FINAL REPORT
OF THE
FARM WORKERS OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

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Final Report

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P R E F A C E

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This report is the result of a team effort by John Flynn, Harold Kachigian, Peter Lauwerys, Christopher Paige, Fred Roske and Kirke Wilson on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee's Farm Workers Opportunity Project.

J U L Y , 1 9 6 7

"NOW I CAN TALK BACK"

.....comments from a graduate trainee of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project.

"I used to work in the fields and the foreman would say things against me out loud to the rest of the crew," a graduate trainee said. "He was talking English and I couldn't answer him back one word. I was red-faced and frustrated."

The farm worker trainee, once frustrated because he could not defend himself against the surly foreman, answered for himself, but also symbolically for his comrades. He had gained the means, English, to counter his boss in the most elementary way.

"Now I know English," the worker said. "Now I can talk back."

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A special appendix section has been prepared as a separate portion of this report. This appendix section includes comprehensive reports on the medical screening and special testing programs of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. The appendix also contains statistics on the trainees in the Project and copies of news articles concerning the program.

Note: Comprehensive tables of contents (printed on blue pages) precede each chapter.

A Mexican-American trainee concentrates on his studies while attending basic education classes, October, 1966.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND TO THE FARM LABOR PROBLEM IN CALIFORNIA AND VENTURA COUNTY

CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

Throughout its history, agriculture in California has been characterized by crop specialization, concentration of land ownership in a few large producers, and reliance on a large force of seasonal farm workers. These three major factors, along with the natural gifts of soil, climate and water, have combined to create an industry whose annual product exceeds $3.5 billion.

The progress of the agricultural industry in California has been possible because of the availability of a cheap, unorganized but highly productive labor force. This force has generally been in abundant supply. Successive waves of immigration, supplemented by domestic migration, have provided a farm labor surplus since the 1880's. During wartime, when labor demand exceeded supply, various emergency supplemental labor schemes have been used to augment the labor supply. The bracero program, which was terminated in December 1964, was initiated during World War II and again during the Korean conflict to recruit foreign nationals to work in American agriculture.

While the industry has prospered, the individual farm worker has suffered low wages, poor working conditions, and a variety of indignities which made him the subject of a score of governmental and private investigations. The farm worker has seen well-meaning public and private efforts on his behalf come and go while the basic fact of his situation has remained unchanged. In relation to other industrial employment, his situation has gotten progressively worse.

The agricultural labor market developed around a continued surplus of temporary workers. These workers appeared at the harvest and vanished until the next year. The industry encouraged this system and constantly pressed for additional labor to ensure the surplus that would perpetuate low wages. As twentieth century social legislation was passed protecting the rights of industrial employees, the agricultural industry carefully exempted itself and its employees. A combination of desperate self-protection by the industry and apathy by the public has allowed the farm worker to be legally

discriminated against and forced to the fringe of society.

The termination of the bracero program in 1964 has provided a fresh opportunity for progress in developing an efficient and socially acceptable agricultural labor market which will benefit society, the industry and the farm worker.

2. The Bracero System

No single event in the history of farm labor in California was as destructive to change in California agriculture as the enactment of Public Law 78 in 1951. Passed as an emergency measure to authorize the use of supplemental labor during the Korean conflict, the bracero program provided a guaranteed labor supply which essentially removed labor from consideration as a factor in agricultural production. Unlike water or fertilizer, labor became an automatic commodity guaranteed, upon request, by an agency of the United States Government. As a 1963 Gianinni Foundation report describes it, ". . . the Mexican contract (Bracero) labor source is an important one to California agriculture, both in terms of the manpower it contributes and also in terms of the insurance it provides against uncertainty of labor supply."[1]

Before braceros were made available to any employer, the Department of Labor had to certify that a labor shortage existed and that the use of foreign nationals would not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of domestic farm workers. In practice this meant that if preseason wage rates offered by growers did not attract sufficient domestic workers, the government would furnish braceros at the "prevailing" wage. In crops where the preseason scale attracted no domestic labor, there would be no actual prevailing wage. The wage which was offered by farmers and rejected by domestic labor became the wage which prevailed. Of 202 wage surveys in California in 1961, 52 were in crop areas which were so dominated by braceros that the government could not find a wage paid to domestic workers.

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1. Seasonal Labor in California, Division of Agricultural Sciences, University of California, Berkeley, March 1963, p. VI.

CONTRACT MEXICAN NATIONAL FARM WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE
UNDER P. L. 78
Selected Years - 1951 to 1964

	MAXIMUM EMPLOYED	MINIMUM EMPLOYED
1951	36,200	12,400
1954	51,200	20,600
1956	100,800	26,600
1960	74,250	27,300
1964	63,150	10,300

The net effect of this federally administered wage system was to freeze wages. In 70% of the 471 areas which used braceros during the period 1953 to 1959, farm wages either declined or remained constant.

It was absurd to hold, as the employers and the governmental agencies did, that the availability of an inexhaustible supply of labor did not directly depress wages. The scandal was not in the spectacular and sordid violations of the law which opponents publicized, but in the fact that the United States government was operating a farm labor program in the labor market which eliminated competition and prevented improvement. Administrative elimination of abuses and indignities did not remove the adverse effect which was implicit in such a program. The bracero period, 1951 to 1964, was one during which progress was nearly stopped. Wages were fixed, working conditions did not change, the labor market was frozen at the point in history when the federal government guaranteed labor on the request of the producer. By the early 1960's, farm workers and their sympathizers were not asking for social progress, but for a return to the anarchy of 1950 before the availability of contract workers made progress impossible. The hope was not that public social policy would intervene in a market between vastly unequal forces, but only that the government refrain from protecting the employer from the free labor market system.

The bracero interregnum not only stabilized the labor force but it reinforced an artificial economic structure by allowing accommodations based on bracero labor.

Patterns of cultivation and labor use were changed to take advantage of this labor subsidy. Inefficient use of labor was encouraged by a system which made labor an unlimited resource protected by federal regulation against any free-market pressures of supply and demand.

The solution became the problem. The emergency labor force to fill wartime shortages became the fundamental obstacle which prevented improvement and change. By fixing conditions and wages at 1951 levels, the program encouraged migration of domestic workers out of bracero dominated crops. Family housing could then be replaced by facilities for organized groups of single men. The program was self-perpetuating as farmers were given an incentive to grow crops with heavy hand labor demands. Not only crops, but areas became bracero dominated. The system created a need for itself. Increased use of nationals created a pattern of dependence and inflexibility on the part of the employers. Even the non-user was always protected with the knowledge that he could get nationals if domestics were not available at the wage he wanted to pay.

Perhaps the most disastrous result of the bracero system was public acceptance of the concept that the government is responsible for supplying labor to the agricultural industry. The idea was not new. Growers have always been able to panic local officials with the threat of crop loss. School dates, for instance, are often changed at the request of growers to provide youth for the temporary labor force.

Welfare recipients, jail inmates, boy scouts, service clubs and church groups are sometimes mobilized in a frenzy of pious public concern about the local agricultural economy. Government agencies had acknowledged the importance of agriculture to the national economy during wartime by supplying prisoners of war, jail inmates and other involuntary labor to the industry. The five years during which the Farm Placement Service was supervised by county farm advisors, reinforced the notion that the public agency was to serve the farmer. The bracero system elevated local and emergency concerns to national policy. Without noticeable opposition, it was established, apparently forever, that it is the responsibility of the United States government to provide

whatever labor may be required by the agricultural industry without regard to any other considerations.

The bracero premise still exists. The major activity of governmental agencies since the 1964 termination of the bracero system has been to recruit labor for agriculture. Although supplemental labor is more difficult to justify and wages have increased, the major premise remains. Agricultural labor supply is a public responsibility.

3. Termination of the Bracero Program

By 1964, the peak number of braceros used had declined from a high of 100,800 in 1956 to 63,150. Northern congressmen, faced with unemployment in their districts, were not willing to support an extension. Mechanization in the cotton harvest reduced support from Southern congressmen who previously had benefitted from bracero labor. The burden of extension rested with a small group of special-interest representatives from the Southwest. Arrayed against these were religious, trade union and consumer groups. Even Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz conceded in 1963 that under the bracero system, "domestic agricultural workers found themselves competing for available job opportunities with an almost inexhaustible supply of workers from areas where wages and working conditions were substantially less favorable than those which prevailed in this country."

A last minute reprieve in 1963 served notice on agricultural employers that termination was imminent. In 1964, Congress refused to extend the program.

The bracero program was a short-run expedient to solve farm labor uncertainty during the Korean War. It was not intended as a permanent solution to uncertainty in the farm labor market. The operation of the program for fourteen years only ensured that no permanent solution to the program would be attempted. The 1964 termination will allow agriculture to seek a permanent solution to its labor problems.

4. Since the Bracero - The Transition

Although publicized as an abrupt termination of foreign labor importation, the two years since the end of the bracero program are perhaps more accurately described as a controlled transition to a domestic labor force. The major effect of termination was to reduce the utilization of supplemental workers by convincing employers that braceros would only be available for situations of demonstrable need. The Secretary of Labor in announcing the impending termination pointed to "accumulating evidence that U.S. workers will be available to do this work if decent working conditions are provided and if it is paid for on terms in line with those for other work that is equally hard and unpleasant."[2] With this premise, the Secretary established wage and recruiting standards which forced employers to exhaust the domestic labor force before requesting supplemental workers. Secretary Wirtz appointed a panel of three prominent California professors to assist him in reviewing the requests for supplemental workers. This panel held public hearings and supervised the year of transition.

The actual utilization of braceros was limited to a few crops and areas which had been nearly totally dependent on bracero labor. Overall there was a 91% reduction in the amount of bracero labor in California. In the Salinas Valley and the tomato harvest of the San Joaquin delta, braceros were used although in sharply reduced numbers.

Mechanization and more efficient utilization of the domestic labor force allowed the transition to occur with only a slight increase in employment of domestic farm workers. Contrasted to grower estimates that it would take three or more domestic workers to replace a bracero, the statistics indicate that each new domestic worker replaced 2¼ braceros.[3]

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2. California Farm Labor Panel, Final Report to Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz (Los Angeles, 1965), p. 4.
3. Ibid, p. 7.

SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

Seasonal Man Years of Foreign and Domestic Labor 1959-65

	TOTAL	DOMESTIC	DOMESTIC % of TOTAL	CONTRACT FOREIGN	FOREIGN % of TOTAL
1959-64 average	136,280	100,500	73.7	35,780	26.3
1965	118,200	115,000	97.3	3,200	2.7

The bracero gap of 32,580 man years of seasonal farm labor was replaced by 14,500 man years of domestic labor and improved efficiency and productivity.

Most of the crops which had previously been bracero dominated used contract foreign workers for a brief period early in the year. By the time of the appointment of the California Farm Labor Panel, these crops had completed the transition to a domestic labor force.

DOMESTIC WORKERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE SEASONAL FARM LABOR FORCE IN CALIFORNIA [4]

CROP	1961 - 1964 AVERAGE	1965
Statewide	73.7%	97.3%
Tomatoes (canning)	21.1%	67.4%
Strawberries	25.6%	89.0%
Lettuce	28.9%	98.3%
Valencia oranges	33.5%	100.0%
Navel oranges	81.4%	99.5%
Lemons	19.6%	97.7%
Melons	47.3%	100.0%
Asparagus	51.3%	90.8%

The second year after the termination of Public Law 78 saw further reduction in the numbers of Mexican contract workers admitted to California. According to Department of Labor officials, only 8775 braceros were approved for California during 1966. The

4. Ibid., pp. 7, 15, 17, 19, 21-24, 26, 27.

crops which required foreign workers were strawberries 2000, brussels sprouts 775, and tomatoes for processing 6000.

