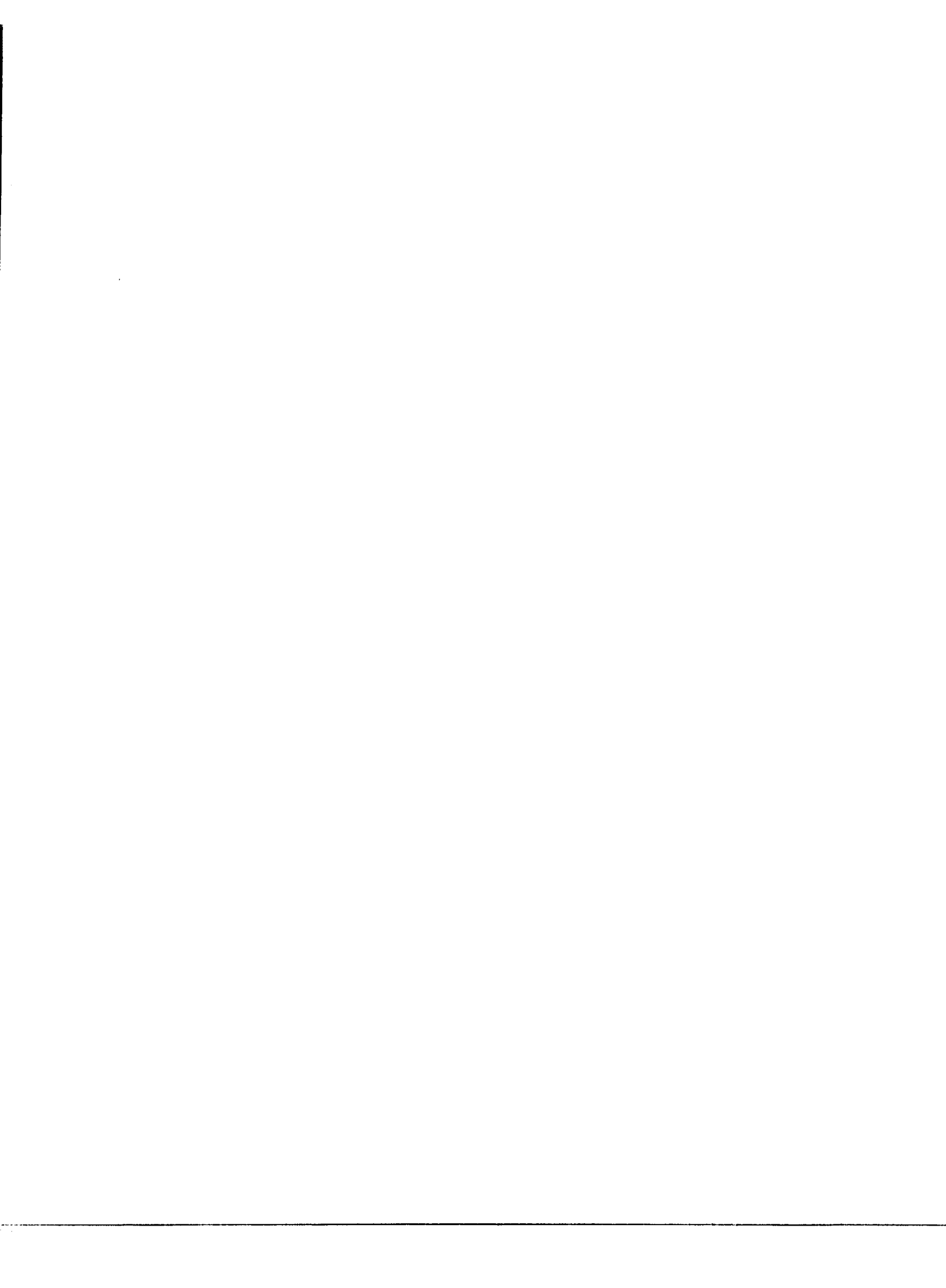
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**The emergence of federal assistance programs for migrant and  
seasonal farmworkers in post-World War II America**

**Effland, Anne Bradstreet Wallace, Ph.D.**

**Iowa State University, 1991**

**U·M·I**

**300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
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**The emergence of federal assistance programs for  
migrant and seasonal farmworkers in  
post-World War II America**

**by**

**Anne B. W. Effland**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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DEDICATION

"If you knew your history, then you would know  
where you're comin' from."

Bob Marley and the Wailers  
"Buffalo Soldier," 1983

To my father, David Wallace, and in memory of  
my mother, Evelyn Schmitt Wallace,  
who helped me learn where I was coming from,

and to my husband, Bill Effland, and  
our children, Daniel, Jacob, and Kathleen,  
who keep me sure of where I'm going to.

## INTRODUCTION

Reform is more frequently a problem of power than of knowledge. The unpleasant and even shocking facts of disease and malnutrition, the brutalizing effects of poverty, are well enough known to lie heavily on the conscience of the American public. One of the curious characteristics of this problem is that the facts are rediscovered every few years. It is testimony to the drama and eloquence of the facts that we have not yet become altogether accustomed to them and they still have power to awaken conscience and even guilt.

But conscience can only put the issues; it is political power that resolves them. Therefore a hiatus has existed, a persistent hiatus between intent and accomplishment.<sup>1</sup>

These words, written by farm labor market analyst Lloyd Fisher in his 1953 study The Harvest Labor Market in California, describe with perceptive insight the circumstances from which federal assistance programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers emerged in post-World War II America. This study traces the political developments that ended the "persistent hiatus between intent and accomplishment" from the years immediately following World War II to the end of the Johnson war on poverty in 1968. During that period, the intersection of an awakening public conscience and the increasing power of reformers in government began to counter the political forces of commercial agriculture and in the process

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<sup>1</sup>Lloyd H. Fisher, The Harvest Labor Market in California (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 140.

defined the character of the programs that finally evolved as part of the broader antipoverty effort.

Historians and other social scientists have repeatedly investigated and analyzed the experiences of migrant agricultural labor in recent American history. Economists have tried to count these workers and determine the reasons for their persistence in the American agricultural system. Sociologists have examined their living and working conditions and tried to discover what forces accounted for their position in American society. Political scientists have been interested in the ways in which the interactions of different group interests have affected government attention to the problems of farmworkers. Historians have recounted the experiences of agricultural workers as far back as the nineteenth century, providing context and perspective to questions about the situation of farmworkers in our own time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The work of economists is well represented in the large number of publications produced by the departments of Agriculture and Labor during the twentieth century. A recent study by economist Philip L. Martin, Harvest of Confusion: Migrant Workers in U.S. Agriculture (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), attempts to make sense of the varied interpretations presented in the last fifty years of such publications. The sociological approach may be seen in William H. Friedland and Dorothy Nelkin, Migrant Agricultural Workers in America's Northeast (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). Examples of the political science perspective may be seen in Richard B.

Particular attention has been paid by recent scholars to the development of unions among California farmworkers, perhaps inspired by the successes of the United Farm Workers in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> The accomplishments of organized labor tell only part of the story of successful action on behalf of migrant agricultural labor, however. The federally funded assistance programs that provided migrants with health, education, housing, and employment services affected migrants in far more areas than ever were touched by the efforts of union organizers. Yet few studies have examined these programs in trying to understand the recent experiences of migrant agricultural labor in the United States.<sup>4</sup> The analysis

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Craig, The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1971) and J. Craig Jenkins, The Politics of Insurgency: The Farmworker Movement in the 1960s (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985). Historical studies include Cletus Daniel, Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981) and Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>See Daniel, Bitter Harvest; Majka and Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State; Jenkins, The Politics of Insurgency: The Farmworker Movement of the 1960s; and Ernesto Galarza, Farm Workers and Agribusiness in California, 1947-1960 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

<sup>4</sup>In fact, most of these studies emanate from either the programs themselves or from groups and individuals formerly associated with them. See, for example, Helen L. Johnston, Health for the Nation's Harvesters: A History of the Migrant Health Program in its Economic and

offered here helps to fill that gap by describing how the migrant assistance programs developed during the post-war period to become part of the federal antipoverty effort of the 1960s.

This study also offers a new perspective on the development and implementation of federal reform programs during the 1960s. Analyses of the movement for reform during the 1960s have just begun to appear in the 1980s. They concentrate primarily on the broad picture, particularly the fate of liberalism, student unrest and the New Left, and the dramatic civil rights movement.<sup>5</sup> Examination of the process by which programs such as those to assist migrants entered the national antipoverty

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Social Setting (Farmington Hills, Mich.: National Migrant Worker Council, Inc., 1985); National Farmworker Policy Project, CETA Farmworker Programs: A Legislative History (Sacramento, Calif.: National Farmworker Policy Project, 1981); and Ronald L. Goldfarb, Migrant Farm Workers: A Caste of Despair (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Allen J. Matusow, The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Alonzo L. Hamby, Liberalism and Its Challengers: F.D.R. to Reagan (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984); Milton Viorst, Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1988); James Miller, "Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Harvard Sitkoff, The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980, ed. by Eric Foner (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981); and David J. Garrow, Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (New York: W. Morrow, 1986).

agenda provides a view of the fate of less spectacular movements. Furthermore, the investigation of how state and local agencies in Iowa used the available federal funds to operate assistance programs offers some evidence of how governments and private agencies translated legislation into operable programs. Such information affords a basis for understanding the effectiveness of federal programs for the communities and migrants they were designed to help.

The terms migrant agricultural labor, migrant farmworkers, migrant workers, farmworkers, migrant labor, migrant farm labor, seasonal farmworkers, seasonal agricultural labor, and other combinations of these words are used interchangeably in this study. They may in some cases carry significant differences of meaning, but for the uses of this analysis those differences seemed unimportant. Farmworkers who worked as seasonal labor on large-scale farms were nearly always migratory to some extent, at least from job to job, if not from state to state. Although migrant labor received the largest measure of national attention, much federal legislation for migratory labor applied to seasonal farmworkers as well.

The dissertation begins its investigation of migrant assistance programs in 1945. Migrant agricultural labor,

however, has been used in the United States since the consolidation of agriculture on a large scale began in the post-Civil War period. Historians have most commonly investigated migrant labor in California, where the size of farms became large enough by 1870 to require the hiring of large numbers of laborers during planting, cultivating, and harvest periods. The earliest groups of migrants included Chinese and Japanese immigrants. Restriction of Chinese immigration beginning in 1882, however, reduced the opportunity to hire Chinese labor. At the same time, the Japanese tendency to organize and insist on improved working conditions, as well as to save money and attempt to become farm tenants and owners themselves, convinced California farmers to look elsewhere for workers.<sup>6</sup>

Large-scale growers turned to other isolated minority groups like the Filipinos and Mexicans for agricultural labor by the turn of the twentieth century. The alienation of these minority groups from the larger society allowed the growers to treat them in ways that would have been unacceptable to white labor. Another, perhaps more important, reason for their popularity as workers was the likelihood that these racial groups would

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<sup>6</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 20-50; Daniel, pp. 46-67.



have few other options for employment and would be unable to discover any rights they might hold as Americans because of educational and language barriers. Those who were not citizens were under the constant fear of deportation.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the reasons for these minority groups' employment as laborers by large farms in California, there seems to have been little public interest or concern for the conditions under which the migrants worked. Not until union organizers for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) made the first attempt to improve conditions for farm workers in California in the years just before the First World War did the public take notice. The strikes and bloody confrontations between labor and growers that resulted from this organizing led to national interest in the situation. As a consequence, the first of many commissions and committees on agricultural labor assembled to investigate conditions in the fields of large-scale farms in California.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 61-68; Daniel, pp. 67-68.

<sup>8</sup>The commission was a California state Commission on Immigration and Housing that began investigations in 1914 as a means of ending the appeal of IWW organizers among farm labor. There was also a federal Commission on Industrial Relations that made investigations in 1915. Majka and Majka, pp. 51-61; Daniel, pp. 81-87; Carey McWilliams, Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942), p. 11.

World War I anti-socialist repression ended the ability of the IWW to affect the agricultural labor issue. The few reforms in California law forced by IWW pressure were rescinded and conditions returned to those that had existed before 1910. World War I also created pressure to allow large numbers of Mexicans to enter the United States as seasonal laborers to take the place of Americans serving as soldiers or in war industries. Throughout the 1920s government support of immigration for seasonal labor allowed further concentration of agriculture in California based on cheap, tractable, and plentiful labor.<sup>9</sup>

As the economy entered the Depression in the 1930s, however, the need for Mexican labor declined. American workers from other regions and from California cities entered the seasonal agricultural work force. By the mid-1930s, the return of American workers to the fields of California had become a mass migration of displaced

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<sup>9</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Employment Service, Report of the Farm Labor Bureau of the U.S. Employment Service, 1923 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1924); U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Employment Service, Report of the Farm Labor Division, U.S. Employment Service, 1924, 1925 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1925, 1926); U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Employment Service, Summary of Activities of the Farm Labor Division, U.S. Employment Service, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931); Majka and Majka, pp. 62-65; Daniel, p. 67.

farm families. The publicity their working and living conditions received helped support the development of the first federal assistance programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Those programs, part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, in turn formed the basis for the later efforts documented in this study.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 65-73; Daniel, pp. 67-68.

## CHAPTER 1

## FARM POWERS ASCENDANT: THE TRIUMPH OF P.L. 78

At the end of World War II, migrant and seasonal farmworkers faced an uncertain future as American society and government began to readjust to peace and search for a new order following a decade and a half of domestic and foreign turmoil. The New Deal and the war offered two conflicting patterns that post-war farm labor policy might follow. On the one hand, the New Deal had produced the federal migrant labor camp system offering housing, sanitary facilities, health care, and a measure of self-determination to impoverished farmworkers. Similarly, the emergency wartime agricultural labor program, continued through December 31, 1947, hired and provided maintenance, health care, and transportation for farmworkers needed by private employers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Accounts of the New Deal programs for farm labor may be found in Theodore Saloutos, The American Farmer and the New Deal (Iowa State Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 150-178; Richard S. Kirkendall, Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1966; reprint ed., Iowa State Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 106-132; Sidney Baldwin, Poverty and Politics: The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968); Grant McConnell, The Decline of Agrarian Democracy (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953), pp. 84-96; Walter J. Stein, California and the Dust Bowl Migration (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 140-189; Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, Farm Workers,

On the other hand, Congress, under pressure from organized farm employers, had denied farmworkers inclusion in the major labor legislation of the New Deal. Moreover, these same organizations had succeeded in wresting control of the federal farm camp program from the Farm Security Administration, sympathetic to workers, and placing it under the control of the Extension Service, sympathetic to employers. The critical question for farmworkers as they entered the post-war period was whether the farmworker advocates or the farm employers would establish control of farm labor issues after the war.<sup>2</sup>

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Agribusiness, and the State (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 108-112; and Wayne D. Rasmussen, A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-47, Agriculture Monograph No. 13, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, September 1951, pp. 10-11. Rasmussen's History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program is also the most complete and detailed source of information on Department of Agriculture involvement with the agricultural labor supply program during World War II.

<sup>2</sup>On the decision to exempt agricultural labor from protective labor legislation during the New Deal see Cletus Daniel, Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 258-272; Ronald L. Goldfarb, Migrant Farm Workers: A Caste of Despair (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 147-148, 152-154, 162-163, 168-175; and Stein, California and the Dust Bowl Migration, pp. 140-144. Details of the transfer of federal farm labor programs are described in Baldwin, Poverty and Politics, and McConnell, The Decline of Agrarian Democracy.

A group of officials in the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Standards had assembled as early as March 1945 to plan action to assert the power of farmworker advocates within government at the end of the war emergency. They were led by the division's associate director Clara Beyer, an appointee of Frances Perkins and associate director of the division since its founding in 1934. Beyer had a lifelong commitment to improving the condition of labor, as evidenced by the long list of labor-related positions she held before joining the labor standards office. Just out of college, she had served from 1917 to 1919 with the World War I Labor Policies Board and from 1919 to 1921 with the District of Columbia Minimum Wage Board. During the years 1922-1927, while she raised her three sons, she held several part-time and volunteer positions with the Women's Joint Committee for the Minimum Wage and Hour Legislation, the American Federation of Labor, and the New York Consumers' League. This last activity led to her acquaintance with Frances Perkins. In fact, after joining the Labor Department in 1928 as an economist with the Children's Bureau, she helped persuade Roosevelt to appoint Perkins to his

cabinet. Perkins in turn appointed Beyer to her position in the Bureau of Labor Standards.<sup>3</sup>

Beyer's labor department committee had hoped to persuade Senator LaFollette to introduce a resolution calling for investigation of the potential solutions to anticipated post-war labor migration. State government officials also expressed concern about a potential return to the migrancy problems of the Depression. In December 1945, delegates to the Secretary of Labor's Twelfth National Conference on Labor Legislation, a gathering of government and private labor officials from throughout the United States, urged the formation of state and federal committees to study and coordinate government services for migrants. The group also recommended coverage of agricultural workers under all state and federal labor legislation, as well as special legislation regulating labor contractors and transportation and providing medical care.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Bart Barnes, "Labor Expert Clara Beyer Dies at 98," Washington Post, 27 October 1990, p. D7; "Beyer, Clara Mortenson," Who's Who of American Women, Vol. 1: 1958-1959, 1st ed. (Chicago: Marquis, 1958), p. 120.

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum, Miss McConnell, 30 March 1945, "Migratory Labor--General," Box 94, Records of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas; "Secretary Reports on Federal Labor Consolidation; Outlines Legislation Problems," Labor Information Bulletin 13(1) (1946):2-3.

Federal action eventually came as part of the Department of Labor's efforts to smooth the reorientation of workers to a peacetime economy. Major General G. B. Erskine, administrator of the Retraining and Reemployment Administration, established the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor in May 1946 to investigate and recommend action on post-war labor migrancy. Erskine chaired the committee, with Shans McCarthy and John P. Sanderson of the Reemployment Branch of the Retraining and Reemployment Administration serving as deputy chairman and secretary, respectively. The committee operated through work groups composed of staff from the departments of Agriculture and Labor, the Federal Security Agency, the National Housing Agency, and the Railroad Retirement Board. Although the committee considered migrancy among workers in industry and transportation as well as agriculture, their report, issued in 1947, concentrated primarily on the needs of agricultural migrants.<sup>5</sup>

The committee report recommended action by employers, communities, all levels of government, and migrants themselves. Calls for inclusion of agricultural

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<sup>5</sup>Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor, Migrant Labor . . . a human problem (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Retraining and Reemployment Administration, 1947), pp. v-vi, 1-5.



workers under state and federal labor protection legislation echoed those made by the National Conference on Labor Legislation two years earlier. In the area of social services for migrants, the report urged removal of state residence requirements for health, education, and welfare assistance and federal grants-in-aid to help states in providing those services to migrants. Less specific recommendations discussed the need for increased public awareness of migrant problems to support necessary legislation, and education of employers, communities, and migrants to promote more efficient recruitment and smoother integration of migrants into the areas where they worked.<sup>6</sup>

Among the most creative of the solutions to migrant problems advanced by the committee were those aimed at ending the need for migrancy altogether. They recalled some of the direct intervention programs attempted during the New Deal to stabilize the rural poor. By 1947, however, solutions requiring federal direction of social and economic innovations had fallen into disfavor. The committee suggested instead that areas with seasonal labor needs take local action to diversify their industries and assist in establishing permanent

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<sup>6</sup>Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor, pp. 6-58.

subsistence homesteads for migrants to assure the availability of seasonal labor without forcing migrancy upon their workers.<sup>7</sup>

Agricultural employers, however, did not show much interest in improving the living and working conditions of their seasonal workers in the immediate post-war period. Discussions of the need for importation of Mexican and other foreign labor to meet harvest labor demands after the war provide ample evidence of this attitude and its influence on Congress and the Employment Service. The emergency farm labor recruitment program had provided both a domestic labor supply program and foreign contract labor agreement.<sup>8</sup> When that program came to an end on December 31, 1947, farm employer organizations abandoned efforts to secure continuation of the domestic program, but they persisted in seeking foreign farmworkers from Mexico in the years after 1947.

From 1948 to 1950, provisions of the 1917 immigration law supported annual agreements with Mexico allowing recruitment of labor both from within Mexico and

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<sup>7</sup>Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>The wartime foreign labor importation agreements are discussed in Otey M. Scruggs, "Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942," Agricultural History 34(3) (1960):140-149.

from among illegal Mexican "wetbacks" already in the United States. Loss of the wartime program resulted in a new program in many ways more amenable to employers: the federal government played no role except for Employment Service certification of a grower's need for foreign workers. The U.S. government no longer supervised contracts guaranteeing minimum living and working conditions or wage levels. Moreover, because farmworkers had no recognized organizations of their own, they had no representatives available to balance farm employer influence on the Employment Service advisory boards that determined when to certify a grower's foreign labor needs. Therefore, the Employment Service rarely denied an employer's contention that domestic labor was unavailable. The Mexican labor importation program of the late 1940s appeared to offer American farm employers the control of their labor force they had long desired.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 142-146; Ellis Hawley, "The Politics of the Mexican Labor Issue, 1950-1965," Agricultural History 40(3) (1966):158-159; Peter N. Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero: A History of the Mexican Workers in the United States from Roosevelt to Nixon (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1977), pp. 64-82; Richard B. Craig, The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1971), pp. 52-64; President's Commission on Migratory Labor, Migratory Labor in American Agriculture (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1951), pp. 52-54, 61-64.

This evidence of the political power of farm employers and their consequent power over agricultural workers angered labor unions, particularly the National Farm Labor Union, and such liberal organizations as the National Council for Agricultural Life and Labor, the National Consumers League, and the Catholic Rural Life Conference, who worked to improve conditions for domestic migrant farmworkers. The resistance of American growers to adopting even minimal standards for foreign workers and their regular use of imported labor instead of domestic farmworkers outraged these migrant advocates. That outrage became an insistent demand by 1949 that the President appoint a commission to thoroughly investigate the situation of migratory labor, both foreign and domestic.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, in June 1950, President Truman created such a commission by Executive Order. The commission included five members, all professionals with some experience in areas germane to the study of migrant labor. Maurice T. Van Hecke was a law professor at the University of North Carolina and a former member of the National War Labor Board. Archbishop Robert E. Lucey served as Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking People of

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<sup>10</sup>Kirstein, pp. 74-75; Craig, pp. 54.

the Southwest. William M. Leiserson, a labor arbitrator, had recently been president of the Industrial Relations Research Association and had formerly held the position of chairman of the National Mediation Board. His experience also included membership on the National Labor Relations Board. Peter H. Odegard chaired the Department of Political Science at the University of California and was president of the American Political Science Association. The fifth member; Paul Miller, worked as chief of the Extension Service at University of Minnesota. Miller resigned shortly after his appointment. Noble Clark, associate director of the University of Wisconsin Experiment Station and former deputy director general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, replaced him. Finally, Varden Fuller, an agricultural economist with the Agriculture Experiment Station at the University of California, served as executive secretary. Fuller investigated labor relations in California agriculture for his doctoral work in agricultural economics in 1939 and had become a recognized expert in the field of agricultural labor.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Kirstein, pp. 85-86; Peter Kirstein, "Agribusiness, Labor, and the Wetbacks: Truman's Commission on Migratory Labor," Historian 40(1978):652, 656; "Brief Biographies of Participants, National Conference to Stabilize Migrant Labor, November 21-22, 1959," p. 2, "National Conference to Stabilize Migrant Labor, Chicago," Box 84, Records of

Officials of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People criticized Truman for neglecting to appoint minority and labor leaders to the Commission, but he also did not appoint representatives of farm employer organizations. The President's choices appeared to be a sincere attempt to produce an objective assessment of the migratory labor situation based on open public testimony from all interested parties. By choosing academic and religious professionals, Truman could expect the Commission to be free of vested interest on either side of the controversy.<sup>12</sup>

Yet why the Truman administration accepted the need for investigation of this question only three years after its own earlier committee had completed a nearly identical study is not clear. The President's Commission report never mentioned the work of the earlier Federal Interagency Committee, despite the striking similarity of their purposes, research, and recommendations. Among agencies and organizations who testified before the

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the U.S. President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas; Varden Fuller, "The Supply of Agricultural Labor as a Factor in the Evolution of Farm Organization in California" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1939).

<sup>12</sup>Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero, pp. 84-87.

Commission, only two, the Federal Security Agency and the Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth, referred to the earlier investigation. Both indicated that the Truman administration had ignored the results of that study. Presumably the President intended the new Commission to serve the administration as a lightning rod for criticism of the foreign farm labor program and the neglect of domestic farmworkers.

The Executive Order creating the President's Commission on Migratory Labor directed the Commission to investigate the twin issues of the inadequate living and working conditions of domestic migratory labor and the implications of the foreign farm labor importation program for efforts to improve those conditions. To carry out this responsibility, the Commission held public hearings during the summer and fall of 1950. These hearings offered interested groups and individuals the opportunity to present their grievances, recommendations, and professional experiences to the Commission.<sup>13</sup>

Presentations followed what had become a familiar pattern of positions. Farmers and their representatives testified that, in the words of LaMonte Graw, migrant labor "could earn \$20.00 a day but they didn't want to

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<sup>13</sup>The President's Commission on Migratory Labor, pp. vii-viii.

work hard enough to earn more than \$20.00 a week." Graw was manager of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, chairman of the Florida Farm Labor Advisory Committee, and a member of the U.S. Employment Service Advisory Committee. He insisted "that migrants who wanted to work could make more money than people in other industries."<sup>14</sup> Keith Mets, president of the Imperial Valley Farmers' Association, representing 500 of the wealthiest California farmers, opposed any labor involvement in determining need for foreign contract workers and recommended an open border for acquiring Mexican farm labor, controlled by a simple card system allowing border crossing for farm work. C. B. Ray, a Texas grower representing the American Farm Bureau Federation, repeated Graw's claim that the shortage of farm labor was a shortage of domestic migrants who were "willing and able." He also echoed Mets' recommendation of a simplified contract labor system that would make legal entries out of illegal ones.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Memorandum, Louise Q. Blodgett to Miss McConnell, 18 July 1950, "President's Commission on Migratory Labor-Hearings of National Organizations," Box 13, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>15</sup>Cited in Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero, p. 88; Memorandum, Blodgett to McConnell, 18 July 1950, p. 7, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.



Labor organizations opposed importation of foreign workers on principle, especially without labor involvement in the process of certifying a domestic shortage. Labor representatives countered the grower argument that domestic farmworkers would not take farm labor jobs by pointing out the role of low wages and poor working and living conditions in creating the supposed shortage of domestic workers. H. L. Mitchell of the National Farm Labor Union suggested that Congress might justify providing minimum standards for farmworkers, since farm parity legislation calculated farm labor costs into the guaranteed price index. He also claimed that the requirement of county extension agent approval for transport of domestic workers to areas of labor shortage outside their home county had hampered the establishment of an effective domestic farm labor placement program.<sup>16</sup>

Testimony from voluntary religious, education, and social welfare organizations echoed the concerns expressed by organized labor, although these groups concentrated particularly on such issues as education, child labor, housing, health care, and racism. They repeatedly challenged the Commission by asking questions

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<sup>16</sup>Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero, pp. 87-88; Memorandum, Blodgett to McConnell, 18 July 1950, p. 4, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

about the federal government's neglect of migrant farmworkers. Why did established labor standards legislation exclude agricultural labor from its provisions? Why had the authority to fund farm labor housing under the Housing Act of 1950 not been used? Why did the U.S. Employment Service work so often in the interests of farm employers to the disadvantage of farm labor?<sup>17</sup>

Federal agency representatives transmitted the administration's position on migratory labor issues to the Commission through written reports detailing their agencies' experiences with migrant labor and recommendations for further action. Each department emphasized those aspects of the migratory labor problem with which it was most familiar and approached the problem from the context of its special responsibilities. The Department of Labor recommendations focused particularly on extension of labor standards laws to migrant farmworkers, including protection of the right of agricultural employees to organize and bargain collectively. Labor also offered model regulations for migrant housing and transportation. The Federal Security Agency, precursor to the Department of Health, Education,

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<sup>17</sup>Memorandum, Blodgett to McConnell, 18 July 1950, pp. 1-5, 7, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

and Welfare, addressed the issues of health care, education, and social security protections for migrants and their children. Although they clearly recognized a need, they expressed frustration over the agency's lack of authority to cope with that need from the federal level, or even to assist state and local governments and voluntary organizations looking for guidance and financial aid.<sup>18</sup>

The Department of Agriculture agreed on the general outline of improvements needed for migrant farmworkers, but approached the issue from a different context. Their solutions took the form of improving the living and working conditions for migrant farm labor in order to retain that labor for the farm, rather than to benefit the migrant farmworkers themselves as an isolated group. In particular, the Department of Agriculture recommendations addressed the problems of "the basic economic and population problems that, from the supply

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<sup>18</sup>"Suggested Recommendations of the U.S. Department of Labor to the President's Commission on Migratory Labor," "Statement to President's Commission on Migratory Labor, Federal Security Agency," October 1950, "President's Commission on Migratory Labor--Federal Agencies," Box 13, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

side, generate migratoriness."<sup>19</sup> The Department considered improved employment and educational opportunities, vocational guidance, and aid in relocating the necessary long-term solutions to the problems that "pushed" workers into the migrant farm labor stream. The Department of Agriculture also identified conditions that "pulled" migrants into a system of short-term, seasonal employment leading to chronic underemployment. To improve this system, Agriculture recommended accelerated mechanization to reduce the need for hand labor at seasonal peaks, experimentation with combinations of crops and livestock within an area or on single farms that would spread labor needs more evenly over the year, and efforts to engage growers in cooperative planning that would provide better distribution of labor needs across regions and over seasons.<sup>20</sup>

After gathering this wide range of views on the problems of migrant agricultural labor in the United States, the President's Commission on Migratory Labor issued its report on March 26, 1951. Reflecting the

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<sup>19</sup>"Recommendations of the United States Department of Agriculture to the President's Commission on Migratory Labor," October 1950, pp. 5-6, "President's Commission on Migratory Labor--Federal Agencies," Box 13, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

seriousness with which they accepted their charge to recommend an appropriate policy response, the members of the Commission distilled their findings into a challenging question:

The issue we face as a matter of national policy is this: Shall we continue indefinitely to have low work standards and conditions of employment in agriculture, thus depending on the underprivileged and the unfortunate at home and abroad to supply and replenish our seasonal and migratory work force? Or shall we do in agriculture what we have already done in other sectors of our economy--create honest-to-goodness jobs which will offer a decent living so that domestic workers, without being forced by dire necessity, will be willing to stay in agriculture and become a dependable labor supply?<sup>21</sup>

The Commission members concluded that federal policy had failed to provide leadership on the question. They believed, in fact, "we have done worse than that. We have used the institutions of government to procure alien labor willing to work under obsolete and backward conditions and thus to perpetuate those very conditions."<sup>22</sup> The Commission members, however, did not believe that the federal government itself could be held fully accountable nor be expected to improve conditions on its own. They recommended a federal role as coordinator of efforts by all involved groups and

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<sup>21</sup>The President's Commission on Migratory Labor, pp. 22-23.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

individuals: employers, workers, private agencies and voluntary organizations, and government at all levels. That role, the Commission suggested, could best be played through the establishment of a Federal Committee on Migratory Labor composed of three public members and representatives from each of the federal agencies with an interest in migrant labor policy--the departments of Agriculture, Labor, and State, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Federal Security Agency.<sup>23</sup>

Except for the addition of the foreign farm labor issue, the recommendations in the Commission report essentially repeated those made by the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor in 1947. Unfortunately, they experienced an identical fate. The reasons for that very likely lie in the problems Truman experienced with agricultural interests throughout his presidency. According to historian Allen Matusow's analysis of farm policy and politics during the Truman administration, the President had continual difficulty in securing the support of farm organizations;<sup>24</sup> perhaps

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<sup>23</sup>The President's Commission on Migratory Labor, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup>Allen J. Matusow, Farm Policies and Politics in the Truman Years (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967).

risking their further alienation on the relatively obscure issue of farm labor seemed unwise. By appointing the Commission, Truman had temporarily satisfied the demands of labor and liberal migrant advocacy associations. By ignoring its recommendations, he could avoid antagonizing the powerful commercial farm groups.

Those farm groups, in fact, were demonstrating their political power on farm labor questions at the very moment the Commission report became public. Despite the Commission's assertions of the detrimental effects of imported foreign labor on conditions for domestic farmworkers, members of the House and Senate agriculture committees introduced legislation early in 1951 to institutionalize the annual agreements with Mexico for supplying farm labor to American growers. Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana presented S. 984 in late February and Representative W. R. Poage of Texas offered a House version in March 1951. The legislation provided the Secretary of Labor authority to operate a foreign farm labor recruitment and transportation program similar to the World War II emergency program. The bill authorized the Secretary to recruit Mexicans for farm labor in the United States; operate reception centers and provide food, transportation, and health care to those workers during transit to American employers; assist in

negotiating work contracts; and guarantee employer compliance with contracts. To protect domestic workers, foreign workers could not be contracted unless the Secretary of Labor certified that domestic workers were unavailable despite sincere efforts to recruit them with wages and working conditions equivalent to those offered the Mexican workers.<sup>25</sup>

The importation program recommended in this legislation differed little from the annual agreements already in operation except that the U.S. government replaced individual growers as contracting agents. The federal government thereby accepted most of the cost of operating the program and guaranteed to the Mexican government that American employers would honor their contracts and that Mexican workers would return to Mexico at the end of the season. The new program relieved growers of the expense and risks of recruiting their own Mexican workers. It also reassured the Mexican government, thereby increasing the likelihood that the

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<sup>25</sup>Studies of the Mexican farm labor importation program (commonly known as the bracero program) are abundant. Among the most instructive are Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero; Hawley, "The Politics of the Mexican Labor Issue,"; Craig, The Bracero Program; Majka and Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State, pp. 136-166; and Ernesto Galarza, Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960 (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 203-276.



program could continue on a relatively permanent basis. In exchange for the security of a more permanent and predictable program, growers accepted additional federal involvement in their operations. Most farm employers, however, expected the Secretary of Labor to defer to the state Farm Placement Service offices for certification decisions and contract supervision. Because grower influence with the state Farm Placement Services remained strong, federal interference did not seem much of a threat in 1951.<sup>26</sup>

Advocates for protection of domestic migrant farmworkers objected strongly to the reinstatement of a government-sponsored labor importation program. The President's Commission on Migratory Labor had just recommended ending foreign farm labor importation altogether in the interests of improving conditions for underemployed domestic farmworkers. To create an elaborate and apparently permanent importation system amounted to rejection of the entire thrust of the Commission's findings. Senators Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Dennis Chavez of New Mexico made persistent efforts in discussions of the Senate bill to add amendments to safeguard American

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<sup>26</sup>See Kirstein, Anglo over Bracero; Hawley; Craig; Majka and Majka, pp. 136-166; and Galarza, pp. 203-276.

farmworkers by insisting on comparable protections and benefits for domestic farmworkers before the Secretary of Labor could certify the need for imported labor. All three repeatedly noted the assertions of the President's Commission that domestic farm labor could fill almost all farm labor needs in the United States if recruitment and labor standards could be improved. Representatives James G. Polk of Ohio and Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota attempted similar amendments in the House.<sup>27</sup>

Supporters of the labor importation bills counteracted the effectiveness of this appeal to protect American workers through reassurances and their own appeals to other related issues. Perhaps most effective, Senator Ellender and Senator Spessard Holland of Florida, another Agriculture Committee member, continually reminded their fellow senators that the Ellender bill included protection for domestic farmworkers. One section required the Secretary of Labor to consider adverse effects of imported labor on American farmworkers before certifying a grower's need for Mexican labor. Representative Poage and Representative Harold D. Cooley

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<sup>27</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 30 April, 1, 7 May 1951, Congressional Record 97:4505-4520, 4546-4547, 4583-4603, 4959-4980; U.S., Congress, House, 26, 30 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7153-7154, 7161-7165, 7167-7169, 7171-7175, 7538-7542.

of North Carolina, also of the House Agriculture Committee, repeated this assertion in the House. At suggestions by Senator Chavez that the Department of Labor had not acted effectively in the past to protect migrant farmworkers, Senator Ellender accused Chavez and those who might agree with him of disrespect for well-intentioned government officials. Ellender thereby helped to turn the sympathies of other senators away from the idealistic appeals for protection of the powerless being made by Chavez and his colleagues.<sup>28</sup>

Supporters of imported farm labor found a second effective issue in concerns about the "wetback invasion." Since the end of the wartime Mexican labor importation program, the numbers of Mexican workers entering the United States illegally had increased dramatically. Senator Ellender and Representatives Poage and Cooley insisted repeatedly that a formal arrangement for recruiting Mexican farmworkers would end this situation by providing alternative, legal means for Mexicans to find employment on American farms. Although the importation bill did not specifically include provisions to enforce immigration laws against illegal Mexicans, it

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<sup>28</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 30 April, 1 May 1951, Congressional Record 97:4581-4603, 4512-4517; U.S., Congress, House, 30 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7538-7542.

did require the Secretary of Labor to refuse to certify growers found to be employing wetbacks.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, as had been the case during the early 1940s, the food production pressures of war entered the discussion of labor importation arrangements with Mexico. North Korea had invaded the South in June 1950 and by summer of 1951 the American military draft began to affect the availability of domestic farm labor in some areas. Fears of labor and food shortages made it easier for farm state congressmen to persuade their urban colleagues of the real need for foreign contract labor. Representative E. C. Gathings of Arkansas, representing a state with several large users of Mexican farm labor, quickly dismissed the recommendations of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor by pointing out that the Commission had been appointed before the outbreak of war and therefore addressed a situation different from the current emergency.<sup>30</sup>

The majority of members of both the House and Senate accepted the arguments advanced by supporters of the

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<sup>29</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 26, 27, 30 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7151-7153, 7156-7171, 7173-7175, 7254-7258, 7538-7542.