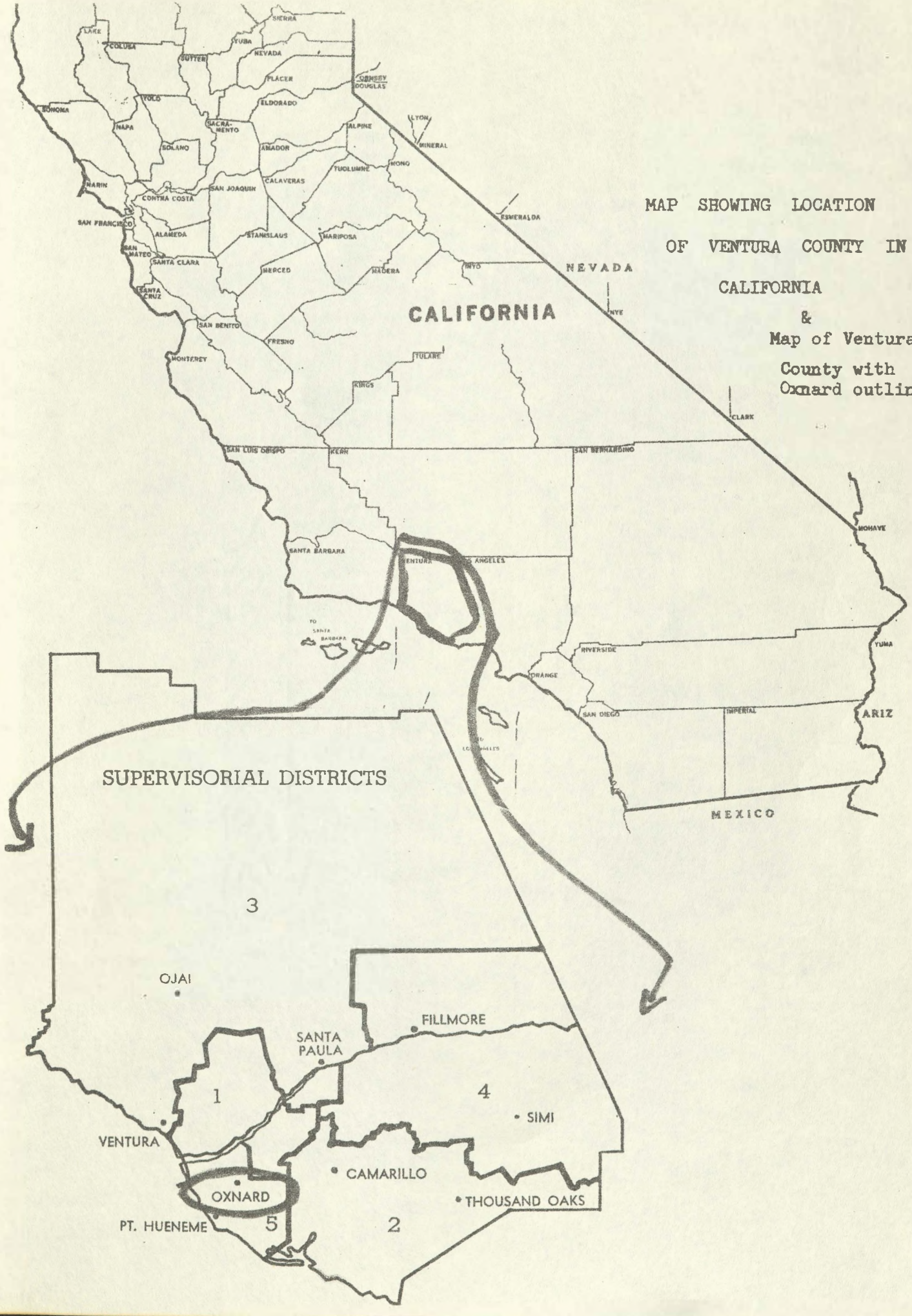
The Southern California citrus industry refused to meet the criteria established by the Secretary of Labor and thus chose to make itself ineligible for braceros. Using a variety of incentives, the industry was able quickly to convert to a reliable non-bracero labor force.

Governmental agencies intensified and augmented their recruitment programs with some success. Youth crews were organized and imported from other states. Manpower Development Training Programs were used to prepare recruits for the hardships of farm work. Training programs, like the one at Davis to train tomato pickers, generally reflected the attitude that farm work is somehow contemptible and that the purpose of training should be to prepare the potential farm worker for the rigors of the job.

In training and recruiting, it continued to be public social policy to accept the farm labor market as inadequate to meet needs and to attempt to deliver whatever human raw material the agricultural industry demanded. Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, with his "adverse effect" criteria, stimulated a quick and substantial improvement in wages. Once criteria were satisfied, the Department of Labor reverted to its previous role as agent for an industry which refuses to attract and hold its own labor supply. Wirtz was courageous and effective in establishing a policy and enforcing it. The misfortune is that the conceptual breakthrough did not materialize which would have freed government from the responsibility for sustaining an inefficient and non-competitive labor market.

5. Agriculture in Ventura County, California

Despite the economic importance of government and military installations, valuable petroleum deposits, and a continuous urbanization and industrialization, agriculture remains the "big business" in coastal Ventura County, California. The


MAP SHOWING LOCATION
OF VENTURA COUNTY IN
CALIFORNIA
&
Map of Ventura
County with
Oxnard outlined.
CALIFORNIA
NEVADA
MEXICO
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS
3
1
4
5
2
OJAI
SANTA PAULA
FILLMORE
VENTURA
SIMI
CAMARILLO
OXNARD
THOUSAND OAKS
PT. HUENEME
SIERRA
LAKE
COLUSA
YUBA
SUTTER
NEVADA
PLACER
SIERRA
DOUGLAS
YOLO
ELDORADO
SONOMA
NAPA
SACRAMENTO
ALPINE
LYON
MINERAL
SOLANO
AMADOR
TUOLUMNE
MONO
MARIN
CALAVERAS
SAN JOAQUIN
CONTRA COSTA
ESMERALDA
SAN FRANCISCO
ALAMEDA
STANISLAUS
MARIPOSA
SAN MATEO
SANTA CLARA
MERCED
MADERA
INYO
SANTA CRUZ
NYE
SAN BENITO
FRESNO
MONTEREY
TULARE
KINGS
CLARK
SAN LUIS OBISPO
KERN
SAN BERNARDINO
MOHAVE
SANTA BARBARA
VENTURA
LOS ANGELES
YUMA
RIVERSIDE
ORANGE
SAN DIEGO
IMPERIAL
ARIZ

Ventura County Agriculture Commissioner in his 1966 annual report, states that total value of county farm products was at a record $147 million, far more than twice the $61 million level of 16 years before. The 1966 standing put Ventura County tenth among farm counties in California and fifteenth nationwide. The county ranked seventh among all U.S. counties in value of vegetables harvested and in value of fruit and nuts sold. It led the nation in lemon production, ranked seventh nationally in orange tonnage and tenth in tomato acreage. The subdivision spillover from neighboring Los Angeles County is rapidly consuming Ventura County's choice farm soil and the preceding crop values are significantly drawn from successively shrinking acreage. But University of California specialists maintain that even in ten years some 100,000 acres will remain under cultivation in the county as opposed to a high of 521,000 acres 20 years ago, which had shrunk to 118,000 by 1965. The number of farms peaked in 1950 at 2,050 and has trickled to 1,400 each of an average of 250 acres. A few major citrus producers, however, like Limoneira Ranch and Rancho Sespe, run into the tens of thousands of acres and Sespe has 200 houses to house its farm worker families.

The agricultural industry of Ventura County became a stronghold of the bracero system. Upwards of ninety percent of the lemon crop was traditionally harvested by braceros. Further Mexican contract workers were used throughout the year, not just during two or three summer months.

6. Political Strength of Agribusiness in Ventura County

With such substantial financial contribution to California's and the nation's agriculture, Ventura County has produced a number of key figures in the power structure of local and state government and in Congress. The extent of interrelationship is too complicated and vast to define here. But as an example, John V. Newman of Ventura, a member and former president of the Sunkist board of directors, also was among the founders and first president of the Council of California Growers, a new but inestimably

powerful public relations and political force in California and Washington. The Council led the fight to keep the bracero system. The district's Republican (13th district) congressman, Charles Teague, is a member of a pioneer Ventura County family heavily involved in Sunkist Corporation lemon production and is on the House Agriculture Committee.

A two-term member of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, John C. Montgomery, is a major county landholder and citrus-cattle rancher in two states and president of Montgomery Land Company. Montgomery, a Republican, publicly assailed U.S. Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz' handling of the expiration of the bracero program and subsequent reluctance to allow foreign workers into the United States. Another supervisor, Democrat H. F. Robinson of Ventura, an insurance agent, was appointed by a unanimous board to go to Washington early in 1965 to lobby with Secretary Wirtz to allow braceros to pick Ventura County crops. Montgomery has recently been appointed State Director of Social Welfare in the new California State Administration under Governor Ronald Reagan.

Governor Reagan's administration has also sought another major appointee from among the Ventura County agribusiness establishment. William Tolbert, manager of the Ventura County Citrus Growers' Committee, has been appointed the administration's farm labor chief. Tolbert began his farm labor administration as a recruiter of foreign workers during World War II for President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. As labor procurer and dispenser for Ventura County's citrus establishment, Tolbert was among the most vocal protestors and doomsayers at the end of the bracero system. But when lawyer Howard Richards, representing the National Farm Workers Association, approached Tolbert in September 1964 and offered him a contract for domestic workers, Tolbert steered away, protesting he had "no such authority to sign such a contract." Ventura County agriculture, largely under the executive leadership of Tolbert and Jesse Frye, then manager of the Ventura County Farm Labor Association, was among the six counties in the state that predominantly relied on bracero labor.

The most vocal and perhaps most powerful local farm force in Ventura County, besides and in addition to the major individual ranchers, is the Ventura County Farm Bureau. The bureau executive secretary, Al Tiffany, is an active lobbyist in local government circles and the most familiar farm public relations agent, with a periodical publication circulating countywide and a daily early morning radio program offering weather, news and comment from the farmers' viewpoint. A recent episode of intimacy with county government illustrates Tiffany's ties with, for instance, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. The five-man Board of Supervisors became angered at press coverage after they fired the county public works director after a near-scandal of alleged laxity of building inspection in the fast-growing urbanizing east end of the county. It was announced that Tiffany, a man of considerable radio broadcasting experience, would broadcast a weekly "news" program "giving the county's point of view" and be paid $500 monthly for it. The Ventura Star-Free Press editorialized against such spending of public funds and warned of increasing bureaucracy. But only after the board decided against the expenditure did that paper editorialize on the more significant aspect, the inadvisability of hiring Tiffany, a man so closely linked to agriculture, to do the county's public relations too.

The president of the Farm Bureau, Robert S. Mills, is manager of Bell Ranch in Somis, a major holding of Berylwood Investment Company. Berylwood, a holding of more than 10,000 acres in the Las Posas, Little Simi and Simi Valleys of southeastern Ventura County, comprises the Bard family interests dating back to the 19th century. The holdings accumulated under the late U.S. Senator Thomas Bard, who opposed the "radical" reformist and progressive moves of his fellow Republicans during his single term from 1898 to 1906. The Farm Bureau's stand on various non-farm issues testifies to the appeal it offers a certain dimension of landed Ventura County society. The very fact that the Farm Bureau issues such resolutions in public is, we believe, significant.

As stated in an enclosed local news story, the bureau believes in "the American capitalistic, private, competitive enterprise system . . . opposes communism and

socialism as 'all forms of collectivism destructive of human liberty' . . . supports a reduction in government spending . . . opposes compulsory unionism . . . favors prayers in schools."

The Ventura County Taxpayers Association, with 500 members representing better than half the assessed valuation in Ventura County, is another influential force in the county. Formed eight years ago by a Ventura industrialist, the association membership overlaps significantly with other established organizations, especially the Farm Bureau. The association president, Robert Hardison, is of a longtime local citrus ranching family. William F. Snow, first vice-president, is a top official in Berylwood Investment Company, which also employs Mills, the Farm Bureau president. Second vice-president David L. Strathearn is a similarly well-to-do rancher and principal in Diversa Inc., a major southwest U.S. investment and speculation firm. Lawyer William Lucking, secretary-treasurer, plays leading roles in Republican political campaigns in Ventura County. Another of the 11-man board is David J. Donlan, a member of a pioneer Oxnard ranching, investment and real estate development family.

7. The Farm Worker in Ventura County

The Ventura County farm worker is of several cultural social types. Most are and have traditionally been Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. Before the end of the bracero system, December 31, 1964, some 6,000 Mexicans had been imported during peak harvest months to help pick the citrus and vegetable crops. Since then, the slack of the defunct bracero program has been taken up by domestic workers, local, immigrant (green card) and migrant. While brought up in Mexico in the singular Mexican culture, these individuals and families are occupying a unique transition phase in cultural development.

VENTURA COUNTY SEASONAL FARM LABOR STATISTICS[5]

COMPOSITION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKER FORCE
PRE- AND POST- BRACERO

1st week of April	Total Seasonal	Contract Foreign	DOMESTIC Inter-State	DOMESTIC Intra-State	DOMESTIC Local
1964	7250	3270 (3490 Mexican 180 Japanese)	450	600	2530
1965	4580	0	300	2200	2080
1966	5770	0	240	2370	3160
1967	5460	0	1550	1210	2700

SEASONAL FARM LABOR PEAKS:

WEEK ENDING:	TOTAL:	
July 18, 1964	6870	(3700 Domestic) (3170 Foreign Contract)
July 17, 1965	7130	(All Domestic)
July 16, 1966	7360	(All Domestic)

Ventura County probably has a "typical" seasonal and migrant farm worker population for California and the Southwest. Many of these farm workers are "green-carders" or immigrants from Mexico. Many of the workers are Spanish-speaking American citizens. According to local employment officials, growers and farm labor contractors, possibly ninety percent of the seasonal and migrant labor force in Ventura County is Spanish speaking or of Mexican extraction. This ethnic breakdown of the farm labor population was reflected in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project which took in ninety percent Spanish-surname farm workers.

"Green-card" immigrants, however, are not braceros. ("Green-cards" are the alien registration cards given to any legal immigrant upon entry into the United States.) Immigrants are permanent residents, nominally at least, of the United States, and have

5. Statistics from California Department of Employment, Weekly Farm Labor Reports.

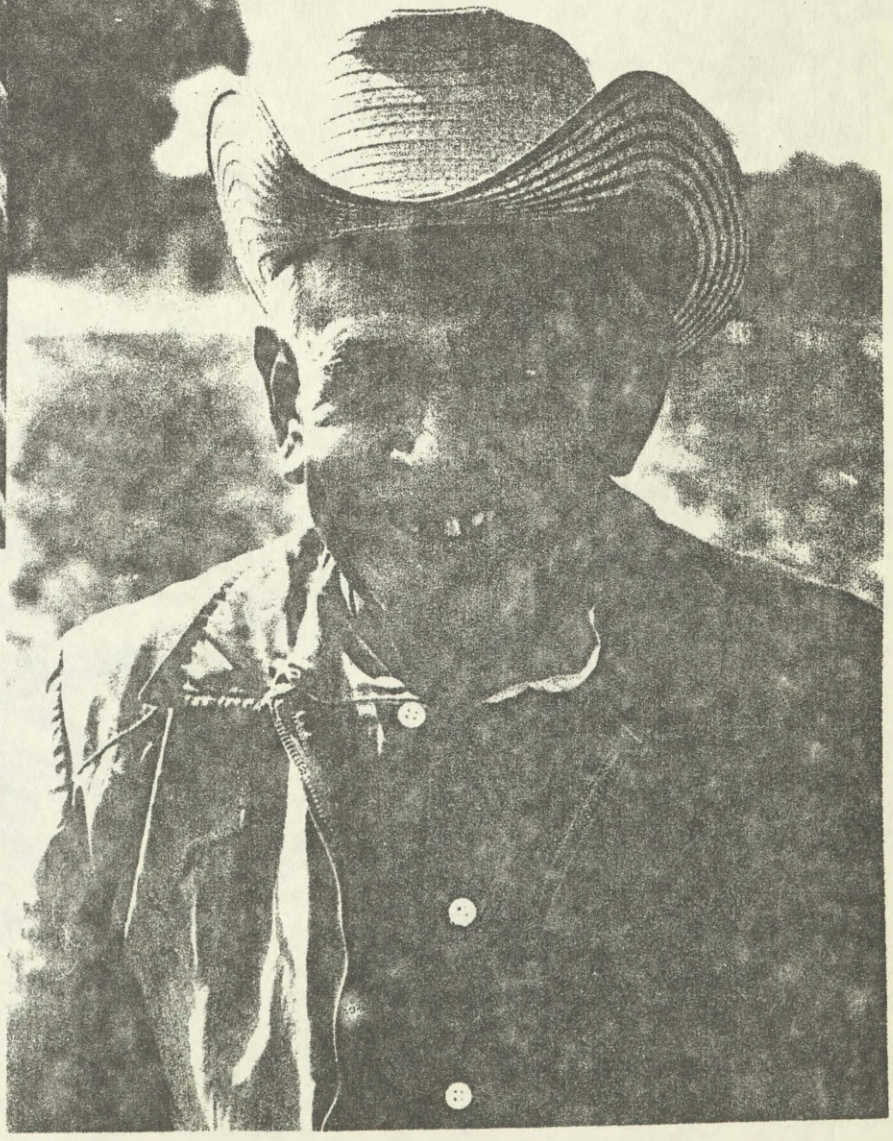
the same legal and constitutional protections and immunities as citizens. Many bring their families to permanent homes in this country though many more, at least among the farm worker segment of the population, appear to make a habit of working for harvests here and moving back to homes in Mexico for winter months and for the holidays. Statistics on this group are scarce.

California Department of Employment officials, who act as agents for U.S. Labor Secretary W. Willard Wirtz in certification of "green-card" immigrants for farm labor in California, say they have certified virtually no additional such immigrants in the past six years. George Geary, California deputy chief of farm labor, told a Farm Workers Opportunity Project officer that "We don't need (green-carders) anymore. We're having a hard enough time keeping the ones we have at work. For five years the door has been shut to them. We know we have a surplus of farm labor for year-round work." Of 66 requests for green-card status since November 1966 the state granted only one, Geary said. These Mexican immigrants, permanent U.S. aliens, were counted at 359,347 in California by the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service January registrations in 1967. In addition, uncounted thousands of others returning late from Mexico for the harvest season were not included in the January compulsory registration totals. The Mexican alien total in California is the greatest alien registration in any state in the nation.

While the immigrant often changes his residence between two countries, he also has a greater social and economic stake in the United States society since he is free to come and go as he chooses. Braceros were restricted in their movement by rigid contracts. Immigrants, therefore, seem to be fertile ground for community organization and legitimate and needy targets for war on poverty, training and basic education programs.

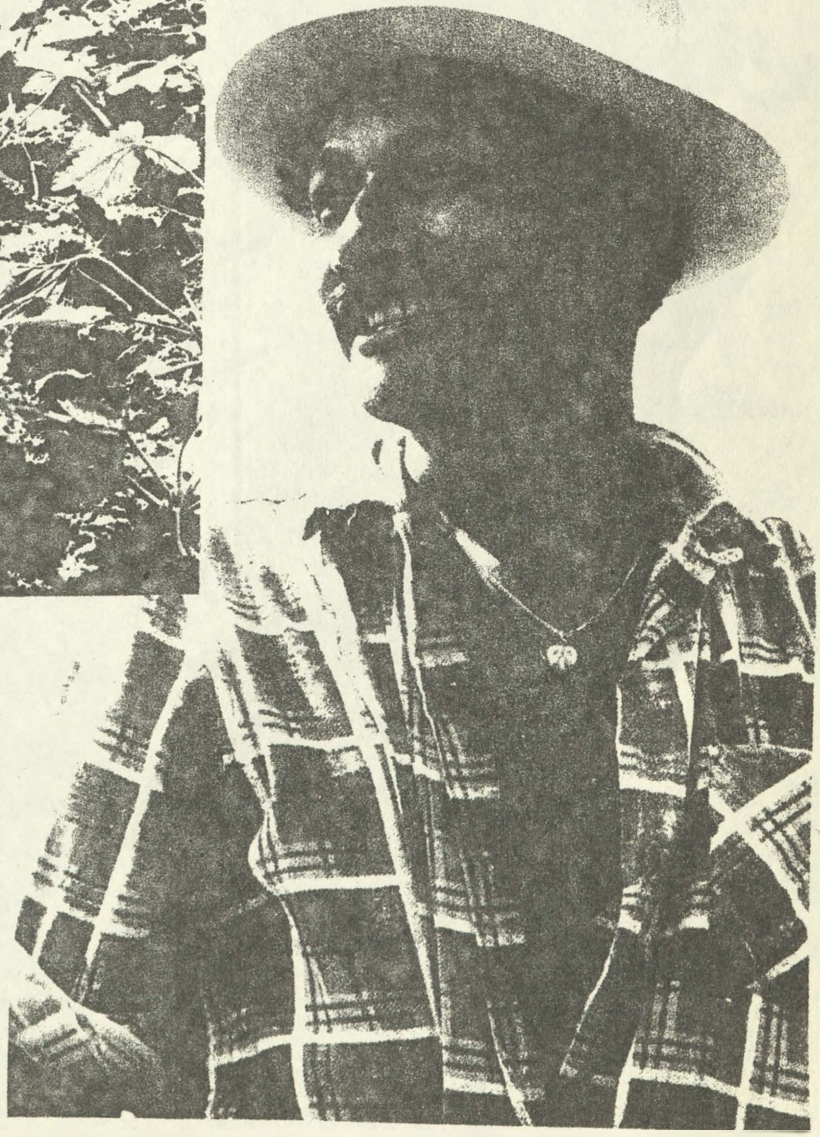
Mexican-American seasonal farm workers work alongside "green card" immigrants from Mexico in the strawberry fields of Ventura County California.