<sup>30</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 1 May 1951, Congressional Record 97:4583-4584; U.S., Congress, House, 26, 27 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7147-7148, 7161, 7258-7259.

Mexican labor importation bill. The final version of Ellender's bill passed the Senate on a voice vote May 7 and the House by a roll call of 240 to 139 on June 27. The question clearly included an element of party division. Democrats had split nearly evenly on the bill while Republicans had voted heavily in favor of it. Of the 240 supporters, 132 were Republicans and 108 Democrats. Among those opposing were 90 Democrats and only 49 Republicans.<sup>31</sup>

Region, however, also played an important role in determining support for the farm labor importation program. Democrats elected from states that regularly used imported farm labor (Arizona, New Mexico, California, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, and Florida) voted 41 to 7 in favor of the bill. Democrats from other states split 83 to 67 against it. Republicans in the farm labor states voted 12 to 1 to support the program. Those representing the rest of the nation favored it only

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<sup>31</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 7 May 1951, Congressional Record 97:4979-4980; U.S., Congress, House, 27 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7261. Analysis of this vote was performed using the SPSSX statistical package. The database of Congressional roll call votes was provided by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the consortium bear any responsibility for the analysis or interpretation. I wish to thank Dr. Don F. Hadwiger and Dr. James M. McCormick of the Iowa State University Political Science Department for their assistance with this analysis.

120 to 49, still overwhelming, but by a smaller percentage.<sup>32</sup>

Grower organizations and their representatives in Congress, a small minority, required the support of these other state delegations to maintain their labor importation program. Their influence had won the day handily in 1951, but only for a two-year program. Those favoring Mexican labor importation would have to lobby to maintain that influence each time Congress reconsidered the law.

The bill passed the conference committee on June 30 and President Truman signed it on July 13, against the advice of his own Department of Labor, whose officials supported the findings of the President's Commission that domestic workers could fill the nation's farm labor needs. The Ellender bill became Public Law 78, creating what amounted to a permanent program for the supplementation of American farm labor through importation of contract labor from Mexico. Congressional support for this program completely disregarded evidence from federal study committees that such labor importation

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<sup>32</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 7 May 1951, Congressional Record 97:4979-4980; U.S., Congress, House, 27 June 1951, Congressional Record 97:7261. Analysis of this vote was performed using SPSSX and the IUCPSR database. See footnote 31 for full citation.

depressed the wages and living conditions available to domestic workers, accepting instead the assurances of grower representatives that farmers needed the additional help to provide the nation with an adequate food supply.<sup>33</sup>

President Truman did not entirely ignore the advice of his own staff regarding the limitations of the bill. In his message to Congress on signing the bill he indicated strong reservations about the limited way in which the legislation addressed the problems of migratory labor in the United States. He expressed the hope that this foreign labor importation program would be only the first in a series of measures in Congress designed to alleviate the other serious shortcomings of American policy that affected migrant agricultural workers. He at least acknowledged the recommendations of his Commission when he reminded Congress of the need of domestic migrants for improved housing, health care, education, and social security protection, and noted his intentions to submit, periodically, recommendations for specific legislation in those areas.<sup>34</sup> Politically, however, Truman could ill afford to take a stand against growers

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<sup>33</sup>Craig, pp. 76-77; U.S., Congress, House, 13 July 1951, Congressional Record 97:8144-8146.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

on an issue on which they had such obvious strength. As Roosevelt had acceded to the transfer of the farm labor program from the Farm Security Administration to the Extension Service during a war emergency in 1942, Truman also acceded to grower demands for a farm labor supply program that conformed to their needs.

Less than a year after passage of P.L. 78, in February 1952, Senator Humphrey, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations, called several days of hearings to investigate the problems of domestic migratory labor. Although these hearings were part of a general series on manpower problems, they addressed directly the legislative recommendations of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor. Witnesses included the same mix of government, labor, grower, church, and social welfare organization representatives who had presented testimony to the President's Commission two years earlier. The subcommittee also heard testimony from most of the former members of the President's Commission. As a result, little new information surfaced, but the hearings did reinforce the effort of the Commission to draw attention to the problems of domestic migrant agricultural workers and their families and to try to address those problems legislatively. Of even greater significance to the



future of migrant labor legislation in Congress, these hearings challenged the jurisdiction of the congressional agricultural committees on farm labor issues. Although the challenge was not repeated until 1959, the hearings became a symbol, along with the President's Commission report, of a new direction for migrant legislation in the United States.<sup>35</sup>

The political interplay between organized agriculture and liberal advocates of federal assistance for migrant labor from the end of World War II to the passage of Public Law 78 reveals a tension that characterized federal involvement with migrants beginning with the New Deal. A contest of power and sympathy between the reality of farmworker poverty and the political influence of agricultural employers developed over those years and affected the content of policies and legislation produced throughout the period.

During the New Deal wide public sympathy with the problems of poverty had supported the rural poverty initiatives that assisted displaced farmers and tenants forced to migrate in search of work. The intervention of

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<sup>35</sup>U.S., Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Hearings on Migratory Labor before the Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952.

war dissipated that support and forced a change in government priorities that derailed the rural poverty initiatives. The war and immediate post-war years witnessed the growing strength of farm organizations at the expense of efforts to address farmworker poverty. Yet advocates of federal assistance to migrants managed to keep the issue alive with study committees and hearings that made public reports of conditions and recommendations for their improvement. Although the Truman administration never implemented any of these recommendations, the committee reports and hearings, particularly that of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor, laid a solid foundation for future initiatives. As the political balance changed over the next two decades, migrant advocates would return to their recommendations repeatedly for ideas about appropriate action on migrant issues.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE 1950S:

## "DARK AGES" OR LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE SUCCESS?

Historian Charles C. Alexander has described the Eisenhower administration as a period of "holding the line," suggesting that resistance to change characterized the years 1952 to 1960. Other analysts, however, have pointed to a slow move away from the conservative consensus of the early years under Eisenhower toward a growing interest in reform by the end of the decade. Political scientist James Sundquist, writing in 1968, identified the Eisenhower period as the conservative half of a pendulum-swing toward liberalism that culminated in the flood of reform legislation of 1964 and 1965. According to this metaphor, the swing toward liberalism was half-completed by 1960.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of farm labor in the 1950s follows both patterns of the political character of that decade. On the one hand, the Mexican farm labor importation program, commonly called the bracero program, continued to color

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<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Alexander,  Holding the Line: The Eisenhower Era, 1952-1961 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1975), pp. xv-xvii; James L. Sundquist,  Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), pp. 506-512.

discussion of the migrant labor problem in the United States during the 1950s. Opponents persisted in their efforts to end the program, but without success. Termed the "Dark Ages" for anti-braceroists by one student of the period,<sup>2</sup> agricultural interests held firm and encountered almost no Congressional opposition to extensions of the program throughout the decade.

Yet, on the other hand, debate of the Mexican contract labor bills and the report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor set in motion a continuing public discussion of the need for improved conditions for domestic migrant labor. Participants in that discussion included union activists in California, members of voluntary religious and social welfare organizations, Congressional advocates of assistance to domestic migrants, and officials within the Eisenhower administration whose work brought them in contact with migratory labor issues. By the end of the decade, their arguments gained increasing government and public support, and although the bracero program continued to appear secure, advocates of reform were poised for action

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<sup>2</sup>Richard B. Craig, The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1971), p. 138.

in the new political environment developing on the horizon.

The political struggle over the bracero program took place primarily in Congress, where agricultural interests maintained a powerful presence during the 1950s. In part, their influence arose from the traditional association of farmers with democratic virtue, which served to insulate farm politics from intense scrutiny by an increasingly urban public with nostalgic views of rural life. But their real strength depended on organization and the close personal ties between farm organization leaders and rural representatives in Congress. If farm state congressmen were not themselves farmers or members of agricultural organizations, they recognized the influence of those groups among their constituents and listened carefully to their advice. Additionally, these rural representatives held most of the seats on congressional agriculture committees, assuring that agricultural interests would control agricultural legislation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Analyses of the influence of farm organizations on agricultural policies in general may be found in Charles M. Hardin, "The Politics of Agriculture in the United States," Journal of Farm Economics 32(November 1950):571-583; Ernest A. Engelbert, "The Political Strategy of Agriculture," Journal of Farm Economics 36(August 1954):375-386; Gordon E. Baker, Rural Versus Urban Political Power (New York: Random House, 1955); Wesley

Because the agriculture committees remained the basis of farm organization political power, continuing jurisdiction over farm labor issues played an essential role in assuring success. Although the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 placed farm labor issues within the purview of the labor committees, the agriculture committees continued to insist on originating farm labor legislation. Chairmen of the agriculture committees tended to be long-time rural representatives with years of seniority, giving them powerful positions within congressional party organizations.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the agriculture committees ignored labor committee reminders of the proper jurisdiction on farm labor

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McCune, Who's Behind Our Farm Policy (New York: Praeger, 1956); Louis B. Schmidt, "The Role and Techniques of Agrarian Pressure Groups," Agricultural History 30 (April 1956):49-58; and Grant McConnell, The Decline of Agrarian Democracy (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953). For an analysis of such influence on the farm labor question particularly see Ellis W. Hawley, "The Politics of the Mexican Labor Issue, 1950-1965," Agricultural History 40(3) (1966):162-164 and Robert D. Tomasek, "The Migrant Problem and Pressure Group Politics," The Journal of Politics 23 (May 1961):295-319.

<sup>4</sup>Chairmen of the House and Senate agriculture committees during the Eisenhower period included Representative Clifford R. Hope of Kansas and Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont, both Republicans, in 1953 and 1954, and Representative Harold D. Cooley of North Carolina and Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana, both Democrats, from 1955 to 1960. Representatives Hope and Cooley entered Congress in 1927 and 1935, respectively. Senator Ellender won election in 1936, while Senator Aiken began his tenure in 1941.

legislation with little fear of repercussions. Consequently, when the agriculture committees reconsidered P.L. 78 in 1953, 1955, 1958, and 1960, the interests opposed to extension of farm labor importation had little hope of altering, let alone ending, the program during committee hearings. The political connections between rural representatives and conservative urban Republicans assured that discussions of the issue on the floor of the House or Senate would be equally ineffective.<sup>5</sup>

Opponents of P.L. 78 nevertheless launched a concerted attack on the program in an attempt to convince legislators that the use of Mexican contract labor undermined the economic position of domestic agricultural workers. Representatives of anti-bracero interest groups and individual congressmen who opposed the farm labor program brought witnesses, letters, testimonies, statistical reports, and journalistic exposes to hearings and the floor of Congress to support their case. These forces employed a wide array of arguments to make their

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<sup>5</sup>Hawley, p. 164; U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952, pp. 350-351; Robert D. Tomasek, "The Migrant Problem and Pressure Group Politics," The Journal of Politics 23(May 1961):309-311.

point against importing farm labor. They claimed the labor shortage which the program existed to alleviate was a false shortage created by farm employers' refusal to pay decent wages and provide adequate living and working conditions. They offered documentation of the extent to which the importation of Mexican laborers depressed the farm labor wage scales. They suggested that public underwriting of the labor costs of a small percentage of corporate farmers undermined the ability of the small family farmers of other regions to compete, essentially valuing their family labor on the same scale as that of exploited braceros. Some even asserted that the foreign farm labor importation system allowed communist agitators to enter the country as farmworkers, thereby opening the U.S. border to uncontrolled assault by enemy agents.<sup>6</sup>

Agricultural interests in favor of bracero labor, however, effectively challenged these objections, responding confidently to each charge with their own version of the evidence and arguments. They asserted that a labor shortage clearly did exist, since the Department of Labor's own Farm Placement Service

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<sup>6</sup>Hawley, pp. 166-171; Craig, pp. 144-147; U.S., Congress, House, 15 April 1953, Congressional Record 99:3144-3157; U.S., Congress, House, 2, 11 March 1954, Congressional Record 100:2492-2511, 3122-3127; U.S., Congress, House, 14 August 1958, Congressional Record 104:17652-17662.



certified the need each season. Unemployed urban workers could not perform farm work adequately and would not consider such work anyway, since they had access to unemployment insurance and other welfare services. Because P.L. 78 required that no foreign workers be paid at less than the prevailing wage, bracero program supporters claimed that foreign workers could not possibly be depressing wages. They pointed to the high wages in California agriculture, one of the largest users of Mexican contract workers, as further evidence that guarantees for foreign labor in fact kept wages up for domestic migrants who wanted to work. Against the anti-bracero argument that underpaid foreign contract labor devalued the labor of family farmers, supporters of P.L. 78 suggested that legal contracting for foreign labor helped keep the value of labor higher than it would become if bracero users had to turn to illegal "wetback" labor for harvest help. The same argument sufficed in response to the charge of communist infiltration through bracero laborers. Without such a legal system, it was argued, illegal entry of Mexican workers would pose an even greater threat to American security.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Hawley, pp. 166-171; Craig, pp. 144-147; U.S., Congress, House, 15 April 1953, Congressional Record 99:3144-3157; U.S., Congress, House, 2, 11 March 1954, Congressional Record 100:2492-2511, 3122-3127; U.S.,

The forces in favor of continuing the bracero program in the 1950s drew their strength from larger numbers and well-developed organizations. Chief among these were the two largest general farm organizations, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Grange. Both groups, along with the equally powerful National Cotton Council, had mastered the politics of farm labor issues during the attacks on the Farm Security Administration in the early 1940s. Joining these three during the 1950s were the National Cannery Association, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the Western Growers Association, the National Farm Labor Users Committee, and a long list of state and local growers and processors associations and corporations.<sup>8</sup>

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Congress, House, 14 August 1958, Congressional Record 104:17652-17662.

<sup>8</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Extension of Mexican Farm Labor Program, 83d Cong., 1st sess., 1953; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor Program before the Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower of the Committee on Agriculture, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 1955; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor Program before the Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower of the Committee on Agriculture, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958; Craig, pp. 138-142; Hawley, pp. 162-163; Tomasek, pp. 301-303.

Also, in addition to their connections with rural congressional representatives and the congressional agriculture committees noted above, the general farm and commodity organizations had links to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labor's Farm Placement Service. Their connections within the Department of Agriculture rested on the same basis as that supporting farm organization alliances with rural congressmen: Department of Agriculture staff and officials generally shared the farming or at least rural background of farm organization representatives and provided services to the same constituency of commercial farmers. The association with the Farm Placement Service resulted from its years as a part of the Department of Agriculture's Extension Service during the World War II farm labor program. Officials and employees of that system continued to consider their responsibility to be supplying farm labor to employers, rather than helping farm laborers find employment. Their citizen advisory board, the Special Farm Labor Committee, included only representatives of commercial farmers and their organizations. The placement service also functioned within a decentralized federal-state cooperative system. Local representatives, as members of small rural communities, felt social

pressure from local employers to conform to their views of the farm labor situation.<sup>9</sup>

Through these well-placed government relationships, the growers' organizations virtually controlled the design and implementation of the bracero program. Although they objected to the demands of the Mexican government for guarantees of adequate working and living conditions, even those could be influenced in extreme situations. When the Mexican government attempted to insist on additional safeguards for their workers in 1954, Congress, at the urging of Department of Labor officials, amended P.L. 78 to allow for unilateral contracting of Mexican workers "after every practical effort has been made to negotiate and reach agreement on such arrangements."<sup>10</sup> With the support of a state department that proved willing to protect the interests of American business throughout the world, the Eisenhower

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<sup>9</sup>Hawley, p. 165; Tomasek, pp. 306-309.

<sup>10</sup>Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 154-155; Craig, pp. 102-118; U.S., Congress, House, 2 March 1954, Congressional Record 100:2486-2511.

administration presented a united front to Mexico that reflected the desires of American farm employers.<sup>11</sup>

Anti-bracero forces worked from a much more limited power base. Among farm organizations only the National Farmers Union opposed importation of Mexican labor. (It contended that such exploited labor cheapened the labor of small family farmers.) Organized industrial labor also sided against foreign farm labor, but only insofar as it affected domestic labor. During the 1950s, labor union representatives at congressional hearings accepted the possibility that in some cases braceros might be necessary where "real" shortages of farm labor existed. The National Agricultural Workers Union, heir to the Southern Tenant Farmers Union of the 1930s, devoted all of its energies in the 1950s to fighting P.L. 78. Their only paid organizer, Ernesto Galarza, described the union's approach as "a major risk," since it meant organizing and recruitment of new members would come to a standstill. Such neglect might mean the end of the struggling union's efforts to gain stability and bargaining strength. But Galarza believed it was a

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<sup>11</sup>Craig, pp. 123-125. See Charles C. Alexander's description of the Guatemala intervention in  Holding the Line , pp. 74-77, for a discussion of the willingness of the Eisenhower administration to intervene internationally for the benefit of American business.

necessary risk in order "to throw light on corporate agriculture's infiltration and domination of government as an instrument to its ends; and to clear the way for future unionists."<sup>12</sup>

Minority rights organizations also assisted the efforts of the farm and labor groups in opposition to the bracero program. Among these groups were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, several representatives of American Indian interests, and the American GI Forum of Texas, a relatively weak Mexican-American veteran's organization that supported causes to strengthen the position of Mexican-Americans in the United States. They opposed the importation of Mexican farm labor on the grounds it damaged the position of minority American citizens who tried to earn their livings as farmworkers.<sup>13</sup>

Further support emanated from an assortment of voluntary religious and social welfare organizations who added their voices to the opposition. They represented what Galarza called "the liberal conscience"<sup>14</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup>Ernesto Galarza, Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 205.

<sup>13</sup>Craig, p. 143; Tomasek, pp. 305-306.

<sup>14</sup>Galarza, p. 315.

although their protests against the bracero program in the 1950s proved ineffective, their influence would grow by the end of the decade and exert significant force on behalf of domestic migrants in the social reform era of the 1960s. Among the most vocal were the National Sharecroppers Fund, the National Consumers League for Fair Labor Standards, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the American Friends Service Committee, and the National Council of Churches of Christ's Migrant Ministry.<sup>15</sup>

These anti-bracero forces also maintained connections within government. They found allies in the Department of Labor, especially the secretaries, and on the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, but their associations produced fewer results than those of the grower interests. The Senate committee insisted on its jurisdiction over farm labor issues in Congress only

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<sup>15</sup>Craig, pp. 142-143; Tomasek, pp. 303-306; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Extension of Mexican Farm Labor Program, 83d Cong., 1st sess., 1953; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor Program before the Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower of the Committee on Agriculture, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 1955; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor Program before Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower of the Committee on Agriculture, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958.

once before 1959, when it finally created a special Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. President Truman's Secretary of Labor Maurice Tobin did appoint a Labor Advisory Committee on Farm Labor in 1952 with the intention of counterbalancing the influence of the grower-controlled Special Farm Labor Advisory Committee, and it continued under the Eisenhower administration. But the advisory committee never succeeded in affecting the Farm Placement Service's implementation of the bracero program because grower organizations retained such a powerful hold on the operations of the service at the state and local levels. Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell used his regulatory powers under P.L. 78 to guarantee adequate employment standards for imported Mexican labor as early as 1956, but because his efforts produced results, the outrage of the farm organizations forced a compromise that curtailed Mitchell's activity in opposition to the bracero program until late in Eisenhower's term.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the seeming impermeability of agricultural interests' control of Congress on the farm labor issue, continuing public discussion of the question strengthened the position of anti-braceroists as the decade passed.

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<sup>16</sup>Tomasek, pp. 307, 311, 316-318; Hawley, p. 161.



Although Congress had ignored the recommendations of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor in 1951 when it passed the initial version of P.L 78, the report served as a rallying point for reform interests throughout the 1950s.

A number of the agencies had already begun the process of focusing staff on the specific problems of migrant agricultural labor. For example, the Public Health Service had an Interbureau Committee on Migrants that researched the public health requirements of migrants and made recommendations to the Bureau for new services. The Association of State and Territorial Health Officers supported the work of the Public Health Service by adopting resolutions in 1953 favoring an increased focus on health needs of migrant workers, particularly on continuity of health care among states within a migrant stream. At their annual meeting in 1954, the Association followed up on that resolution by making specific recommendations through a Special Committee on Migrant Labor. Among these recommendations were such suggestions as a traveling health record card system and federal appropriations to control communicable diseases among migrants, both of which would become important in the next decade as part of the Kennedy

administration's focus on public health, leading ultimately to a successful Migrant Health Act in 1962.<sup>17</sup>

The Bureau of Employment Security of the Department of Labor also began a program on improving life for migrant agricultural labor by 1954. In a circular letter to State Employment Security Agencies, Robert C. Goodwin, Director of the Bureau of Employment Security, outlined the role local employment offices could play in encouraging community support for migrant workers. Suggestions for local office activity included providing information to communities about incoming migrants, assisting in evaluating facilities and services available for migrants in the community, sharing information about successful programs in other communities around the nation, and cooperating with community programs where possible. The letter provided examples of various community programs offered successfully in previous

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<sup>17</sup>Lucile Petry Leone and Helen L. Johnston, "Agricultural Migrants and Public Health," U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, reprinted from Public Health Reports, Vol. 69, No. 1, January 1954, p. 1, "Health," Box 28, Records of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, RG42, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; "Excerpts from Recommendations of the Fifty-Third Annual Conference of State and Territorial Health Officers," 20 December 1954, "Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Committee on Migrancy," Box 7, Records of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

years. While emphasizing cultural, educational, and health services, the programs also included emergency relief and even legal assistance.<sup>18</sup>

Advocates of assistance to domestic migrant farmworkers approved such efforts among federal and private agencies, but as they operated separately from one another, their activities remained uncoordinated and essentially invisible. Since the issuance of the report on migrant labor by the Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor in 1947, study committees and commissions, government officials, professional associations, and voluntary service organizations had been urging the creation of some kind of ongoing federal committee to coordinate programs and focus public attention on the problems of migrant agricultural workers and their families. Bills to establish such a committee began to appear regularly following the migratory labor hearings of 1952. The first Secretary of Labor under the Eisenhower administration, Martin P. Durkin, favored this legislation, claiming that "past experience has clearly demonstrated the inability of Federal agencies, acting without the assistance of non-governmental groups, to

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<sup>18</sup>Robert C. Goodwin to State Employment Security Agencies, Letter No. 572, Appendix F, 17 August 1954, pp. 1-3, "Department of Labor," Box 11, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

achieve positive action or formulate comprehensive programs to deal with these problems."<sup>19</sup> A year later, however, at the urging of the new Secretary of Labor, James P. Mitchell, and following the failure of Congress to act on the issue, President Eisenhower appointed an Interdepartmental Committee on Migratory Labor. Its members included the secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare, and the administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency.<sup>20</sup>

James P. Mitchell emerged during the Eisenhower administration as a key figure in support of federal assistance for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The son of working class parents, Mitchell had experienced both the labor and management sides of business and industry. After a few years of success as the owner of two retail dairy stores, followed by a recession-induced bankruptcy, Mitchell eventually entered the field of personnel administration in 1929 with the Western Electric Company. The immediate onslaught of the Great Depression provided

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<sup>19</sup>The Secretary of Labor to The Honorable Bernard M. Shanley, Special Counsel to the President, 21 July 1953, "124-C Migratory Labor (1)," Box 634, White House Central Files, Official File, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>20</sup>Dwight Eisenhower to James P. Mitchell, Secretary of Labor, 26 August 1954, "Bradley Patterson, The White House," Box 12, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

Mitchell the opportunity to prove his talent for dealing with difficult labor relations. Both labor leaders and management praised his ability during that crisis to satisfy both sides in a conflict.<sup>21</sup>

Mitchell's management skill soon led him into government service, to which he would return periodically until his appointment as Secretary of Labor by Eisenhower. With the beginning of the New Deal, Mitchell joined the federal Emergency Relief Administration in New Jersey, remaining in that position from 1932 to 1936. After two years back at Western Electric as supervisor of training, the New York City Works Progress Administration appointed him director of industrial relations in 1938. He followed his area director in New York, Brehon Somervell, to the Construction Division of the Army Quartermaster Corps for the duration of World War II, where he continued to work with labor relations problems. When the war ended, Mitchell joined the staff of the R. H. Macy department store in New York as chief industrial relations officer. In 1947 he moved to Bloomingdales where he served as vice-president of labor relations

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<sup>21</sup>Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. "Mitchell, James Paul," by Henry P. Guzda, pp. 542-543; Henry P. Guzda, untitled draft of biographical study of James P. Mitchell, available from the author, Department of Labor, 1990, p. 3.

until reentering government service in 1953. His relations with unionized employees defied the generally volatile labor situation in the retail industry during the post-war period, even earning him a membership in the union's "no-executives" fishing club.<sup>22</sup>

Mitchell's first position in the Eisenhower administration as assistant secretary of the Army lasted only a few months. On October 8, 1953, Mitchell replaced Martin Durkin, former president of the plumbers and steamfitters union, as Secretary of Labor. Although organized labor feared Mitchell's connections with management, quick action on behalf of labor against Commerce department attempts to preempt labor issues in the Eisenhower administration gained their confidence. In addition to more traditional labor issues, Mitchell, almost alone within the Eisenhower administration, also supported the causes of civil rights and equal employment opportunity.<sup>23</sup>

Given this orientation toward labor and the disadvantaged, Mitchell's championing the rights of migrant agricultural labor to adequate employment and

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<sup>22</sup>DAB, "Mitchell," p. 543; Guzda, unpublished study, pp. 4-5.

<sup>23</sup>DAB, "Mitchell," p. 543; Guzda, unpublished study, pp. 5-8.

living conditions was a natural position for him, although it surprised many at the time. Despite Mitchell's career as an industrial relations specialist with management, his interest lay as much with fairness to labor as with improving efficiency and profits for employers. Mitchell did not become a Republican until after Eisenhower's election, and with his government service roots in Roosevelt's New Deal, he brought a greater social conscience to the Republican administration than his fellow cabinet officers. Finding as he entered office that migrant agricultural workers were among the most exploited labor group in the nation, he requested the formation of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor within a year of his appointment. He continued to use the Committee as his channel for advocating reform for agricultural workers throughout his tenure.<sup>24</sup>

The new Committee held its first meeting on October 14, 1954. Having identified some 500 studies over the preceding fifty years, the members concluded "that there was no need for further study on the total migratory labor problem, but that an action program should be instituted at once." The myriad reports together

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<sup>24</sup>DAB, "Mitchell," pp. 543-544; Guzda, unpublished study, pp. 11-15.

reflected a clear consensus for action in the areas of education, health, increased income, housing, and transportation.<sup>25</sup> At subsequent meetings in 1955 and 1958, this interdepartmental cabinet committee considered a variety of recommendations from its working subcommittees, but its mandate to "aid the various Federal agencies in mobilizing and stimulating more effective programs and services for migrants"<sup>26</sup> limited its capacity to act except through the already established programs of individual cabinet departments. Consequently, by 1960 the Committee could only claim to its credit the publication of model codes for safe transportation of migrant farmworkers and farm labor camp housing standards, an unsuccessful attempt at legislation to allow federal establishment of highway rest stop facilities for the use of migratory labor, the successful establishment of state migratory labor committees in 28 states through Committee encouragement, and a new set of studies and surveys to provide more information on

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<sup>25</sup>"Federal Interdepartmental Committee on Migratory Labor," 10 November 1954, "First Meeting - ICML, Cabinet Members," Box 12, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; "The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, A Report - January 1956," 24 January 1956, "Arthur Larson, Under Secretary of Labor, 1955-56," Box 11, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>26</sup>Eisenhower to Mitchell, 26 August 1954, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.



migrants and their needs. Executive branch action had to come from another source.<sup>27</sup>

Among the committee's departments, Secretary Mitchell's Department of Labor took the lead. The Department worked particularly through the programs of the Bureau of Employment Services, since those operations were the Department's only direct responsibility for migrant farm labor. As its earliest program under Mitchell, except for the community involvement program mentioned above, the Bureau adopted the Annual Worker Plan in 1954. Very simply, the Plan involved Farm Placement Service personnel working closely with migrants at their home base to map out a series of seasonal industrial and agricultural jobs throughout the year, hoping to decrease periods of unemployment and travel in search of work. The New Jersey Farm Labor Service had developed a prototype of this plan at the end of World War II, which the Farm Placement Service then expanded to

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<sup>27</sup>Agenda for Meeting of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, 17 October 1955, "Secretary Mitchell's Cabinet Meeting, October 20, 1955," Box 13, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Agenda for Meeting of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, 22 May 1958, "Summary of October 14, 1954, meeting of Cabinet Committee," Box 12, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Progress Report, September 1956 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1956); The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Report to the President on Domestic Migratory Farm Labor (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1960).

cover the entire East Coast migrant stream in 1948. The Employment Service then adapted the Eastern Seaboard Plan for national use.<sup>28</sup>

The state offices of the Farm Placement Service provided information stations, also termed rest camps, by the mid-1950s. These stations offered employment and travel information for migrants seeking work, and toilets, shelter, and water for overnight highway stops. The department had requested funding for a federally supported system of migrant rest camps in 1951, but the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry did not report the bill. Opponents at hearings considered the provision of such accommodations outside the legitimate authority of the federal government. Although such authority had been found to support the federal farm labor camps of the New Deal and World War II period, attitudes about federal intervention had changed by the 1950s. The information station/rest stops thus offered a

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<sup>28</sup>Ronald L. Goldfarb, Migrant Farm Workers: A Caste of Despair (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1981), p. 271; "Minutes and Recommendations of the Special Farm Labor Committee," 9-10 February 1955, p. 5, "Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, BES," Box 40, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Don Larin, "Annual Work Plans for Agricultural Migrants," Employment Security Review 22(March 1955):3-4.

similar service within the established authority of the state employment offices.<sup>29</sup>

Both the Department of Labor and the President's Committee worked again for legislation to authorize rest camps following promulgation of new Interstate Commerce Commission regulations in 1957 that required periodic rest stops for private carriers of migrant farmworkers. The Department of Labor had first attempted to establish an expanded rest camp system based on its authority to maintain information stations for interstate labor recruitment, but the department's own solicitor questioned the legal basis for that authority. The legislative proposal lacked key support, however, from Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, a member of the President's Committee. He believed federal establishment of a travel camp system would compete unfairly with private business, and, furthermore, would suggest federal support for a system of long distance migration for employment. Without Department of

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<sup>29</sup>Charles W. Kenyon, "Farm Labor Information Station and Rest Camp," Employment Security Review 22(March 1955):6-7; Millard Cass, Chairman, Intradepartment Committee on Migratory Labor, to The Under Secretary, 24 March 1959, p: 3, "Rest Stops," Box 102, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

Agriculture support Congress again showed little interest.<sup>30</sup>

Department of Labor officials frequently appeared as witnesses at hearings and submitted statements directly to congressional offices on legislation affecting migrant labor throughout the decade. The Department unsuccessfully supported amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act that would have extended protections to farmworkers in 1955, 1956, 1957, and 1958. Labor also strongly encouraged the inclusion of seasonal farmworkers under amendments to the Social Security Act in 1955 and vigorously, although unsuccessfully, opposed alteration of those same amendments to the detriment of seasonal agricultural workers the following year. The Department urged the legislation in 1956 that authorized the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate interstate transportation of farm labor. Other bills supported by the Department included those to provide loans and other financial support for provision of improved housing for migrant workers, which failed in both 1958 and 1959, and legislation in 1959 to require federal registration of farm labor crew leaders, which also did not become law.