Young and old, men and women, work long hours at "stoop" or "squat" farm labor. Ventura County strawberry fields, October, 1966.



Age and good humor show on the faces of Ventura County farm workers, Fall, 1966.

Seasonal and migrant farm workers, such as these two Mexican-Americans, made up the trainee group in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project.



CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARM WORKERS OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

CHAPTER II

1. Introduction

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was developed during 1964 and early 1965 in the midst of the "Farm Labor Revolution." Evolutionary in design rather than revolutionary, the Project evoked considerable political opposition. The Project's developmental life, from conception to implementation of a training program, was therefore drawn out over more than a year. Opposition to the development of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project arose from many quarters. It is therefore important to understand the attitudes and philosophies that gave rise to the resistance that almost prevented the establishment of this experimental and demonstration manpower program.

This chapter will attempt to give an understanding to the reader of the attitudes and behavior of the participating agencies in the Project. The three local agencies that originally cooperated with the Project were the Oxnard Union High School District, the California Department of Employment (through its Oxnard Farm Labor Office), and the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Inc. At a later date (mid-1966) the American Friends Service Committee sponsored a counseling and testing project in cooperation with the Oxnard Union High School District. However, the American Friends Service Committee did not effect any radical changes in the Project and continued the Project with some of the staff that had been employed by the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers.

2. Oxnard Union High School District

Attitudes of boards of trustees and administration

The city of Oxnard is a growing one of about 60,000 citizens in the Southern California coastal county of Ventura. It is the biggest city in the county of 333,000 which is still largely, however, rural. Farming remains a major industry in the county, and in 1956 four farmers and a banker comprised the Oxnard Union High School Board of

Trustees, elected by district voters. The district envelopes much of the southern third of the county from the coast inland to the cities of Camarillo and Thousand Oaks, nearly to the Los Angeles County line. One of the board members, Fred Snyder of rural Somis, was also a member of the outlying Somis Elementary School Board.

Ten years ago the school board had already begun showing signs of reflecting the vested interests of farmers by working to minimize property taxes rather than maximize benefits to students in the school system. Two probationary English teachers, Harold E. Richardson and the English department head, Joseph M. Collier, wrote a series of 12 articles March 5, 1956 to March 18 in the Oxnard Press-Courier at the editor's request. The co-authored articles dwelt mainly on the issue of teachers' pay. Teachers had just been denied a raise by the board. They argued that the board allocated too little of the budget for salaries compared to those of other state school districts. Teachers wanted the minimum salary raised from $4,000 to $4,500. Part of their grievance was that teachers were excluded from public board meetings unless invited, and an invitation to the pleading teachers had been rescinded by the board. The teachers called for formation of a citizens' committee to investigate the salary issue. The board elected not to renew the contracts of the two teachers and rejected their appeals for renewal afterwards. Subsequent public meetings on the matter found the board ignoring public questions on their motives. The May 10, 1956 Press-Courier reports Daniel Wilson, the president of the American Federation of Teachers Union local as saying ". . . there was no warning. There were no questions of competence of the two discharged teachers. There appears no valid reason for the dismissal. Both teachers were rated tops, Collier with an AA rating, the highest possible. They were dismissed for frankly expressing honest views."

There are a number of significant results of the teacher-board confrontation, not the least of which was the consequent voter changes at the polls which began one by one eliminating the offending board members. A local of American Federation of Teachers

(AFL-CIO) was formed to rally teacher support. A new superintendent, Dr. Joseph Crosby, was within a year afterward in the top administrative position in the district. "Until teachers and the board can meet as equals and negotiate salaries teachers can do nothing. . ." the teachers wrote. "Until teachers can meet as equals with the board" sounded too much like unionization for the comfort of the conservative rural board. Growers and bankers are traditionally anti-union, and these men were no exception. Within five years, three of those board members would be retired or defeated at the polls. They were to be replaced by a new dimension of Oxnard society -- merchants and professional men. But the tone of the board on many key social issues would remain hardened and unreceptive.

Federal Aid to Education

By 1958 the two board members most persistently and adamantly opposed to federal aid to schools and most heatedly against many social and minority education programs, merchant John L. Cooley and anesthesiologist Dr. Robert Williams, plus the third board member who often sided with them, insurance salesman Robert Matthews, had all replaced the banker, who resigned, and two of the growers on the board. Each of the three new board members was a pillar of the community. They were all middle-class Anglo-Saxons. The latest comer to the community, Matthews, had lived in Oxnard nine years when elected. He was and remains an insurance salesman with his own agency in Oxnard. He has four children, and when elected to the board was president of the Oxnard Lions "Noon-timers," chairman of the Christian Business Mens' Committee, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and P.T.A., and a Cub Scout committeeman.

Dr. Williams, a graduate of the University of Southern California Medical School, had lived 28 years in the county having graduated from the local junior college. Williams was treasurer of the Ventura County Medical Society when first elected to the board. Cooley when first elected had been a merchant in town more than a decade. He had taken correspondence business courses after graduating from Santa Barbara High

School. He operates a local market and is co-proprietor of two liquor stores. Father of five, when elected he was president of the Oxnard Shrine Club and member of the Elks, Masons, P.T.A., Oxnard High School Music Boosters Club and a Boys Club leader. With such staunch middle-class backgrounds, these three members of the board proceeded in a ten-year history of board policies to compile a record of hard-nosed business attitudes toward the school system in the face of tripling enrollments and budgets.

Meanwhile, the Oxnard-Colonia grew to more than 15,000 low-income people, largely of lower class Mexican-American extraction, with as of 1967, average family income of $1,900 and 40% of the city's unemployment. In 1961 the board balked in one meeting at the request of an agent of the California Department of Education to delete "discriminatory" questions from teacher application blanks. The district asked teacher applicants to answer questions about community, civic and fraternal affiliations, birthplace, citizenship, nationality and church preference. Soon, on April 17, 1961, then Attorney General Stanley Mosk told the Chamber of Commerce of neighboring Port Hueneme it was "unfortunate" that the Oxnard board did not "obey the law." The board in their April 28 meeting acceded and changed their applications, but betrayed an attitude that was to be the hallmark of their policy and of many of their decisions by saying they "intended all the time" to change the application "but didn't like being pushed around by the state," according to newspaper accounts.

The issue of federal aid to local schools came up in various minor issues in the ensuing four years, but it was not until 1965 that the board was forced, by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the War on Poverty, and the Farm Workers Opportunity Project, to come to a showdown with the issue of federal support. Cooley and Williams in their re-election campaigns in April 1965 both bitterly attacked the principle of spending federal money on the local level. Cooley in an April 5 Press Courier campaign statement said there is "too much control on federal money and taxpayers get back only part of what they pay." But if the board can block such expenditures and "the money isn't spent, it won't be budgeted the next year. It isn't federal

money. It's taxpayers' money . . . not a gift." In the next newspaper column, Williams opposed federal aid "because any dollars we send to Washington are returned to us through bureaucratic channels with the meat gone and with strings around their necks so they can be pulled out of our hands if we fail to comply with the rules."

On school district unification, a current topic because of state legislation encouraging merging small districts into big ones, Williams said he opposed it too, "because it is a stride toward centralized and impersonalized control . . . If we unify far enough I can visualize a gigantic education machine accepting kneepants children at one end and ejecting cap-and-gowned young adults at the other end stamped 'U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare'." Cooley received more votes than any candidate in that election, 3,353, and Williams was second with 3,085. A third member elected, Mrs. Jane Tolmach, wife of a physician and former chairman of the County Democratic Central Committee, received 2,870. She has consistently taken a more moderate stand on federal aid, urging separate, undogmatic consideration of each proposal before deciding whether to accept the aid. The remaining candidates in the election were either mute or similarly moderate on the federal aid issue. The board within three months showed they voted as they talked. The July 15, 1965, Star-Free Press reports "an angry, split Oxnard High School Board refused to apply to federal money to finance two new language laboratories and then called for a study to determine what government aid is available in all school programs." The news account tells of "fierce debate" on the issue, but finally Williams, Cooley and Matthews voted against Mrs. Tolmach and the fifth board member, Rollo Van Slyke, a postmaster at Port Hueneme, against seeking the allocation for a language laboratory. Matthews, however, swung to the other side and voted with Tolmach and Van Slyke for the federal aid study. Cooley was incensed. "District administration will fiddle around with something (federal aid) we don't need," he said. And he added, Superintendent Crosby "ought to take a cut" for the work he'll put in on the study. Mrs. Tolmach argued that astute

use of federal money could take tax burdens off the local property tax payer and that such taxes pay 70 percent of the district's budget, more than that of any other district in the state. Countered Cooley: "We can afford it better than poor old Uncle Sam. Our budget is balanced."

In August, Cooley and Williams vituperated against the proposed Farm Workers Opportunity Project. The August 5 Star-Free Press carries the story by Tom Shannon, widely circulated, exemplifying the acme of the classical narrow, anti-federal sentiment by local politicians. The statements, especially by Cooley, approximate the most inflammatory attitudes about the less fortunate and less educated that can be heard anywhere in the contemporary United States. "I want nothing to do with it," Dr. Williams said. "It is absolutely ridiculous . . . shoved down our throats. I don't have to prostitute my feelings . . . I want nothing to lend stature and dignity to this program . . . another governmental giveaway penalizing hard-working individuals. It's hogwash." School district Superintendent Joseph Crosby and Farm Workers' Opportunity Project director Peter Lauwerys said basic education planned by the project in reading, writing and arithmetic would help the unemployed, underemployed and public assistance individuals in Oxnard to qualify for jobs. "If we'd starve them just a little bit, they'd find work," Cooley replied. Crosby reminded the board that at the previous

SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF OXNARD UNION HIGH SCHOOL

BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 1965-1966

JOHN L. COOLEY	MERCHANT
DR. ROBERT WILLIAMS	ANESTHESIOLOGIST
ROBERT MATTHEWS	INSURANCE AGENT
ROLLO VAN SLYKE	POST MASTER
MRS. JANE TOLMACH	HOUSEWIFE (wife of medical doctor)

meeting the board indicated willingness to take on the project and was therefore responsible to the State Department of Education to follow through on the application.

"The state be damned," Cooley countered. "We don't owe them anything. There is no reason why these people, prospective students, couldn't attend adult education classes at night. They'd be twice as productive than if they had a job during the day." . . . "The welfare department creates unemployment and lack of incentive to find work by handing out relief checks," Dr. Williams said. "We don't have to coax and bribe." Mrs. Tolmach replied: "You make people on welfare seem like a bunch of scoundrels. They need help . . ." Cooley and Williams, however, were outvoted in the final vote on the project and it went on as planned, though delayed at least a month by the Cooley-Williams obstruction.

That December, Cooley and Williams again blocked anti-poverty money in the district. December 8 they voted with Matthews against a $77,000 program for 242 eligible local slum youths under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, for "educationally disadvantaged" students. "They could spend the $77,000 on paddles in the elementary schools," Cooley said. "Then we wouldn't have to expel students in high school". January 12 the program came up the third and last time, and again Cooley and Williams led resistance. But again Matthews swung to the other side and a measure to seek $12,000 in federal funds for library materials passed 3-2. Cooley's and Williams' dogmatic and simplistic opposition to federal aid has been in the forefront of at least one of the three elections each has won in the past ten years. In the 1963 election another candidate, Eugene C. Sykes, introduced the issue and ran on a campaign geared largely to the federal monies the district could have applied for but didn't. Sykes charged the district "needlessly missed" $750,000 in recent years because "board policy prevents acceptance of or application for federal money . . ." In the same Star-Free Press story, March 28, 1963, Crosby said the district has taken $95,000 for a high school under construction under a law allowing allocations for districts impacted with inordinate numbers of children whose parents were on federal payrolls (mainly military and civilian defense personnel). Actually, the district applies regularly and receives money under that law. Crosby added, however, "the

board has expressed that every dollar that comes into the district makes $2 in tax revenue to supply because of red tape and procedures. The amount that could have been had over the years is anybody's guess."

Control of High School Plays

One can get an index of the narrow standards espoused by the board in other matters besides the federal aid issue. In May, 1965, the drama students of a district high school (Hueneme High) produced "Mister Roberts," a comedy play widely applauded during its Broadway and movie showings. The play has the words "hell" and "damn" several times and the students kept them intact in their production. The resulting controversy shook a board meeting and threatened to result in rigid censorship of subsequent Hueneme High productions. Matthews thought "the play suggestive and profanity is not necessary in high school productions. I think there should be a closer review of plays. There is no place in high school for this type of thing." Said Williams, "Well for goodness' sakes there are plenty of plays inoffensive. They could choose plays (without objectionable words) that would give the kids a workout and there is reams of material available that would not improperly expose the students to vulgarities and profanities." The controversy died, however, with no censorship and no more publications on "offensive" plays.

Anti-Union Sentiment

One can gain a further insight into the attitudes and convictions of one of the board members, Cooley, by his statements and actions during controversy at his market in mid-April, 1959, when he had been on the board two years. His contract with the Retail Clerks Union had run out and he refused a new one that asked 15 cents more per hour, plus 11 cents the next year and 7½ cents the following two. Cooley told the Press-Courier the raises were "an exorbitant price for clerks and inflationary." Cooley won the battle and so far has won the war against unionism. The dispute failed

to reinstate the union and Cooley says he has no union in his store now. Would he allow a union in his store now? The Farm Workers Opportunity Project reports officer asked him recently. "I'd burn the son-of-a-bitch (his store) down first," he replied. "They (unions) want to run my business, not let me do it."

School Superintendent and Administration

If the Oxnard Union High School board has been less than sympathetic toward these families and students of their constituency from a culture with values different from the prevailing Anglo-Saxon Calvinist ethic, the school administration has but little cushioned the effects by its sharp accounting pencil and close attention to educational efficiency above almost all else.

Before any of the current school board had been elected, the superintendent, Dr. Joseph Crosby, a counselor in the district since 1949, was appointed to a four year contract on March 27, 1957. The predominantly grower board had bought up the contract of Crosby's predecessor, L. A. Weimers, charged by many teachers who departed the district as an authoritarian administrator. Significantly, of the scores of teachers who left during Weimers' administration and who responded to a California Teachers Association poll, nearly one out of two (45 percent) said they left because of "administrative policies," according to newspaper accounts.

During Dr. Crosby's tenure, student load has undergone what must be termed phenomenal growth by any measure. District students increased from 3,000 to 10,000 in a predominantly rural district with little added industrial tax base to help carry the fiscal burden. The district expanded from two to seven high schools. The district tax base, largely through real estate inflation and construction of new tract homes, expanded from $93 million to $396 million, raising the tax rate for the schools from $4.16 in 1957-58 to a high of $4.48 in 1966-67. Crosby came to Ventura County and to the Oxnard High School District in 1949 as a counselor. He had studied education and law at St. Mary's College and Georgetown University and earned a

doctorate in education at the University of Southern California. During World War II he worked part time registering aliens in Washington, D. C. He served 18 months in the service during World War II. Crosby was the president of the 1959 County Community Chest Drive, won the "Oxnard Distinguished Citizen Award" in 1965 and also a Boys' Club National Medallion. Despite the overwhelming growth of Crosby's pupil load during his tenure, he must share with his board responsibility for whatever institutionalization has permeated his schools and whatever disadvantages his exaggerated economies have inflicted on his students.

Crosby is rated second to none among his colleagues for squeezing more service out of the school dollar than any other administrator. By 1964, when the Star-Free Press ran a profile of him (August 29), Crosby had been superintendent seven years, largely under the Cooley-Williams-Matthews board. When he came to his superintendent's job, the district's per student investment was second highest in the county among high school districts. By 1964 Crosby's per student investment had dropped to second lowest. The Star-Free Press reports that an architect had told Crosby that by re-using school plans and other economies, he had built twelve new classrooms at Oxnard High School for what it cost another local district to build four. Much of the saving was a reduction from 8 to 5½ percent in architects fees by not redesigning buildings but by merely adapting old plans.

By 1964, Crosby still had not refilled the district assistant superintendent for curriculum post left vacant when he was promoted to superintendent. He fills that function instead, with various committees and consultants. The district student-teacher ratio, a key indicator of school quality, has shown only sporadic tendencies to drop below the 25.3:1 ratio of Crosby's first year in the district, 1957-58. Subsequent year ratios were: 25.3:1, 23.4:1, 23.4:1, 25.1:1, 25.5:1, 24.7:1, 23.1:1, and 24:1. The ten year average is slightly cut to 23.9:1 only by the 1966-67 ratio of 19.1:1 because of opening of a new high school.

Dr. Crosby's administration of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project demonstrated an administrative penuriousness. He did not hire a $15,000 coordinator to administer the educational program and administered the Project himself. That administration is questionable. His class placement of project students was cursory and compounded screening errors. There were no staff meetings with project teachers. Crosby indicated pride at saving $40,000 of the money allocated for the classroom dimension of the project. He saved part of it by not hiring a coordinator and only a total of a dozen teachers for the 200 students, making classes ranging from more than twice the federal guideline of ten students per class to two-thirds bigger than the state suggested maximum of 15 students for such hard-core education programs. It appears then, from the experience of the Project, that Dr. Crosby's greatest concern is with limiting expenditures and stretching the educational dollar even when such frugality promises to hurt the quality of the educational program.

3. California Department of Employment

Farm Placement Service

Primary responsibility for serving farm workers in California rests with the State Department of Employment. Since the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, the state has provided an information service to connect unemployed farm workers with employers seeking labor. From 1935 to 1943, this responsibility was assigned to the Farm Placement Service within the Department of Employment.

In 1942, California sugar beet growers requested governmental assistance in obtaining labor to replace the seasonal labor force which had been depleted by the war industry. In September, the first 1,500 Mexican national workers arrived in California under the joint supervision of the Farm Security Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the U. S. Employment Service. In July 1943, the responsibility for all farm placement activity was centralized and transferred to the United States

Department of Agriculture. At the state level, the Agricultural Extension Service was delegated farm placement responsibilities. In California, the Emergency Farm Labor Project was established by the University of California Agricultural Extension Service. Local farm labor offices were placed under the supervision of county farm advisors. This arrangement continued under the War Food Administration until 1948, when the farm placement functions were returned to the State Department of Employment.

Within the Department, the farm unit began as a separate system. In the late 1950's after much of the Farm Placement staff resigned due to investigations and charges of conflict of interest, the farm section was administratively integrated into the full functioning employment service. By 1966, the Farm Placement Service in Sacramento was proposing comprehensive manpower planning and services for rural and agricultural areas. The new state administration under Governor Reagan, however, selected a bracero program advocate and frequent critic of the Farm Placement Service as new director. Significantly, this new director, William Tolbert, is from Ventura County and was until early 1967 manager of the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee. He has begun to segregate the farm section from the general employment service program and administer it as a separate and parallel agency as it was prior to 1959.

The Farm Placement Service and the Farm Worker

In recent years, the major function of the Farm Labor Office has not been to assist the grower by referring labor to him, but to certify that no such labor existed so the grower could be eligible for braceros. During the bracero system, Farm Placement grew increasingly isolated from the domestic farm labor market. State officials have admitted recently that they are in effective contact with less than 10% of the farm workers in California.

This isolation of the Department of Employment extends beyond just farm workers to all the poor, unemployed and underemployed who are not currently receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits.

In an attempt to interview a 15% sample of the 1963 peak harvest labor force in Stanislaus County, the State Department of Public Health found that the Farm Placement Service was not in contact with most of the farm labor force. Of the farm workers interviewed only 24% had ever used the farm labor office. This total includes 34% of the English-speaking workers and only 9% of the Spanish-speaking. Of farm workers permanently living in Stanislaus County, 61% said they had never been in the Farm Labor Office. The isolation of the farm placement service was also demonstrated by its gross over-estimation of the size of the farm labor force. Using a door-to-door canvass, the state staff could only locate sixty percent of the total farm workers expected based on Department of Employment statistics.

In the Modesto MDTA project, the Employment Service was sometimes unable to recruit trainees for vocational training. As the 1966 project report described the problem,

> "the Employment Service is bound by its regulations which appear to allow little room for experimentation in developing new approaches to problem solving.' (1966 Report, Vol. II, p. 149).

The Modesto project also found that "forty original referrals to pre-vocational show family ties in one way or another to ninety-eight other referrals" (Ibid, Vol. II, P. 11). The report speculated on the possibility that the Employment Service was not recruiting the hard core unemployed.

The Employment Service was also unsuccessful in providing effective post-training placement. Of all trainees, less than 10% were placed by the Employment Service. The project report concludes that, "some consideration could be given to bring the placement service to the trainee or perhaps to a program that would change the present image of the employment service sufficiently so that trainees would come to the employment office" (Ibid., Vol. II, p. 33).

Farm Labor Office in Ventura County

In Ventura County there are only two State Employment Service offices. One office, in Ventura, serves the total county with regular employment office services. The second office, in Oxnard, is a small Farm Labor Office of the California Department of Employment. It is managed by William Turner who is aided by a small staff of from four to six farm placement officers. The Farm Labor Office is not located in the Colonia area of Oxnard where reside so many of the permanent farm workers of the county, but rather on the southeast side of Oxnard, next to the large Coastal Growers Farm Labor Camp. The Coastal Growers Farm Labor Camp houses single migrant workers, most of them temporary residents in the area.

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was handled by the Oxnard Farm Labor Office. However, when job placement took place for the trainees of the Project, the Ventura office of the regular California Department of Employment took over some responsibility for the location of jobs. The Director of the Ventura office, Francis Bawden, felt a sincere responsibility toward the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. He had participated in the earliest meetings concerning the program and continued to keep informed regarding the status of the project.

However, neither the Oxnard Farm Labor Office nor the Ventura Department of Employment Office achieved any success with respect to job placement for the Mexican American trainees of the project. The Mexican American students of the F.W.O.P. did not show much faith in the Employment Service and seemed to reflect the popular attitude towards the State Employment Office. Further, to date, there has been no indication that the California Farm Placement Service will identify with the unemployed or disadvantaged seasonal farm workers of the area. No regular project or program has yet come to light that would cause the Farm Labor Office to address itself to the manpower needs of the type of persons who came into the Farm Workers Opportunity Project.