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<sup>30</sup>Cass to Under Secretary, 24 March 1959, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Ezra to Hon. James P. Mitchell, 3 March 1960, "Rest Camps for Migrants," Box 48, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

One of the chief reasons for failure of both the housing legislation and the crew leader registration bills was the lack of enthusiasm for both ideas from the Department of Agriculture. The primary rural lending agency, the Farmers Home Administration, showed no interest in broadening its lending programs to include farmworker housing, and Secretary of Agriculture Benson personally opposed federal registration of crew leaders, asserting that states bore that responsibility.<sup>31</sup>

Lack of enthusiasm, and even outright hostility, from the Department of Agriculture, plagued the

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<sup>31</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Transportation of Migrant Farm Workers, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Communications of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 1956, p. 9; U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Amending the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 1955, Part 1, pp. 38, 64, Part 3, pp. 1494, 1503, 1511, 1536-1537; U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Education and Labor, Fair Labor Standards Act, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor Standards of the Committee on Education and Labor, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1957, Part 1, p. 2; U.S., Congress, Senate, 23 April 1959, Congressional Record 105:6505; "Statement of the Department of Labor on Sections 201(f)(1) and 201(f)(2) H.R. 7225, The Social Security Amendments of 1956," "H.R. 7225 - Social Security with Secretary Mitchell's Statement, 1956," Box 14, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; "Farm Labor Housing Legislation," 11 July 1958, "Council of State Governments (Housing)," Box 7, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; "Tangible Accomplishments in the Field of Farm Labor," "Farm Labor-Tangible Accomplishments," Box 43, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

Department of Labor and the President's Committee on Migratory Labor throughout the Eisenhower period. The Department of Agriculture, among all the other members of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, retained strong reservations about the directions taken by Secretary of Labor Mitchell towards migrant farm labor. In an analysis of the work of the Committee for Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, Russell W. Oberlin, of the Commodity Stabilization Service and a member of the President's Committee's Working Group, described these reservations candidly. Oberlin observed "there is a tendency on the part of some agencies and groups to emphasize the social and welfare problems of migrants out of proportion with what we believe to be the basic economic situation."<sup>32</sup> He reassured Butz, however, that there was little likelihood of these agencies actually accomplishing changes in the social conditions for migrant farmworkers, "since funds are usually not available to expand programs and, therefore, reorientation is about all that can be expected."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>R. W. Oberlin to Earl L. Butz, Assistant Secretary, 27 April 1955, p. 3, "USDA Migrant Work Committee," Box 10, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>33</sup>Oberlin to Butz, 27 April 1955, p. 3, "USDA Migrant Work Committee," Box 10, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

Of greater concern to Oberlin was the leadership of the President's Committee. In a thinly veiled reference to Secretary of Labor James Mitchell, Oberlin suggested "while we do not wish to imply criticism of any Department, we believe that the problems of migratory farm workers involve both employers and workers." He continued:

It would, therefore, appear that to get full cooperation and effective action the chairmanship should not be placed in any one of the Departments which are primarily concerned. The chairman should be a person who would have an equal interest in the welfare of management, labor and the public. This arrangement would also make it possible to place the Secretariat under the direct supervision of the chairman instead of in a Bureau of a particular Department as located at the present time.<sup>34</sup>

Yet Oberlin summed up his analysis with an even more fundamental indictment of the Committee, suggesting that the Interdepartmental Committee as set up by the President mistakenly singled out migrant farmworkers for attention. This orientation ignored the needs of other seasonal farmworkers and provided "an opportunity for some agencies to give migrant farm worker problems undue publicity which in turn brings undeserved criticism to certain employers and communities." Oberlin advised that "by broadening the scope of interest of this Committee,

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<sup>34</sup>Oberlin to Butz, 27 April 1955, p. 3, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

there will be greater inducement to consider practical problems of labor recruitment, training and productivity along with the more strictly social problems."<sup>35</sup>

Clearly the departments of Agriculture and Labor approached the issue of migrant farm labor from opposite poles. That antagonism increased through the 1950s as Secretary Mitchell escalated his pressure for federal intervention to protect migrant farmworkers from oppressive labor conditions. After repeated refusals by Congress to extend minimum wage and other labor standards protection to agricultural workers, Secretary Mitchell looked in 1958 to his position as administrator of the Employment Service and of the Mexican labor importation program. Congress had given the Secretary of Labor authority under the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 creating the U.S. Employment Service to make rules governing the operation of an interstate employment referral system. Under P.L. 78 governing the Mexican farm labor program, the Secretary bore responsibility for assuring that the use of Mexican contract laborers did not "adversely affect" the wages and working conditions of domestic farmworkers. Mitchell planned to use the provisions of

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<sup>35</sup>Oberlin to Butz, 27 April 1955, p. 4, "USDA Migrant Work Committee," Box 10, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.



those two laws to set prevailing wages and require adequate housing and transportation arrangements before allowing use of the interstate farm labor recruitment system by employers. Employers who could not use the farm placement service also could not be certified to receive Mexican braceros, so exclusion from that system could have severe consequences for large farm employers.<sup>36</sup>

The Secretary found support for his new regulations among members of Congress often frustrated in their attempts to pass legislation to accomplish similar ends. In June 1959, thirty-four representatives and senators submitted a signed statement to the Congress recommending support for the regulations requiring stricter wage, housing, and transportation standards by users of the Farm Placement Service. Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, among the signers of that statement, further urged Congress, although without success, to extend those minimal protections through legislation in an attempt to

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<sup>36</sup>Newell Brown to The Secretary, 20 May 1958, "1958-President's Committee on Migratory Labor (Jan-May)," Box 131, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

use the momentum created by Secretary Mitchell to force action in Congress.<sup>37</sup>

Secretary Mitchell's proposal, however, evoked outraged reactions from farm interests. Mitchell met with Republican congressional leaders in April 1959 to answer objections to the regulations and found from Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois that the Farm Bureau Federation had raised the loudest voice in opposition to the changes. Mitchell wrote to Benson regarding the Farm Bureau response, pointing out to him that the organization's uncompromising stance against any changes in regulations jeopardized the possibility of constructing regulations in the best interests of all parties. Rather than recommend improvements in the interests of farm employers, the Farm Bureau had directed its members to oppose the changes entirely. Mitchell assured Benson that new regulations would be issued despite Farm Bureau pressure and advised that farmers would be better served by helping the Department of Labor

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<sup>37</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 15 July 1959, Congressional Record, 105:13473-13474; U.S., Congress, House, 9 June 1959, Congressional Record 105:10350-10351.

create regulations that considered the employers' needs as much as possible.<sup>38</sup>

The National Farm Labor Users Committee joined the Farm Bureau in opposing the new regulations. This organization served most employers of imported farm labor and so had an obvious interest in avoiding stricter standards for importing braceros. A confidential Department of Labor analysis of opposition to the new farm labor regulations, however, noted an important difference between the interests of the foreign labor users group and those of the Farm Bureau. The latter intended to regain leadership of a united farm bloc through a very public opposition to the new farm labor recruitment regulations; the Farm Labor Users Committee feared any public discussion of farm labor that might increase sympathy for even greater federal protections for farm labor and perhaps for an end to the importation program altogether. The analysis suggested a Labor Department strategy of "divide and conquer." The report counseled key personnel to let leaders of the foreign

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<sup>38</sup>"Notes on Congressional Leaders Meeting, Tuesday - April 14, 1959," "Legislative Meetings 1959 (3) [March-April]," Box 3, Legislative Meeting Series, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Library; Jim, Secretary of Labor, to Ezra Taft Benson, 14 April 1959, "Employment 1-1 Agricultural Jan. 1-May 31, 1960," Box 3437, Series 17, Correspondence of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16, National Archives.

labor users group know that the Department planned public hearings in response to the public opposition of farm leaders. They hoped the foreign users would rein in the Farm Bureau to protect their own interests. Since opposition to the new regulations did not appear to slacken throughout the year before they became permanent, the strategy apparently failed.<sup>39</sup>

The Department of Labor used its own Special Farm Labor Advisory Committee to suggest changes in the recruitment regulations that might help to ease farmer objections. A Domestic Labor Subcommittee composed of farm employer representatives from the eleven Employment Service regions prepared recommended revisions to the regulations in early 1959, but refused to approve even the revised regulations. The group charged that such regulations made the Department of Labor standards for wages, housing, and transportation mandatory controls, since most farm employers depended on Employment Service recruitment to supply their seasonal labor. Although they believed that the Secretary of Labor might have legal authority for this action, they opposed "using obscure sections of a statute designed to provide a

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<sup>39</sup>D. E. Christian to R. Kennedy, Confidential, 27 April 1959, "Interstate Recruitment Regulations," Box 83, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

service to farmers as the basis to accomplish what Congress . . . refused to authorize in specific terms."<sup>40</sup>

Despite Secretary Mitchell's request to Secretary Benson that he use his influence to moderate farm employer responses to the new regulations, Benson continued to support the Farm Bureau position opposing any regulation of farm labor conditions. He claimed more research was needed about farm labor conditions and the economic impact of increasing wages and other labor standards before regulations should be imposed. According to Department of Agriculture data, the wages of farm labor had actually increased twice as much as the prices farmers paid for other services and materials. The Secretary also pointed out the variable character of agriculture among regions and crops that made federal labor standards difficult to apply equally, suggesting that state and local controls were more appropriate. Most emphatically, however, he reiterated his fundamental objection that "the proposed regulations . . . retain the concept of Federal intervention and administrative control and regimentation that is contrary to the

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<sup>40</sup>Introduction to revisions by the Domestic Labor Subcommittee to "Proposed Standards for Job Orders Placed in Interarea Recruitment," and "Subcommittee on Domestic Labor," February 1959, "Special Farm Labor Committee," Box 86, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

principles of this Administration and that is so repugnant to agriculture."<sup>41</sup>

Secretary Benson had first publicly opposed federal intervention in agriculture, including protections for agricultural workers, in 1940 as an official of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. He continued that opposition throughout his tenure with the Council and so his position as Secretary of Agriculture on the Secretary of Labor's farm labor regulations came as no surprise. In contrast, Secretary of Labor Mitchell accepted the responsibility of government to protect the interests of American wage workers, including farmworkers. Although he publicly subscribed to the Eisenhower administration preference for private solutions to labor relations problems, he noted frequently that agricultural employers had indicated no interest in solving their labor problems privately. He further asserted that they could not be expected to do so

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<sup>41</sup>Ezra to Hon. James P. Mitchell, 8 September 1959, "Interstate Recruitment Regulations," Box 83, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library. See also Benson to Mitchell, 23 April 1960, "Employment 1-1 Agricultural Jan. 1-May 31, 1960," Box 3437, Series 17, RG16, National Archives.

as long as the federal government provided them with a cheap alternative foreign labor force.<sup>42</sup>

Benson and Mitchell's disagreements continued through the end of the Eisenhower administration. In May 1960, the latter presented the results of a Department of Labor study of the feasibility of a minimum wage in agriculture to Congress without clearing the report with the Department of Agriculture. Benson complained to Mitchell and warned the White House that he would speak openly in opposition to the report if asked about it by the press. The White House, through Deputy Assistant to the President Gerald D. Morgan, showed little concern about the possibility of a public confrontation on this issue and Mitchell seemed surprised by Benson's irritation, noting the cooperation he had received from Department of Agriculture staff in preparing the report. He also suggested not having advance notice could be useful to Benson, since it allowed him to deny Department

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<sup>42</sup>"Ezra Taft Benson," Current Biography 1953 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1954), pp. 63-65; "James P(aul) Mitchell," Current Biography 1954 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1954), pp. 462-464; Paul Jacobs, "An Interview with Secretary Mitchell," The Reporter, 22 January 1959, p. 20; Speech text, "Migrant Labor, the National Responsibility," 23 November 1959, "James P. Mitchell, Chairman, PCML 1959," Box 1, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

of Agriculture knowledge of the report and thereby retain the support of angered farm groups.<sup>43</sup>

In the next couple of months, Benson again wrote to Mitchell to complain about another example of the Department of Labor's "misunderstanding" of labor problems in agriculture. Mitchell had issued regulations refusing use of the interstate recruitment system of the Farm Placement Service during agricultural labor disputes. Benson emphasized to Mitchell "that the labor problem for farmers and ranchers is entirely different from that of industry. . . because of the possibility of substantial crop loss at harvest time which can result from inadequate or uncertain labor supplies." Benson continued, "it should be an accepted principle that the interests of farm operators are protected equally with those of hired workers."<sup>44</sup> Mitchell's reply merely noted that he had already scheduled meetings with agricultural interests and Department of Agriculture officials to

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<sup>43</sup>Ezra Taft Benson to James P. Mitchell, 10 May 1960, Miller F. Shurtleff, Executive Assistant to the Secretary, to Gerald D. Morgan, Deputy Assistant to the President, 11 May 1960, and James P. Mitchell to Ezra Taft Benson, 17 May 1960, "Employment 1-1 Agricultural Jan.1-May 31, 1960," Box 3437, Series 17, RG16, National Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Ezra, Secretary of Agriculture, to James P. Mitchell, Secretary of Labor, 15 July 1960, p. 2, "1960--Migratory Farm Workers (May-June) (2)," Box 104, James P. Mitchell Papers, Eisenhower Library.



discuss details of the regulations. He offered no indication that he intended to rescind the regulations at Benson's request.<sup>45</sup>

Representatives of agricultural interests in Congress vigorously opposed Mitchell's use of regulatory powers to intervene on behalf of domestic farmworkers. Because the Attorney General had found the making of such regulations to be within the Secretary's legal authority, these opponents, led by Florida Senator Spessard Holland of the Agriculture Committee, sought legislative changes to remove that authority through an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1960. The amendment failed, however, by a vote of 56 to 42.<sup>46</sup>

Divisions on this vote substantially paralleled those that had appeared in the vote to create the Mexican farm labor program in 1951, but at the same time indicated a growing opposition among Democrats outside the region employing Mexican contract labor. In fact, the House Agriculture Committee had originally proposed

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<sup>45</sup>E. T. Benson to the Secretary of Labor, 30 June 1960, "Labor Department," Box 3385, Series 17, RG16, National Archives; Ezra to Mitchell, 15 July 1960, p. 2, Mitchell Papers, Eisenhower Library; Jim, Secretary of Labor, to Ezra Taft Benson, Secretary of Agriculture, 18 July 1960, "1960--Migratory Farm Workers (May-June) (2)," Mitchell Papers, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>46</sup>U. S., Congress, Senate, 16 August 1960, Congressional Record 106:16500-16521.

the amendment as part of the 1960 extension of that program. When supporters feared losing the whole program over disagreements on the question of controlling Mitchell's regulatory power, the committee removed that section of the bill and reintroduced it during discussion of the Fair Labor Standards Act.<sup>47</sup>

The fears of those congressmen were well-placed. Although the party preferences established in 1951 remained in 1960--Republicans supported restricting the Secretary of Labor's authority 22 to 11 while Democrats opposed that plan 45 to 20--the regional voting pattern indicated a polarization among Democrats. Those from states using the Mexican labor program (Arizona, New Mexico, California, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, and Florida) voted 7 to 5 in favor of the amendment; Democrats from other states opposed the amendment 40 to 1. With a growing number of reform-minded Democrats entering Congress in the 1960s, this new voting bloc boded ill for the influence of farm employers in the coming years.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1965), p. 757.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.; U.S., Congress, Senate, 16 August 1960, Congressional Record 106:16520-16521; Congressional Directory, 86th cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1960), pp. 185-195.

The vote followed a lengthy debate in which supporters of federal protection for migrant farmworkers, including Senators Hubert Humphrey, Wayne Morse, and Harrison Williams of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, pressed the opponents to propose the amendments at public hearings on migrant labor being held by the Senate Committee on Labor. They apparently believed that the attempt by agricultural interests to attach these amendments to an unrelated bill indicated they had begun to fear their voices could no longer prevail under public scrutiny. Supporters of federal assistance and protection for migrant farmworkers had, in fact, achieved some success in the Senate by 1960, at least in recognition of the importance of their issue. The Committee on Labor and Public Welfare created a Subcommittee on Migratory Labor on August 5, 1959, to study the problems of migrant farmworkers. Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr., of New Jersey, assumed the chairmanship of the new subcommittee. By 1959, Williams had established a reputation as a liberal Senator through his support of such issues as civil rights, repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, and health insurance for the elderly. As a Senator from New Jersey, a state whose growers employed considerable numbers of seasonal farmworkers, he also possessed first-hand knowledge of the labor

situation in agriculture. The Subcommittee held public hearings for two months in 1959, sponsored extensive staff studies, then prepared a lengthy report repeating the familiar list of recommendations for federal assistance in the areas of labor standards, housing, transportation, health, sanitation, and child and adult education.<sup>49</sup>

The Subcommittee began with four referred bills to establish a minimum wage and end child labor in agriculture and to require federal registration of migrant labor crew leaders. Subcommittee members introduced additional bills to allow federal assistance for migrant housing and education in 1960. All of the bills died in committee, but the existence of the Senate Subcommittee provided a focus of support for federal legislation on behalf of migrant farmworkers. Its members, particularly Senator Williams, worked continuously to increase public awareness of migrant problems and to raise the issue at every possible

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<sup>49</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 16 August 1960, Congressional Record 106:16500-16521; U.S., Congress, Senate, Study of Migratory Labor, S. Rept. 1088, 86th Cong., 2d sess., 1960, pp. 2-4; U.S., Congress, Senate, Study of Migratory Labor, S. Rept. 66, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, pp. 2-3; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 1098, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961; "Williams, Harrison A., Jr." Current Biography 1960 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1960), pp. 463-465.

opportunity on the floor of Congress. In the next four years, the Subcommittee would generate a constant stream of bills to authorize federal assistance or protection for migrant farm labor, forcing opponents to defend repeatedly the farmers' need to employ labor at wages and under conditions considerably inferior to that of workers in other industries. One of the reasons behind the congressional success of farm employers, a small minority even among American farmers, had been the lack of interest in agricultural issues shown by the nonfarm constituents of the majority of congressmen. Publicity on the issue forced these same congressmen to take stands on the question in response to a growing concern for the problems of migrant labor among their urban supporters.<sup>50</sup>

The Senate Subcommittee worked closely with the growing group of private voluntary organizations that advocated federal responsibility for assistance to migrant farmworkers. Subcommittee members credited the work of these groups for most of the improvements that had been made in the migrant condition by the end of the 1950s. Some organizations had been active for years as advocates of government assistance for farm labor; others

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<sup>50</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1088, 1960, p. 2; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 66, 1961, p. 3; "Position paper in 6 parts," "II-A.5 Subcommittee Position Paper," Box 16, RG42, National Archives.

appeared in the 1950s as the migrant labor issue gained visibility. The Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches, among the most vocal of these groups, had been created in 1920. During their first decade, the Migrant Ministry offered child care and health services on the East and West Coasts. In the 1930s they added education for school-age children and cooperated with the Farm Security Administration in providing programs at federal farm labor camps. By the 1950s, the Migrant Ministry's experience in providing programs at the state and local level had attracted the attention of officials in the newly emerging federal programs to study migrant farmworkers.<sup>51</sup>

The President's Committee on Migratory Labor worked closely with the Migrant Ministry through its Director of Home Missions, Edith Lowry. Lowry had begun working with the National Council of Churches on migrant programs in 1926 and by 1950 directed those activities at the national level. The staff of the President's Committee first met with Lowry in November 1954, only three months after the Committee was created. At that meeting Lowry informed the members of the Committee about state

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<sup>51</sup>"Four Decades of the Migrant Ministry," 19 June 1961, "531. Migrant Ministry," Box 21, RG42, National Archives.

government programs and recommended strategies for encouraging additional action at that level. The Migrant Ministry local and state committees offered themselves as a convenient distribution system for information on federal programs. For example, Migrant Ministry program staff served as the local interpreters of new regulations for Social Security coverage of farmworkers in 1955 and 1956. Along the same lines, church leaders and federal government officials met for consultations sponsored by the National Council of Churches and the Department of Labor in 1957 and 1960 at which the participating government representatives presented information on programs available for use by private organizations assisting migrant farmworkers and their families.<sup>52</sup>

Shortly after the end of World War II, the Migrant Ministry had joined with the National Child Labor Committee, the National Consumers League, and the

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<sup>52</sup>"Four Decades of the Migrant Ministry," 19 June 1961, p. 7, RG42, National Archives; "Edith Lowry, 72, Farm Labor Aide," 14 March 1970, The New York Times Biographical Edition (New York: The New York Times Co., 1970), p. 611; R. A. Dungan to Files, 12 November 1954, "National Council of Churches, Dec. 1954-Oct. 1955," Box 9, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security, Proceedings of Consultation on Migratory Farm Labor (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1957), pp. 1-2; "Working Group Meeting with Migrant Ministry," 12 January 1960, "Jan. 22, 1960 PCML Working Group Meeting with National Council of Churches," Box 38, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

National Sharecropper Committee to form a coordinating organization, the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor. Other groups joined over the next fifteen years until by 1962, when Edith Lowry had become its executive director, thirty-five different groups maintained connections with the Council. The group maintained an office in Washington, D.C., and shared research and news on developments in the field of migratory labor. As the orientation of these organizations became increasingly political by the end of the 1950s, the Council expanded its efforts to include study of legislation affecting farm labor. The Council issued its first report on that subject in January 1960, identifying the political opposition to such legislation at the state level. That opposition closely resembled the national political opposition identified at the same time by the Department of Labor staff in response to attacks on the regulatory changes announced in 1959, but the Council recognized the power of the opposition in state politics and urged its member organizations to enter the battle on all governmental levels.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>"Four Decades of the Migrant Ministry," 19 June 1961, p. 5, RG 42, National Archives; "Guests Attending PCML Working Group Meeting - April 27, 1956," "Subcommittee on Cooperation with Voluntary Agencies, Bever," Box 18, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; "Edith Lowry," The New York Times Biographical Edition,



In keeping with the accelerating pace of activity on behalf of migrant farmworkers in the late 1950s, the National Sharecroppers Fund, an original member of the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor, had created a new organization, the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, in October 1958. The Fund's interest in migrant labor arose from its work with low-income farmers in the South, many of whom either supplemented their insufficient incomes with seasonal farm work or turned to seasonal farm work when they lost their farms or sharecropping arrangements. By 1955 the Sharecroppers Fund had become interested enough in the question to issue a pamphlet exposing the miserable condition of farm workers and their difficulties in organizing into trade unions. At a conference focused specifically on migratory labor in 1957, the members of the National Sharecroppers Fund concluded that the gravity of the migrants' situation justified a new committee dedicated exclusively to furthering the interests of migrant farm labor. That committee materialized as the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor. Well-known representatives of liberal and labor

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p. 611; "Memorandum to the Board of Directors," 30 January 1960, "#9 National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor, 1959," Box 77, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

organizations and institutions made up the membership, including A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and active in the civil rights arena; Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the former President and a social activist in her own right; Norman Thomas, leader of the American Socialist Party; Dr. Clark Kerr, president of the University of California; and Dr. Peter Odegard, Dr. Maurice van Hecke, and Archbishop Robert Lucey, former members of President Truman's Commission on Migratory Labor. The Committee served to provide a strong public profile for migratory labor issues and tied them to other prominent social causes of the day.<sup>54</sup>

The National Advisory Committee immediately sponsored two days of hearings in Washington, ostensibly to gather information on migratory labor for their use in developing a strategy for advocating reform. More likely the committee members intended to force public and federal government attention to migrant labor issues, since the committee members had already taken positions

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<sup>54</sup>League for Industrial Democracy and National Sharecroppers Fund, Down on the Farm: The Plight of Agricultural Labor (N.p.: League for Industrial Democracy, 1955); "National Committee on Farm Labor Established," 20 October 1958, "National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, 1958-59 (5)," Box 8, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

as members of other organizations on most of the problems and solutions discussed at the hearings. To some extent the hearings achieved that goal. Both Senator Wayne Morse and Representative James Roosevelt referred on the floor of Congress to having attended the hearings with other legislators. Secretary of Labor Mitchell and Senator Eugene McCarthy spoke together at the hearings on the need for minimum labor standards protection for farm labor. Paul Jacobs, a journalist writing for the nationally circulated liberal magazine The Reporter, publicized the hearings in advance, hoping that they would play a part in "a revival of the instincts for social compassion and indignation--qualities recently absent from our society."<sup>55</sup>

The National Sharecroppers Fund and National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor maintained closer contact and sympathy with the labor union approach to migrant farmworker problems than did most other voluntary advocacy groups. The National Sharecroppers Fund had originally formed to support the work of labor organizer

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<sup>55</sup>Paul Jacobs, "The Forgotten People," The Reporter, 22 January 1959, p. 20; U.S., Congress, Senate, 16 February 1959, Congressional Record 105:2361; U.S., Congress, House, 25 February 1959, Congressional Record 105:2950; "Report on National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor," 5-6 February 1959, "National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, 1958-59 (5)," Box 8, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

H. L. Mitchell with the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) in the South during and after the Depression of the 1930s. H. L. Mitchell continued the farm labor organizing work of the STFU as a leader of the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) chartered by the AFL in 1947. The NFLU later became the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU) under the AFL-CIO in 1955. The National Sharecroppers Fund followed these changes with continuing support of the NFLU and NAWU. Mitchell had adopted the strategy of securing liberal urban support, with its access to the national media and high-level politics, in an effort to improve conditions for agricultural workers through legislation and law enforcement when traditional organizing methods seemed to be failing. Those tactics continued under NFLU and NAWU, although never with the whole-hearted acquiescence of Mitchell's fellow union members, who preferred traditional union organizing and collective bargaining as solutions to labor problems.<sup>56</sup>

The approach of labor organizers differed fundamentally from that of most other farmworker advocacy organizations. The labor organizers emphasized

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<sup>56</sup>Galarza, pp. 317-320; H. L. Mitchell, Mean Things Happening in This Land (Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1979), pp. 237-278; "Mitchell, Harry Leland," Biographical Dictionary of American Labor Leaders, edited by Gary M. Fink (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 247.

government labor standards protection as the key to solving the problems of farm labor. At a seminar on services for migrant children sponsored by the federal Interdepartmental Committee on Children and Youth in 1952, H. L. Mitchell had represented the position of the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU) on federal assistance for farmworkers. He asserted in his comments following presentations by leaders of such social welfare organizations as the National Child Labor Committee and the National Consumers League that "the development of programs for health, recreation and education of adults and children of migratory workers is most desirable but the Union points out that the basis of the plight of the migratory worker is economic, and until this problem is solved, anything else is in the nature of a palliative."<sup>57</sup>

One of Mitchell's NAWU organizers, Ernesto Galarza, also a professional economist who wrote a number of books on labor relations in California agriculture, recognized as Mitchell did that these organizations idealized the plight of migrant workers. He warned against allowing them to control the direction of farm labor solutions.

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<sup>57</sup>U.S. Interdepartmental Committee on Children and Youth, "Report of Seminar on Services for Children of Migratory Agricultural Workers, October 28 and 29, 1952," Washington, D.C., January 1953, p. 51.

Galarza argued that these groups focused their energies on migrant farmworkers, often placing most emphasis on helping them find a new life outside the migrant stream. Their approach ignored the labor protection needs of seasonal farmworkers who did not migrate and often did not wish to leave farm work. Moreover, their tendency to dramatize the misery and poverty of families and characterize the farmworkers as helpless victims led away from empowerment and towards bureaucratic assistance.<sup>58</sup> Rather than work toward political and institutional changes that would allow the farmworkers to protect their own interests, the liberal groups, according to Galarza, stopped short of altering "the structure of power . . . in Agri-businessland" and secured "neither economic power nor political efficacy for farm workers beyond what the existing establishments were willing to permit." As a result, when "the crises waned, the moral pressure was turned off, and the destruction of the domestic harvester's unions continued."<sup>59</sup>

Galarza credited voluntary organizations with one important accomplishment, however. Their investigations

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<sup>58</sup>Galarza, Ernesto, "Biographical Dictionary of American Labor Leaders, pp. 116-117; Galarza, pp. 315-320.

<sup>59</sup>Galarza, p. 318.

exposed the poverty and substandard working conditions of migrant farmworkers and forced at least a temporary end to grower violence against farmworkers in California. . . . Ultimately, according to Galarza, the publicity produced by their persistent efforts "created . . . the climate of opinion in which Public Law 78 was at last rejected."<sup>60</sup> That rejection did not come during the Eisenhower administration, but the battle for extension of the law in 1960 foreshadowed the power of the opposing forces that would bring a final end to the program in 1964.

A critical change had occurred in late 1958 and throughout 1959 that moved the voluntary organizations in the direction of agitating for an end to the bracero program as the first step in helping domestic migrant farmworkers. Secretary Mitchell's justification for the Labor Department's regulatory restrictions on the program as a way of protecting domestic migrant farmworkers publicly connected the bracero program abuses with the poverty of domestic migrants. This recognition served to focus advocacy groups on the role of federal labor policy in prolonging the poor conditions for domestic farmworkers and brought the full weight of an awakening urban social conscience about agricultural workers to

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<sup>60</sup>Galarza, p. 317.

bear against the traditional political power of the farm bloc.<sup>61</sup>

Secretary of Labor James Mitchell initiated a review of the Mexican farm labor program by a group of non-government consultants in 1959 in preparation for the anticipated Congressional discussion about renewing the program in 1960. Those consultants brought direct experience and differing viewpoints on the question of imported farm labor to their study. Edward J. Thye was a former Senator from Minnesota who had served on the Agriculture Committee that considered the original bracero legislation in 1951. The Very Rev. Msgr. George G. Higgins directed the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Glenn E. Garrett held positions as executive director of the Good Neighbor Commission and chairman of the Texas Council on Migrant Labor. Dr. Rufus B. von Kleinsmid was chancellor of the University of Southern California. After study of the issues, these consultants recommended temporary extension, but only with significant changes in the powers of the Secretary of Labor to enforce the provisions to protect domestic farmworkers. Among these

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<sup>61</sup>J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)," American Sociological Review 42(April 1977):260-262.



powers the consultants suggested giving the Secretary of Labor specific power to refuse Mexican workers unless farmers made adequate attempts to recruit domestic workers by offering the same wages and working conditions to domestic labor that were offered to braceros. The consultants found that decentralized administration allowed local interests to control the program, encouraging abuses and distortions of the law. They believed that clearly assigning authority for setting standards for use of the program to the Secretary of Labor could best solve those problems.<sup>62</sup>

Combined with previous Department of Labor "attacks" on P.L. 78 through regulatory restrictions, the consultants report brought angry reactions from bracero program supporters in Congress. Those supporters offered a bill in the House Agriculture Committee to extend P.L. 78 that included provisions to remove what authority the Secretary of Labor already claimed under the Wagner-Peyser Act to protect domestic farmworkers and to divide control of the foreign farm labor program between the

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<sup>62</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Mexican Farm Labor Program Consultants Report (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1959), pp. 13-17; "Mexican Farm Labor Program, Digest of Consultants Report," 23 October 1959, "Consultants Report, Mexican National Program," Box 80, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; U.S., Congress, House, 28 June 1960, Congressional Record 106:14805.

Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Agriculture. Neither amendment succeeded through the full Agriculture Committee, however. As noted above, a majority of representatives of farm employer interests did not wish to jeopardize renewal of the labor importation program over the question of restricting the Secretary of Labor's role in regulating farm labor. Such attempts to restrict the power of the Secretary of Labor to protect a group of American workers from exploitation drew a backlash reaction even from supporters of the bracero program.<sup>63</sup>

An anti-bracero bill encompassing most of the recommendations of the Department of Labor consultants report appeared in March 1960, soon after the grower representatives proposed their restrictive amendments to curtail the authority of the Secretary of Labor. George McGovern, congressman from the farm state of South Dakota, took the unusual step as a member of the House Agriculture Committee of offering a bill to extend P.L. 78 that included strong protections for domestic migrant farmworkers and phased the entire program out over a five-year period. McGovern's bill, and similar

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<sup>63</sup>Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, p. 765; Craig, pp. 151-155, 160-161; Tomasek, pp. 316-318; Miller to Secretary of Agriculture, 17 March 1960, "Employment 1-1 Agricultural Jan. 1-May 31, 1960," Box 3437, Series 17, RG16, National Archives.

amendments proposed later by Senator Eugene McCarthy and Representatives John Fogarty of Rhode Island and Alfred Santangelo of New York, achieved no more success than the bill proposed by opponents of the consultants report, but they served as rallying points for bracero program opponents who forced serious congressional debate of the foreign farm labor program for the first time since its initiation in 1951.<sup>64</sup>

An important reason for the failure of amendments from both camps could be found in the refusal of Eisenhower administration officials to endorse either approach. Behind that refusal was the culmination of the long-standing dispute between Secretary of Agriculture Benson and Secretary of Labor Mitchell over the bracero program. That conflict had been building since Mitchell began his pressure on the Mexican labor importation program using the Wagner-Peyser Act in 1959. Their disagreements, noted above, increased when the consultants report appeared and Mitchell took a public stand in opposition to extension of P.L. 78. Such a public division within the Cabinet created political

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<sup>64</sup>Craig, pp. 155-157, 160-161; Tomasek, pp. 316-318; U.S. Congress, House, 21, 24, 28 March, 11 April, 28 June 1960, Congressional Record 106:6172, 6517-6518, 6720-6721, 7914-7915, 14801-14812; U.S., Congress, Senate, 13 June 1960, Congressional Record 106:12377-12380.

embarrassment for the Eisenhower administration and White House officials forced a compromise in March 1960 between Mitchell and Benson guaranteeing that neither would support any changes to P.L. 78 in 1960. The compromise led by default to an administration endorsement of extension without change, seriously weakening the chances for success of amendments on either side of the question.<sup>65</sup>

In the end, the House passed the two-year extension of P.L. 78 without amendment. The Senate, however, proved more difficult for the grower interests to secure. The House bill failed to gain enough support in the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to reach the floor. Only a six-month extension survived, and that largely through the efforts of Chairman Allen J. Ellender, sponsor of the original bracero bill in 1951. Senator Ellender revealed the nature of the opposition to any bracero bill in the Senate Agriculture Committee as he defended the six-month extension to the full Senate in late August. Not all committee members who opposed the House extension necessarily opposed P.L. 78. Some simply believed discussion should be held over to the next session of Congress, when the issues could be

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<sup>65</sup>Craig, pp. 156-157, 159; U.S., Congress, House, 16 June 1960, Congressional Record 106:12947.

reconsidered without the pressure of an upcoming recess. The secretaries of Labor and Agriculture had suggested such an approach in letters to the committee, pointing out that the program would not expire until June 30, 1961, leaving plenty of time for more careful study and debate in the new Congress. The Labor Department hoped to gain further support in the new Congress to end or alter the farm labor program as recommended by the consultants report. The Agriculture Department hoped instead that a delay would give them time to persuade Congress of the need for a full two-year extension.<sup>66</sup>

Ellender defended the six-month extension with the explanation that postponing consideration of the labor program until after the planting season would eliminate any chance for growers to plan for changes in the availability of Mexican farmworkers. If Congress voted to end or substantially alter the program after June 30, 1961, its legislated termination date, farm employers could be left without harvest labor in 1961 and with no time to make other arrangements. The extension to December 31, 1961, would protect the harvest season in

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<sup>66</sup>Craig, pp. 158-160; Marvin L. McClain, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, to Phillip S. Hughes, Assistant Director for Legislative Reference, Bureau of the Budget, 12 August 1960, "Employment 1-1 Agricultural June 1-Sept. 13, 1960," Box 3437, Series 17, RG16, National Archives.

1961 and provide farmers a year's advance for making adjustments. His arguments persuaded a majority of senators to vote with him for the short extension and the House concurred that same afternoon, rescuing the bracero program for another year.<sup>67</sup> The short-term extension, however, also guaranteed renewed struggle in the next Congress over the same issues. Indicative of what that struggle would be like, Democratic Representative Cleveland M. Bailey of West Virginia, who had opposed bracero legislation since 1951, withdrew his objection to the six-month extension at the last minute, warning "you are not going to be back here at the expiration of your 6 months extension demanding to make this type of lousy legislation a permanent proposition . . . it is lousy legislation which cannot be justified, in view of the situation of these farm people out there."<sup>68</sup>

The final consideration of the farm labor question under the Eisenhower administration had thus ended on a note suggestive of imminent change in the new decade. Paralleling Charles C. Alexander's characterizations of the Eisenhower administration described at the beginning

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<sup>67</sup>Craig, pp. 159-160; U.S., Congress, House, 31 August 1960, Congressional Record 106:18904.

<sup>68</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 31 August 1960, Congressional Record 106:18904.

of this chapter, the farm employer interests and rural Congressmen had indeed "held the line" against substantial alteration of the federal role in farm labor programs. Yet the pendulum swing suggested by James L. Sundquist had also clearly begun. Secretary Mitchell's policy changes within the Department of Labor had increased the momentum of liberal support for federal intervention on behalf of migrant farmworkers and had identified federal administration of the Mexican labor importation program as the primary support for continued grower control of the farm labor market. Congressional debate of the bracero program in 1960 revealed a growing interest in the farm labor question as a social reform or poverty issue. As the liberal critique of American politics and government intensified at the turn of the decade, the problems of migrant labor became attached to a widening social reform agenda. That agenda would mature in the next few years amidst some encouraging political successes in the areas of health, nutrition, and job-training, and American migrant farmworkers would share in that experience.

## CHAPTER 3

## TURNING POINT: MIGRANTS ENTER THE PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

On the day after Thanksgiving, 1960, Americans were shocked by the stark scenes of poverty and deprivation among the nation's migrant agricultural laborers captured in the CBS documentary Harvest of Shame. The film ushered in an era of renewed sympathy for these farmworkers and their families. It undermined the political influence of farm employers by publicly exposing the living and working conditions of migrants and their families and spurred new support for federal assistance to migrant farmworkers. Part of the social reform mood of the incoming Kennedy administration and promoted by increased publicity through the activism of liberal advocacy organizations, this new public interest encouraged the work of the administration and the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, as well as some state legislative activity. As a result, the early years of the 1960s witnessed the first successful federal legislation directed specifically to migrant farmworkers and prepared the way for the end of the bracero era and the inclusion of migrant assistance programs in the Johnson administration's war on poverty.



Historian Allen Matusow has suggested that the election of 1960 "initiated the resurgence of American liberalism, which had not commanded the political landscape since the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt."<sup>1</sup> For migrant farmworkers that prospect offered renewed hope, since the first term of Roosevelt's administration had launched the original efforts by the federal government to assist them in escaping their poverty. The rising tide of that new liberalism had begun in the last few years of the preceding decade, punctuated by the publication of John Kenneth Galbraith's The Affluent Society in 1958. Galbraith's book pointed out the material affluence of American society and suggested that the nation could afford to invest more of its wealth in public spending, including programs to assist the poor who continued to exist within the affluence. Among his purposes in writing the work, Galbraith wished to oppose the Keynesian obsession with economic growth as the cure-all for social problems. He asserted that increasing economic growth simply shifted the level of income by which poverty was measured. He insisted that societies must consider the ways in which

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<sup>1</sup>Allen J. Matusow, The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 3.

they spent their wealth, because only through government taxation for public spending could the necessary investments in social problems bring relief of economic imbalances.<sup>2</sup>

Matusow has pointed out, however, that, more than Galbraith's work itself, the critical responses to Galbraith's book affected the social reform focus of politics. He notes that Leon Keyserling, a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under the Truman administration, countered Galbraith's dismissal of economic growth in solving social problems. Keyserling claimed nearly a quarter of the American population lived in poverty. American society could not afford public spending on the level necessary to alleviate poverty among such a large group. Only continued economic growth could accomplish the feat, by raising the standard of living of many of those poor and by increasing tax revenues as incomes rose, thereby providing sufficient income for government programs to assist those not reached by the economic growth. Keyserling's viewpoint would affect the Kennedy poverty initiatives by suggesting a combination of tax reduction to spur

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<sup>2</sup>John Kenneth Galbraith, The Affluent Society (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958; 2d ed., revised, 1969), pp. xxiv-xxvii.

economic growth with increased direct public spending on antipoverty programs.<sup>3</sup>

The reaction of another critic, socialist Michael Harrington, held more direct significance for the future of federal assistance to migrant farmworkers.