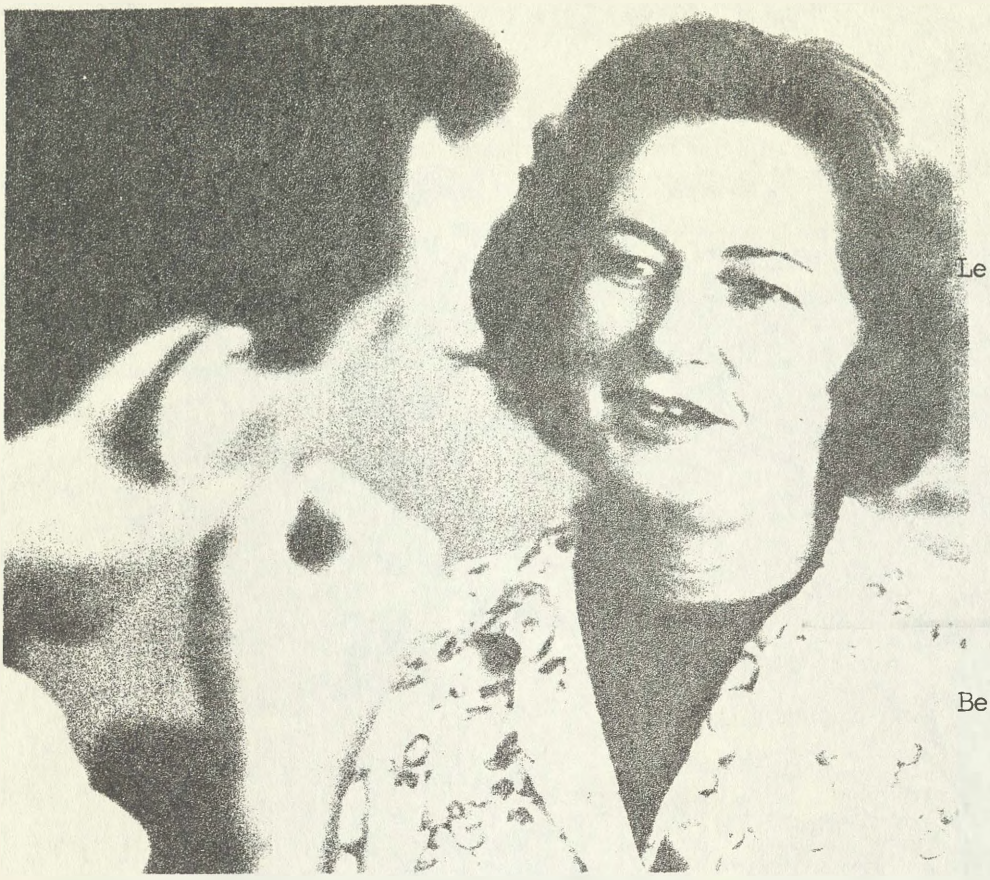
4. The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers

The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Inc. was formed by a group of civic-minded Californians under the leadership of Katherine Peake, a Santa Barbara civic leader and horse rancher, in response to the 1961 Imperial Valley lettuce strike. The Committee's purpose is to "encourage and help farm workers trying to remedy distressing and often desperate living conditions to enjoy their full rights as Americans." The Committee states its goals as focusing public attention on farm workers, safeguarding civil and constitutional rights of the farm workers, protecting their rights to join organizations of their choice and to engage in collective bargaining, defending them against displacement by foreign workers. The committee board and staff were especially fervent and outspoken in their opposition to the bracero program. Most of these persons are of an Anglo-Saxon middle class background. There are three Mexican-American members of the committee.

The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers includes many nationally known figures such as actor Steve Allen, poet Carl Sandburg, and Nobel Prize-winning author John Steinbeck. However, the Committee operates its regular activities through an eleven person Board of Directors, the majority of whom reside in the Los Angeles area. The Board of Directors that oversaw the Farm Workers Opportunity Project included:

Chairman:	Rev. John Simmons	Hospital Administrator
Vice-Chairman:	Katherine Peake	Horse Rancher
Executive Secretary:	Max Mont	Secretary, Jewish Labor Committee, Los Angeles
Members:	William Gilbert	AFL-CIO, Los Angeles Organizing Director
	Rev. Wayne Hartmire	Director, California Migrant Ministry
	Marshall Ross	Lawyer, Los Angeles
	James Lorenz	Lawyer, Los Angeles
	Dr. Julian Keiser	Minister
	Susan Adams	Official, United Way, Los Angeles
	J. J. Rodriquez	Meat Cutters' Union Official

While the Farm Workers Opportunity Project was under Emergency Committee sponsorship the Board would regularly review the progress of the Project. However, no Board member expressed disapproval with the basic purposes of the Project or the manner in which the program was implemented.

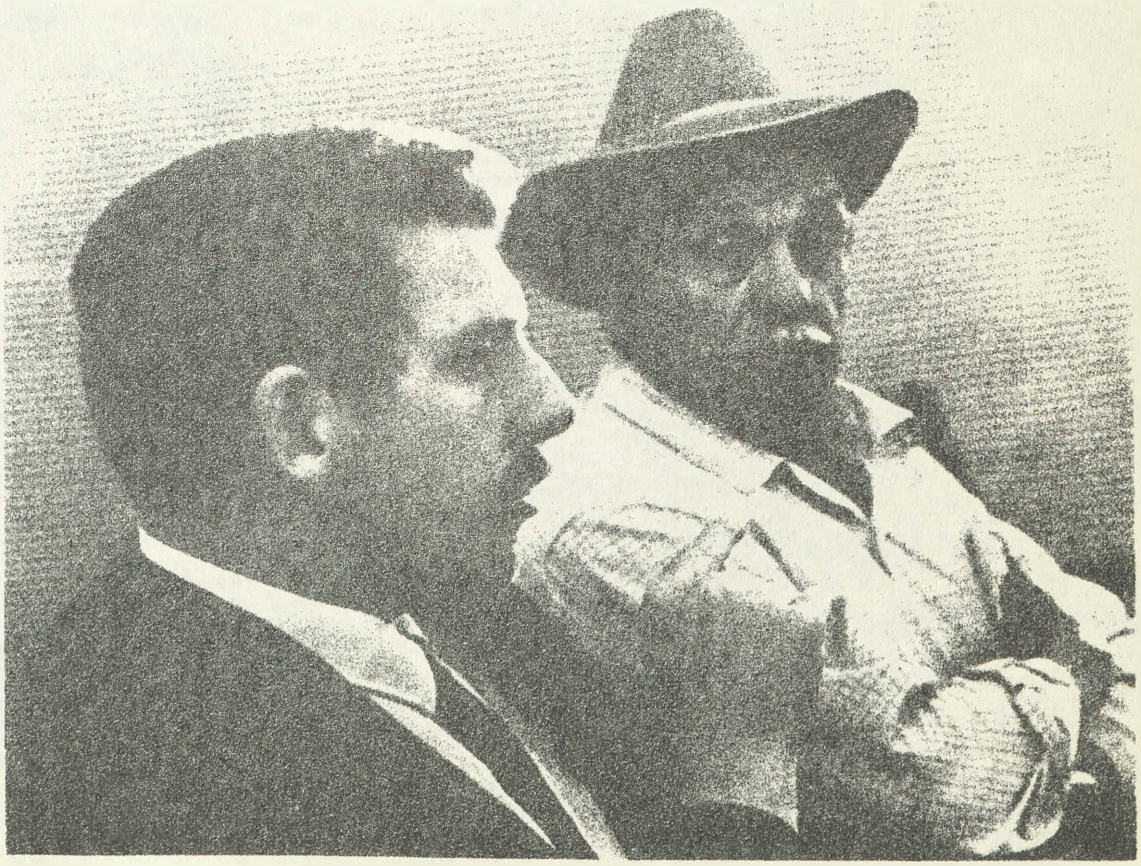


Left - Katherine Peake, Vice-chairman of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers Inc. and one of the founders of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project

* * * * * * *

Below -

Peter Lauwerys (left) Director of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project with Antonio (Tony) Del Buono, Counselor and early organizer of FWOP.



5. The American Friends Service Committee

The American Friends Service Committee, Pacific Southwest Region, assumed administration of F.W.O.P. after the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers had held the responsibility for sixteen months. The American Friends Service Committee, a 50 year old non-profit group chartered to execute educational and social service programs worldwide, has for more than a generation been trying to better the economic, social and civic lot of American farm workers. Some of its major activities have been year-round worker cooperatives and self-help housing projects in Tulare County, California. The A.F.S.C. Farm Labor Project in Visalia was formed under the leadership of Bard McAllister. The Visalia Farm Labor Project has for the past decade cultivated a core of leadership that subsequently formed the vanguard of the War on Poverty in that county. Tulare County now has one of the most active, prolific and productive rural anti-poverty programs in the nation.

The American Friends Service Committee Farm Workers Opportunity Project operated under the supervision of the Rural Affairs Committee of the Southwest Region.

6. Project Development

Conception and Early Development

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was conceived in close personal conversations during mid-1964 with Peter Lauwerys, then director of Year-Round Farm Skills Program of the American Friends Service Committee and two Department of Labor (OMAT) staff members, Tom Karter and Dan Schulder. Peter Lauwerys had experienced initial success with recruitment of migrant and seasonal farm workers for the Year Round Farm Skills Experimental and Demonstration MDTA Project in Tulare County. He felt that a fundamental problem afflicting seasonal farm workers was the obvious existence of a surplus farm worker force, not a shortage. The concept of making use of federal manpower funds to prove the existence of an adequate farm labor force was born. Even while the Tulare County Year Round Farm Skills Project was attempting to expand agricultural employment

opportunities for farm workers, Mexican braceros were being brought into California in large numbers.

Peter Lauwerys had numerous and lengthy discussions with O.M.A.T. staff members concerning farm labor manpower problems in August and September, 1964. The O.M.A.T. officials encouraged Lauwerys to submit a proposal for an Experimental and Demonstration MDTA Project to be funded by the Labor Department. This was done by early October 1964.

Early written proposals:

The first project proposal suggested training 1,000 domestic farm workers to harvest crops traditionally harvested by Mexican National workers (braceros). Congress had refused to extend Public Law 78, which for more than a decade had supplied California farmers with thousands of braceros annually. The law was to expire December 31, 1964 and growers were loudly pleading that their crops would rot on the vine without imported foreign contract labor. Ventura County was proposed as the location for the project. Ventura was one of a half-dozen counties largely reliant on braceros for year-round crop work, employing up to 7,500 in peak periods. Significantly also, new War on Poverty legislation was forthcoming from Congress and it was Lauwerys' contention that the War on Poverty and braceros were absolutely incompatible. Grower associations, though not all individual growers, had already stated some opposition to any federal training as suggested and seemed to fear the Labor Department's potential farm labor policies.

A sponsoring agency for the Project was needed. Lauwerys sought out the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Inc. as an ideal agency to sponsor F.W.Q.P., largely because the project as it evolved seemed to mesh unmistakably with Emergency Committee policy and goals. The Emergency Committee also had Ventura County community involvement. With the demise of the bracero system, the project under Emergency Committee sponsorship might show that domestic farm workers were already in California and could be recruited for training to work in the jobs earlier held by braceros. Further, such a project might encourage the government into the business of recruiting

domestic farm workers to replace braceros and would provide an opportunity to gather more information about farm worker wages and working conditions.

The first written proposal was sent to the Labor Department from the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers in October, 1964. After early discussions and meetings in Ventura County with local California State Farm Labor Office officials and the regional representative of O.M.A.T. (Dr. Vernon Sheblak) it was decided to further explore and develop the proposal both in Washington, D. C. and in Ventura County.

December 3, 1964 Meeting

A highly significant meeting to discuss the proposed project was held in Ventura on December 3, 1964. Numerous representatives from state and local government agencies were present at this meeting as well as grower representatives, members of the Emergency Committee, and news reporters. A representative of O.M.A.T (Daniel Schulder) had flown from Washington to attend the meeting.

This meeting was well reported in the press on the following day, significantly in the Los Angeles Times. The implications of the meeting were drawn in broad terms as told in the Times headline which read "Break in Bracero Impasse." The article reported how bracero-using growers were told that unemployed domestic farm workers could be trained with federally funded programs to take the place of braceros.

The Ventura meeting proposed many approaches for a well-rounded training program, the majority of which failed to materialize. The project as proposed, was to be for 1,000 trainees. There was discussion over the organization of two "tracts" of trainees, one of which would enter a short term (4 weeks) basic education program, the other a long term (5 months) basic education program. These institutional basic education programs would be followed by a three or four week on-the-job training program that envisaged a close working relationship between the project staff and local grower associations. A subcontracting arrangement with the Emergency Committee for the on-the-job training was proposed. Further, it was proposed that in-service training be

given to the foremen and crew leaders of the growers. Staff workers of the Emergency Committee would have access to the workers in the fields to discover progress of trainees.

It was not known at this meeting which local school could participate in the institutional training phase of the program. It was suggested that the local Junior College would be the best institution to do the job. The tone of the meeting was generally optimistic. Participants reported later that there were obvious political overtones inherent in a program as proposed in California at that time. It was felt, however, that the program would stimulate the development of basic education for the rural poor, develop better methods of evaluation for workers in the agricultural industry, and provide an interesting experiment in the blending of state, federal and local programs in a rural area.

The meeting was seen as historic by some as it was the first time grower representatives had publicly stated a willingness to engage in discussions towards replacing braceros with domestic farm workers through a systematic training program.

As a result of the December 3, 1964, meeting and the impact of the Los Angeles Times article (which was widely distributed), the project proposal won top political support from many quarters. Further development of the basic idea (the use of Manpower funds to help develop a domestic farm labor force) led the Labor Department to fund numerous pilot projects in the spring of 1965 throughout the United States.

Final Development of Proposal:

The December 3 meeting raised several issues that were not elaborated in the first proposal. Consequently a second proposal was written and submitted on December 14, 1964. During January and February, 1965, community support and involvement in the proposed program was developed. No basic changes in the proposal came about, however, at this time. The program was now seen as a vocational education program in farm skills combined with a basic education component that was seen as a way of developing motivation

and stability in the individual farm workers. Lauwerys also visited with employers and packing houses to solicit support and develop actual proposals for on-the-job training components.

Finally, the Office of Manpower Automation and Training in Washington suggested the development and formalization of an actual contract with the Emergency Committee. A final Ventura community meeting was called for February 16, 1965. Tom Karter (then Project Officer for O.M.A.T) flew to California to attend the meeting. Final points of disagreement in the proposal were ironed out and Karter flew back to Washington with a completed proposal that became the basis for Contract No. 82-04-51 of the Department of Labor with the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers. This contract was signed and became effective on March 15, 1965.

7. CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF F.W.O.P. PRIOR TO OPENING OF TRAINING CLASSES

August, 1964	First discussions regarding use of federal funds to train domestic farm workers to take the place of imported braceros.
September	Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers decides to sponsor a MDTA project to help eliminate bracero program.
October	Early meetings in Oxnard with California Department of Employment officials to discuss proposed program.
October 30	Submission of original proposal to O.M.A.T.
November	Numerous detailed telephone conversations with O.M.A.T officials in Washington and Emergency Committee members. Emergency Committee opens office in Colonia area of Oxnard.
December 3	Large community meeting in Ventura with growers, state and local government officials. Meeting was attended by OMAT official from Washington (Schulder).
December 14	Revised proposal submitted to OMAT.
January, 1965	Emergency Committee staff built further.
February, 1965	Community support for project. Visit with local growers to develop on-the-job training plans.
February 17	Third proposal sent by Emergency Committee to Washington.

February 24	Second broad community meeting in Ventura with local growers, groups involved. Tom Karter of OMAT flew from Washington to help speed development. Karter reports Secretary of Labor's support for idea.
March 15	Contract with Emergency Committee signed.
March - April	Emergency Committee hires counseling staff.
March 19	Citrus growers propose training project under grower sponsorship. Meet with state and federal officials.
May 11	Santa Ana meeting to revise MT1 document that stated need for training.
June 30, 1965	Meeting of Emergency Committee, five Assemblymen, and Department of Education officials in State Superintendent of Schools office, Sacramento. State Superintendent (Max Rafferty) agrees to lend his support and weight behind project.
July 16	Oxnard meeting between FWOP staff, local community leaders, local school superintendents and State Department of Education officials. Oxnard High School District Superintendent agrees to consider project.
July 28	Oxnard Union High School District agrees to "consider" sponsorship of basic education project.
August 25	Oxnard High School District Board of Trustees votes 3 - 2 in favor of project sponsorship.
November 15, 1965	First basic education classes for farm workers begin.

CHAPTER III

THE FARM WORKERS OPPORTUNITY PROJECT IN OPERATION

CHAPTER III

1. Introduction

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was designed during the fall and winter of 1964 and early 1965. The original design related to the needs of the seasonal farm workers of Ventura County for employment and the needs of the agricultural industry for a steady work force. The hope of the originators of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project was that a basic education project tied to a short vocational training component would assist farm workers in obtaining more agricultural employment. Specifically, the employment was to be in the agricultural operations that had traditionally been in the hands of braceros from Mexico. At the same time it was thought by the project planners that employers would benefit from a steady and dependable local work force. These original plans might have been relevant in 1964. They became outdated by the rush of events in the spring and summer of 1965. The Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz steadfastly refused to allow the importation of massive numbers of Mexican National contract workers. As a result agricultural employers were forced to utilize local sources of farm labor, and discovered that there were sufficient domestic workers to meet their needs. The crops were harvested and new sources of farm labor were tapped. By mid-summer of 1965 the "crisis" was over.

These events took place while the staff of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers attempted to find a public school in Ventura County that would implement the institutional training component of the program. Agricultural employers, uninterested in having outsiders assist them in solving their labor problems, resisted the establishment of the project. The agricultural industry in the area even proposed a federally funded training project which they would sponsor and administer. This proposal was summarily dropped in June 1965. The local schools and their boards and administrators looked with disfavor on the project. It was extremely difficult to obtain enthusiasm for the implementation of a well-conceived and planned vocational training program.

Finally, the Oxnard Union High School District approved the project but only after protracted public controversy and strong intervention from the State Department of Education. The project that the high school district was willing to sponsor was devoid of any vocational component and concentrated exclusively on basic education and English instruction. After a year of frustrating development work, the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers staff agreed to support the program as it was proposed by the High School District and the first trainees were admitted on November 15, 1965.

The third chapter of this report discusses the Farm Workers Opportunity Project as it was developed by three local cooperating agencies in Oxnard: the Oxnard Union High School District, the California Department of Employment's Farm Labor Office, and the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers. Recruitment, selection and counseling were basically the functions of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers. The final screening, payment of allowances, and job placement were in the hands of the Farm Labor Office. The basic education was to be given by a special teaching staff hired by the Oxnard Union High School District office. The full administration of the thirty hours a week of institutional training remained in the hands of the Oxnard Union High School District. In addition to the above aspects of the program, a special medical screening program and a special testing program were instituted under the direction of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers. The staff of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project also instituted intensive individual and group counseling that developed into a full-fledged community development program.

2. Summary of Agency Functions and Responsibilities of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was handled at any one time by three cooperating agencies in Oxnard whose functions related to the task of training over 200 individual seasonal farm workers for periods of six months or one year. The functions and responsibilities of the agencies can be seen in the following table:

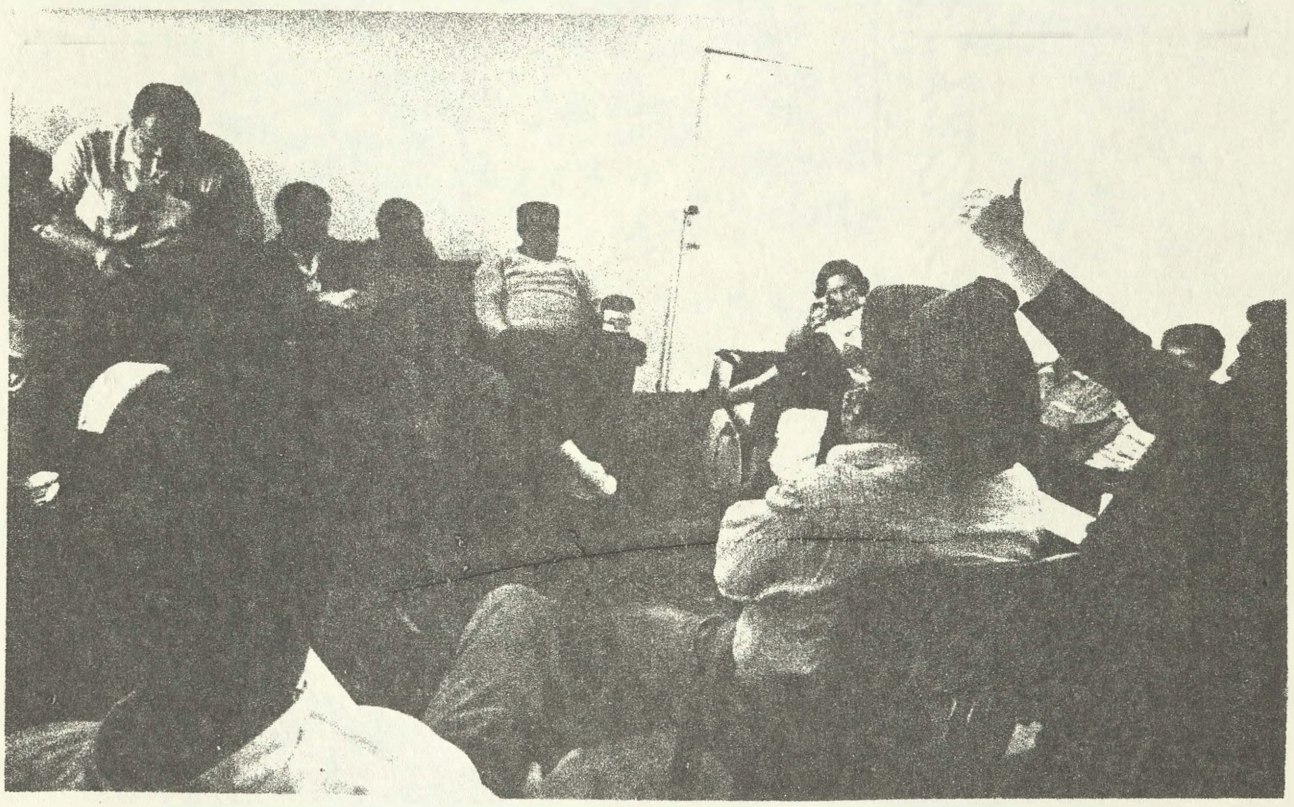
"Sponsoring" Agencies:	Functions:
Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Inc. (March 15, 1965 - July 15, 1966) American Friends Service Committee, Inc. (Sept. 1, 1966 - July 31, 1967) Farm Workers Opportunity Project	RECRUITING COUNSELING SPECIAL TESTING MEDICAL SCREENING REPORTING COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIAL REPORTING ASSISTING JOB DEVELOPMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
California Department of Employment Oxnard Farm Labor Office	APPROVED NEED FOR TRAINING (MT-1) FINAL SCREENING REFERRAL TO TRAINING ALLOWANCE PAYMENTS JOB DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT
Oxnard Union High School District	TRAINING AND EDUCATION (INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING 30 HOURS A WEEK)

In addition to the above local agencies there were state and federal agencies that had functional responsibilities. These included the California Department of Education whose responsibility it was to draw up a contract with the local school district to develop a program (through the "MT-2 form" process). The California Department of Employment's Sacramento and Southern Regional offices also became involved in the original development of the program, which although,an experimental and demonstration project utilized "regular" MDTA channels to handle training allowances and determine the need for training ("MT-1 forms").