Harrington's book The Other America: Poverty in the United States, published in 1962, praised Galbraith for recognizing the new form of poverty existing in mid-twentieth century America. Much like Galbraith, Harrington emphasized the isolated, minority character of modern poverty and the seeming paradox of its existence amid an increasingly affluent society.<sup>4</sup> Further, he credited Galbraith with an important political insight about poverty, one he obviously shared: "[Galbraith] was one of the first to understand that there are enough poor people in the United States to constitute a subculture of misery, but not enough of them to challenge the conscience and the imagination of the nation."<sup>5</sup> His only criticism of Galbraith concerned Galbraith's

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<sup>3</sup>Matusow, pp. 9-10; James L. Sundquist, Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), pp. 112-113.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Harrington, The Other America: Poverty in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 1-18.

<sup>5</sup>Harrington, p. 12.

underestimate of the prevalence and causes of American poverty.<sup>6</sup>

Harrington devoted most of the pages of The Other America to describing the varieties of this poverty, within which he included workers who lost their jobs through technological progress in industry, the elderly, blacks and other minorities, and poor farmers and farmworkers. His book achieved wide popular circulation and became the source of much public opinion on the federal role in addressing poverty. Americans had been made aware of the poverty of migrant farmworkers by Harvest of Shame in 1960; The Other America made explicit the connection between the migrant situation and the more widespread condition of poverty throughout the United States. Migrant farmworkers thereby gained a place in the public conscience as members of the poverty class to which federal legislation should be directed.<sup>7</sup>

A succession of books and magazine articles joined Harvest of Shame and The Other America in exposing the conditions of migrant agricultural workers in the early years of the 1960s. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People published No Harvest for

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<sup>6</sup>Harrington, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Harrington, pp. 19-174; Matusow, p. 119.

the Reaper: The Story of the Migratory Agricultural Worker in the United States by Herbert Hill in 1960. Louisa Rossiter Shotwell of the National Council of Churches' Migrant Ministry wrote The Harvesters: The Story of the Migrant People to explain the life of migrants to children in 1961. Liberal magazines like The Reporter and Commonweal ran numerous articles on the problems of migrants throughout the period, beginning as early as 1959. Such social-action oriented religious journals as Christian Century and Christianity and Crisis carried similar stories, including one by Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr., chairman of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, in 1961. More significant for influencing the general reading public, however, a sprinkling of articles appeared in such general circulation magazines as Newsweek, Time, and the New York Times Magazine in 1960 and 1961.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Herbert Hill, No Harvest for the Reaper: The Story of the Migratory Agricultural Worker in the United States (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); Louisa Rossiter Shotwell, The Harvesters: The Story of the Migrant People (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961); Paul Jacobs, "Forgotten People; with an Interview with Secretary Mitchell," Reporter, 5 February 1959, p. 8; E. P. Morgan, "Forgotten People," Reporter, 5 March 1959, p. 4; "Possible Turning Point," Commonweal, 17 April 1959, pp. 68-69; "California Farm Labor," Commonweal, 18 September 1959, p. 508; P. Burnham, "Million Migrants," Commonweal, 19 February 1960, p. 572; "Men on the Land," Commonweal, 8 April 1960, p. 30; L. T. King, "America's Poor," Commonweal, 22 July 1960, pp. 366-369; S. Keisker,

Some publications in the first half of the decade originated in the state activities stimulated by the work of Eisenhower's President's Committee on Migratory Labor. Reports on farm labor conditions and programs appeared from Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Oregon, between 1959 and 1963. Although reports do not necessarily equal action on identified problems, these state publications added to the attention gathering around the migrant labor issue and usually supported federal involvement in solutions because of the interstate character of migrancy. When the states themselves requested federal assistance, the case for federal legislation and funding gained considerable strength.<sup>9</sup>

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"Harvest of Shame," Commonweal, 19 May 1961, pp. 202-205; L. T. King, "Blight in Our Fields," Commonweal, 24 November 1961, pp. 227-230; "Latter-Day Serfs," Commonweal, 8 February 1963, p. 504; Paul Jacobs, "Task for a Peace Corps," Christian Century, 20 February 1963, pp. 237-238; "American Outcasts," Christian Century, 3 May 1961, p. 548; H. E. Fey, "Out of Work in Ten Years: National Council of Churches-Sponsored Migrant Ministry Program," Christian Century, 9 October 1963, pp. 1230-1231; Harrison A. Williams, Jr., "The Migratory Farm Worker Problem in the United States," Christianity and Crisis, 27 November 1961, pp. 207-210; A. H. Raskin, "For 500,000, Still Tobacco Road," New York Times Magazine, 24 April 1960, p. 14; "Excluded Americans," Time, 5 December 1960, p. 50; "Drudgery and Despair," Newsweek, 23 October 1961, p. 68.

<sup>9</sup>Colorado General Assembly, Committee on Migratory Labor, Migratory Labor in Colorado: a Progress Report to the Colorado General Assembly, Denver, 1960; Colorado

In fact, by 1960 the issue of migrant farmworker assistance had achieved sufficient public support to warrant campaign platform statements from both parties. The Republicans pledged "action on . . . improvement of job opportunities and working conditions of migratory farm workers."<sup>10</sup> The Democratic platform, more dramatic and activist than the Republican, promised "to bring the two million men, women, and children who work for wages on the farms of the United States under the protection of

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General Assembly, Legislative Council, Migratory Labor in Colorado: Report, Research publication no. 72, Denver, December 1962; Florida Legislative Council, Migrant Farm Labor in Florida (Tallahassee: State Legislative Council and Legislative Reference Bureau, 1963); Indiana Governor's Committee on Migratory Labor, Progress Report, 1960-1963, Indianapolis, 1964; Louisiana Interdepartmental Committee on Health, Education and Services, Report on the Louisiana Migrant Labor Problem, Baton Rouge, 1960; Maryland Governor's Committee for the Regulation and Study of Migratory Labor, Annual Report (College Park: Univ. of Maryland, 1960, 1961, 1962); Maryland Governor's Committee on Migratory Labor, Progress in Meeting Problems of Migratory Labor in Maryland, 1959-1962, 4th Annual Report, Annapolis, 31 January 1963; Elizabeth Brandeis Raushenbush, The Migrant Labor Problem in Wisconsin (Madison: Governor's Commission on Human Rights, 1962); Ohio Legislative Service Commission, Migrant Workers in Ohio; Report, Research report no. 49, Columbus, 1961; Ohio Governor's Committee on Migrant Labor, Migratory Labor in Ohio Agriculture; a Report, Columbus, 1962; Oregon Bureau of Labor, . . . and Migrant Problems Demand Attention: the Final Report of the 1958-59 Migrant Farm Labor Studies in Oregon, Salem, 1959.

<sup>10</sup>As quoted by Harrison A. Williams, Jr., in Harrison A. Williams, Jr., "Proposed Legislation for Migratory Workers," Labor Law Journal 12(7) (1961):631.

existing labor and social legislation; and to assure migrant labor, perhaps the most underprivileged of all, of a comprehensive program to bring them not only decent wages but also an adequate standard of health, housing, social security protection, education and welfare services."<sup>11</sup>

According to political scientist James L. Sundquist, the voters endorsed that traditional Democratic activism on domestic social issues in the 1960 election by choosing John F. Kennedy as President.<sup>12</sup> Supporters of the Kennedy presidency who had worked for some time to secure federal assistance to migrant labor expected much from the new administration. William L. Batt, Jr., Secretary of Labor and Industry for Pennsylvania and a supporter of government intervention on behalf of farmworkers throughout the 1950s, claimed in an article published by the National Council of Churches that

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 630-631.

<sup>12</sup>Sundquist, p. 470. Sundquist based his interpretation of the voter mandate to Kennedy on domestic reform on a series of public opinion polls conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion on leading election issues from 1956 to 1960. According to these polls, voter support for Democrats arose primarily from concerns about such issues as unemployment, inflation, and education. Strength on these domestic issues barely outweighed Republican strength on foreign policy questions and anti-Catholic votes against Kennedy. Thus, Sundquist asserts, a very close election can still be read as a mandate for domestic reform.



because "we have just elected a President who pledged in his campaign to move America forward in a war on poverty . . . we may be able to accomplish more in the next six months than we have in the last generation."<sup>13</sup>

These high expectations for success arose in part from the earlier indications of increasing voter support for government activism evident in the 1958 congressional elections. Those elections brought an activist Democratic majority to Congress in 1959 whose effect on migrant labor issues included increasing opposition to the Mexican labor importation program and the creation by the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare of a subcommittee dedicated to studying and recommending legislation to assist migrant farmworkers. The chairman of the new Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Harrison A. Williams, Jr., of New Jersey, had himself been among the liberal activist senators elected in the 1958 elections.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>William L. Batt, Jr., "How the New President and Congress Can Best Help Solve the Nation's Migratory Labor Problem" The Fifth Decade (memorial publication by the National Council of Churches), p. 33, "National Council of Churches, Jan. 1960-," Box 9, Records of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

<sup>14</sup>Sundquist, pp. 456-470; "Williams, Harrison, A(rlington), Jr.," Current Biography 1960 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1960), p. 463.

Senator Williams believed that such public backing for government activism specifically supported the subcommittee's work on behalf of migrant agricultural labor. His comments at the opening of hearings in 1959 reflected a well-developed liberal critique of the migrant condition reminiscent of Galbraith's general comments on the need for American commitment to government spending for the public welfare. They also presaged Harrington's popular application of that idea to the particular problems of diverse poverty groups. Williams characterized the public concern for migrant farmworkers as "based upon three fundamental propositions:

(1) A democratic and affluent society such as ours will not tolerate pockets of poverty and human degradation such as those presented by the migrant laborer.

(2) A democratic society deplores exploitation of the weak and uninformed.

(3) A democratic society does not accept the concept of inequality by birth; and, therefore, will not permit economic hardship, educational disadvantages, and health disabilities, to be passed on from parent to child. It surely follows that we must find effective means to prevent the children of migrant laborers from inheriting the extremely unfortunate economic circumstances of their parents.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959, Part 1,

The Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor led a growing initiative in Congress to increase federal assistance and protection for migrant farmworkers. During the Eisenhower period the strongest push for change within government had come from Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell, whose personal political strength allowed him to successfully challenge the power of agricultural interests in Congress and the administration. With the advent of liberal Democratic strength in Congress just preceding the Kennedy years, however, advocates for migrant labor in Congress began to take the lead in recommending new federal approaches to the problem.

The Subcommittee pursued two years of study and proposed legislation to deal with the problems of a minimum wage, child labor, registration of crew leaders, education, and housing. None of those bills had reached the Senate floor by the end of 1960, but the Subcommittee renewed its legislative advocacy for migrant farmworkers in the reform climate of 1961. In that year members of the Subcommittee considered a more comprehensive series of laws aimed at improvement of conditions for migrants and their families. Encompassed in eleven bills, the

proposals offered minimum wage and child labor protection for agricultural workers; registration of labor contractors; collective bargaining; housing assistance for farmers and workers; employment stabilization; improved health, education, and welfare benefits for migrant adults and children; and a National Citizens' Council on Migratory Labor.<sup>16</sup>

The Subcommittee settled on six of these bills to be the focus of hearings in April 1961. Those six bills outlawed migrant child labor, offered federal assistance to states for educating migrant children and adults, provided for registration of farm labor contractors, established a grant program to fund health clinics for migrant farmworkers and their families, and instituted a National Advisory Council on Migratory Labor. The Subcommittee reported all six to the full Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare following hearings in April 1961; the full Committee in turn recommended all six bills to the Senate for consideration.<sup>17</sup>

Two members of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, John G. Tower and Barry Goldwater, expressed

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<sup>16</sup>Williams, p. 631.

<sup>17</sup>Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions, 87th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1962), pp. A-64, A-65.

dissenting opinions on the bills to fund education for migrant children and adults and to establish a national advisory council. Viewed as among the most conservative Republicans of the Senate, Tower, a new senator from Texas in 1961, and Goldwater, a veteran senator from Arizona, both represented states that were heavy users of migrant seasonal farm labor. Texas growers, in particular, had a reputation for low wages and poor treatment of workers, so much so that the government of Mexico had refused to allow bracero contracts with Texas growers during the early years of that program. Tower and Goldwater objected to the national citizens advisory council because it duplicated the purposes and responsibilities of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, still in existence under the Kennedy administration. They also believed the planned membership of the council favored the interests of farmworkers, since twelve of the fifteen members would represent migrant farmworkers or agencies and individuals knowledgeable about migrant farmworker problems. The remaining three members would represent farmers; none of the members would be appointed because of their knowledge of farmers' problems. Their opposition to the bill to provide federal funding to assist in educating migrants stemmed from their fundamental objection to federal

interference in state and local educational systems.<sup>18</sup>

General farm organizations like the American Farm Bureau Federation and specialized grower associations like the Virginia Horticulture Society, the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, the National Potato Council, and the Vegetable Growers Association of America expressed similar views on these migrant farmworker questions at the hearings in April 1961. Long the most powerful of the interest groups involved in farm labor issues, these groups did not like the idea of a national advisory committee for the same reasons expressed by Senators Tower and Goldwater in their minority views on the bill. Similarly, the Farm Bureau representative, Matt Triggs, objected on principle to any increased federal involvement in education, as had Tower and Goldwater. The farm employer organizations also objected to regulation of child labor and crew leader registration. The growers' objections to child labor focused on the value of farm work for young boys. These objections ignored suggestions that the poverty and

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<sup>18</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, National Advisory Council on Migratory Labor, S. Rept. 697, 87th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 9-10; U.S., Congress, Senate, Programs for Improving Educational Opportunities for Migratory Farmworkers and Their Children, S. Rept. 698, 87th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 13-14; "Tower, John G(odwin)," Current Biography 1962 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1962), p. 426.

transiency of migrant families made exploitation of migrant children more likely than for family farm children helping out on neighboring farms. They opposed registration of crew leaders out of concern for the effects of such regulation on hard-working migrants who earned extra money by leading crews. Such leaders were usually poorly educated and would be unable to maintain the required records for federal licensing.<sup>19</sup>

Much of the testimony at the hearings on these bills, however, supported the proposed comprehensive legislation. Representatives of such religious, social welfare, professional, and labor organizations as the Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Migrant Ministry, the National Child Labor Committee, the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, the National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO spoke in favor of one or more of the six bills, often supporting them all. Most of these voluntary advocacy groups had begun their support of federal legislation for domestic migrant farmworkers in the preceding decade, if not earlier, and by 1961 occupied a well-established position within the

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<sup>19</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 49, 61, 67, 79, 125.

debate on migrant labor issues. Their testimony expressed the consensus of the liberal activist community that impoverished and powerless groups like the migrant farmworkers required federal assistance and protection.<sup>20</sup>

The opposing beliefs of the farmworker advocate groups and the farm employers' organizations, however, added no new directions to the ongoing debate over government responsibility towards migrant labor issues. These two positions simply continued the polarized discussion of the 1950s. The critical change occurred in the distribution of political power, which, as noted above, had begun to alter in favor of social reform and antipoverty causes with the 87th Congress in 1959. The Kennedy election enhanced liberal strength because of its character as a national referendum on the liberal social reform agenda. Despite some Democratic losses in Congress in 1960, particularly in the House, the new administration worked with Congressional liberals to try to effect those reforms.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 76, 129, 132, 139, 153, 154, 205, 280, 292, 297, 312, 324, 334.

<sup>21</sup>Sundquist, pp. 466-470; Matusow, pp. 17-20, 28-29; Herbert S. Parmet, JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy (New York: Dial Press, 1983), pp. 96-98, 203-209.



Consequently, Kennedy administration cabinet officers testified in favor of the migrant labor bills at the April hearings, reflecting the support of the new administration toward federal assistance to farmworkers as one of the impoverished groups in American society. Comments by those officers, especially Secretary of Labor Arthur J. Goldberg and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Abraham Ribicoff, indicated clearly that the new administration joined the Senate Subcommittee in accepting the need for federal solutions to the problems of migratory farm labor.<sup>22</sup> The preceding Eisenhower administration, even including Secretary of Labor Mitchell, had urged use of federal power primarily to assist states in solving their farm labor problems. This transition in 1961 to viewing the federal government as having direct responsibility for providing programs for farmworkers served as a critical step toward establishment of the comprehensive federal approach achieved under the Johnson Administration War on Poverty.

As part of that commitment to federal involvement in solving farm labor problems, the Kennedy Department of

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<sup>22</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 21-33, 284.

Labor attempted to reinvigorate the President's Committee on Migratory Labor. John Walsh, Executive Director of the President's Committee since November 1959, produced an evaluation of the work of the Eisenhower Committee. He noted such accomplishments as passage of the Interstate Commerce Commission regulations for transporting migrant workers, issuance of model transportation and housing codes, and creation of state migratory labor committees. But in Walsh's estimation, "while these accomplishments are of some value, they are not . . . of sufficient value to justify the existence of a cabinet-level committee."<sup>23</sup>

Walsh did not recommend disbanding the Committee. He believed the Committee's ineffectiveness in the 1950s resulted from the conflict between Secretary of Labor Mitchell and Secretary of Agriculture Benson over the proper federal role in agricultural labor questions and President Eisenhower's lack of interest in resolving the dispute. These constraints on action by the Committee could be avoided under the new administration if the President took a strong position in support of the

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<sup>23</sup>John Walsh to the Secretary of Labor, 27 January 1961, p. 3, attached to letter, John Walsh to Frederick G. Dutton, 31 January 1961, "FG 273, President's Committee on Migratory Labor-Exec.," Box 203, White House Central Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Columbia Point, Massachusetts.

Committee's work. Walsh also suggested Kennedy appoint a citizens advisory committee and allow the Secretary of Labor to promote a comprehensive action program and forge close ties between the administration's Committee on Migratory Labor and the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. Walsh asserted that "with proper leadership and direction, the Committee could contribute a great deal to public understanding of the migratory labor problem, and become an important segment of the Administration's overall attack on domestic poverty."<sup>24</sup>

Although the President never issued the strong statement of support Walsh had advised, the Committee did meet on January 17, 1962, to consider what direction it should take under the new administration. The Committee members heard presentations on pending migratory labor legislation by Senator Williams of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor and New York Congressman Herbert Zelenko, House sponsor of the Subcommittee bills. Walsh outlined the problems of migratory labor and past federal policies in response to those problems, then presented a proposed

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<sup>24</sup>Walsh to the Secretary of Labor, 27 January 1961, pp. 4-5, White House Central Files, Kennedy Library. Walsh's recommendation to give the Secretary of Labor a stronger hand for action on behalf of the committee reflected his Labor Department affiliation. A staff member in the department since 1954, Walsh remained a Department of Labor employee in his position as executive secretary of the committee.

policy statement and set of recommendations for the new Committee.<sup>25</sup> That policy, unanimously adopted by the members, supported the effort to accomplish "in agriculture what we, as a Nation, have already accomplished in most other sectors of our economy - the restoration of respect and dignity, based on good wages, good working conditions, steady employment, educational opportunities, and the extension of public health and welfare services to the men, women and children who labor for hire in American agriculture."<sup>26</sup>

The recommendations for accomplishing this ambitious policy, however, simply advocated supporting the Subcommittee's legislative initiative and urging vigorous enforcement of provisions in current laws that affected migrant farmworkers. In essence, the new President's Committee on Migratory Labor repeated positions already taken by the individual cabinet departments on pending legislation and encouraged cabinet departments and other government agencies to implement laws already passed. This was hardly the invigorated

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<sup>25</sup>Arthur J. Goldberg, Secretary of Labor, to the President, 17 January 1962, "I-E.4 President's Committee on Migratory Labor," Box 16, Records of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, RG42, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

<sup>26</sup>Goldberg to the President, 17 January 1962, p. 3, RG42, National Archives.

"attack on domestic poverty" Walsh had envisioned. The Committee, in fact, did not meet again, dying "of its own inertia," as Walsh had predicted it would, early in the Johnson administration.<sup>27</sup>

The Working Group of the Committee, however, continued to pursue some of its recommendations, particularly those aimed at adapting other antipoverty legislation to benefit migrants. The Kennedy administration had seen several important antipoverty measures through Congress in 1961. Among these, the Housing Act, the Area Redevelopment Act and related Rural Area Development programs, and the Manpower Development and Training Act held most promise for migrant farmworkers. The Housing Act included provisions for loans to farm owners to improve housing for their seasonal labor and to farmworkers to improve or construct houses in their home-base locations. The Area Redevelopment Act and Rural Area Development programs seemed to hold job-training possibilities for migrants in distressed areas to help them leave unskilled seasonal farm work for better jobs. The Manpower Development and Training Act offered similar services to migrants in

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<sup>27</sup>Goldberg to the President, 17 January 1962, pp. 4-8, RG42, National Archives; Walsh to the Secretary of Labor, 27 January 1961, p. 3, White House Central Files, Kennedy Library.

other parts of the country not designated as distressed areas eligible for Area Redevelopment or Rural Area Development programs.<sup>28</sup>

In practice, however, none of these programs offered substantial benefits for the migrant population. Administration of the housing program continued to be oriented toward urban renewal, as it had been under housing legislation passed in 1949 and 1954, and thus afforded little assistance to migrant farmworkers. Both the Area Redevelopment and Rural Area Development programs had been designed to stimulate economic development in identified geographic areas and so could aid migrants only where their home-bases coincided with an otherwise designated area. Furthermore, both of these programs and the Manpower Development and Training programs tended to track migrant and seasonal farmworkers who did obtain training into agricultural occupations like farm mechanics and tractor operation. Although

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<sup>28</sup>Matusow, pp. 100-105; David Burner, John F. Kennedy and a New Generation (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1988), pp. 138-140; "Assistance to Agricultural Migrants through the Manpower Development and Training and Area Redevelopment Acts," "I-E.5 Area Redevelopment Administration," Box 16, RG42, National Archives; "Summary of Action Taken by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor," pp. 2-3, attachment to Arthur J. Goldberg, Secretary of Labor, to the President, 17 January 1962, "I-E.4 President's Committee on Migratory Labor," Box 16, RG42, National Archives.

opportunities for employment in those areas increased in 1961 because of provisions in the renewal of the Mexican farm labor program that forbid imported Mexican workers from holding such jobs, these occupations could not accommodate large numbers of retrained farmworkers. Furthermore, lack of basic education often precluded other job-training possibilities for migrants, as for other unemployed and underemployed people served by these programs, and the economic development acts could not address that issue.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, as the Working Group pursued its efforts to incorporate migrant farmworkers in the programs of the more general antipoverty acts, the administration continued to support the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor's agenda of specific migrant assistance programs. Advocates in the administration who favored such legislation for social reform reasons found additional support for their position from Kennedy's political advisors. In these advisors' estimation, support for

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<sup>29</sup>Matusow, pp. 100-105; Burner, pp. 138-140; "Assistance to Agricultural Migrants through the Manpower Development and Training and Area Redevelopment Acts," RG42, National Archives; Louis Levine to Seymour Wolfbein, attn: William Mirengoff, 8 February 1962, "Area Redevelopment Administration," Box 24, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; John Walsh to Lou McConnell, 26 April 1962, and John J. Walsh to William Mirengoff, n.d., "37 ARA & RAD Negotiations on Migrant Programs," Box 79, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

migrant labor issues could create a "favorable public image . . . since their need had been well exposed in our mass media." They also felt passage of the migrant bills would provide the President "a place in American history . . . [because] to date no legislative program has been enacted, even by the Liberals and past Democratic Administrations." At the same time, because the migrant labor bills paralleled other interests of the administration, Kennedy could not be accused of using the migrant issue to score easy political points. Finally, the President's advisors assured him the "price to be paid for passage of migratory bills is small; grower types are not against these bills," a questionable analysis considering the testimony by growers and their representatives at the Senate Subcommittee hearings in 1961. Still, the gain was potentially great, especially on minority issues, since "liberal sectors would be ready to commend JFK for action here; especially the Negro, who of late is becoming somewhat dubious about racial stand of Administration."<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps for these reasons, the President personally assisted the effort to establish at least one federal

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<sup>30</sup>Memorandum, Harry G. Wilkinson to Frederick R. Blackwell, 10 August 1962, "I-A.4 Intersubcommittee," Box 33, RG42, National Archives.



program for migrant workers. He did so in a presidential message to Congress in 1962 focusing on the administration's national health program. Kennedy spoke directly of the needs of domestic migrant agricultural workers in that message.<sup>31</sup> His particular emphasis on the migrant health issue coincided with, or perhaps recognized, the bipartisan consensus on that issue in Congress. Of the original six bills proposed at hearings by the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, all of which passed the Senate in 1961, only the bill to establish health clinics for migrant farmworkers and their families raised no apparent opposition.<sup>32</sup>

Three reasons may explain this broad support of health clinics for migrant families. The arguments in favor of providing improved health care for migrant workers connected migrant health to the health of communities through which they traveled, making control

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<sup>31</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Message from the President of the United States Relative to a Health Program, H. Doc. 347, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 1962, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 49, 61, 67, 79, 125; U.S., Congress, Senate, National Advisory Council on Migratory Labor, S. Rept. 697, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, pp. 9-10; U.S., Congress, Senate, Programs for Improving Educational Opportunities for Migratory Farmworkers and Their Children, S. Rept. 698, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, pp. 13-14.

of disease among migrants a public health benefit to non-migrants as well. Supporters also emphasized the benefits to growers, arguing that improved health care for migrants meant a better labor force for growers. The third reason for success lay in the funding strategy of the bill. Federal money would be granted to state governments, local governments, or local nonprofit agencies to administer health care facilities and education activities. This plan emphasized local control of programs and funding, thereby satisfying those opposed to federal intervention on principle.<sup>33</sup>

The Senate bill (S. 1130) prepared by the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor provided that up to \$3,000,000 annually for five years could be spent by the Surgeon General through the Public Health Service. Grants to state and local agencies would pay part of the cost of special projects to provide health care services to migrant farmworkers and their families or to train personnel to provide those services. The grants could also be used to support studies and demonstration projects aimed at improving delivery of these health care services and to encourage inter and intrastate

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<sup>33</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 1961, Congressional Record 107:1707; U.S., Congress, House, Message from the President of the United States Relative to a Health Program, H. Doc. 347, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 1962, p. 9.

cooperation for improving health care and health conditions of migrant farm labor. The full Committee on Labor and Public Welfare amended the bill by removing references to research and demonstration projects so as to assure that the money would be spent on services to migrants.<sup>34</sup>

The House Subcommittee on Health and Safety of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce developed its own migrant health bill in 1962, following the report of S. 1130 to the House in spring of that year. Committee members envisioned a program of grants through the Public Health Service to help pay for "visits by public health nurses to migrant labor camps; sanitary inspections of camps, worksites, and temporary rest stops to assure the maintenance of adequate sanitary facilities, including safe and adequate water supplies; and the exchange of information between health workers in different areas to assure the availability of needed

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<sup>34</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 25 August 1961, Congressional Record 107:17078; Abraham Ribicoff to Hon. Lister Hill, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 13 April 1961, "P.L. 87-692 Migrant Health, Office of General Counsel, Legislation 1961-63, Health," microfilm roll 2, Records of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Kennedy Library; Helen L. Johnston, Health for the Nation's Harvesters (Farmington Hills, Mich.: National Migrant Worker Council, Inc., 1985), pp. 136-140.

health service and eliminate unnecessary duplication."<sup>35</sup> The House bill (H.R. 12365) resembled S. 1130 very closely, except that it authorized the program for only three years, to force a more immediate review before reauthorization. The Senate concurred in that change. The law as enacted, P.L. 87-692, authorized the expenditure of up to \$3 million each year for a migrant health program within the Public Health Service until June 30, 1965.<sup>36</sup>

The Migrant Health Act, as it came to be known, initiated a program of grants to state and local governments and nonprofit agencies to provide clinics and visiting health services for migrant families. Although Congress appropriated less than the full amount of authorized funds for the initial year of 1963, the Public Health Service's new Migrant Health Branch approved 52 of the 77 applications received that spring. By the end of the following year, 55 programs were operating in 27 states. State and county health departments acquired most of the grants (approximately 85 percent), with the

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<sup>35</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Health Clinics for Domestic Migratory Farmworkers, H. Rept. 2253, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 1962, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 10 September 1962, Congressional Record 108:18898-18904; U.S., Congress, Senate, 11 September 1962, Congressional Record 108:19058-19059; Johnston, pp. 139-140.

remainder going to such nonprofit agencies as the National Council of Negro Women in Maryland, a Migrant Ministry program in New Mexico, a county health association in New York, and several independent local migrant councils. The California State Department of Health received \$483,004, the largest grant in the first year, to be divided among 14 county health programs. The New Jersey State Department of Health received the second largest grant: \$130,669 for eleven county projects. The smallest grants went to local nonprofit agencies. For example, the Migrant Health Branch awarded the Las Cruces (New Mexico) Committee on Migrant Ministry \$2,070 for a single nurse to train volunteers to teach migrants better health care and ways to get professional care for accidents and illnesses.<sup>37</sup>

According to evaluations and progress reports at the end of the first year, expenses for clinic-based nursing, dental, and medical services, supplies, and equipment absorbed 70 percent of granted funds. An additional 10 percent paid for field nursing and sanitarians. Thus the programs spent an average of 80 percent of their grant funds on actual health care services to migrant families.

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<sup>37</sup>Johnston, pp. 145, 150-151; "Migrant Health Project Grant Awards Summary - July 1963," 22 July 1963, "570. Health - General folder #2," Box 28, RG42, National Archives.

State and local supporting contributions of funds and services added another 40 percent to the total project budgets, nearly doubling the federal financial investment.<sup>38</sup>

Typically, projects concentrated on preventive health and early diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury through night clinics and visiting nurse services. Screening and immunizations for communicable diseases, especially tuberculosis, occupied a high priority for these clinics and mobile health services, not surprisingly since control of such diseases had been one of the reasons behind Congressional support for migrant health care. In most areas, physicians cooperated with the clinics by providing supplemental care for cases beyond the scope of the clinics. In a few localities, hospitals offered care for more acute conditions without charge. Visiting nurses screened migrant families for health problems, encouraged visits to the clinic, and offered advice on health, nutrition, and sanitation problems.<sup>39</sup>

Most projects included sanitarians on their staffs who surveyed and reported camp conditions and offered

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<sup>38</sup>Johnston, p. 151.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-153.

suggestions for improvements to camp owners and migrants. Camp sanitation directly affected migrant health problems. Poor water supplies, inadequate toilets and waste disposal systems, overcrowding, and lack of refrigeration and cooking facilities made maintenance of good health difficult, despite improved health care services offered by the projects. To assist in overcoming the effects of camp conditions, some projects offered health education classes for migrants and even training and employment for migrants as health aides. Programs in California and Michigan also offered classes to health care workers to help them understand the working and living conditions of migrants that promoted ill health and the best ways of providing health care services to migrant families, including instruction in Spanish.<sup>40</sup>

Operation of Migrant Health Act grants during 1963 encountered the perennial problems of the migrant condition. Late appropriations meant funding did not reach projects until after the migrant movement began. Programs found themselves providing services before staff and volunteers had time to complete planned training sessions and before arrangements for locally contributed

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<sup>40</sup>Johnston, p. 153; "Migrant Health Project Grant Awards Summary," 22 July, 1963, RG42, National Archives.

funds and services could be settled. Moreover, a poor growing season in many parts of the country fostered an unusually mobile migrant stream, undermining many of the educational and public health goals of the projects.<sup>41</sup>

Health care workers, however, believed they accomplished some worthwhile ends in that first year. Some migrants became less suspicious of the health care effort after their initial exposure and sought out health clinics on their own as they traveled the next season. Local projects sensitized communities to the presence and needs of migrants and stimulated new projects sponsored entirely by local organizations like the Lions Clubs and Church Women United. Perhaps most importantly for the future of federal assistance programs for migrant workers, however, the experiences of migrant health care workers illuminated the interconnectedness of migrant problems. Although advocates had been arguing the complex nature of the migrant labor question for years, the migrant health program offered the first direct federal program experience of this phenomenon since the days of the farm labor camps during the 1930s and 1940s. The lessons learned by administrators, staff, and local cooperators of the migrant health projects would be

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<sup>41</sup>Johnston, pp. 155-157.



transferred to other programs as they passed Congress in the next few years.<sup>42</sup>

When President Kennedy signed the Migrant Health Act on September 25, 1962, the law marked the emergence of a new coalition of support for social programs for migrant farmworkers in Congress. Not only was the legislation the first assistance program directed specifically toward domestic migrant labor in thirty years; it had passed both houses of Congress without a dissenting vote. Expectations rose immediately for further progress on migrant issues in the next session. In opening the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor's hearings on a new series of migrant labor bills for the first session of the 88th Congress, Senator Quentin Burdick of North Dakota, filling in for Chairman Williams, expressed the feeling of enthusiasm about the upcoming session:

In the 87th Congress the perennial hiatus between intent and accomplishment was broken. Last year marked the passage of the Migrant Health Act (Public Law 87-692), which provides badly needed medical services for migrant farm families.

This act is the first significant legislation enacted since the short-lived farm security program of the raw 1930's. The passage of this act marks more than a beginning--it marks the end of the era

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<sup>42</sup>Johnston, pp. 157-176.

of legislative lethargy in the field of migratory worker problems.<sup>43</sup>

Such enthusiasm for the passage of a single bill indicates the feeling among advocates for federal assistance to migrant farmworkers that their program inevitably would be adopted, despite persistent opposition. Of six bills introduced in the Senate in 1961, only one had become law. Yet Senator Williams resubmitted the failed bills of the 87th Congress in 1963 and added two new initiatives, one to authorize federal assistance for migrant day care facilities and another to establish a fund to help growers improve sanitation in their fields and migrant camps. Again, all of these bills passed the Senate, over the same objections from conservative, farm state Senators as expressed by Senators Tower and Goldwater in 1961. Although the House did not have the opportunity to vote on these particular bills, the expectation of inevitability among migrant program advocates proved true; the programs in the individual bills became part of the successful anti-poverty legislation introduced by the Johnson

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<sup>43</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migratory Labor Bills, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, p. 2.

administration in 1964 following Kennedy's assassination.<sup>44</sup>

State legislatures joined the federal Congress in considering new programs and protections for migrant farmworkers during the early 1960s as well. By mid-1961, twenty-four states had considered a total of 120 bills dealing with migrant farm labor questions. Of those, fifteen bills became law that year, reflecting successful promotion of migrant needs in the states of California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Oregon. Some of these laws simply funded continued study or authorized special migrant labor committees, but others created new regulations and programs for safe transportation, health care, education, crew leader registration, payroll protections, and labor standards for women and children. By 1963, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island added labor camp regulations to their state statutes, Pennsylvania added a wage collection law, Wisconsin required workmen's compensation for larger farm

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<sup>44</sup>Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1963), pp. A-24, A-25, VII; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 167, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, p. 5, 81-83; U.S., Congress, Senate, 1 May 1963, Congressional Record 109:7587-7588.

employers, and California increased its minimum wage for women and children in certain agricultural occupations.<sup>45</sup>

The final, and to many the most important, legislative triumph of the Kennedy years in the field of farm labor occurred on the question of extending P.L. 78, the Mexican farm labor importation program. Congress had extended the labor importation, or bracero, program for only six months in 1960 as a compromise between the two opposing views, both of which hoped to persuade a majority of congressmen to their perspective, given a little more time to prepare their cases. As a result, reauthorization of P.L. 78 came up early in the first session of the 87th Congress, initiated by Representative E. C. Gathings of Arkansas, chairman of the Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower of the House Committee on Agriculture, which held jurisdiction on farm labor issues in the House. Gathings' bill, H.R. 2010, called for a four-year extension of the program without

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<sup>45</sup>"Migratory Labor Legislative Activity - 1961," "Status of Agricultural Workers under State and Federal Labor Laws, February 1962," and "Status of Agricultural Workers under State and Federal Labor Laws, January 1963," Box 21, RG42, National Archives.

change, a position guaranteed to provoke debate between the opposing forces on the question.<sup>46</sup>

The Kennedy administration presented a united position in favor of amendments prepared by the Department of Labor. These amendments authorized the Secretary of Labor to restrict the number of braceros an individual grower could receive, require that domestic farmworkers be offered the same employment conditions as imported workers, prohibit use of imported workers in nonseasonal and skilled jobs, and require payment of an average hourly rate. Despite this united front, however, the House Committee on Agriculture rejected all four amendments and reported the Gathings bill in tact. Attempts by Representative Merwin Coad of Iowa to introduce similar amendments on the floor failed overwhelmingly. Proposals by New York Representative Alfred Santangelo and California Representative Jeffrey Cohelan to deny braceros to farmers producing surplus crops and to phase out the importation program over several years met the same fate. The House passed the bill to extend P.L. 78 without alteration by a margin of

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<sup>46</sup>Richard B. Craig, The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 163.

231 to 157. Only a reduction of the extension period from four to two years survived House debate.<sup>47</sup>

That majority copied exactly the one which had passed the original Mexican labor importation program in 1951. In the only instance of change within that vote, unanimity among Republican representatives from states using the farm labor program (up from 92 percent in 1951) balanced the slightly larger number of Democrats opposing the program (4 percent) from states outside that region. Besides indicating the continuing strength of farm organizations in the House, this breakdown also foreshadowed an increasing party polarization on the issue of farm labor that would bear fruit by the end of the Johnson administration.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Craig, pp. 164-167; Memorandum for Mr. Myer Feldman, 10 March 1961, "LE/LA5 Legislation - Migratory Labor, Executive," Box 487, White House Central Files, Kennedy Library; Memorandum for the President, 16 March 1961, p. 1, "LA5 Migratory Labor, Executive," Box 461, White House Central Files, Kennedy Library; Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1965), p. 765.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. Analysis of this vote was performed using the SPSSX statistical package. The database of Congressional roll call votes was provided by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the consortium bear any responsibility for the analysis or interpretation. I wish to thank Dr. Don F. Hadwiger and Dr. James M. McCormick of the Iowa State University Political Science Department for their assistance in this analysis.

As suggested by the vote the preceding year on restricting the Secretary of Labor's authority over the bracero program, the Senate reflected a growing transformation in its members positions since the 1951 vote. The Senate Agriculture Committee proved less hostile to administration proposals for change in the importation program. The Committee report recommended amendments that required employers to offer domestic farmworkers comparable employment conditions before braceros could be provided and pay prevailing wages to both domestic and Mexican labor. The report also prohibited Mexican workers in skilled or year-round farm work. Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota proposed an additional amendment on the floor that required employers to pay Mexican farmworkers 90 percent of the average state or national wage for agricultural labor, rather than a local prevailing wage. That amendment passed by a margin of one vote. With such fundamental differences between the House and Senate versions of the Mexican labor bill, the potential for compromise appeared slim.<sup>49</sup>

The conference committee produced a bill that extended the bracero program for two years, as the House had wanted, but included amendments requiring comparable

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<sup>49</sup>Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, pp. 765-766; Craig, pp. 167-169.

conditions be offered domestic farmworkers before Mexicans could be contracted and prohibited use of Mexican labor in nonseasonal and skilled farm jobs, as the Senate had supported. The compromise sparked heated debate in the House between Congressmen George Mahon of Texas and Merwin Coad of Iowa. Mahon claimed his constituents would prefer no bracero program at all to one so restrictive. Coad considered the compromise a complete defeat for those in Congress who wished to improve conditions for domestic farmworkers. Despite such different perspectives between the strongest advocates on both sides, the House, rather surprisingly, passed the conference version easily.<sup>50</sup>

The conference compromise produced a similar debate in the Senate. Senators holding extreme positions on both sides of the issue opposed the bill. Bracero program supporters preferred no program to one with increased restrictions and statutory authority for federal officials to monitor employment practices in agriculture. Bracero program opponents refused to support a bill without the McCarthy amendment guarantee of wage levels. The final vote showed a sharply divided chamber, with 41 supporting the compromise, 31 opposing

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<sup>50</sup>Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, p. 766; Craig, p. 170.



it, and 28 not voting at all. Democrats evidenced the deepest division, with 25 supporting and 24 opposing the bill, reflecting the party's transition toward a more reform position. Among Republicans, not unexpectedly, a strong majority of 16 to 7 voted in favor of acceptance.<sup>51</sup>

Kennedy signed the extension of the program on the advice of the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, State, and the Bureau of the Budget, despite congressional refusal to include all the administration's amendments, especially the crucial minimum wage provision. The President's signing statement, recommended by both the Department of Labor and the Budget Bureau, reflected the two primary reasons cited by administration officials against a veto of the bill. Kennedy noted the importance of the bracero program to farm employers and Mexico and his belief that adverse effects of the program on domestic labor could be avoided through administrative action by the Secretary of Labor. He also made clear that he intended the Secretary of Labor to use his authority vigorously to "prescribe the standards and to make the determinations essential for the protection of

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<sup>51</sup>Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, p. 766; Craig, pp. 170-172.

wages and working conditions of domestic agricultural workers."<sup>52</sup>

The extension of P.L. 78 in 1961 renewed the bracero program through 1963 and the Department of Labor followed through on its mandate from the President to enforce the new provisions. During the next two years, changes in the use of braceros that had begun in the late 1950s accelerated. Eisenhower's Secretary of Labor James Mitchell had started a process of employer withdrawal from the bracero program by his decision in 1959 to enforce long-ignored sections of P.L. 78. Using these sections, he set prevailing wage rates and refused braceros to employers who did not attempt to recruit domestic workers in good faith or who were involved in labor disputes. Cotton growers, particularly, turned to newly available mechanization to avoid the restrictions on importing foreign farm labor. As a result, the number of braceros used by American growers declined from 437,543 in 1959 to 291,420 in 1961. The amendments to the law in 1961 provided detailed, statutory authority to the Secretary of Labor for the administrative regulations instituted by Mitchell and added additional regulations

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<sup>52</sup>Craig, pp. 173-174; Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1961, "P.L. 87-345, 10/3/61," Box 12, BOB Bill Reports, Kennedy Library.

in the law prohibiting the use of Mexican contract workers in year-round and skilled occupations. Together these changes led to further reduction in bracero use; only 194,978 Mexican contract laborers entered the United States in 1962, 116,000 of them to be used in California's fruit and vegetable fields.<sup>53</sup>

Increasing restrictions and more vigorous enforcement of Department of Labor regulations discouraged some of the previously pro-bracero interest groups, as well. During congressional consideration of the 1961 extension, the National Grange had withdrawn its support for the bracero program. Grange leaders believed that increased governmental involvement in the farm labor question had developed from administration of the foreign farm labor problem. Without administrative responsibility for such a program, the Department of Labor would have no authority to set wage rates and working conditions in agriculture. Withdrawal of the Grange from support for P.L. 78 left the Farm Bureau alone among general farm organizations in favor of

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<sup>53</sup>Craig, pp. 177-182; Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 160-164, 166; Ellis W. Hawley, "The Politics of the Mexican Labor Issue, 1950-1965," Agricultural History 40(3)(1966):173-174; Employment Service Program Letter No. 1196, 20 July 1961, "ESPL No. 1196 - Preference for Domestic, etc.," Box 68, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

continuing the program. The number of grower associations and commodity groups supporting the program also declined, as bracero use became concentrated among less than two percent of American farm employers. Those growers and organizations who continued to favor P.L. 78 were increasingly burdened with the negative publicity becoming current in the national media, an image with which many farm groups hesitated to associate themselves when their members had so little need for imported labor.<sup>54</sup>

The political power of bracero users, so overwhelming during the 1950s, also rapidly evaporated amid the reform climate of the Kennedy years and the concomitant loss of interest among important farm groups. As labor, religious, welfare, and liberal reform leaders cultivated moral outrage among the public, urban congressmen withdrew from old arrangements to trade support of the bracero program for rural congressional support of issues important to urban constituencies. Similarly, farm leaders in Congress feared loss of support for other farm programs more important to their constituents if they insisted on continuation of an unpopular farm labor program. With the Department of

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<sup>54</sup>Craig, p. 176; Majka and Majka, pp. 165-166; Hawley, p. 176.

Agriculture firmly behind the administration position opposing the unrestricted continuation of P.L. 78, the former sources of political power available to bracero supporters had disappeared.<sup>55</sup>

Still, Congress gave P.L. 78 one final reprieve in 1963, although not without extenuating circumstances. Three positions developed during congressional debate. The Department of Labor recommended a one-year extension when hearings began in 1963, but insisted that it must include an amendment requiring comparable conditions of employment be offered domestic farmworkers before foreign workers could be certified. The administration supported the short-term extension in order to allow an orderly end to the program. Some forces still maintained the long-term need of American farmers for foreign labor, however, and offered an alternate proposal that would extend the program for two years and remove the restrictions that had been added to the law in 1961. Committed anti-bracero program opponents, on the other hand, called for immediate termination of the program.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Hawley, pp. 174, 176.

<sup>56</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 29 May, 31 October 1963, Congressional Record 109:9803-9806, 20691-20732; U.S., Congress, Senate, 15 August, 4 December 1963, Congressional Record 109:15183-15204, 23217-23223; Craig, pp. 182-183.

The House Agriculture Committee again recommended a two-year, unamended extension. Although rejecting the reactionary amendments offered by the pro-bracero group, the Committee also rejected the administration proposal and specifically criticized the Secretary of Labor's use of P.L. 78 to set a de facto minimum wage for agriculture. The Senate, under pressure from the Mexican government not to end the program without some adjustment period, recommended a one-year extension. The Senate Agriculture Committee also rejected the administration amendment to equalize conditions for domestic farmworkers, but Senator McCarthy introduced a floor amendment to reinstate those protections. During extended debate, pro-bracero senators emphasized the desire of Mexico for a continuation of the program and American obligations to assist poor Mexicans in need of work. Anti-bracero senators repeated descriptions of the miserable conditions of domestic farmworkers and countered pro-bracero arguments with calls for tax-supported foreign aid, rather than foreign aid drawn from the poverty of American workers. The final vote of 62-25 in favor of a one-year extension which included the

McCarthy amendment attested to the growing strength of the liberal anti-bracero coalition in the Senate.<sup>57</sup>

Debate of a new House bill calling for a one-year extension but without the McCarthy amendment became the final battle ground for P.L. 78. Pro- and anti-bracero congressmen urgently argued the diplomatic, moral, and economic implications of the importation of Mexican farmworkers, aided by heavy lobbying efforts by interest groups on both sides of the issue. In the end, the one-year, unamended extension passed both the House and the Senate, in both cases with a majority of Democrats opposed, but only as a final extension intended to serve growers and Mexican workers as an adjustment period to avoid a chaotic end to the program.<sup>58</sup>

Farmworker advocates had long considered termination of the bracero program critical to further progress in improving conditions for domestic farmworkers. Availability of government-sponsored foreign workers allowed farm employers to resist the rise in wages and

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<sup>57</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 15 August 1963, Congressional Record 109:15183-15204; Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, p. 766; Craig, pp. 188-192.

<sup>58</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 31 October 1963, Congressional Record 109:20691-20732; U.S., Congress, Senate, 4 December 1963, Congressional Record 109:23217-23223; Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964, p. 766; Craig, pp. 192-195; Majka and Majka, p. 164; Hawley, p.174.

improvement of working conditions that competition for domestic labor would have required. Thus the assurance that the extension passed in 1963 would be the last promised much hope for additional legislative success on migrant labor issues.

The success of the anti-bracero reform efforts during the early 1960s and the passage of the Migrant Health Act in 1962 depended on the changes in political and public attitude that had occurred in the period. Media attention to farmworker issues and a resurgence of liberal interest in government-sponsored social reform together had created a constituency for federal involvement in solving the problems of migrant labor. The election of a more liberal, activist Congress and a united administration committed to reform had neutralized the political power of the conservative farm bloc that had successfully obstructed federal interference in agricultural labor questions in previous years. Moreover, these developments in the political climate were as important as the legislative accomplishments to the future of federal assistance for farmworkers. Just as the new Congress and Kennedy administration had built on the beginnings of reform that emerged in the last two years of the Eisenhower presidency, the Kennedy era political successes provided the groundwork on which the



comprehensive migrant programs of the Johnson  
administration would rest.

## CHAPTER 4

## ADVENT OF A NEW ERA: MIGRANTS IN THE WAR ON POVERTY

The War on Poverty, inaugurated by President Lyndon Johnson in his first State of the Union speech, January 8, 1964, has been termed by one scholar "the apex of the liberal reform efforts of the 1960s."<sup>1</sup> That phrase aptly describes the poverty initiative's meaning for migrant assistance programs. Inclusion of special programs for migrants in the general antipoverty bills of the 88th and 89th congresses rewarded the years of preparation by administration, congressional, and private proponents of such programs. The new programs offered funding for improvements in housing, sanitation, day care, job training, health services, and education. At the same time, the expiration of the bracero program, legislation to require registration of crew leaders, and limited minimum wage and child labor amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1966 added some protective labor standards to the services of the poverty programs. Thus, by the end of the Johnson presidency the basic outlines

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<sup>1</sup>David Zarefsky, President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History (University, Ala.: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1986), p. 20.

of federal programs and protections for migrant farmworkers were in place.

The federal antipoverty initiative originated in attempts by the Kennedy administration in 1963 "to go beyond" the antipoverty efforts of the administration's first two years. The unconnected programs had begun to appear inadequate to the task of reducing the deep poverty witnessed by Kennedy during campaign stops in West Virginia in 1960 and described by Michael Harrington in The Other America in 1962. The President charged his staff with developing a new, comprehensive approach to poverty. The initial plans concentrated on community development, job training, and basic education, which had come to be considered the most effective means of destroying "the culture of poverty" that seemed to trap families for generations. Based on juvenile delinquency, urban renewal, welfare reform, and job-training programs of the 1950s and early 1960s, Kennedy's planners proposed to bring together the experiences gained by administrators and social work professionals through these programs into a united attack on the basic causes of poverty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>James L. Sundquist, Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), pp. 112-134; Allen J. Matusow, The Unraveling of America: A History of

The assassination of President Kennedy on November 23, 1963, subsequently placed the burden of opportunity for creating a new approach to poverty on the shoulders of the new President, Lyndon Johnson. Johnson proved enthusiastic and reassured the continuing Kennedy staff that he intended to carry through with the Kennedy plans for a comprehensive poverty program. In fact, as his 1964 State of the Union address suggested, he intended to make the war on poverty a centerpiece of his administration. Making the most of a public mood favoring immediate action in support of the Kennedy agenda, Johnson presented the plans for his antipoverty programs to Congress within two months of his January declaration. Only five months later, the war on poverty was effectively launched with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in August of 1964.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson intended the Economic Opportunity Act to be the basic antipoverty effort of his administration. The bill, prepared by a special task force, included job training and education programs for youth, employment and

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Liberalism in the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 119-122; Zarefsky, p. 30; Paul K. Conkin, Big Daddy from the Pedernales: Lyndon Baines Johnson (Boston: Twayne, 1986), p. 219.

<sup>3</sup>Sundquist, pp. 137-145; Matusow, pp. 123-126; Conkin, pp. 220-221.

investment incentives to bring jobs to economically depressed urban and rural areas, adult basic education programs, funding for a domestic volunteer service corps (VISTA), and a plan for community involvement and control of poverty programs called "Community Action." It reflected a philosophy of poverty which required responses on three fronts: economic development, to make more jobs available to the poor; education and training, to make the poor more employable, supported by social services to help the poor maintain good health and living standards as they established productive roles in society; and restructuring of social institutions, to allow the poor more access to political power and thereby increased influence over their own circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the theory behind the Johnson antipoverty programs rested on a concept called "the culture of poverty." That concept posited a cyclical problem, in which poor parents lacking skills to achieve adequate incomes lived in economically depressed areas which

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<sup>4</sup>Adam Yarmolinsky, "The Beginnings of OEO," in On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience, ed. James L. Sundquist (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp. 37-46; Robert H. Haveman, "Introduction: Poverty and Social Policy in the 1960s and 1970s--An Overview and Some Speculations," in A Decade of Federal Antipoverty Programs: Achievements, Failures, and Lessons, ed. Robert H. Haveman (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 1-19; Sundquist, pp. 137-145.

provided few services and poor education, thereby breeding the same lack of employment skills among children of these parents. Breaking that cycle required poverty efforts aimed at several points. The Economic Opportunity Act offered job training to improve the parents' earning power; economic development, social services, and community organization to improve conditions in the ghettos and rural poverty areas where the poor lived; and education to help the children into a better future. In effect, to avoid the discredited methods of fighting poverty by welfare payments that encouraged dependence and continuation of the poverty lifestyle, the new approach to poverty offered to empower the poor to improve their own lives and neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup>

The planning task force for the Economic Opportunity Act did not originally contemplate a special program for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Officials of the Department of Agriculture involved in the planning task

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<sup>5</sup>The concept of a "culture of poverty" first became popularized in 1962 through Michael Harrington's The Other America. By 1964, federal antipoverty program planners had adopted the idea and incorporated it in a chapter of the Economic Report of the President for that year ("The Problem of Poverty in America," p. 55). For a detailed account of the origins of the concept and its effects on American antipoverty efforts see James T. Patterson, America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981; rev. ed., 1986), pp. 115-125.

force, particularly Under Secretary James L. Sundquist, recommended a title in the legislation to respond to rural poverty, but their suggestions included only loan and grant programs to assist small family farmers and rural businessmen, not farm labor. The impetus for inclusion of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the war on poverty came from members of Congress.<sup>6</sup>

Senator Harrison A. Williams, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, had attempted to combine the issues of migrant poverty and the larger antipoverty program as early as December 1963. At that time, he offered the services of his subcommittee staff to assist President Johnson in designing his broad antipoverty initiative, citing the experience of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor in preparing successful legislation on poverty issues. Williams, in fact, had hoped that his subcommittee might be designated a special subcommittee on poverty to assist in developing the administration antipoverty plans and seeing them through Congress. The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare instead created a Select Subcommittee on Poverty, under the

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<sup>6</sup>Sundquist, p. 144; Ronald L. Goldfarb, Migrant Farm Workers: A Caste of Despair (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 52-53; National Farmworker Policy Project, CETA Farmworker Programs: A Legislative History (Sacramento, Calif.: National Farmworker Policy Project, 1981), pp. 7-14.

chairmanship of Pat McNamara of Michigan. But McNamara had been a longtime supporter of migrant labor legislation and other members of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor favorable to federal assistance for migrants, including Williams, Democrat Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, and Republican Jacob Javits of New York, also held seats on the Select Committee.<sup>7</sup>

The initiative to place programs from pending migrant legislation into the Economic Opportunity Act did not come from the Senate Select Committee on Poverty, however. Representative James Roosevelt, Democrat of California, made the suggestion that migrant farmworkers should be covered within Title III, the rural poverty program. Roosevelt, the eldest son of former President Franklin Roosevelt, consistently supported liberal legislation in Congress and as a California congressman maintained a particular interest in migrant farmworker issues. He had been promoting House versions of migrant assistance legislation introduced by Senator Harrison Williams and the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor since their efforts began in 1960. When the poverty bill

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<sup>7</sup>Harrison A. Williams, Jr. to The President, 20 December 1963, and "Memorandum for the President," n.d., "64. Poverty - General," Box 3, Records of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, RG42, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 13-14.



came before the House Subcommittee on the War on Poverty, Roosevelt pressed for the addition of a section in Title III providing for funding of public and private agencies to offer assistance in the areas of housing, sanitation, education, and day care for migrants and their families.<sup>8</sup>

Roosevelt based his recommendation for funding in these areas on four bills proposed by the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. Three of the bills, covering sanitation, education, and day care had passed the Senate in 1963; a housing bill for migrant farmworkers was still pending in early 1964. Because similar bills had failed in the House two years earlier, Democratic Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, chairman of the House subcommittee considering the poverty bill, and Phil Landrum of Georgia, an influential southern member of that subcommittee, expressed concern that adding the migrant provisions could jeopardize support of the poverty bill among southerners. Congressman Roosevelt approached this potential problem by engaging the help of southern senators who had voted for the bills to persuade their House delegations of the merits of the programs. The tactic apparently succeeded. On April 22, 1964, only a few days after the administration had expressed its

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<sup>8</sup>Sundquist, p. 144; Goldfarb, p. 53; National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 14-16.

reservations about the response of southern congressmen, Roosevelt suggested to the House the idea of including migrant provisions in the poverty legislation then being written. Staff members of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor prepared a final version of Title III-B. Authorizing "programs of assistance to migrant agricultural employees and their families which programs shall be limited to housing, sanitation, education, and day care of children," it appeared in the Economic Opportunity Act as passed by Congress in August of that year.<sup>9</sup>

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the independent agency created to administer the new anti-poverty program, included migrant and seasonal farmworker

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<sup>9</sup>"Migrant Action on House Side," Frederick R. Blackwell, 13 April 1964, "Chronological File - April 1964," Box 1, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; "Memorandum Re Plan to Add Senate Passed Migrant Bills to Poverty Bill," 20 April 1964, "64. Poverty - General," Box 3, RG42, National Archives; "Migrant Action on House Side," Frederick R. Blackwell, 21 April 196[4], "Interoffice Memo - Staff," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; U.S., Congress, House, 22 April 1964, Congressional Record 110:8820-8821; Anne to FRB, 15 June 1964, Frederick R. Blackwell to Don Baker, 7 July 1964, and "Legislative History," "64. Poverty - General," Box 3, RG42, National Archives; National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 7, 14-16; Goldfarb, p. 53.

It is not possible to determine which individuals supported the migrant provisions of Title III-B in particular, since no floor discussion took place and neither the House nor the Senate voted on that section separately from the full Economic Opportunity Act.

assistance programs within an Office of Special Field Programs. This office provided national rather than regional control of funding and approval for projects. Two other divisions joined the Migrant Division in this special administrative arrangement: the Indian Division and the Commonwealth and Territories Division. The reason behind such an arrangement focused on the fact that none of the poverty groups covered under these offices could be considered the responsibility of any individual state or region. Regional OEO directors often tried to bring migrant programs under their purview, arguing that seasonal farm labor and even many migrants worked within one region or state and could be better served through administrative agencies more familiar with local conditions. OEO director Sargent Shriver insisted, however, that the interstate character of migration required national administration of the migrant assistance programs. Shriver and migrant program administrators feared that regional control of funding would simply perpetuate the tendency of agricultural states to ignore the needs of farm labor.<sup>10</sup>

Advocates also used the arguments against regional administration to protect migrant programs from the power

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<sup>10</sup>National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 22-24.

of governors to prohibit OEO-funded programs from operating in their states. That tool for obstructing federal antipoverty activity proved popular, particularly in California and Alabama under conservative governors Ronald Reagan and George Wallace. Since a large number of migrant programs operated in California and the deep South states, areas that had historically disregarded the needs of farm labor, such a veto power for governors might well have precluded the existence of programs for a majority of poor farmworkers.<sup>11</sup>

As soon as the OEO staff had completed administrative arrangements for programs authorized in the Economic Opportunity Act, distribution of information regarding types of poverty assistance available for migrant and seasonal farmworkers began. The organized constituency for migrant farmworker assistance programs consisted primarily of the few church and social welfare organizations and state governments who had been offering services on their own for years. The staff of the OEO Migrant Division sought out these and other appropriate

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<sup>11</sup>National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 26-34; U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment Manpower and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, p. 2993; U.S., Congress, Senate, 12 October 1967, Congressional Record 113:27850-27860.

grantee agencies who would offer the kinds of innovative programs in housing, sanitation, child care, and education envisioned by the authors of Title III-B. They avoided old-line state agencies and farm employer associations who showed interest in using the money for such projects as building new migrant housing on private land and offering education programs without attempting new approaches to solve the deficiencies of the past. Projects encouraged by the Migrant Division under Title III-B included rest camps on migrant routes; experimental migrant camp designs and field sanitation facilities; self-help housing; and day care and summer schools for children and adults with programs ranging from preschool adjustment to adult basic literacy, job training and job-search methods, and personal and community relations.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the Title III-B authorization, projects to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers could be funded under Title II-A community action programs. Communities in California, Texas, and Florida, for example, where large numbers of migrant and seasonal farmworkers maintained their "permanent" homes, could create community action programs that concentrated on

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<sup>12</sup>Goldfarb, pp. 53-54; National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 25-26; Office of Economic Opportunity, The Migrant and the Economic Opportunity Act, February 1965, p. 1.

offering new leadership opportunities for farmworkers in their home communities. At the same time, community action programs could offer similar social and educational services to those available through Title III-B grants. Encouragement of this use of the community action program expanded the funds that could be offered to farmworkers through OEO grants.<sup>13</sup>

In 1965, the first year in which grant funds were available, 48 grants in 26 states supported programs in the full range of eligible categories. The smallest grant, of \$2,858, supported special summer library services for migrants in a single Wisconsin county. The largest grant, of \$3,485,623, funded the construction of 1,000 mobile housing units on state land, a program administered by the California Office of Economic Opportunity. Three-fourths of the grants went to private nonprofit agencies; state agencies, some newly created to receive OEO grants, made up the remaining one-fourth of grantees. Housing projects dominated the grants to California agencies, but outside that state most programs concentrated on day care, summer school for children, and adult basic education and vocational training. In fact,

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<sup>13</sup>Office of Economic Opportunity, The Migrant and the Economic Opportunity Act, p. 2.

over 75 percent of grant funds supported education programs of one kind or another.<sup>14</sup>

The Office of Special Field Programs, which administered the Title III-B migrant programs, fell under the control of the Community Action Program within the Office of Economic Opportunity. Because of this administrative connection, the migrant programs were required to adhere to the concept of "maximum feasible participation" in which members of the clientele population--in this case, the migrants--served on policy-making boards and worked as aides in whatever programs operated in their areas. Although a central concept in the community action program from the initiation of the war on poverty in 1964, the requirement achieved a formal status in the 1966 amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>International Research Associates, Inc., OEO Grants to Assist Migratory Labor and Other Seasonal Agricultural Workers, Report prepared for the Office of Economic Opportunity, 15 April 1966, pp. 1-8; "Progress Report - January 1, 1965 to May 31, 1965," "Interoffice Memos-Staff," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; Office of Economic Opportunity, A Nation Aroused: 1st Annual Report (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), pp. 57-58.

<sup>15</sup>The literature analyzing the Community Action Program and the concept of "maximum feasible participation" is extensive. A critical, but well-known, analysis is Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty (New York: Free Press, 1969). An important contemporary collection of essays on the subject is James L.

Beginning in that year, agencies had to appoint migrants, or at least former migrants, to one-third of the seats on their boards of directors to comply with this directive. In addition, the new amendments mandated that migrant aides, often mothers of children involved in day care and summer school programs, were to make up as much as possible of the nonprofessional staff at local

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Sundquist, ed., On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience (New York: Basic Books, 1969). Written by such participants in developing and administering community action as Sundquist, Adam Yarmolinsky, Sanford Kravitz, John G. Wofford, and Robert A. Levine, the essays offer both local and national perspectives on the problems and successes of the program. Other studies, many also contemporary, that analyze community action and the concept of participation by the poor include Brian Henry Smith, "The Role of the Poor in the Poverty Program: The Origin and Development of Maximum Feasible Participation," (M.S. thesis, Columbia Univ., 1966); Lillian B. Rubin, "Maximum Feasible Participation: The Origins, Implications, and Present Status," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 385(Sept. 1969):14-29; Ralph M. Kramer, Participation of the Poor: Comparative Community Case Studies in the War on Poverty (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969); Joseph A. Kershaw, Government Against Poverty (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1970); Paul E. Peterson, "Forms of Representation: Participation of the Poor in the Community Action Program," American Political Science Review 64(June 1970):491-507; Neil Gilbert, Clients or Constituents: Community Action in the War Poverty (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970); David M. Austin, "Resident Participation: Political Mobilization or Organizational Cooptation?," Public Administration Review 32(September 1972):409-420; Joseph Helfgot, "Professional Reform Organizations and the Symbolic Representation of the Poor," American Sociological Review 39(August 1974):475-491; and Robert H. Haveman, ed. A Decade of Federal Antipoverty Programs: Achievements, Failures, and Lessons (New York: Academic Press, 1977).



programs. In most cases, program directors managed to appoint the requisite number of migrants to board positions and hire migrants as support staff, and most reports concluded that migrant representatives participated in making policy decisions. Some evaluators, however, especially during the first year of Title III-B grants, expressed some doubt about the ability of many programs to fully implement the idea of maximum feasible participation, since such an implementation required local program sponsors to reconsider their own plans for the migrants and to accept a much slower, and less efficient, process of program development.<sup>16</sup>

Even professionals at the Office of Economic Opportunity did not always seem ready to ignore their own assessments of migrant needs in the face of evidence that

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<sup>16</sup>"Progress Report - January 1, 1965 to May 31, 1965, Submitted by the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare," p. 2, "Interoffice Memos-Starr," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; "Proceedings of the First Office of Economic Opportunity Conference on Antipoverty Programs for Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers," 18-20 January 1966, pp. 11-13, Box 750, Series 41, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG381, National Archives; International Research Associates, pp. 135-137, 148-150; Comptroller General of the United States, Effectiveness and Administration of the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program under Title III-B of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964: Phoenix, Arizona (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1969), pp. 20-22.

their evaluation differed from that of their clients. The Migrant Division employed social scientists and educators as "migrant specialists" to evaluate program proposals and provide technical assistance to grantees. These specialists emphasized day care and education programs on the dual premise that adult education would expand the limited employment opportunities available to parents and help them move their families out of poverty while educating migrant children would break the "cycle of poverty" and allow the next generation to move beyond the restrictions their parents faced.<sup>17</sup>

According to a survey commissioned by OEO in 1965, however, migrants rated free medical and legal services highest among services they considered "most important." Adult vocational education and better housing followed medical and legal services in third and fourth places. Free day care shared fifth place with better ways to find work; adult basic literacy and improved toilet facilities rated a close sixth and seventh. Remedial education for children rated next to last in a list of ten services, ahead only of camp recreation centers. Health care and legal services did become increasingly available to migrants in subsequent years through reauthorizations of

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<sup>17</sup>International Research Associates, pp. 12-15.

the Migrant Health Act and the addition of legal services to Title III-B in the 1967 reauthorization of the Economic Opportunity Act. But despite the migrants' rating of housing and sanitation as equally important with adult educational opportunities and more important than remedial education for their children, in the following grant year, day care and education programs continued to receive 70 percent of available Title-III funds.<sup>18</sup>

During 1966, funding expanded from \$24 to \$35 million, serving migrants through 96 projects in 35 states. Most programs resembled those of the first year, often simply continuing and expanding work begun in 1965. Some new types of programs appeared in the second year, however. Among these, self-help housing grants and stipend-supported vocational education received most attention. Self-help housing offered migrants both the opportunity to own homes and to learn new occupational skills involved in home construction. Stipend-supported job training allowed farmworkers who could not afford to lose their income the chance to expand their job skills while still earning a minimal salary. The Migrant

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<sup>18</sup>International Research Associates, pp. 12-15, 46-49, Appendix D, Tables 3 and 4; Office of Economic Opportunity, The Quiet Revolution: 2d Annual Report (Washington, D.C: GPO, 1966), p. 54.

Division applied the same principle to youth education in the Migrant Compensatory Education Program, offering stipends to encourage teens and young adults to forego field work, remain in school, and pursue vocational training for nonagricultural occupations.<sup>19</sup>

Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act in 1967 expanded the migrant programs further by increasing the flexibility in types of programs that could be funded. Although the amount of funding did not increase, Congress authorized the director to make grants in three general areas: to meet the immediate needs, including day care, education, health services, housing, and sanitation, of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families; to promote increased community acceptance of migrants; and to provide education and training to improve the job skills of farmworkers and their families and to assist them in finding employment. In some cases, Title III-B grants funded the actual services offered to migrants. In other cases, Title III-B grantees employed their staffs in coordinating access to other funds available to migrants through federal educational, job-training, employment, health, and housing programs. With these new

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<sup>19</sup>The Quiet Revolution, pp. 53-55; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 1006, 90th Cong., 2d sess., 1968, pp. 23-24.

amendments, OEO Title III-B migrant programs could begin to approach the comprehensive ideal for providing migrant services that supporters had often advocated.<sup>20</sup>

Title III-B of the Economic Opportunity Act thus became the basic federal assistance program for migrant farmworkers during the Johnson administration. Congress supported an important supplement to the OEO migrant offerings in 1966, however, in an amendment to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed in 1965. Title I of ESEA provided federal funds for educational programs directed toward improving the school performance of disadvantaged children. Migrant children did not receive special mention in the 1965 act, but public and private migrant education advocates in state and federal government and in private agencies insisted that because of their migratory lifestyle, migrant children could not be served by traditional programs operated through the local school districts. They needed interstate coordinated projects, summer classes, bilingual instruction, and mobile services, to name only

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<sup>20</sup>National Farmworker Policy Project, pp. 35-41; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 91-83, 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1969, pp. 40-46.

a few of the special offerings recommended for the amended Title I.<sup>21</sup>

The migrant programs authorized in 1966 followed the same granting pattern as that of the original ESEA Title I programs. The Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare allocated funds to state departments of education based on the number of migrants potentially served by the state's education system. As with other programs funded by Title I, the state retained full control over what programs would be supported with allocated federal money, although the Office of Education prepared guidelines, especially recommending coordination with other poverty programs in the state and cooperation with local migrants, growers, churches, and social service agencies in designing programs. The 1966 amendment limited participation in migrant education programs to children who had moved from one school district to another with a parent or guardian in search of agricultural employment. Congress made the eligibility limits less restrictive in 1967, allowing children of migratory farmworkers who had not migrated

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<sup>21</sup>Matusow, pp. 221-226; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Administrative History," Vol. 1, Part 4: Office of Education, Part 2, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Chapter 11, Migrant Program, p. 433, Box 3, Administrative Histories: HEW, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.

for up to five years to continue to receive services through the program.<sup>22</sup>

Following passage of the ESEA amendments in 1966, the Office of Education allocated funds to migrant education programs in 44 states. Thirty of them used the funds to initiate the first migrant education projects ever operated in their states; the remaining fourteen used the funds to expand projects already in place. In its first year, the migrant education program served about 80,000 migrant children with a budget of just under \$10 million. Eligible expenditures included construction of facilities, hiring of teachers, purchase of textbooks, and operation of summer school programs. Most programs emphasized such areas of special need as English and bilingual instruction, development and testing of culturally appropriate teaching materials and techniques, interstate teacher exchanges, and a records transfer system to enable migrant children to move from one school to another with minimal disruption of their education.<sup>23</sup>

In the second year, in addition to broadening

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<sup>22</sup>Matusow, p. 222; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Administrative History," pp. 434-435, 438, Administrative Histories: HEW, Johnson Library.

<sup>23</sup>Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Administrative History," pp. 433-436, Administrative Histories: HEW, Johnson Library.

eligibility, Congress increased the program's appropriation to \$42 million. The increase allowed the state grantees to add full-time migrant education program personnel to their education departments. Many states also used their increased allocations to improve training for teachers working with migrant children and to hire additional Spanish-speaking aides from among the migrants to relieve shortages of bilingual teachers. Mobile classrooms, food and health programs, and extended surveys of the migrant population and its educational needs accounted for the remainder of newly funded programs in 1968. Of the \$42 million appropriation, however, nearly 55 percent paid for instructional services and supplies similar to those supported in the first year of the program.<sup>24</sup>

Migrant education projects attempted to equalize access to education for migrant children as a specifically identified "educationally deprived" group. Access to health care had emerged three years earlier as another area of social opportunity with respect to which migrants had been identified as a disadvantaged group. Under the Migrant Health Act of 1962, migrant farmworkers

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<sup>24</sup>Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Administrative History," pp. 438-439, Administrative Histories: HEW, Johnson Library.



became eligible for special public health service clinics and mobile family health services for a period of three years. Congressional consideration of that program for possible reauthorization began in early 1965. The Migrant Health Branch had requested an external review by the American Public Health Association (APHA), in addition to the internal review required by law. That review formed the basis for congressional discussion regarding extension of the migrant health program. The reviewers found that the program had been carefully administered and had made a measurable impact on the health care of migrant farmworkers. The APHA recommended the addition of some kind of hospital care provisions among the funded services, as well as improvement in continuity of health care along the migrant streams, addition of family planning to migrant health services, and studies of special farmworker health problems. They also suggested training of health care professionals in intercultural understanding, inclusion of nonmigratory seasonal farmworkers under the Migrant Health Act, cooperation between the Migrant Health Branch and the OEO

Migrant Division programs, and larger appropriations to support all of these new programs.<sup>25</sup>

With full administration support, Congress incorporated the suggestions for inclusion of hospital care and larger appropriations in the bill extending the Migrant Health Act to 1968. "Necessary hospital care" became one of the health care expenses eligible for funding under the extended act, and annual appropriations increased from \$3 million a year under the original act to \$7, \$8, and \$9 million in each of the years covered by the extension. Following the extension of the migrant health program in 1965, the Migrant Health Branch responded to other APHA recommendations on its own, particularly those related to improved continuity of care and intercultural understanding. Conferences and staff working groups increased communication among projects within a single migrant stream that helped especially with referrals from one project to another as migrants traveled during the season. Hiring of health care aides from among the migrant population proved the most effective method of promoting intercultural

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<sup>25</sup>Helen L. Johnston, Health for the Nation's Harvesters (Farmington Hills, Mich.: National Migrant Worker Council, 1985), pp. 158-160; "Summary of American Public Health Association Report Evaluating Migrant Health Act," "1965 Chronological File - January," Box 2, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives.

understanding. Aides helped professional staff and migrants communicate better and often reduced potential misunderstanding by serving as the initial contact for migrants at clinics and on mobile units.<sup>26</sup>

Congress and the President had often expressed as a purpose for the "war" approach to antipoverty that it could provide for comprehensive, integrated services to attack all of the causes of poverty for a given group at one time. The OEO Title III-B, ESEA Title I, and Migrant Health programs together represented such a comprehensive attack, offering a range of services to improve the living conditions and opportunities of migrant farmworkers and their families. In some areas a single agency administered grants under all three programs. More often, grantee agencies for each of these programs worked together in one area to provide their services in an integrated manner, so that migrant clients might not even be aware of the administrative diversity. Despite the perennial inadequacy of funding and the problems of reaching the eligible population, advocates of federal assistance for migrant and seasonal farmworkers found many reasons to support the antipoverty migrant programs

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<sup>26</sup>Johnston, pp. 161-164; Phillip S. Hughes to the President, 3 August 1965, "P.L. 89-109/S. 510, 8/5/65," PL89-109/S510, Enrolled Legislation, Johnson Library.

as a first step in alleviating the worst effects of the migrant lifestyle.

But the antipoverty approach offered only one kind of solution to the problems of migrant farmworkers. In addition to such assistance as health care, education, housing, and sanitation, migrant advocates and every reviewer of the adequacy of migrant antipoverty programs insisted that migrants needed the protection of labor laws in order to improve their own lives. The maximum feasible participation requirement and adult education programs to teach political and leadership skills empowered some migrants to take more control of their circumstances, but without the economic protections afforded other categories of labor in the United States, migrants simply did not have enough secure income to maintain an adequate standard of living.

Labor protection legislation for agricultural workers had first become an issue during the New Deal, when Congress passed child labor, wage and hour, collective bargaining, and social security legislation to cover workers in other industries. Repeated attempts to extend those guarantees to agricultural labor failed throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and agricultural labor laws remained an unresolved issue in the 1960s. As health and education assistance programs for migrants

began to gain support in Congress, the question of whether social services alone could solve the problems of migrant labor achieved increasing significance. In April 1960, Varden Fuller, Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former member of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor during the Truman administration, offered a particularly clear exegesis of the dual approach needed in solving the problems of migrant labor. Although his presentation, made at the Western Interstate Conference on Migratory Labor sponsored by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, effected no change in federal legislation, his explanation of the alternative concepts behind the social service and labor law approaches offers much insight into some of the shortcomings of the migrant antipoverty programs that did appear in the 1960s.<sup>27</sup>

Fuller's dichotomy asked the question: "Are people poor because they are migrants, or are they migrants because they are poor?" These two alternative constructions reflected two understandings of the nature of poverty and of agricultural employment. If one

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<sup>27</sup>Varden Fuller, "Immediate Needs and Ultimate Goals in Migratory Labor Policies," Presented at the Western Interstate Conference on Migratory Labor, Phoenix, 12 April 1960, "Hon. E. L. Bartlette," Box 24, RG42, National Archives.

believed people became poor because they were migrant farmworkers, then one would seek solutions to migrant poverty in the structure of farm employment. Remedial measures would include establishment of a minimum wage, employment stabilization, better planning of crops, and other methods for assuring adequate income to seasonal farmworkers. If, however, one believed people became migrants because they were poor, then solutions would be aimed toward altering the condition of the individual migrants so that they could choose other occupations. Measures to accomplish that end would include education, health care, and other social welfare programs to raise migrants from poverty and provide them with abilities to enter more productive employment. Fuller advocated a combination of approaches, believing that the causes of migrant poverty arose from both personal and cultural disabilities and structural deficiencies in farm employment patterns.<sup>28</sup>

But legislation offering agricultural labor the same benefits guaranteed industrial labor came much more slowly than legislation providing social services to the poor. During the five years of Johnson's administration, when the integrated approach to relieving the personal

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<sup>28</sup>Fuller, "Migratory Labor Policies," 12 April 1960, pp. 1-4, RG42, National Archives.

and cultural disabilities that sustained migrant poverty became reality, very little structural change in farm employment was accomplished. Only legislation requiring crew leader registration, offering limited guarantees of a minimum wage, and placing equally limited restrictions on child labor succeeded in Congress. Crew leader registration regulated the labor contractors who acted as middlemen between the farmworkers and farm employers. They hired crews of workers and accepted employment for them as a group from farmers who wished to avoid the complications of employing individual farmworkers on their own. Crew leaders retained responsibility for paying their crew members, allowing them to determine when and how much individual farmworkers received, regardless of the rates paid by farmers for the work. The Department of Labor documented enough abuses in the system to convince Congress by 1964 that these labor contractors required regulation.<sup>29</sup>

The minimum wage guarantees and restrictions on child labor passed as amendments in 1966 to the Fair Labor Standards Act. Although these amendments might

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<sup>29</sup>Phillip S. Hughes to the President, 3 September 1964, "P.L. 88-582/S. 524, 9/7/64," P.L. 88-592/S. 524, Enrolled Legislation, Johnson Library; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 155, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, pp. 15-17.

have signaled a significant breakthrough in labor law coverage for farmworkers, their narrowness limited their influence. Among the remaining recommended priorities in protective legislation for migrants, collective bargaining, unemployment and workmen's compensation, and social security legislation for agricultural labor repeatedly failed to receive enough support for passage. Consequently, the Johnson era approach to solving migrant farmworker poverty remained incomplete, even though it accomplished more than any previous period in provision of needed social services.<sup>30</sup>

The Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor continued to work actively, however, for the passage of both social service and labor protection legislation throughout the years of the Johnson presidency. The subcommittee's preeminence in Congress as the source of ideas for solving migrant problems suffered some with the absorption of key migrant programs under the Economic Opportunity Act. Chairman Harrison Williams, however, assured an oversight role for the subcommittee by insisting the OEO Migrant Division make regular reports to the subcommittee and appear in person to answer the

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<sup>30</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 71, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, pp. 6-15; Goldfarb, pp. 147-148.



members' questions regarding funded projects and the direction and progress of the Title III-B programs. The subcommittee also continued to issue annual reports on the condition of migratory farmworkers, implementation of recently instituted federal programs, and progress of additional needed legislation. Although for the most part these reports repeated the already familiar recommendations of the subcommittee, beginning in 1966 they also included in detail the dissenting views of Senator George Murphy of California, with the occasional concurrence of Senator Paul J. Fannin of Arizona.<sup>31</sup>

Both newly elected in 1964, Murphy was a former actor and Fannin a former governor of Arizona and a partner in an agricultural chemicals marketing firm. These two Republican senators represented the minority position on the subcommittee. Senators Murphy and Fannin

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<sup>31</sup>Harrison A. Williams, Jr., to Edward Kennedy, 9 June 1965, "C-Subcommittee Members," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 934, 88th Cong., 2d sess., 1964, ; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 155, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, ; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 1549, 89th Cong., 2d sess., 1966, ; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 71, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, ; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 1006, 90th Cong., 2d sess., 1968, ; U.S., Congress, Senate, The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States, S. Rept. 91-83, 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1969.

generally agreed with the majority view on social service issues and even on such labor protection issues as child labor restrictions, unemployment and workmen's compensation, and social security extensions. On the questions of federal legislation to increase the agricultural minimum wage, protect collective bargaining for farmworkers, and end importation of Mexican farm labor, however, the minority senators voiced their opposition repeatedly. With regard to the agricultural minimum wage, Murphy and Fannin recommended against increasing the coverage of the agricultural minimum wage beyond that of the 1966 amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act without careful study of the effects of the initial law. They warned of increasing unemployment, especially in the South, where the minimum wage had encouraged mechanization on many farms. The senators also feared the minimum wage would undermine the incentives of the piece-rate system by paying poor workers, as well as efficient ones. In the end, fewer workers would have jobs, since increased labor costs induced farm employers to mechanize or hire only the most productive workers. As a consequence, rural-to-urban migration would tend to increase, adding to the urban

unemployment problems already claimed as pressing by the Democratic administration.<sup>32</sup>

Senators Murphy and Fannin objected to collective bargaining legislation primarily because provisions of the existing National Labor Relations Act that covered collective bargaining for industrial workers did not take into account the special circumstances of agricultural labor and employers. For example, agricultural employers depended for their entire year's income on the work of a few weeks or months of seasonal farm labor, particularly during harvest time. Strikes by an agricultural union could ruin a farm employer in a very short time, in contrast to an industrial employer who would have the remainder of the year's production to help him recover the losses incurred in a strike. Furthermore, the senators pointed out, farm employers were often themselves unorganized individuals who could easily be overpowered in negotiations with an organized group of union farmworkers. Finally, because of the seasonal variations in the number of employees needed on farms,

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<sup>32</sup>"Murphy, George (Lloyd)," Current Biography 1965 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1964), pp. 296-298; Congressional Directory (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), p. 8; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1549, p. 159; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 71, p. 69; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1006, pp. 97-98; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 91-83, p. 149.

questions would arise about when elections for union representation should appropriately be held and which workers should be eligible to vote.<sup>33</sup>

On the issues of collective bargaining and the agricultural minimum wage, the minority views of Senators Murphy and Fannin persuaded the majority of members of Congress. Despite the ardent pleading of such liberal Democratic senators as Harrison Williams, Walter Mondale, and Edward and Robert Kennedy, and the strong support of such citizen organizations as the National Council of Churches, the American Friends Service Committee, and the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, neither an extension of the federal minimum wage for farmworkers nor provisions for collective bargaining in agriculture achieved enough support for passage.<sup>34</sup> Conservative

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<sup>33</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1549, pp. 160-163; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 71, pp. 91-97; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1006, pp. 69-73; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 91-83, p. 143-149.

<sup>34</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 934, pp. 43-48; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 155, pp. 25-26, 34; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1549, pp. 33-36; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 71, pp. 6-10, 30-33; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1006, pp. 25-31, 38-43; U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 91-83, pp. 19-24, 51-61; Kay Longcope, "The Changing Role of the Migrant Ministry," Presbyterian Life, 15 November 1967, pp. 14, 16; National Council of Churches meeting, 18 March 1964, transcript by Anne von der Lieth, Associate Counsel, Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, "181. National Council of Churches," Box 5, RG42, National Archives; "Statement by Bard McAllister, Farm Labor Secretary, American

attempts to reinstate the bracero program, on the other hand, experienced a different fate.

In 1964, Congress had refused to extend the farm labor importation program under P.L. 78 beyond its termination date of December 31, 1964. Another legal possibility for importing farm labor existed, however, under the provisions of P.L. 414 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. As had been the case under P.L. 78, the Secretary of Labor had the authority to certify a farm employer's need for additional harvest labor beyond that available domestically. Under such conditions, farm labor could be imported from Mexico or other supplier nations for the required period. Many growers who had received Mexican labor under the provisions of P.L. 78 for years hoped to continue their use of foreign farm labor without interruption through P.L. 414.<sup>35</sup>

Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz, however, refused to utilize the provisions of P.L. 414 to continue a program that had so clearly been rejected by the

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Friends Service Committee before the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, May 18-19, 1964," pp. 4-8, "195. Misc. National Supporting Organizations," Box 5, RG42, National Archives; National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, Poverty on the Land in a Land of Plenty (New York: National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, May 1965), pp. 7-15, 20.

<sup>35</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1549, pp. 2-3.

majority in Congress. He issued regulations for receiving P.L. 414 farm labor in mid-December 1964, just before the scheduled termination of the P.L. 78 importation program. These regulations made clear his aim of enforcing the intent of Congress to require the use of domestic farmworkers except under extraordinary circumstances. Retaining some of the same wording as had been used in regulations promulgated by the Department of Labor for implementing P.L. 78, Wirtz refused to certify need in areas where domestic farmworkers could not find employment at specified minimum wage levels and required farm employers to offer paid transportation and adequate housing to farmworkers, as had been required under the bracero program.<sup>36</sup>

Not unexpectedly, employers accustomed to using imported foreign labor to harvest their crops objected to Wirtz' pre-certification requirements. Growers turned to their traditional sources of influence in government for help. In a move reminiscent of the attempt in 1960 to remove the Secretary of Labor from involvement with farm labor importation, the Senate Agriculture Committee included a provision in the 1965 farm bill that would

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3, 61-63; Ellis W. Hawley, "The Politics of the Mexican Labor Issue, 1950-1965," Agricultural History 40(3) (1966):175.

have removed the Secretary of Labor's authority under P.L. 414 and reassigned it to the Secretary of Agriculture. The tactic failed, as it had five years earlier, through the adoption of an amendment on the floor of the Senate removing the restrictive provision.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the loss, the closeness of that vote (Vice President Humphrey broke a 45-45 tie) indicates how much power farm interests still held on the issue of farm labor in 1965, notwithstanding the termination of the bracero program, and how consistent political and regional sympathies remained. Republicans still voted strongly, 28 to 2, in favor of the growers' interests, Democrats continued strongly opposed to farm organization wishes, voting 43 to 17 to leave the Secretary of Labor in charge of P.L. 414 certifications. Democrats in the region making most use of Mexican farm labor, however, still supported farm interests in opposition to the majority of their party, in this case by a vote of 4 to 2.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 13 September 1965, Congressional Record 111:23504-23530; Hawley, p. 175.

<sup>38</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 13 September 1965, Congressional Record 111:23530; Congress and the Nation, Vol. 2: 1965-1968 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1969), pp. 595-596.

Applying another strategy, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Representative Harold D. Cooley of North Carolina, approached the President with a plan to "relieve" the Secretary of Labor of direct responsibility for making certification decisions for each individual employer who applied. Chairman Cooley recommended the establishment of a system of regional certification boards that would hear evidence and make recommendations regarding the need for foreign workers on a particular farm. Although no national system of regional certification boards appeared, Secretary Wirtz did set up a special panel in California to evaluate applications for foreign workers. The panel, however, found Secretary Wirtz' assessment of need appropriate and made no changes in policy.<sup>39</sup>

The Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor included a review of the effects on American farmers of terminating the bracero program in its annual report for 1966. According to their information, derived primarily from Department of Labor reports, the harvest in 1965 had

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<sup>39</sup>"Memorandum of conversation with: Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, et al.," 6 April 1965, pp. 1, 4-5, "C-Labor Department," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; Lee C. White, Special Counsel to the President, to Willard Wirtz, Secretary, Department of Labor, 9 April 1965, with attachments, "LA5, 4/7/65-4/30/65," Box 18, Series LA5, White House Central Files, Johnson Library.



been among the largest since 1952 and had shown an increase in net farm income of 21 percent. Moreover, this large harvest had been accomplished with nearly 75 percent fewer foreign farmworkers. The minority views expressed by Senator Murphy, however, challenged the subcommittee majority's figures with information provided by grower associations and the California Board of Agriculture. These sources documented losses from labor shortages in most fruit and vegetable crops that formerly depended on braceros, as well as serious crop damage resulting from inexperienced labor recruited to take the place of foreign workers.<sup>40</sup>

Since both sets of figures came from interested parties, it is difficult to determine which, if either, were the accurate measure of the 1965 harvest. The majority figures depended on more highly aggregated data, showing overall harvest figures and labor usage for the nation. Their interpretation might, therefore, have glossed over real shortfalls in the crops and regions subject to loss of Mexican labor. The figures presented by the minority broke the harvest data down into individual crops and growing regions, suggesting that their interpretation might portray the harvest conditions

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<sup>40</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, S. Rept. 1549, pp. 3-5, 61-159.

in the affected crops and regions more accurately. Growers, however, had often been accused of misrepresenting their harvest figures and labor needs in past discussions about imported labor. They were just as likely as the members of the majority to present the data in ways advantageous to their interests.

The Department of Labor retained responsibility under P.L. 414 for determining the number of foreign workers needed by farm employers, however, and so its interpretation of labor availability and reasons for crop losses prevailed. Secretary Wirtz insisted on strict implementation of pre-certification requirements and the use of imported foreign farm labor continued to decline.<sup>41</sup> But the secretary considered protection of employment opportunities for domestic migrant farmworkers only a "transition" for those workers. Writing in a report on seasonal farm labor in 1965, Wirtz remarked:

The turning of work previously performed by braceros over to domestic workers was in itself no great gain. Its real significance is that it was a necessary step toward cleansing the whole "migrant worker" sore on the American body politic. There still lies ahead the establishment for migrant farm labor of the standards of both decency and

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<sup>41</sup>"Administrative History of the Department of Labor," Vol. II, Part I, "Programs of the Department of Labor," Section 8, "Farmworker Programs," p. 297, Box "Vol. II, Part I," Administrative Histories: Department of Labor, Johnson Library.

efficiency which are characteristic of other employment in this country.<sup>42</sup>

Among the priorities for carrying out the necessary "establishment of standards," Wirtz hoped to see legislation to guarantee minimum wages, better housing, and improved recruitment. A former law professor and labor lawyer, Wirtz had special interests and experience in the areas of wage stabilization and labor arbitration. He worked closely with the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, advising the chairman and his staff about what programs he believed the administration could support and implement effectively. In the face of strong grower resistance to increased farm labor regulation by the Department of Labor, he urged "a broad offensive tackling the overall problem rather than the fragmentary approach he and the Senator [Williams] had adopted in the past."<sup>43</sup>

Secretary Wirtz championed the cause of improving social and economic conditions for migrant and seasonal

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<sup>42</sup>W. Willard Wirtz to Bill Moyers, 21 January 1966, with attached report, pp. 2-3, "LA5 Migratory-Seasonal Labor 6/3/65-1/21/66," Box 17, Series LA5, White House Central Files, Johnson Library.

<sup>43</sup>"Memorandum of conversation with Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, et al.," 6 April 1965, pp. 2, 4, "C-Labor Department," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives; "Wirtz, William Willard," Current Biography 1963 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1963), pp. 474-476.

farmworkers, much as Eisenhower's Secretary of Labor James Mitchell had a decade earlier. He did so without the formal interagency cooperation so important to Mitchell, however, preferring instead to coordinate programs and strategies from within the Department of Labor. Just two days before President Kennedy's death in November 1963, Wirtz had submitted a request for approval to disband the interdepartmental President's Committee. President Johnson supplied the required assent within a few weeks of taking office, eliminating the decade-old committee that had served as the symbolic centerpiece for action on migrant labor issues for both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.<sup>44</sup>

Formal interagency cooperation did not disappear with the dissolution of the President's Committee, however. President Johnson favored the task force approach to developing administrative strategies. During his tenure he appointed more than 90 interagency task forces to develop legislative programs directed toward narrowly identified problems. More than one of these task forces addressed the problems of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The Task Force on Labor and

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<sup>44</sup>W. Willard Wirtz to the President, 21 November 1963, "FG273," Box 399, White House Central Files, Subject File, Johnson Library.

Related Legislation of 1965, the Health Task Force of 1966, and the Rural Poverty Task Force of 1967 all included recommendations for legislation to assist farmworkers. The need for a concentrated look at legislative issues aimed at migrant and seasonal farmworkers, however, brought the establishment in 1966 of a Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, chaired by Secretary of Labor Wirtz.<sup>45</sup>

The Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers operated much like the old President's Committee on Migratory Labor in that its members represented the federal agencies most involved with programs for migrant farmworkers--the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, and Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Office of Economic Opportunity. Representatives from the Council of Economic Advisors, the Bureau of the Budget, and the White House completed the membership, serving in their capacities as overseers of administration programs. Meeting occasionally for a period of just over two months, from October 4 to December 14, 1966, the task

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<sup>45</sup>Conkin, pp. 209-210; 1965 Task Force on Labor and Related Legislation, Box 10, 1966 Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, Box 17, and 1967 Task Force on Health, Box 22, Task Force Reports, Johnson Library; 1966 Rural Poverty Task Force Report, "Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, File 1," Reel 31, Federal Records: Department of Labor, Johnson Library.

force members produced a report containing four recommendations for legislative action.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the expectation that this task force would develop innovative approaches to the problems of migrant labor, its recommendations resembled those advanced by nearly every public and private study since the 1930s. The task force called first for an expanded research program to determine the character of the farm labor force and the effects of technological change in agriculture on that labor force. It further recommended coverage of farm labor under federal collective bargaining, social security, and unemployment insurance laws; continued funding of education, health, housing, and other social services for migrants; development of a more comprehensive system of service delivery to migrants; and improved efficiency in the recruitment and employment of interstate migrants. Moreover, the report generated no new legislative initiative from the administration, suggesting it served President Johnson in the same way the President's Committee on Migratory Labor had served presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy--as a symbol

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<sup>46</sup>"Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, File 1," Reel 31, Federal Records: Department of Labor, Johnson Library.

of administration interest in the problems of migrant farmworkers.<sup>47</sup>

The most creative of the recommendations, supported particularly by Secretary of Labor Wirtz, envisioned a Migrant Manpower Corporation that would both stabilize the farm labor force for employers and offer farm workers employment security, protection from exploitation, and educational services to help them eventually leave the migrant stream. A truly comprehensive, if paternalistic, employment service approach, the Migrant Manpower Corporation would have represented workers in bargaining with employers over wages and working conditions and have served as a party to any contract between employers and farmworkers. At the same time, it would have provided housing, transportation, insurance, and job-training to migrants choosing to accept the Corporation's services. The Department of Labor developed the idea into a legislative proposal in early 1967, but failed to persuade the administration to introduce it in Congress. Secretary Wirtz, together with Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, presented the proposal again in November as a demonstration project in response to Johnson's 1967

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<sup>47</sup>1966 Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, pp. 1-5, Box 17, Task Force Reports, Johnson Library.

Manpower Report calling for new solutions to the problems of rural workers. Again, the recommendation failed to gain administration support.<sup>48</sup>

The Migrant Manpower Corporation proposal very likely failed because it managed to raise opposition from both the liberal and the conservative camps on the farm labor question. Thomas Karter, director of the OEO migrant programs, found the bill proposed in early 1967 "unsatisfactory. It provides little more than a means of assuring cheap labor for growers and does not attempt to provide needed education and other services."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, in proposing the Migrant Manpower Corporation demonstration project the following November, Wirtz clearly reflected an awareness of opposition from growers. He recommended "that no publicity be given this effort or credit taken for it at this time in order that its chances of acceptance and success . . . not be jeopardized by backlash from . . . resistance-prone employers."<sup>50</sup> Secretary Wirtz favored the program,

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<sup>48</sup>1966 Task Force on Migratory and Other Farm Workers, p. 4, Task Force Reports, Johnson Library.

<sup>49</sup>Don Wortman to John Bell, 3 February 1967, "Migrants," Box 28, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 1967, RG381, National Archives.

<sup>50</sup>Memorandum for the President from Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor, 28 November 1967, with attached report, p. 3, "Migrant Manpower Corporation," Reel R-51,



though, because he did not believe legislation providing the protection and assistance required by migrant farmworkers to improve their position in the workplace would be forthcoming in the near future. He did not prefer paternalistic government protection of farmworkers, but endorsed it because of the inability of farmworkers to bargain effectively against highly organized employers intent on maintaining their control of the farm labor market.<sup>51</sup>

The bargaining position of farmworkers had indeed become a volatile issue by the mid-1960s with the rise of a successful organizing effort in California under the leadership of Cesar Chavez. Chavez, a Mexican-American and son of a migrant farmworker, began organizing among farm laborers in California in opposition to the bracero program in 1958. He worked at that time in civil-rights organizing among Mexican-Americans for the Community Service Organization, an affiliate of Saul Alinsky's urban community organizing effort, the Industrial Areas Foundation. Chavez finally left that organization in 1962 after they repeatedly refused to support a full-fledged labor organizing drive among farmworkers, but he

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Federal Records: Department of Labor, Johnson Library.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 2; Wirtz to Moyers, 21 January 1966, pp. 27-28.

continued that group's emphasis on community-based political empowerment in his work with agricultural labor.<sup>52</sup>

Labor organizers had attempted to unionize farmworkers in California periodically throughout the twentieth century, but generally without much success. California growers maintained powerful associations dedicated to resisting organizing efforts by farmworkers and almost always found willing support from state authorities in enforcing their control over the labor supply. When state authority proved insufficient to suppress successful strikes, California growers turned to vigilantism and effectively neutralized organizers through violence and fear. Strikes led by the socialist Industrial Workers of the World in 1913 and the Communist-led United Cannery and Packinghouse Workers of the 1930s ended in the face of such tactics. Further sporadic strike efforts under the leadership of the National Agricultural Workers Union in the 1940s and

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<sup>52</sup>The literature on Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union is abundant, much of it for popular audiences and published during and immediately after the successful grape boycotts of 1965-1966 and 1967-1970. Among more scholarly studies, Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982) and J. Craig Jenkins, The Politics of Insurgency: The Farm Worker Movement in the 1960s (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985) are particularly good.

1950s met the same resolute response from growers and government. Cesar Chavez, however, developed a new organizing strategy for the United Farm Workers, one tailored to the political climate of the 1960s that seemed to hold great promise for achieving lasting success.<sup>53</sup>

That strategy consisted of allying the community organizations that fostered solidarity and cooperation among the farmworkers with "a new feature in American social and political activity--the movement for civil rights, the movement of the youth and the movement of the poor."<sup>54</sup> Chavez thereby connected the struggle for farmworker unionization to the movements for empowerment of the poor and minorities that were rising out of the civil rights movement and antipoverty initiatives. Chavez built on the publicity surrounding the poverty of American farmworkers that politicians and journalists had been cultivating since the end of the 1950s. Such

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<sup>53</sup>Histories of the early years of farm labor organizing may be found in Majka and Majka; Jenkins; Cletus E. Daniel, Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1914 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981); Ernesto Galarza, Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977); and Clarke A. Chambers, California Farm Organizations: A Historical Study of the Grange, the Farm Bureau and the Associated Farmers, 1929-1941 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1952).

<sup>54</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 171-172.

publicity had evoked compassion among liberals and a commitment to ending poverty among farmworkers. At the same time, the civil rights movement in the South had attuned American liberals to the need for direct action and mass demonstrations to gain political power for traditionally powerless groups. Thus, when the Farmworkers Association began strike activity against grape growers in 1965, the movement could rely both on sympathy for the justice of their cause and acceptance of nonviolent, mass demonstration tactics to mobilize liberal support for farm labor unionization.

Chavez made full use of these methods in gathering such support. He adopted Martin Luther King, Jr.'s strategy of nonviolent confrontation, refusing to allow pickets to react violently when harassed by local growers and sympathetic law enforcement officials. He organized a mass march from Delano, the center of strike action, to Sacramento, the California state capital, to draw media attention to the cause and force action by the California state government. Finally, he used the tactic of public fasting to reenergize a faltering strike effort by bringing national attention to the injustice of grower efforts to crush the farmworker movement. All three tactics brought the expected media coverage, as well as the endorsement of powerful politicians, particularly

potential Democratic presidential candidate Robert Kennedy. Such public attention brought financial assistance and worked to pressure some of the larger corporate agricultural interests into recognizing the union and signing collective bargaining contracts to avoid adverse publicity. It also brought manpower in the form of students and churchworkers already experienced in the work of the free speech and civil rights movements. Scarce commodities during the 1940s and 1950s, political recognition, money, and organizers allowed the United Farmworkers to sustain its efforts against determined grower resistance.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps the most effective use of the external connections cultivated by Chavez came in the mobilization of the liberal public behind the grape boycotts of the late 1960s. The farmworkers first employed the boycott strategy successfully during the 1965 strikes against the Schenley and DiGiorgio corporations. Farmworker Association organizers and their cooperators contacted other unions and leafleted and picketed stores in thirteen large cities, portraying Schenley and DiGiorgio as antiunion and heartless oppressors of poor farmworkers. The boycotts, and the grape harvest strikes

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<sup>55</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 172-179, 189-190; Jenkins, pp. 140-144, 150-151, 154-156, 165-166.

they were meant to support, had little financial effect on the companies, but they brought national attention to these large corporations with recognizable brand names and threatened more harm to their images and sales in the long term than could be balanced by the gains from fighting the farmworkers union. The corporations decided not to risk the loss and recognized the union.<sup>56</sup>

The success of the first boycott campaign in 1965-1966 led to the adoption of a much broader boycott in 1967. Again a response to a failing strike effort, the union's attempt to run a boycott of table grapes produced by a single grower, Giumarra vineyards, derailed when the grower adopted the strategy of using labels borrowed from other growers to disguise his shipments. The farmworkers union decided that it needed a boycott of much larger proportions and that such a boycott would be more effective in forcing recognition of the union than strikes that could be so easily defeated by growers

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<sup>56</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 174-179; Jenkins, pp. 151-156. In fact the process of recognition by the DiGiorgio company was not nearly as smooth as is portrayed here. Although it did succeed eventually, a violent jurisdictional dispute broke out with the Teamsters Union and in the process of winning recognition for the Farmworkers Association, its leadership accepted affiliation with the AFL-CIO, thereby sacrificing some of its autonomy and grassroots character. See Majka and Majka, pp. 179-186, and Jenkins, pp. 157-160.

through violence, sympathetic injunctions restricting picketing, and an endless supply of willing labor.<sup>57</sup>

Throwing most of the union's resources into the boycott, organizers established "boycott houses" in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. From these centers, boycott staff directed an intensive campaign, eventually active in fifty cities and hundreds of smaller communities, to disrupt grape sales at several critical points. They called on the support of other unionized workers to refuse to handle shipments of California table grapes, they appealed to grocery store owners to refuse to stock the grapes, and they asked consumers to refuse to either buy California grapes or shop in stores that continued to sell those grapes. Through the efforts of Chavez' effective coalition of labor unions, students, and urban liberals, the strategy brought success. In little more than a year, the effects of plummeting grape sales brought California grape growers into negotiations with the farmworkers and resulted in contracts for grape workers that recognized the union, established union hiring and grievance procedures, limited pesticide use,

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<sup>57</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 186-187; Jenkins, pp. 162-163.

forced rehiring of strikers and contributions to a union health fund, and instituted a 25-cent-per-hour raise.<sup>58</sup>

The successes of the farmworkers' unionization effort decisively affected the development of federal programs for migrant farmworkers through its radicalizing effect on both private and public supporters of their efforts. Chief among the private supporters were the church-related organizations, especially the National Council of Churches' Migrant Ministry. Migrant Ministry work on behalf of farmworkers had begun in the 1920s and had offered religious, recreation, and welfare services to migrants since that time. The organization became more activist, however, during the late 1950s as it joined other migrant advocacy organizations in opposing the bracero program and supporting increased federal assistance to alleviate the poor working and living conditions of farmworkers. In the 1960s, the interest of professionals within the Migrant Ministry began to move more toward community organizing and fostering of self-help and political effectiveness among farmworkers. By 1967, the Migrant Ministry supported unionization activity in Texas, Wisconsin, Michigan, Florida, and California. Particularly in California, where the number

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<sup>58</sup>Majka and Majka, pp. 187-197; Jenkins, pp. 163-172.



of farmworkers far outstripped the numbers in other states and where the state Council of Churches had adopted a liberal stance, the Migrant Ministry staff threw its whole effort behind the grassroots organizing of farmworkers under the leadership of Chavez. By 1969, the California Migrant Ministry had renamed itself the National Farm Worker Ministry and considered itself "the servant of the farm worker movement."<sup>59</sup>

Individual denominations, including the American Baptist Convention, the Disciples of Christ, the Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, and the United Presbyterian Church, endorsed the right of farmworkers to organize for collective bargaining, as well, and many allowed ordained ministers to join union picket lines and grape boycott efforts. The Roman Catholic church also offered support, both moral and financial, although it restricted the organizing activities of its clerical members more carefully. Such changes in the mission to migrant and seasonal farmworkers within many churches created a polarization between radicalized liberal members who favored supporting the United Farmworkers and more conservative members who felt the churches had betrayed their role as

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<sup>59</sup>Jenkins, pp. 137-140; Longcope, pp. 12-38.

mediator of disputes and supporter of understanding and reconciliation.<sup>60</sup>

Such a polarization of the issue of collective bargaining rights for agricultural labor also appeared in the political arena. As mentioned above, collective bargaining, along with the minimum wage and termination of the bracero program, had already divided the members of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor along partisan and ideological lines. Liberal Democrats supported federal legislation to protect the right of farmworkers to organize; moderate and conservative Republicans opposed such legislation because of agriculture's special vulnerability to strike action and the complications of union elections in a seasonal industry with a casual labor supply. The success of Cesar Chavez' farmworker organizing, especially as the grape boycotts took hold, further intensified feelings on the issue, radicalizing some politicians as it had the staffs of private advocacy organizations.

Senator Williams recognized the change in attitude among farmworkers following their organizing successes, having held hearings of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor in the Delano area to investigate the 1965-1966

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<sup>60</sup>Longcope, pp. 14-38.

grape strike. In response to the testimony at those hearings, he recommended active administration support for the passage of minimum wage and collective bargaining legislation to preclude the development of even more threatening labor unrest in the future. Although much of the testimony implied that the strike resulted from frustration among farmworkers over denial of federal labor law coverage to agricultural workers, in a letter to Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Williams hinted that the farm labor issue was making connections with Mexican-American civil rights questions. Williams paraphrased farmworker testimony saying, "They will not accept special welfare programs and government subsidies in lieu of their rightful claim to equality with other citizens."<sup>61</sup>

The changes which these farmworkers considered necessary for equality offer evidence of the broad nature of their grievances. Again according to Senator Williams, "they equate equality with collective bargaining, minimum wage, unemployment compensation, reform and abolition of the Farm Placement Service, freedom from discrimination by governmental authorities,

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<sup>61</sup>Memorandum to Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey from Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr., 24 March 1966, p. 2, "Full Committee & Chairman," Box 16, 2d accession, RG42, National Archives.

particularly local law enforcement, etc."<sup>62</sup> Farmworkers, at least in the California movement, had developed a voice and a consciousness of their rights and potential power in a way similar to that in which the civil rights movement for blacks had led to increasingly assertive demands for social and economic change.

This new attitude on the part of mobilized farmworkers, coupled with unapologetic liberal support of the United Farmworkers grape boycott, brought angry reactions from conservative congressmen, particularly those representing states heavily dependent on migrant and seasonal farm labor. Congressmen J. Herbert Burke of Florida and Burt L. Talcott of California spoke derisively of two unnamed New York congressmen who had returned a gift of grapes from California representative Robert Mathias, a member of the House Agriculture Committee. Burke and Talcott accused the New York congressmen of playing to the media and misleading the public regarding the farm labor dispute in California. Talcott insisted that no farmworkers were striking table grape growers in California and that the union had instigated the grape boycott in desperation when they

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<sup>62</sup>Memorandum to Humphrey from Williams, 24 March 1966, p. 2, RG42, National Archives.

failed to persuade grape workers to join their organization.<sup>63</sup>

Senator Williams issued a rebuttal of grower attacks on the farmworker movement a few days later, as well as statistics showing the success of the grape boycott. He insisted that the farmworkers had begun the boycott not out of desperation, but because growers had destroyed the possibility of an effective strike through use of court injunctions and strikebreakers. The boycott, he noted, had the support of politicians, church leaders, and organized labor, as well as ordinary citizens. Such wide support, not the use of illegal methods, explained the boycott's success. In the same vein, Williams and Senator Fannin of Arizona had argued heatedly a few months earlier over an attempt by Williams to add a collective bargaining amendment to the 1968 farm bill. Each man accused the other of unfair parliamentary tactics to thwart the will of Congress. Dispassionate discussion of the issues deteriorated into thinly veiled antagonism that clearly demonstrated the degree to which views on this issue had become polarized.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>U.S., Congress, House, 26 September 1968, Congressional Record 114:28508, 28527-28528.

<sup>64</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, 20 July, 11 October 1968, Congressional Record 114:22453-22455, 30919, 30932-30934.

In the face of such heightened tension, compromise for the purpose of passing new legislation to solve migrant problems became impossible. For this impasse, however, the farmworker movement itself must take some responsibility. Chavez had discovered the effectiveness of the secondary boycott in placing pressure on grape growers to deal with the farmworkers union. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the basic federal law protecting collective bargaining rights for workers, outlawed the use of secondary boycotts by unions in labor disputes. If farmworkers achieved coverage under this act, they could not use their most successful organizing and pressure tactic. As a result, Chavez informed the congressional coalition fighting for expansion of NLRA coverage to agricultural workers that the farmworker movement no longer wished to be covered by the same collective bargaining legislation as industrial workers.<sup>65</sup>

With this change of position on the part of farmworker leaders, liberal advocates of farmworker rights faced a dilemma. They had to decide whether to respect the wishes of the grassroots farmworker movement or follow their own beliefs and continue to work for

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<sup>65</sup>Jenkins, pp. 166-167.

passage of a collective bargaining law for farmworkers. Again, as with the transformation of the civil rights movement into the black power movement, the emergence of indigenous leaders among the farmworkers led to a divergence between traditional liberal solutions to their problems and the solutions the poor demanded on their own. Some liberals, like the professional staffs of the Migrant Ministry described above, chose to follow the lead of the indigenous movement. Others pulled back from the new demands, unsure of what their position should be and of where the new direction would lead.

J. Craig Jenkins has analyzed these consequences of the success of the farmworker union movement in his recent book The Politics of Insurgency, calling them "paradoxical." As the farmworkers gained success in organizing and forced acceptance of their demands, they threatened the traditional powers in agriculture who then increased their efforts to crush them. At the same time, success brought increasingly radical demands and alienated many of the former allies who had provided the external support necessary to the movement's successes. Weakened by the loss of its widespread public support through apparent radicalization, the movement became more vulnerable to conservative counter-pressure which

eventually forced the farmworkers to retrench in an effort to protect earlier victories.<sup>66</sup>

Jenkins' description of the dynamics of the farmworker movement parallels descriptions by other scholars of the dynamics of liberalism itself in the 1960s. Alonzo Hamby has described the liberal expansion in the 1960s as a "politics of excess," in which the political popularity of reform encouraged national leaders to move beyond the acceptable confines of social change, thereby provoking a public reaction that forced a return to more moderate approaches. Allen Matusow has suggested that the steady resurgence of conservatism after 1968 resulted from a loss of faith in liberalism among the general public, brought on by rising violence and threats to traditional community power structures, as well as disillusionment with the potential for liberal solutions to reduce poverty and discrimination.<sup>67</sup>

The movement to improve living and working conditions for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, then, followed the same pattern as other antipoverty and civil rights initiatives of the 1960s. Beginning with

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<sup>66</sup>Jenkins, pp. 221-222.

<sup>67</sup>Alonzo L. Hamby, Liberalism and Its Challengers: F.D.R. to Reagan (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 5-6; Matusow, pp. 438-439.



relatively modest efforts by liberal advocates to achieve passage of government assistance programs, the initial successes encouraged further demands and provided the support for indigenous organization. Although self-determination among the poor and disenfranchised was among the original goals of liberal advocates, such self-determination threatened the traditional social and economic power structure and brought a strong enough conservative reaction to preclude further progress toward improving the position of the disadvantaged group within society.

The Johnson administration antipoverty initiatives for migrant and seasonal farmworkers truly fit their description as "the apex of liberal reform efforts." During the period 1964-1968 those efforts achieved their fullest possible potential, then were followed by a period of reaction and retrenchment for the next two decades. Yet despite conservative reaction to the war on poverty, most programs, including those for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, continued to operate in slightly reorganized form under subsequent administrations. The increasingly radical demands of the late 1960s had rendered the original programs of the war on poverty much less threatening. Providing child care, health, housing, and educational services to farmworkers became an

accepted part of the federal social agenda, fulfilling over thirty years of effort by more than one generation of activists. Although success was far from complete, the work of migrant advocates had increased the availability of social services and educational opportunities for migrants, if not the power of farmworkers in relations with their employers.

## CHAPTER 5

FIGHTING THE WAR IN IOWA: MIGRANT ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAMS ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

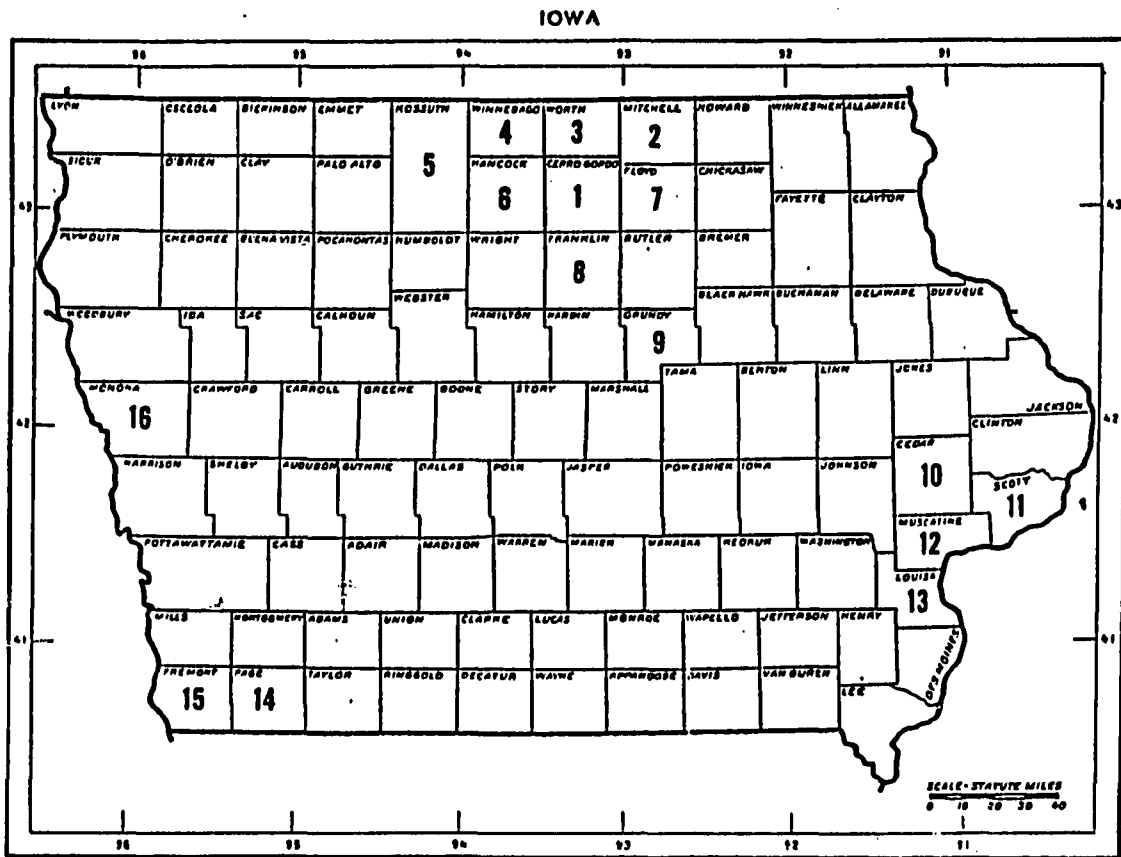
The federal assistance programs authorized during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations depended for implementation on state and local agencies willing to accept federal funding and direction to provide services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Since provision of social services had traditionally been state and local government responsibilities in the United States, adoption of grant programs for new services by the federal government sometimes required establishment of new offices and agencies within state and local government. Moreover, the federal migrant assistance programs allowed for grants to private agencies that offered direct federal support for programs complying with federal goals, bypassing entirely the state and local government systems. For both government and private agencies, the federal funds provided a substantial new source of income. But also for both, federal funding brought with it new experiences of federal involvement in local activities.

In order to explore the effects of federal funding on state and local solutions to migrant problems, this

chapter examines the development and implementation of service delivery for migrant farmworkers in a single state. Although analysis of the experience of one state cannot provide the basis for any broad conclusions, it can provide an example of the ways in which state and local agencies translated federal legislation into programs that affected the lives of individual people, and how these agencies worked with available federal funding to create the kinds of programs they wanted to offer.

The state of Iowa may serve as a useful example for two reasons. First, the state's migrant population was relatively small in the 1960s compared to other agricultural states. A comprehensive statewide analysis of migrant programs is therefore less complicated than it would be for such large migrant-user states as California, Texas, or Florida. Second, two different nonprofit agencies provided service programs for migrants using federal funding. These two programs operated from different philosophies, which led ultimately to different relationships with funding agencies and different kinds of program development. Thus, there is the opportunity to make some comparative observations about the effects of relationships with state and federal funding agencies on programs offered to migrants.

Although Iowa is most often portrayed as a state of small farmers using family labor to run their operations, migrant labor has played an essential role in the state's agricultural economy. Annual estimates of the number of migrants working in Iowa during the 1960s hover around 1500. They worked primarily in five counties: Cerro Gordo in north-central Iowa, where the American Crystal Sugar Company contracted with local growers for sugar beets, and Cedar, Scott, Louisa, and Muscatine in the southeast, where the H. J. Heinz Company contracted with tomato and cucumber growers. Small growers hired scattered groups of workers in Kossuth, Winnebago, Hancock, Worth, Mitchell, Floyd, Franklin, and Grundy counties in the north-central part of the state, and in Fremont, Page, and Monona counties in the southwest (see Figure 1). These growers used migrant labor crews to cultivate and harvest seed corn, soybeans, onions, asparagus, potatoes, cucumbers, and melons; and to work in the tree nurseries, orchards, and seasonal food-processing industries. Migrants arrived as early as late March for nursery work and stayed as late as the end of October for vegetable and orchard harvesting. Most of those who worked in Iowa traveled north from Texas along the mid-continent migrant stream at the beginning of the season, passing through Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas,



KEY

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1-Cerro Gordo | 9-Grundy     |
| 2-Mitchell    | 10-Cedar     |
| 3-Worth       | 11-Scott     |
| 4-Winnebago   | 12-Muscatine |
| 5-Kossuth     | 13-Louisa    |
| 6-Hancock     | 14-Page      |
| 7-Floyd       | 15-Fremont   |
| 8-Franklin    | 16-Monona    |

Figure 1. Counties in Iowa where Migrant Farm Labor Worked during the 1960s

Missouri, Illinois, and Nebraska on their way to Iowa (see Figure 2). Some remained in Iowa throughout the season; others traveled north into Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan after spring cultivation, then returned through Iowa in the fall.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the migrants who came to Iowa traveled in small crews, often related by family ties, although growers in the Muscatine area brought from 100 to 200 braceros each year until 1965 to harvest tomatoes and cucumbers under contract with the H. J. Heinz Company cannery in Muscatine. These migrants, primarily Mexican-Americans, generally lived in housing provided on growers' farms, isolated from nearby communities. Thus, their problems, including poor housing and sanitation, frequent unemployment and underemployment because of poor weather, and limited access to educational and health care services, remained hidden from most residents of the

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<sup>1</sup>Migrant Action Program, Annual Report 1966 (Mason City, Ia.,: Migrant Action Program, 1966), n.p.; Muscatine Migrant Committee, Annual Progress Report 1966 (Muscatine, Ia.: Muscatine Migrant Committee, 1966), p. 1; Janet M. Jorgenson, David E. Williams, and John H. Burma, Migratory Agricultural Workers in the United States (Grinnell, Ia.: Grinnell College, 1961), pp. 41-43; U.S. Department of Health Education, and Welfare, Domestic Agricultural Migrants in the United States, Public Health Service Publication No. 540, revised 1966.



Source: Iowa Governor's Spanish Speaking Task Force, Conceme en Iowa: The Official Report of the Governor's Spanish Speaking Task Force (Des Moines: The Task Force, 1979), p. 36.

Figure 2. Iowa in Relation to the National Migratory Patterns



state; even state officials were unaware of their presence.<sup>2</sup>

To combat such ignorance, the President's Committee on Migratory Labor appointed by Eisenhower in 1954 included among its objectives the fostering of efforts on the state level to solve the problems of migrant farm labor. Members of working subcommittees contacted state governors, labor and health departments, and special commissions and committees to gather information on the experiences of migrants in individual states and to encourage programs and new laws and regulations to protect these migrants and improve their living and working conditions. In November 1954, Mildred Dougherty, field consultant for the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Standards, visited Iowa to discuss migrant problems with representatives of the Department of Health and the Employment Security Commission. Paul Hauser, Director of

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<sup>2</sup>Jorgenson et al., p. 42; George W. Moore, Chief, Employment Service Division, to Robert C. Goodwin, Director, Bureau of Employment Security, 21 January 1960, "592. USDL Crew Leader Survey folder #2," Box 9, Records of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, RG42, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; William T. Bailey, Acting Regional Director, Kansas City, to Don Larin, Chief, Farm Placement Service, 27 July 1955, "Subcommittee on Development of Migrant Housing, Smelker (3)," and "Farm Labor Camps," Region VII-Iowa, p. 13, "Subcommittee on Development of Migrant Housing, Merlin Smelker (1)," Box 16, Records of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

Public Health Engineering, and Dr. Zimmerer, State Health Commissioner, both expressed surprise, and even disbelief, that any Iowa growers hired migrant farmworkers. To convince them, Dougherty had to show them a map of migrant labor use around the state prepared by the Iowa Employment Service.<sup>3</sup>

Some officials, however, knew of the state's migrant problems from personal experience. Dr. Madeline Donnelly, Director of Maternal and Child Health, had delivered a number of children in migrant homes under distressing conditions while in private practice in the Mason City area in the 1940s, although she no longer encountered migrant workers after she joined the State Department of Health. Esther Immer, Executive Secretary of the Iowa Commission on Children and Youth, had traveled around the state inspecting the health and housing problems of migrant families in Iowa. Immer worked closely with Dougherty during her field visits to Iowa in 1954 and again in 1956 and both Donnelly and Immer represented the state at the Mid-American Conference on Migratory Labor cosponsored by the Council

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<sup>3</sup>Mildred Dougherty to George Moore, Director, Employment Service, 18 November 1954, "Iowa," Box 2, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Mildred Dougherty to Miss McConnell, 23 December 1954, "Subcommittee on Housing Standards, Clara M. Beyer (2)," Box 16, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

of State Governments and the President's Committee on Migratory Labor in 1959.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the efforts of Donnelly and Immer, however, the state government did not follow through on the information about migrants in Iowa by initiating any new regulations or laws or by sponsoring any special programs to help farmworkers and their families. They and others concerned about migrants in Iowa turned to private interests in hopes of establishing programs to assist migrant farmworkers. In the summer of 1958, the Iowa Commission on Children and Youth helped to sponsor a study of the need for a migrant assistance program in the Muscatine area. The Iowa Council of Churches, through "Skip" Andrews, a Des Moines college student and president of Christian Young Men of Iowa, approached the Social Action Department of the Muscatine Ministerial Association and the H. J. Heinz Company to organize a

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<sup>4</sup>Esther L. Immer, Executive Secretary, Iowa Commission on Children and Youth, to Miss Dougherty, 12 November 1954, and Mildred Dougherty to Esther L. Immer, 19 September 1957, "Iowa," Box 2, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library, Mildred Dougherty to Miss McConnell, 23 December 1954, "Subcommittee on Housing Standards, Clara M. Beyer (2)," Box 16, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Newspaper clipping, "Migrant Workers in Iowa," 5 September 1957, "Iowa (No rep.)," Box 28, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Beatrice McConnell to Esther L. Immer, 8 September 1960, "Migratory Labor-2, Publications-Bulletin 215," Box 101, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

short exploratory program for that summer. A four-member group, called "The Harvester Team," composed of Andrews, Marvin Budd of the National Council of Churches summer staff, and two women students of area colleges operated a mobile program to offer informational and recreational services to migrants at their camps. As a result of the acceptance of this pilot project among migrants, and an assessment of extensive need for services by the Harvester Team, the Ministerial Association formed the Muscatine Migrant Council to provide education, health, and "Christian social welfare" services.<sup>5</sup>

The Council planned a full-summer program for 1959 to be supported by the Iowa Council of Churches, the Heinz Company, and the national Migrant Ministry. They established another Harvester Team to provide expanded services at the camps and to spread information about the other facets of the Council's program. The Iowa Department of Social Welfare contributed \$3,000 toward the operation of a day care facility to offer supervision and education for migrant children too young to work in

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<sup>5</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Annual Progress Report 1966, p. 1; Esther L. Immer to the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, 9 October 1958, attached to F. A. Potter to Esther L. Immer, 14 October 1958, "Iowa," Box 5, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Richard DeVere Horton, "Spanish-Speaking Migratory Agricultural Workers in the Area of Muscatine, Iowa" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Iowa, 1963), pp. 69-71.

the fields. The State Health Department, through the influence of Dr. Donnelly, provided the services of a Public Health Nurse to serve the child care facility and the camps. Local churches and individuals, as well as a thrift sale, contributed the remainder of the Council's summer budget of \$6,035. The Harvester Team estimated it had served about 500 migrants and family members during its visits to 16 individual farms and the Heinz migrant camp. A total of 46 children attended the child care center over six weeks, although none attended every day and about half attended for five or fewer days. The Public Health nurse provided care to nearly 350 children and adults, through both the child care program and home visits.<sup>6</sup>

Despite organizational problems and a tight budget, the Council and summer staff considered the program successful. They also believed a much larger population could be served by the child care center with better planning and increased funds. Consequently, the Council operated a program again in the summer of 1960. The Public Health nursing service remained essentially the same, concentrating on examinations at the child care

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<sup>6</sup>Muscatine Migrant Council, "Migrant Work in Muscatine, Iowa, 1959," "Iowa," Box 56, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

center and home visits, and the Harvester Team again served about 500 migrants at 16 different locations. The child care center, however, enrolled 163 children in three age divisions, each with a teacher and assistant, in contrast to the single teacher and assistant with 46 children of varying ages in 1959. The child care staff evaluated the new program enthusiastically, but with further suggestions for increasing the staff and number of children served. They estimated up to 250 migrant children might attend the center in 1961.<sup>7</sup>

But salary and staff increases and expenses for serving so many additional children had stretched the Council's budget beyond its limits. Although the local contribution rose from around \$600 to over \$2,000, including contributions from the Heinz Company, the State Department of Social Welfare had reduced its contribution from \$3,000 to \$2,000 in anticipation of this local increase. With an income of \$5,440 and expenses of \$7,556, the Council faced a shortfall of funds by September that forced a reevaluation of the purposes and goals of the Muscatine Migrant Council. Estimates of potential local contributions went as high as \$3,000, but

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<sup>7</sup>Muscatine Migrant Council, "Migrant Ministry Report," Summer 1960, pp. 6-10, 23, 26, "Iowa," Box 56, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

the Executive Secretary, Jean Green, calculated the budget needs for 1961 at \$15,000. The Council believed its programs offered a necessary service to both the migrants and the local community, but without increased government support for their work they could not continue. Robert Hinshaw, chairman of the Council, suggested federal support was warranted, since the services provided to migrants in Iowa benefited other states as well by handling health and educational problems that reduced their need when they traveled to their next destination.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Migrant Council could not directly request federal funding before grant programs passed Congress, they maintained some contact with the federal government through the President's Committee on Migratory Labor in the early 1960s. They sent a copy of their first year's report to President Eisenhower, with the comment that "the migrant people are very much in need of help and any support that can be given to the Councils that are trying to do this is well worth while."<sup>9</sup> The White House referred the letter and report to the

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<sup>8</sup>Muscatine Migrant Council, "Migrant Ministry Report," Summer 1960, pp. 1-3, 31-33; Horton, pp. 75-76.

<sup>9</sup>Rev. Robert B. Goebel to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 17 February 1960, "Iowa - General," Box 72, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.

President's Committee on Migratory Labor, whose Assistant Executive Director responded with a request for further reports to keep the Committee up to date on activities for migrants in the various states. Mildred Dougherty also continued to gather information on the Iowa situation, noting in 1962 the success of the Muscatine program in gaining support from the state departments of Health and Welfare.<sup>10</sup>

Dougherty did not believe such support would necessarily lead to any statewide efforts, however, since the two departments disagreed on the value of expanding migrant work beyond localized programs. In fact, because of legislative cutbacks in the budget, the Department of Social Welfare eliminated contributions to the Muscatine Migrant Council in 1962. At about the same time, federal grants for the public health component of the Muscatine program replaced the state health department support for the Council. Thus, instead of increased state support for migrant assistance programs in Iowa during the early 1960s, direct state government funding for migrant

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<sup>10</sup>Mrs. Howard H. Green, Executive Secretary, Muscatine Migrant Council, to John F. Heathershaw, Assistant Executive Director, President's Committee on Migratory Labor, 21 September 1960, "Iowa - General," Box 72, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Mildred Dougherty to Miss Geach, 6 April 1962, "Migratory Labor-2, Community Projects, 1962-," Box 100, Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library.



programs came to an end after 1962. It did not resume until the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments of 1966 provided federal funding to state departments of education to support special programs for migrant children.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the Muscatine Migrant Council continued its program throughout the early 1960s, expanding the child care center enrollment annually, until, by the mid-1960s, between 200 and 250 children attended each summer.<sup>12</sup> Although the Council suspended the public health service project for 1962 when a qualified nurse could not be located, health service resumed under federal Migrant Health Act funds in 1963.<sup>13</sup> The Muscatine program remained the only agency providing special services to migrant farmworkers until 1964. In that year, however, the Mason City Council of Churches decided to begin a project to assist migrant farmworkers

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<sup>11</sup>Horton, pp. 76-77.

<sup>12</sup>Unfortunately, I could not locate any reports of the Council's activities for the period 1963-1964 and so cannot discover the source of funds to continue the child care center operations following the withdrawal of state support. According to Horton, p. 78, the Council had applied to be included among the United Fund donees, requesting an annual share of \$2,000. The Fund denied their application for 1963, but was expected to reconsider in 1964.

<sup>13</sup>Horton, p. 73.

in north-central Iowa. They had heard of the program in Muscatine and thought a similar need for services to migrants might exist in their area.<sup>14</sup>

The area Council of Churches asked the United Church Women, an affiliate of the Council, to accept leadership of the project. The president of that volunteer organization, Betty Jean Clark, agreed to take on the responsibility and formed a committee to study the problem. The committee included representatives of the Council of Churches, United Church Women, the Mason City Deanery of the Catholic Church, and the American Crystal Sugar Company, the area's largest employer of migrant farmworkers. Together they decided to fund a study of the needs in their own area before launching a program based on the Muscatine plan, to be sure that such services as those offered by the Muscatine Migrant Council fit the requirements of the north-central Iowa migrant families. Clark indicated that the committee considered itself "only an activating group." They planned to direct a study during the summer of 1964, propose a list of needed services, and then interest

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<sup>14</sup>"Extend hand to migrants," Mason City Globe Gazette, 6 June 1964.

"individual churches and individual agencies which can best meet the needs" in providing the services.<sup>15</sup>

To conduct the summer study, the committee requested an experienced person trained in migrant ministry from the National Council of Churches. Working with a local budget of \$530, the committee hired Enrique Perez, a Methodist ministerial student from Mexico who had worked with a migrant ministry in Michigan during the previous two summers. Perez established a program of camp visitations to offer "social, recreational, educational, and religious" services with the help of local volunteers. Planned activities for children and adults included bringing toys and games, movies, reading material, religious services, and local information to the migrants at home in the evenings. Perez oriented local volunteers to migrant culture and appropriate ways to offer services and offered advice to the program committee regarding the need for expanded services and attention to the general situation of migrants in the area, not just individual problems.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>"Extend hand to migrants," Mason City Globe Gazette, 6 June 1964; Interview with Betty Jean Clark, Des Moines, Iowa, 12 April 1990.

<sup>16</sup>"Study of migrants' needs starts," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 15 June 1964, p. 15; "Reaching migrants," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 4 July 1964, p. 4; "Local fold in visits to migrants," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 6 July

One of the local volunteers who assisted Perez was Shirley M. Sandage. A former president of the Mason City United Church Women, Sandage had become interested in working with migrants in 1963 following a state convention of the Disciples of Christ at which delegates discussed the needs of migrant farmworkers and their families. Sandage urged Betty Jean Clark to involve the United Church Women in a migrant ministry and to get the area Council of Churches' support for a project in 1964. Following her volunteer experiences during the initial summer project, Sandage recognized the wider needs of migrants in the Mason City area and began work with similarly inspired volunteers to formalize and expand the efforts of the initial planning committee into an ongoing program. In March 1965, these interested volunteers organized the Mason City Area Committee on Migrant Relations. Unlike the Muscatine Migrant Council, the committee did not retain a formal connection to the local council of churches, although church members and clergy remained much involved with the committee's activities. The group prepared a purpose statement to guide its work that called for the new committee to direct a church and community program for migrants in the areas of "day care

and remedial education, health and sanitation, and camp visitation for purposes of fellowship, recreation and training." The committee was also expected to "secure adequate interest and financial support," provide public relations for the program in the community, and coordinate its services with programs directed by the Iowa Council of Churches, Archdiocese of Dubuque, and "concerned governmental agencies."<sup>17</sup>

Sandage became secretary of the new committee. The committee hired a local woman, Carolyn Pitts, who was about to graduate from college with a degree in elementary education and who spoke fluent Spanish, to coordinate the program and continue camp visitations in the summer of 1965. But Sandage also had hopes of a full-fledged education program for migrant children that summer and volunteered to write a grant for funds from the newly established Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in Washington. The decision of the committee to take that step beyond the limits of local volunteer efforts to a federally funded program of much broader scope precipitated dissension among the church groups and community supporters who had worked together during the

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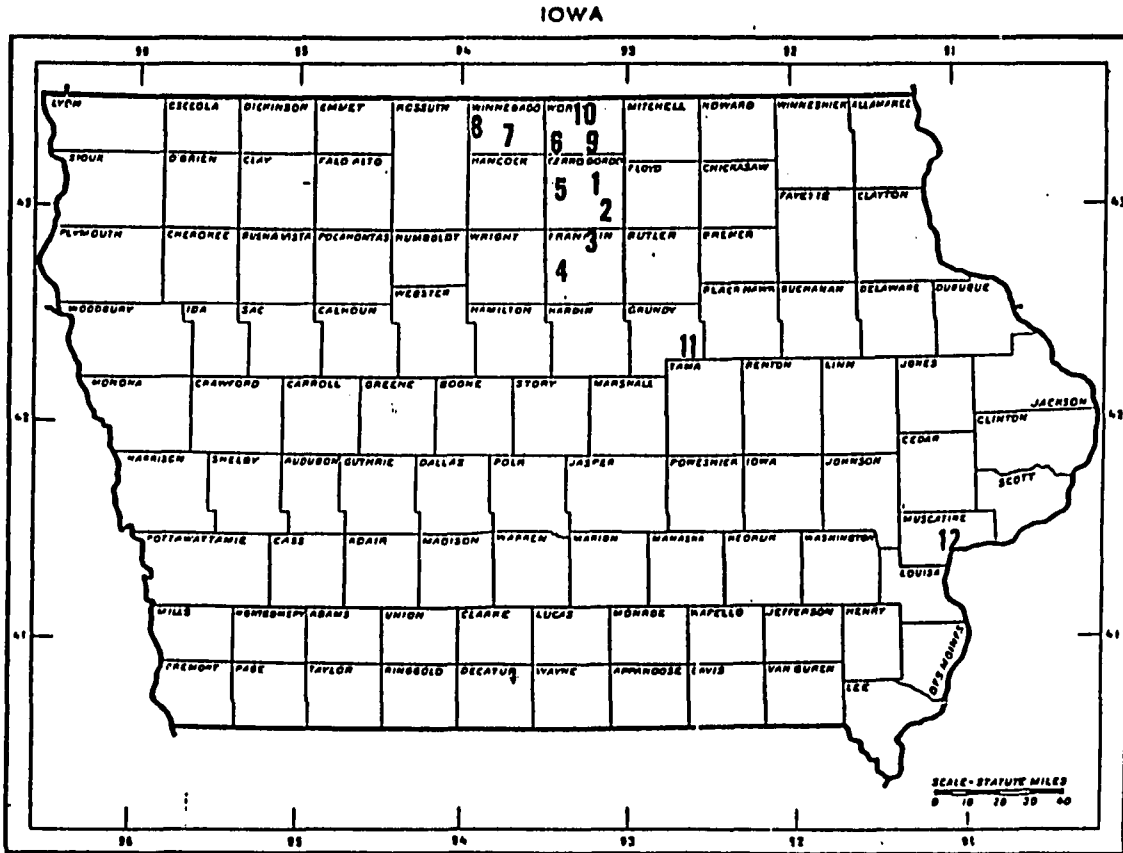
<sup>17</sup>Shirley M. Sandage, "Something of Substance," unpublished manuscript, copyright 1988, pp. 54-55; "Hire co-ordinator for area summer migrant program," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 13 March 1965.

first summer. The Committee on Migrant Relations supported Sandage, however, and when the OEO approved the grant for a summer remedial education program in the Mason City area, Sandage became its director.<sup>18</sup>

Funded from an Economic Opportunity Act Title III-B grant of \$23,817, the summer school program, serving about 75 children, operated at three locations--Manly, Sheffield, and Clear Lake--for the convenience of migrants, most of whom lived in camps clustered around these three towns (see Figure 3). Sandage secured the use of regular school classrooms for all three programs and hired local teachers to work with the children at each school. In addition to the remedial education program, the grant provided for a public health nurse to work in the schools and with families at the camps and a

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<sup>18</sup>"Hire co-ordinator for area summer migrant program," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 13 March 1965; Interview with Betty Jean Clark; Sandage, "Something of Substance," pp. 55, 58.



**KEY**

1-Mason City  
 2-Rockwell  
 3-Sheffield  
 4-Latimer  
 5-Clear Lake  
 6-Hanlontown

7-Thompson  
 8-Buffalo Center  
 9-Manly  
 10-Northwood  
 11-Reinbeck  
 12-Muscatine

Figure 3. Locations Served by Migrant Assistance Programs in Iowa

sanitary engineer to work with migrants and growers on improving housing and field sanitation.<sup>19</sup>

OEO required state approval in order to qualify for a grant, and so Sandage secured official support for the Mason City program from the state departments of Social Welfare, Employment Security, and Public Instruction, apparently without difficulty.<sup>20</sup> Local support, despite division over the wisdom of launching an expanded, federally funded program, also continued. The local newspaper, in fact, ran an editorial recommending the success of the program as a model for other local agencies interested in securing OEO grants. Granting "the antipoverty program . . . is not above criticism," the newspaper insisted "there is some need for antipoverty money in North Iowa and the migrant workers project afforded a worthy springboard." In conclusion, the newspaper advised "there will be more and larger antipoverty allocations in future years. Other groups

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<sup>19</sup>Telegram, Sargent Shriver to Mrs. Richard Sandage, 3 July 1965, photocopy provided to author by Sandage; Office of Economic Opportunity press release, 2 July 1965, "Program Development-Iowa," Reel 26, Federal Records:OEO, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas; "Expect federal aid to provide schooling, health training for migrant workers," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 23 June 1965, p. 21; "School set for children of migrants," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 26 June 1965, p. 8; Sandage, "Something of Substance," pp. 56-59, 64-65.

<sup>20</sup>Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 57.



would be well advised to follow the footsteps of the migrant workers committee and lay their plans now."<sup>21</sup>

A federal evaluation praised the Mason City summer school program as well and recommended expansion in 1966. Margaret Garrity, Midwest project director for the OEO Migrant Division, hoped to see a full-day summer school for children and the institution of evening and weekend adult education classes in future years. Responding to Garrity's suggestions, Sandage, now officially project director for the Mason City Area Committee on Migrant Relations, submitted a proposal for the summer of 1966 that included day care for preschoolers at four centers, remedial education for elementary children 6-10 years old, industrial arts and home economics classes for children over 10, and classes in literacy, citizenship, and health for adults. OEO accepted the proposal and funded the Mason City program, renamed the Migrant Action Program, with a grant of \$45,269.<sup>22</sup>

The Migrant Action Program (MAP) faced public relations problems in 1966, however, despite increased

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<sup>21</sup>"Federal funds fight poverty," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 6 July 1965.

<sup>22</sup>"Migrant workers program, U.S. consultant: 'Good job,'" Mason City Globe-Gazette, 7 August 1965; Office of Economic Opportunity press release, 20 April 1966, "Program Development-Iowa," Reel 26, Federal Records:OEO, Johnson Library.

federal support. The sanitarian's report for 1965, made public in March 1966, had pointed out the inadequacy of some area migrant housing, antagonizing growers whose camps had been singled out for criticism. In addition, the extension of the school program from half to full days threatened the use of children's labor in the fields. Adult education programs intensified the threat to adequate labor and grower control of the work force, since part of the purpose of such programs was to teach farmworkers new skills for better employment opportunities, as well as better understanding of their rights as American citizens. As a result, some of the original program staff from 1965 chose not to return in 1966 and the schools in Clear Lake, Sheffield, and Manly refused the use of their buildings.<sup>23</sup>

MAP, led by the determined and not easily defeated Sandage, secured facilities in the nearby towns of Rockwell, Hanlontown, and Thompson (see Figure 3) and raised local funds to buy a bus to transport children from the camps to the new school locations. In addition, a new school facility opened in Reinbeck (see Figure 3) as a result of a decision by the Reinbeck Area Council of

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<sup>23</sup>"Growers' concern asked, Migrant's housing varies," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 3 March 1966, p. 14; Sandage, "Something of Substance," pp. 69, 71-72, 73-77.

Churches to begin work with migrants. Although they had planned to create their own program, Garrity recommended they invite MAP to expand into their area, since OEO could not justify funding of similar programs in such close proximity. The local asparagus canning company, for whom the migrants in Reinbeck worked, opposed the school program, but the local community supported it through donations of clothing and equipment and preparation of meals for the children.<sup>24</sup>

Education of migrant children remained among the highest priorities for the Migrant Action Program and its OEO sponsors throughout the 1960s. Sandage, particularly, envisioned MAP's adult education program as a means of improving opportunities for the children. Besides increasing the parents' ability to provide support and approval of their children's schooling, basic literacy and vocational training could help migrant parents find permanent work in Iowa communities, thereby insuring their children's attendance during the regular school year. Three families "settled out" in this way during 1966. Although enrollment in most adult classes

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<sup>24</sup>"RCS Board Votes To Adopt Migrant Educational Program," Reinbeck Courier, 17 March 1966; "Migrant Worker Program Well Received," Grundy Register, 14 July 1966; Sandage, "Something of Substance," pp. 69, 71-72, 73-77.

remained low that year (the total for all classes reached only 39), MAP found, through a survey of migrants not attending, that classes in a greater variety of occupational specialties might increase involvement.<sup>25</sup>

Sandage also administered a Migrant Health grant during 1966 that allowed MAP to operate clinics for migrant families in six locations around north-central Iowa, including Reinbeck, Latimer, Buffalo Center, Manly, Clear Lake, and Northwood (see Figure 3). The grant allowed the clinic to operate for a total of 128 hours, divided in whatever manner best suited the needs of the migrant population. The grant also supported school and camp visits by a staff of three nurses, reimbursed local dentists for a systematic screening through the summer school program, and paid the full-time salary for a sanitarian to continue efforts to survey housing and recommend improvements to growers.<sup>26</sup>

During 1965 and 1966, the OEO Migrant Division and the U.S. Public Health Service also funded the program of the Muscatine Migrant Committee, formerly the Muscatine

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<sup>25</sup>Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 78-79; "Migrants get practical help," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 27 July 1966; Migrant Action Program, Annual Report 1966, n.p.

<sup>26</sup>Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 68; Migrant Action Program, Annual Report 1966, n.p.

Migrant Council. An OEO grant of \$24,587 in 1965 had relieved their chronic financial problems, allowing the Committee to continue the day care and summer school services operated since 1959. In 1966, OEO increased the Committee's funding to \$51,279, enabling them to add more instructors for each level and buy new materials and equipment to replace outdated and worn supplies donated in previous years. The day care program for 2- to 5-year-olds enrolled 118 children over the nine weeks of operation and the remedial elementary program served 110 students during the same period. Because the Muscatine Community School District offered the use of one of its school buildings to house both the day care and elementary school programs, migrant parents could send all of their children aged 2-12 years to a single location. That situation encouraged the parents to allow their preschoolers to travel by bus from the outlying camps to the school in Muscatine.<sup>27</sup>

The Muscatine Migrant Committee continued to hire two public health nurses with the assistance of a Migrant Health grant from the Public Health Service and the Iowa

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<sup>27</sup>Office of Economic Opportunity press release, 2 July 1965, "Program Development-Iowa," Reel 26, Federal Records:OEO, Johnson Library; Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 4-8, 11, 15, 18, 21-23.

State Department of Health, each paying the salary and expenses of a single nurse. The Council hired a school nurse in 1966 to supply the health screening and first aid formerly offered by one of the public health nurses. Unlike the Migrant Action Program's health grant, however, the Muscatine program did not operate a family health clinic, offer hospitalization assistance, or provide dental screening. The nurses made regular visits to the 49 farms housing migrant workers in the four counties--Louisa, Scott, Cedar, and Muscatine--served by the Committee (see Figure 3). They provided emergency treatment of illnesses and injuries, immunizations, referrals to doctors and family planning agencies, and health education programs for the migrants and growers. The Committee recognized the limitations of its program, particularly the lack of a central health clinic and funds to assist with hospitalization costs, and planned to request increased funding from both OEO and the Public Health Service for an expanded program in 1967.<sup>28</sup>

The Muscatine program seemed to maintain friendly relations with the local school district and area growers, avoiding some of the problems encountered by the Migrant Action Program with growers in their area.

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<sup>28</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 25-27, 31.

Offering of adult education had caused some of the friction in the north-central region, but did not have the same effect in the Muscatine area. Adult vocational education, sponsored by the neighboring Illinois Migrant Council, assisted 65 migrant families to settle in the Muscatine area in 1966. The work of the project sanitarian also did not seem to create the same animosity among Muscatine area growers as it did in north-central Iowa. An explanation for that may lie in the attitude reflected by the Committee's insistence that poor conditions in the camps required not only grower improvements and but also "an educational program to teach these impoverished people to learn how to help themselves more in seeking improved living and working conditions."<sup>29</sup>

The Iowa Department of Social Welfare assisted the Muscatine Migrant Committee program by paying the salaries and expenses of four student social workers in 1966, an increase from only two social workers in 1965. These students visited migrant families as they arrived to assess their needs and offer information about migrant services available in the area. They served as links between the migrants and migrant service programs,

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<sup>29</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, p. 2, 35-39. Quotation from p. 38.

carrying information about educational, health, and recreational programs to the migrants and bringing information and insight about individual migrant families' needs to the service providers. In addition, the state Department of Social Welfare reimbursed the county welfare department for the cost of family day care for migrant children under 2 years old, since state law prohibited children under 2 years old from group care. Parents of fourteen infants accepted such care for their children.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, the Muscatine Migrant Committee offered social and religious programs, as well as space for the Illinois Migrant Council adult education classes, at a permanent migrant center in downtown Muscatine. The center replaced the services that had been provided by the mobile Harvester teams during the early years of the Committee's work and operated entirely on local funds received from churches, businesses and foundations, and the center's thrift shop sales. During the peak periods of the migrant season as many as 500 migrants used the center on weekends, and 100 to 200 visited on the weekdays. Saturday night dances brought the largest crowds. Despite such heavy use, the Committee believed

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<sup>30</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 49-55.



the mobile Harvester teams formerly supported by the state and national Council of Churches had reached greater numbers by bringing services to isolated camps and they hoped to reinstitute that program. Priorities had changed by the mid-1960s in the National Council of Churches Migrant Ministry, however, reducing the availability of funding for primarily recreational programs.<sup>31</sup>

Both the Muscatine Migrant Committee and the Migrant Action Program attempted to ascertain what services the migrants themselves most wanted in order to make their programs as useful as possible to migrants working in their area. During the initial summer of programming in Muscatine the staff surveyed the migrants at the camps in the area asking them which of the services they received during the 1959 season benefited them most and what other services they might like to see added to the program. The Muscatine Migrant Council used the responses to that survey in planning the program for the following year. A similar process occurred in Mason City, where volunteers became aware of unmet needs among migrants in the north-central Iowa area during their initial summer program in

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<sup>31</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 41-47; Kay Longcope, "The Changing Role of the Migrant Ministry," Presbyterian Life, 15 November 1967.

1964 and incorporated what they learned in preparing their program for 1965.<sup>32</sup>

Such attention to the migrants' perceptions of their own needs became formalized when the programs began to receive funding from OEO. Following a directive developed from amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act in 1965, OEO required Community Action Program grantees to practice "maximum feasible participation" of clients in the planning and operation of antipoverty programs. This directive applied to migrant programs funded under Title III-B of the Economic Opportunity Act, since the Migrant Division fell under the administrative control of the Community Action Program. The OEO expected at least one-third of the members of their grantees' boards of directors to be from among their client group and also recommended the hiring of as many staff members as possible from that group.

The Muscatine Migrant Committee complied with the requirement for migrant representation by establishing a twelve-member migrant advisory board elected from among the migrant population. The Committee expressed a dual

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<sup>32</sup>Ann Hillyer, "Report on the Child Care Center for Migrant Children in Muscatine, Iowa," in Muscatine Migrant Committee, "Migrant Work in Muscatine Iowa, 1959," Records of the PCML, Eisenhower Library; Interview with Betty Jean Clark; "Extend hand to migrants," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 6 June 1964.

goal for the advisory board: the elected migrants would pass along the migrant community's evaluation of services provided by the Muscatine program and their suggestions for additional services, and the members of the advisory board would gain leadership experience and enhance their ability to represent their community's needs. Since it took time to arrange for elections among the migrants, the advisory committee could only participate in evaluation of an already planned program in 1966. The Committee hoped to constitute the board much earlier in the season in 1967, however, in order to involve the migrant members in planning and operating the program throughout the summer. The Committee also employed migrants as aides in the day care and elementary school programs and at the migrant center in Muscatine, in compliance with the OEO recommendations.<sup>33</sup>

The Migrant Action Program increased its board of directors from six to eighteen members, five of whom came from among the migrant workers served by the program. Migrants from four central locations elected representatives to the board and a fifth served as an officer of the board, representing all of the migrants as a group. Program director Sandage remembered that the

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<sup>33</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 3, 39, 41.

experience of serving on the MAP board of directors often provided the incentive needed for a family to settle in the Mason City area permanently. She developed close personal friendships with several migrants through this process. Migrants also served as teacher and cook aides in the day care and summer school programs and as aides and interpreters at the family health clinics.<sup>34</sup>

By 1966 two fairly comprehensive programs served the migrant farmworkers who traveled through Iowa during the growing season. Both offered day care, remedial summer school, adult education, sanitation, and health services in two distinct areas of Iowa using an appreciable number of migrant laborers in cultivating and harvesting a variety of crops. Both had their origins in church initiatives to help the migrant farmworkers overcome the disadvantages of their poverty and feel more welcomed by the communities where they worked. Both expanded into programs offering not only church-supported community acceptance and recreation, but also state-certified and federally funded day care, health, and educational programs for all ages to assist the migrants in improving their condition. A difference in the philosophies of the

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<sup>34</sup>"H. O. Clark heads migrant committee," Mason City Globe-Gazette, undated clipping supplied to the author by Shirley M. Sandage; Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 70; Migrant Action Program, Annual Report 1966, n.p.

programs had begun to surface in 1965 and 1966, however, evident in the amount of friction each program generated in the local communities they served. By the end of the 1966 program year that difference began to affect their relationship with the OEO Migrant Division, the federal agency on whom both depended most for financial support.

The Migrant Action Program adopted a broad critique of the condition experienced by migrants, similar to that proposed in repeated federal studies of the migrant condition in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Such a critique required comprehensive structural solutions that involved not only provision of educational and health services to individual migrants, but also empowerment of migrants in their relations with their employers and with the governments to whom they turned for services and protections. Such a philosophy brought strong support from the OEO, where programs had always been based on such a structural "culture of poverty" approach to migrant problems. But it also threatened established local community relations and centers of power and longtime patterns of state and county assistance to needy families, leading to strained relations with these local

communities and county and state social service agencies.<sup>35</sup>

The Muscatine Migrant Committee, on the other hand, maintained a good working relationship with traditional state service agencies, including the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare, and Department of Public Instruction. They seemed to accept a more conservative philosophy of charitable assistance for individual betterment in improving the lives of the poor, rather than the more radical stance that called for "changing the system." Their advisory board included such members as Republican state senator David Stanley, who had a reputation for opposing liberal antipoverty and labor bills in the state legislature and who worked with grower representatives against a bill to prohibit child labor in agriculture in Iowa. The Muscatine Migrant Committee supported the prohibition on child labor, but its relationship with Stanley and growers who served on the Committee board of directors undoubtedly worked to

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<sup>35</sup>Interviews with Shirley M. Sandage, Arlington, Virginia, 8 October 1988, and Washington, D.C., 7 November 1989.

keep its programming from moving along the lines of structural change.<sup>36</sup>

Margaret Garrity, who oversaw both programs for the OEO Migrant Division, developed a close working relationship with Shirley Sandage and the Migrant Action Program. She had encouraged Sandage during the first grant application process in 1965, providing guidance about the necessary steps to a successful grant when Sandage refused to withdraw the request and wait a year to develop plans more fully. Garrity publicly expressed her pleasure with the program offered by MAP in 1965 and encouraged expansion of the summer school into a full-day program and the addition of an adult education component. She discussed personally with Sandage the problems of migrant child labor in Iowa and the need to help migrant families find permanent jobs and settle into communities.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, Garrity found the Muscatine Migrant Committee program unsatisfactory. She reported misuse of

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<sup>36</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966; Muscatine Migrant Committee, Annual Progress Report 1967 (Muscatine, Ia.: Muscatine Migrant Committee, 1967); "Fellow Republican Assails Stanley on Migrant Bill," Des Moines Register, 17 June 1967; Interview with Betty Jean Clark; Interviews with Shirley Sandage.

<sup>37</sup>Sandage, "Something of Substance," pp. 56-57, 63-65; "Migrant workers program, U.S. consultant: 'Good job,'" Mason City Globe-Gazette, 7 August 1965.

funds and discriminatory treatment of migrant children to the OEO Migrant Division and recommended ending support for the day care program. Mary Seaton, a Headstart preschool program consultant working out of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, inspected the situation and concurred with Garrity's assessment of the program's inadequacy. Seaton found the physical facilities too small, poorly arranged, and unsanitary, and the equipment in terrible condition. Teachers adopted a patronizing attitude toward the children and used questionable methods of discipline. Some of the parents of enrolled children had complained about the conditions and about the unwillingness of the center staff to involve parents in planning and evaluating the program. Moreover, funds allocated for the migrant preschool also supported programs for resident children.<sup>38</sup>

The Muscatine Migrant Committee contested the charges. They explained that the facility visited by Garrity and Seaton had been a temporary location used only for the final three weeks of the center's operation;

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<sup>38</sup>Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 72; Telephone interview with Mary Seaton, San Diego, California, 31 March 1989; Margaret Garrity to Judy Carlisle, 28 February [1967], "Muscatine Migrant Committee (discontinued)," Box 757, Series 42, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG381, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.



the school district needed to prepare the school building used for the earlier part of the summer for the upcoming regular school session. The day care staff recognized the inadequacy of the site and planned to find a better alternative in the future. The Iowa Department of Social Welfare had licensed the center and a supervisor made a number of inspections during the twelve-week session. In addition, a day care consultant spent nearly one day each week with the program and found it warm and supportive. She did recommend an improved educational plan and the use of fully trained teachers, rather than college students, as well as a permanent location for the program to avoid the problems of moving and operating in an inadequate physical environment. But she praised the integration of migrant children with local children, finding the interaction valuable despite language barriers.<sup>39</sup>

Disagreements over the number of children served and unauthorized expenditures increased the friction between the Muscatine program and OEO. Despite efforts by the Rev. Philip Auffrey, president of the Muscatine Migrant

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<sup>39</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Progress Report 1966, pp. 4-8; H. Philip Auffrey, President, Muscatine Migrant Committee, to Noel H. Klores, Director, Office of Special Field Programs, OEO, 31 January 1967, "Muscatine Migrant Committee (discontinued)," Box 757, Series 42, RG381, National Archives.

Committee in 1967, to explain and defend the program's efforts and to account for the fiscal questions, OEO refused to fund the Muscatine Migrant Committee after 1966. Auffrey had expressed concern that such a loss of funds would harm the migrants of the Muscatine area, but Noel Klores, director of the Office of Special Programs under which the Migrant Division operated, assured Auffrey that funds would be available for preschool and elementary school education programs through other sources.<sup>40</sup>

The Muscatine program did not fear a complete end to their offerings without OEO funds. The Committee could continue the adult education classes provided in cooperation with the Illinois Migrant Council, the medical program funded by the Public Health Service, the social services provided by the state Department of Social Welfare, and the migrant center supported by local funds. Their concern stemmed from the dependence of their day care and summer school programs on OEO funding. Based on encouragement from this federal agency, the

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<sup>40</sup>Auffrey to Klores, 31 January 1967, RG381, National Archives; Noel H. Klores to H. Philip Auffrey, 27 February 1967, "Muscatine Migrant Committee (discontinued)," Box 757, Series 42, RG381, National Archives; "Growing Season, Not Waste Ruled Migrant School's Size," Muscatine Journal, 21 February 1967, p. 2.

Muscatine Migrant Committee had expanded its programs for children beyond what could be supported by local funds. Without a day care and school program, parents would either leave children unattended in camps or take them to play and work in the fields.<sup>41</sup>

Klores explained to Auffrey that although OEO would no longer fund the Muscatine Migrant Committee, the Migrant Division had made arrangements to fund all the costs of the education program offered by the Migrant Action Program, thereby releasing newly available education funds from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments of 1966. The federal Office of Education disbursed those funds to the states on the basis of the previous year's migrant population. State education departments then allocated the money to school districts according to the number of migrant children those districts could serve. Because OEO offered to pay the full costs of migrant children's summer education for the Migrant Action Program, the State Department of Public Instruction could allocate the full amount of Iowa's Title I funds to the Muscatine Community School District. Klores also noted that the Iowa State Office of Economic Opportunity, which

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<sup>41</sup>Auffrey to Klores, 31 January 1967, RG381, National Archives.

administered community action program grants throughout the state, could be called on to assist in providing a preschool Headstart program for migrant children in the Muscatine area.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, the Muscatine program continued under just such an arrangement. Because of the Muscatine Migrant Committee's good relations with the local community and state officials, disapproval of its program by the Migrant Division in Washington, D.C., could not force the agency to change. The State Department of Public Instruction dedicated its entire allotment of \$9,800 to summer migrant education in Muscatine, since "the funds were not needed elsewhere in the state."<sup>43</sup> In addition, the adjoining Nichols Independent School District donated \$17,544 in unused ESEA Title I funds from the 1966-1967 school year to Muscatine for their summer migrant program. Officially the Muscatine Community School District operated the migrant summer elementary school, but the Muscatine Migrant Committee program continued in

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<sup>42</sup>Klores to Auffrey, 27 February 1967, RG381, National Archives.

<sup>43</sup>"State Allocates Muscatine \$9,800 for Migrant School," Muscatine Journal, 2 March 1967.

essentially the same form it had for the previous two years.<sup>44</sup>

The preschool Headstart program continued through a grant of \$24,528 from the Iowa East-Central TRAIN Community Action Agency. In addition to directly funded migrant programs, OEO operated in Iowa through the state Office of Economic Opportunity, which in turn made grants to locally organized community action agencies. These agencies accepted grant proposals and funded local programs based on decisions taken by their own local citizen boards. The decision not to refund the Muscatine Migrant Committee program at the national level, therefore, did not necessarily preclude its funding through the local agency. Again, the Muscatine Community School District acted as the official delegate agency for the program, but they simply contracted with the Muscatine Migrant Committee to operate a day care center in 1967 in the same manner it had operated in previous years.<sup>45</sup>

The Muscatine Migrant Committee added a few new services to its program for 1967 as well. The Public

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<sup>44</sup>"Growing Season, Not Waste Ruled Migrant School's Size," Muscatine Journal, 21 February 1967, p. 2; "School for Migrant Children to Open July 3," Muscatine Journal, 27 June 1967, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

Health Service provided funding for weekly family health clinics through a private physician in Muscatine and added money for emergency hospitalization. The Iowa East Central TRAIN Community Action Agency sponsored adult basic education at the Muscatine Migrant Center in cooperation with the county welfare department and the Muscatine Community College.<sup>46</sup> Yet although the Muscatine Migrant Committee replaced the OEO Title III-B funds and even gained funding increases for their health and adult education services, loss of backing by the OEO Migrant Division nevertheless had a discernible effect on the program. While Muscatine was forced to find ways in 1967 to maintain its program at the same basic level as 1966, the Migrant Action Program in Mason City expanded into new program and geographical areas.

Even before the ESEA amendments in 1966 that specifically provided for migrant education programs under Title I, the Migrant Action Program had begun a program under the general provisions of Title I to offer remedial services to disadvantaged children. In cooperation with the Reinbeck and Dinsdale Consolidated Community school districts in Grundy County, MAP organized special classes for migrant elementary school

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<sup>46</sup>Muscatine Migrant Committee, Annual Progress Report 1967, n.p.

students during the final month of the regular school year, when migrant families had already begun arriving to work in the asparagus fields. Two teachers worked with 31 children in a special classroom separate from the nonmigrant students, but the students shared library, physical education, and lunch facilities. At the end of the school year, the teachers and students transferred to the summer education program run by the Migrant Action Program. Because MAP provided the teachers' initial training, the transition to the summer program worked smoothly for both children and staff. This program continued in 1967, although its funding came from OEO Title III-B sources when the state dedicated its ESEA Title I allocation to Muscatine.<sup>47</sup>

An increase in MAP's OEO Migrant Division grant from \$45,269 in 1966 to \$80,716 not only covered the added cost of the elementary education program, but also an expanded day care program to provide care for infants under 2 years old. Although a program of family day care for infants seemed to work well in Muscatine, the Migrant

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<sup>47</sup>James O. Schnur, A Handbook for Migrant Education in Iowa (Des Moines, Ia.: Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1975), pp. 11-13; State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction, This was Title I--1966, pp. 20-22, "Title I ESEA, Fiscal 1966," Box 47, Records of the Department of Public Instruction, Iowa State Archives, Des Moines, Iowa.

Action Program had found migrant parents in the north-central Iowa area reluctant to allow their young children to be placed in private homes. Shirley Sandage, still director of the Migrant Action Program in 1967, made special arrangements with the state Department of Social Welfare to allow group day care of infants for the migrant program, a practice generally prohibited by state regulations.<sup>48</sup>

In other changes made possible by increased funding that year, the adult education component became further oriented toward helping migrants find permanent jobs. In addition to basic education, MAP offered a welding class, helped arrange placements with the federal Manpower Development and Training Act job-training program, and persuaded the area Employment Service offices to remain open on occasional evenings so migrants could apply for full-year jobs and training programs. In addition, the OEO Migrant Division provided money for Sandage to train

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<sup>48</sup>Migrant Action Program, Annual Report--1967 (Mason City, Ia.: Migrant Action Program, 1967), n.p.; "\$80,716 for N. Iowa Migrants," Des Moines Register, 30 March 1967, p. 4; "Area migrant plans outlined," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 30 March 1967, p. 17; "Migrant Children Start to School," Reinbeck Courier, 8 May 1967.



migrant program personnel in Minnesota and North Dakota, indicating their full support of her methods.<sup>49</sup>

The Migrant Action Program expanded its program geographically, as well, in 1967. Through a cooperative arrangement with Migrants, Inc., of Minnesota, MAP offered day care and elementary education services to migrants in several counties in southern Minnesota through a school already serving north Iowa migrants in Buffalo Center. The Minnesota Department of Education provided a grant of \$84,102 from the state's ESEA Title I funds to underwrite the education of migrant children living in Minnesota. In exchange, the Minnesota agency operated adult basic education classes in Buffalo Center to serve Iowa migrants in that area. The two programs further exchanged health and dental services, the Minnesota Migrant Health project treating Iowa migrants in their area family health clinic and the Migrant Action Program offering dental services to Minnesota migrant families. The following year Migrants, Inc. requested

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<sup>49</sup>Migrant Action Program, Annual Report--1967 (Mason City, Ia.: Migrant Action Program, 1967), n.p.; "\$80,716 for N. Iowa Migrants," Des Moines Register, 30 March 1967, p. 4; "Area migrant plans outlined," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 30 March 1967, p. 17; "Migrant HIT Welding Under Way," Reinbeck Courier, 8 June 1967.

that MAP expand into southern Minnesota with its full array of services.<sup>50</sup>

In connection with this expansion into Minnesota, Iowa Governor Harold Hughes designated MAP the "official state agency to channel state and other government resources into programs to benefit migrants" late in 1967.<sup>51</sup> Representatives of a number of state agencies interested in migrant services joined the board of directors. These agencies included the Governor's Commission on Children and Youth, the Iowa Welfare Association, the Governor's Commission on Children and Youth, the Iowa Employment Security Commission, the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, the Iowa Catholic Conference, and the Iowa Council of Churches. At the same time, MAP expanded into the Muscatine area in 1968, offering an OEO-funded adult education program at the invitation of the Muscatine Migrant Program.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>"Set Up School For Migrants," Des Moines Register, 13 June 1967; Migrant Action Program, Annual Report--1967, n.p.

<sup>51</sup>"Expand Migrant Program To Cover Entire State," Waterloo Daily Courier, 11 January 1968, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup>"Migrant unit to extend service," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 17 November 1967, p. 13; "Migrant program grows," Mason City Globe-Gazette, 11 January 1968, p. 22; "Expand Migrant Program To Cover Entire State," Waterloo Daily Courier, 11 January 1968, p. 13; "2-State Pact on Education of Migrants," Des Moines Register, 11 January 1968, p. 3; Sandage, "Something of Substance," p. 95.

Thus, while the Muscatine Migrant Committee maintained a strong but limited program during the mid-1960s, the Migrant Action Program continued to expand with each year, adding new programs, territories, and political sponsors. The potential for conflict simmered beneath the surface; even the OEO evaluator of MAP's grant request for 1968 recognized it, noting that "the Mason City director and the Muscatine Migrant Council do not agree on issues . . . there may be some problems as time goes on."<sup>53</sup> But in fact those problems never developed, at least openly. The two agencies successfully continued to operate their programs side-by-side for the next decade. Based on widely different philosophies of how to help migrants improve their lives, both found sources of political and financial support to maintain the kinds of programs they wished to provide.

The Migrant Action Program expanded rapidly and favored new approaches and ideas. For this they received funding and support from the federal Office of Economic Opportunity Migrant Division, whose staff admired MAP's commitment to experimentation and change. The Muscatine Migrant Committee preferred to offer traditional services

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<sup>53</sup>"Statement of CAP Grant, Migrant Action Program," 1 April 1968, n.p., "Migrant Action Program," Box 757, Series 42, RG381, National Archives.

in familiar ways and found support through state and local agencies more comfortable and undoubtedly less threatened by an approach that accepted and worked within the established social services system of state and local government. The federal antipoverty effort to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers provided money for both approaches; whether one proved more effective than the other in the long term remains to be investigated.

## CONCLUSIONS

The federal assistance programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers of the 1960s emerged slowly over a period of three decades, built on the experience of the depression and war years and sustained through the inauspicious 1950s by persistent interest groups and sympathetic individuals within government. During those decades, the political strength of both opposing and supporting forces rose and fell with the rise and fall of public sympathy for the poverty of farmworkers. Yet throughout the period, particularly in the 1950s when assistance to farmworkers foundered in the face of a powerful farm lobby and public indifference, determined individuals within government played a critical role in sustaining federal involvement. Such figures as Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell and Senator Harrison A. Williams fostered a renewal of public interest and supported the research and planning that enabled reforms to take place quickly once public support reappeared.

Depression-era efforts to provide help to migrant farmworkers succeeded as long as a constituency could be gathered that felt compelled to relieve the suffering of migrant workers as portrayed by liberal advocates in the media. When public interest in poverty dissipated with

the coming of World War II, so did the constituency on which liberals in the New Deal had depended for support. The wartime labor shortage and guarantees regarding living and working conditions for foreign workers together forced some minimum standards for farmworkers and assistance in the form of transportation and subsistence. But when the war program ended, the reasons for assisting migrants disappeared and American farmworkers returned to a situation in which they lived and worked without any government protections or support.

Conservative reaction to the liberal "excesses" of the New Deal neutralized the remaining support for federal assistance to migrant labor in the Democratic administration and among the public in the immediate post-war period. The influence in Congress of such farm organizations as the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Council of Farmers Cooperatives reached their apogee during the decade following the war. Fears of recurring food shortages, both immediately after World War II and with the outbreak of the Korean War helped farm employers convince legislators that they needed imported farm labor to fill their labor needs. Truman and other members of his administration placated migrant advocates in government and voluntary religious and social welfare associations by sponsoring periodic

studies of the needs of migrant labor. But Congress and the administration unflinchingly ignored the recommendations of these studies and favored farm employers through the legislative establishment of a permanent Mexican farm labor supply program.

Nevertheless, the operation of that farm labor supply program, the bracero program, held the seeds for its own demise. Migrant advocates could point to the inequity of guaranteeing minimum living and working conditions for foreign workers when the federal government offered no protections to domestic farmworkers. Such arguments gained ground as the latter part of the decade of the 1950s witnessed a return of liberal interest in the question of poverty in the United States. In sympathy with this thinking, Eisenhower's Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell began to enforce the protection of domestic farmworkers written into the bracero program. Although his actions outraged organized agriculture and its federal government allies in the Department of Agriculture and on the congressional agriculture committees, a rising tide of public interest in social reform sustained his efforts.

Drawing on the studies of migrant labor needs commissioned by the Truman administration, and those conducted by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor

during the mid-1950s, the more liberal Senate elected in 1958 began to consider ways in which the federal government might assist domestic farmworkers. An indication of this renewed interest, the Senate created a Subcommittee on Migratory Labor chaired by Senator Harrison A. Williams that studied and publicized conditions for farmworkers and regularly submitted legislation to correct them. The election of Kennedy as President consolidated liberal strength in the federal government and indicated a readiness for government-sponsored social and economic reform. Public interest in the condition of migrants solidified following the airing of the television documentary Harvest of Shame just weeks after the election in November 1960. The first federal assistance program for migrant farmworkers passed during the Kennedy administration in 1962 and further bills followed in every year of Johnson's presidency.

Although the liberalism of the 1960s witnessed the establishment of a series of federal social service assistance programs for migrant farmworkers, attempts to extend support of social assistance to support of collective bargaining failed. By 1968, union organizing among farmworkers in California had led to polarization of public opinion on the question of farmworker legislation. Education, health care, and job-training



did not threaten power relations in agriculture; unionization and collective bargaining did. Moreover, public sympathy with the plight of the poor in America had begun to dissipate with increasing violence in the civil rights and student movements and the rise of the antiwar movement. Divided views on the wisdom of federal involvement thwarted attempts at further extension of federal assistance to migrants by the end of the Johnson period.

The political rollercoaster that marked the emergence of federal assistance programs for farmworkers mirrors the rise and fall of other liberal efforts to establish federal aid for the disadvantaged in American society, particularly the movements for the equality of blacks and other minorities. The New Deal witnessed the beginning of federal interest in improving conditions. The priorities of war during the early 1940s diluted support for such improvements, but the heavy involvement of government in the war effort sustained what progress had been made. The retreat from liberalism and federal involvement in American society during the decade immediately following the war overwhelmed the power of activists to accomplish any advance, but by the end of the 1950s the return of liberalism and interest in social reform reignited the movements on hold since the war.

Although the pace of change in the early 1960s remained disappointingly slow for those in favor of liberal social change, the rapid passage of civil rights and antipoverty legislation after 1963 inspired increasing demands. By 1968 a polarization had developed, ending the possibilities for compromise available in the mid-1960s and signaling the likelihood of a renewed retreat from social reform efforts.

In addition to reaffirming the outlines of the rise and fall of liberal social reform in post-World War II America, this study suggests that the years from 1945 to 1958 served as an incubation period during which a critique of American society's neglect of less-advantaged groups quietly but deliberately developed. This critique became the agenda available for new federal social policies when the political climate changed in 1960. In the case of migrant farmworkers, the regulatory actions of Secretary of Labor James Mitchell in the late 1950s and the legislative proposals of Senator Harrison Williams in the early 1960s drew directly from the reports of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor and the President's Commission on Migratory Labor, both prepared during the early to mid-1950s. These actions and proposals subsequently became part of the agenda of the war on poverty in the mid-1960s. Thus, the federal

assistance programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers that finally emerged in the 1960s depended for their substance on the recommendations for improving farmworker conditions developed in the late 1940s and 1950s.

A critical change occurred in the late 1950s in the way in which decisions about migrant farmworkers were made within government that both accompanied the rise of liberal leadership on farmworker issues and helped to provide that leadership with the political power to achieve its reforms. This change supports the generally accepted contention of agricultural historians that farmers lost political power in government as an increasingly urban and liberal population began to view agricultural interests as a barrier to reform. At the urging of James Mitchell, Eisenhower had appointed the Secretary of Labor to chair the President's Committee on Migratory Labor in 1954. The Labor Secretary already held responsibility for the operations of the foreign farm labor supply program; with this appointment, the administration acknowledged the Department of Labor as the center of policy development for domestic migrant farmworkers as well. Mitchell used that position, and his powers under Public Law 78, to accomplish some limited federal assistance to domestic migrants over the

objections of the Department of Agriculture and the congressional agriculture committees.

A newly liberal Senate accomplished a similar reorganization in 1959 that transferred jurisdiction over migrant farm labor questions from the Agriculture Committee to the new Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Legislative proposals for federal migrant assistance programs and minimum labor standards no longer required the approval of the Agriculture Committee before reaching the Senate floor. This reorganization greatly reduced the ability of farm organizations to alter or kill farm labor initiatives that threatened employer control of the farm labor supply system. Thus, by the end of the 1950s, the federal labor establishment, with interests in liberal reform of the farm labor situation, had wrested political control of that issue from the agriculture establishment. Although agricultural interests in government did not lose all power to influence decisions on farm labor questions, they did lose their ability to manage the terms of their discussion. Coupled with the more general public interest in social reform by the end of the 1950s, these changes severely curtailed the political power of farm employers.

The final conclusion of this study arises from examination of implementation of federal assistance programs in Iowa. Although this investigation does not evaluate the effectiveness of Iowa's two quite different programs for migrant farmworkers, it does illustrate that agencies which offered programs funded from federal sources managed to maintain substantial local control through creative use of overlapping federal authorities. Because the federal government offered grants to support state and local migrant assistance through more than one program, agencies could apply for support to whichever agency suited their local needs and program philosophies.

For example, the Migrant Action Program came to depend for most of its funds on the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) Migrant Division. The Migrant Division stressed a comprehensive approach to providing needed services to migrant workers and their families through sympathetic government and private nonprofit agencies, thereby circumventing local power structures that had neglected migrants in the past. The Migrant Action Program (MAP) shared this philosophy. Its program director maintained a close relationship with the OEO project officer and both accepted and suggested ideas to expand its services across a wide area of north-central Iowa and into neighboring states. With its support

primarily based on a relationship with the federal government, the program consciously crossed local and state government boundaries in providing programs. As a result, MAP weakened its ties to local communities and state government and became increasingly dependent on federal funding for its survival.

The Muscatine Migrant Committee, in contrast, offered migrant services in a clearly defined four-county area that did not change for the entire decade covered by this study. The Committee maintained strong ties to the community of Muscatine and continued to receive substantial support from local churches throughout the period. It supplemented its federally funded education, day care, and health services with recreational and religious offerings, unlike MAP, which had given up its recreational offerings and religious ties within a year of its organization. Although the Muscatine Migrant Committee received funds from the OEO Migrant Division for two years, its preference for a more traditional approach to services for migrants and its disinclination to challenge established authority led to a loss of those funds. When the Muscatine program lost its OEO funding, however, the state Department of Public Instruction replaced the money to operate its educational program with state-administered federal funds under Title I of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Muscatine program's traditional approach to migrant services did not challenge established authority, making it an appealing agency for the state school system to fund, unlike the Migrant Action Program, which never received Title I funds from Iowa.

Further state and local studies must be made before these observations of the ways in which local agencies in Iowa implemented migrant assistance programs can be considered representative. Yet on their own they offer some suggestive considerations about the distance that can develop between federal legislative intentions and programs on the local level. Those differences can be constructive or destructive, depending on one's perspective. In the case of migrant assistance programs, supporters of the recommendations for social and political change advanced by liberals in government and private advocacy organizations would be disappointed to see that their legislation could provide for continuation of traditional programs like that in Muscatine. Opponents of such change, on the other hand, would find such uses of migrant assistance funds encouraging as a counter to threatening programs like MAP that actually proposed to carry out the expansive changes supporters of federal migrant assistance had advocated for thirty

years. This flexibility in migrant assistance programs as they took form on the local level suggests a characteristic perhaps inherent in reform efforts through the American federal system: dispersion of power among many levels of government can protect local communities against abrupt change by moderating comprehensive reforms considered too radical by established authorities.

Overall, however, the position of migrant agricultural workers in American society improved during the post-World War II period and federal assistance programs could claim much credit for that change. By 1968, migrant farmworkers had access to health care, day care, educational opportunities from elementary school through the community college level, and improved standards for housing and sanitation. Crew leader registration requirements had ended some of the exploitation of individual migrants and transportation safety regulations curtailed the number of fatal accidents stemming from transportation of migrants to worksites. Failure to include most migrant and seasonal farmworkers in major labor standards and protection legislation kept seasonal farmworkers economically insecure, but the social programs and safety regulations at least offered a measure of improvement in these workers' daily lives.



Congress and subsequent presidential administrations have made changes in federal farmworker programs over the last two decades, but the approach developed in the 1950s and 1960s has remained the model. Such social programs as health care and educational opportunities garner support even from conservative administrations. The thrust remains to improve the individual and offer him or her a path out of the migrant stream, rather than to improve the working conditions and economic return for seasonal employment in agriculture. Individual success stories abound, but as the 1990 public television documentary New Harvest: Old Shame makes clear, for those who cannot escape, the poverty and insecurity of migrant and seasonal farm work remains little changed since 1945. Although we should not disregard the accomplishments of these programs for the individuals they have aided, we also must not lose sight of the fact that they have not altered the underlying economic and political structures that allow this system to persist.

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