The private agencies, the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers and the American Friends Service Committee, had contracts directly with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Manpower,Policy, Evaluation and Research. The Emergency Committee's contract ran from March 15, 1965 to July 15, 1966. The American Friends Service Committee's project ran from September 1, 1966 until July 31, 1967. These agencies provided

services outlined in the preceding table of functions. The American Friends Service Committee's staff also provided follow-up studies, analysis and assessment studies, some of which are included in this report.

The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare also becomes involved in the final approval of MDTA programs proposed by local school districts and approved by the California Department of Education.



Counselors and administrative staff of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers hold a staff meeting in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project office; Spring, 1965.

3. Demonstration Features of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project was established to demonstrate that:
1) Seasonal and Migrant Farm Workers could be recruited into a Manpower Development and Training Act program that emphasized basic education and that these workers could successfully complete a long course of basic education supported by an intensive counseling program.

2)A basic education program for seasonal farm workers can successfully be instituted through the sponsorship and participation of a private agency dedicated to the growth of the seasonal farm worker community.

3)Seasonal and migrant farm workers could be retained in such a program through the use of training allowances and supportive services, including intensive counseling by semi-professional social workers drawn from the target community.

4)Indigenous semi-professional social workers could design and implement an individual and group counseling program in conjunction with the seasonal farm worker trainees who were in the program.

5)The economic and political organization which results from intensive counseling and community development work can be of assistance in solving the problems and meeting the needs of the local agricultural and farm worker community.

6)The agricultural industry can benefit from such an MDTA Basic Education program because of the more highly skilled and productive work force that is the end result of such a program.

4. Recruitment, Selection and Referral of Project Trainees

Recruitment

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project completed a very low key recruitment program prior to the entry of the first group of forty trainees in November 1965. Thereafter, there was no further need for any recruitment of trainees into the project. On the contrary, the demand for entry into the project by unemployed farm workers was so great that the project staff was frequently tempted to hang a "full house" sign outside the project office. There was a constant stream of workers who came on their own accord to ask if they might become trainees in the project. As many as 1000 applications were made for entry into the F.W.O.P. whereas only 208 trainees were admitted. Many farm workers became somewhat bitter towards the project staff because of their refusal to allow them into the basic education program. These were those farm workers who had heard about the project in the early days of planning and debate during the winter of 1964-65 and the summer of 1965. Some of these individuals had expected to be able to gain admission into the program during the winter months of low employment after they had lost their jobs. To their great chagrin, by the time the project began all spaces were taken.

The great demand for entry into the Farm Workers Opportunity Project is a reflection of the importance of basic education and English to the migrant and seasonal farm workers of the area. The majority of these workers are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico. Few speak English. Fewer have had a formal education of more than two or three years. An opportunity to learn English and obtain a diploma is therefore seen by this population to be a golden opportunity to gain an education which in turn will be the key to a better job and higher wages.

Selection, Screening and Referral

Selection and screening of trainees into the basic education program was accomplished by the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers staff and the California

Department of Employment's Oxnard Farm Labor Office. The staff at the Farm Workers Opportunity Project office made an initial screening examination of all but three applicants. This screening was informal and based largely on the subjective judgments of the counseling staff. The potential trainees were then taken over, or sent over, to the State Farm Labor Office where they were "screened" once more by a more formalized and precise "rulebook" or "MDTA Manual" process. Once a farm worker had received such a double screening and was approved by the Farm Labor Office, he could be officially "referred to training" at the Oxnard Union High School. The farm worker would receive an official referral card when his "application" was approved.

The State Farm Labor Office was at first uncertain as to who should be allowed into the project, even though the office had copies of the project purposes and had been involved in the development of the project from the outset. The final authority for selection and referral of trainees rested with the State Farm Labor Office. A situation arose, however, where two agencies were involved in the screening and referral process.

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project staff made general recommendations based on their "rough" screening processes and personal judgments. The Farm Labor Office staff made referrals based on more precise legal or administrative rulings. There was little or no disagreement between the two offices over the selection of the first forty trainees. Considerable dissension arose, however, during the selection of the second group of forty trainees. This was due to a number of factors including a lack of thorough screening by the staff of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project, a realistic understanding by the staff of the Farm Labor Office of the farm labor market in Ventura County, and a lack of precise guidelines and rulings by competent authority with regard to admission into this Experimental and Demonstration MDTA Project.

Arguments among the staff of the two cooperating agencies strained relations between individuals and organizations. The following issues, among others, were items

of debate and disagreement: transportation allowances, residency requirements, the definition of unemployment, dependency status, and the location of residence.

The views of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project staff were that farm workers in Ventura County could not be looked upon as industrial workers and judged by regular MDTA selection criteria. Seasonal farm workers are consistently underemployed. With automation and improved farming techniques the days of employment available to seasonal farm workers are ever decreasing. The average seasonal farm worker in California has 130 days of employment each year. Another area of disagreement between the two local offices arose over whether a farm worker who lived on a ranch could come into the program. The Oxnard Farm Labor Office considered farm workers who lived on ranch property as being employed by the company that owned the housing, regardless of whether the worker was actually employed at the time he applied.

Friction caused numerous arguments between the staff of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project and the Farm Labor Office staff. The following type of conversation was not uncommon and reflects the basic disagreements between the local agencies:

S.C. (Farm Labor Office official): He doesn't need this schooling if he's a pruner - it won't upgrade him.

R.H. (Counselor): Won't English upgrade him? He lives in the United States and doesn't speak English and yet English is the recognized national language of the United States.

S.C.: He should know how to speak English.

O.B. (Farm Labor Office worker): He can go to night school.

R.H.: Look, have you seen the list of things they're teaching?

S.C.: Yes.

R.H.: They're teaching English, he doesn't know English. They're teaching math. Do you know math: (to worker)

Worker: No.

R.H.: They're teaching driving -- he doesn't know how to drive. They're teaching U.S. history, local history, and government agencies. He doesn't know these and he wants to. Don't you think they will upgrade him, S.C.?

S.C.: Why hasn't he tried to do it before?

R.H.: He is trying, now. That's why he's entering the program.

S.C.: Yeah, they've all been entering the program now that there's money.

After rejecting some prospective trainees, the local farm office found most of their decisions being reversed by the Sacramento Department of Employment head office. At this point a change in attitude took place in the local Farm Labor Office. Suddenly, they no longer rejected anybody. The Farm Labor Office seemed to go from one extreme to the other in their selectivity. Either extreme probably hurt the selection process and resultant class groupings. Too cursory and ineffectual screening admitted trainees who had already attained minimal cultural and language knowledge, for whom project curricula would be on too low a level. Too stringent screening, or screening by irrelevant or mistaken standards, could likewise keep out trainees most able to benefit from the program. Regardless of how well the selection and referral process was coordinated, the project did take in trainees from the segment of society for whom the program was designed. Sixty percent of the trainees were Mexican citizens from the rural poverty community of the area. They were Ventura County farm workers. Eighty-six percent of the trainees had worked in farm work immediately before becoming unemployed.

5. The Farm Workers Opportunity Project Trainee.

Ninety per cent of the trainees were of Spanish surname (189 out of 208). The few non-Mexicans were Anglo-Saxon or Negro. A high percentage were drawn from Oxnard's Colonia district. According to a recent study the average annual family income in this area is $1,900, with two-thirds of the Colonia's families earning less

than $4,000. In contrast one-third of the rest of the city's families live in the same low bracket. Twelve year olds are two years behind their junior high school classmates. The chances of catching tuberculosis are three times greater in Colonia than outside of the area. Housing density averages nearly three times the 6.6 units per acre prevalent in the rest of the city. A few project trainees came from outlying rural slums in communities and small cities as far away as Fillmore, a 45-minute drive.

Statistical Profile

Eighty-one percent of the trainees (170) were male, 159 (76 percent) were heads of households. Six out of ten were Mexican, not American, citizens. Forty-two of them, 20 percent, comprised the biggest single age group, from 36 to 40 years old. Thirty-seven (18 percent) were under 26. 144 (69 percent) were married, 158 of them (three out of four) had six years of school or less in Mexico or the U.S. When they entered the project, 179 or nearly nine out of ten had worked in agriculture prior to coming into the project. Most had worked only in agriculture in the U.S, even though 44 of 47 ex-trainees in sections four and five interviewed by the California Department of Employment were found to possess non-farm job experience acquired in Mexico. But because of language difficulties they found farm employment here the only avenue of employment. (See accompanying table). Many trainees, 63 or roughly 30 percent, had lived in Ventura County four years or more but 73, roughly a third, had lived here less than a year.

Project trainees entered training with a very low educational level. One in ten trainees, for instance, had higher than an eighth grade education, while according to the 1967 U.S.Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor Report (Number 71), one in three farm workers in a nation-wide survey had attained this level of schooling. In addition, only two percent of F.W.O.P. trainees had better than an 11th grade education, while nationally one in six are of that level, according to the Senate subcommittee report. Substantiating the low education level of F.W.O.P. trainees, 36 percent of

F.W.O.P. trainees had less than a third grade education, while only 25 percent nationally have four years of school or less.

With a high mobility and migrancy rate, many of the F.W.O.P. trainees came from Texas, the beginning of many of the major Southwest migrant patterns. According to the Mexican American Study Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, Texas has the lowest median number of school years completed among its Mexican-American population. California's record on this matter is one of the best in the West. For example, the median number of school years completed ranged from a low of 3.1 years in Lubbock, Texas, to 10.1 years in Colorado Springs. The Los Angeles metropolitan area has a rate of 8.9 years.

Characteristics of Trainee Selectees for F.W.O.P.

ITEM	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Total Selected	208	100
Male	170	82
Female	38	18
Spanish Surname	189	91
Citizenship		
Mexican	125	60
American	83	40
Age		
Under 26	37	18
26 - 30	31	14
31 - 35	28	13
36 - 40	42	20
41 - 45	34	16
46 - 50	16	8
51 - 55	8	4
56 - 60	9	4
61 +	1	.48
Marital Status		
Single	40	19
Married	144	69
Other	24	11
Family Status		
Head of Household	159	76
Years of School Completed		
Mexico		
0	22	11
1-3	38	18
4-6	60	29
7-8	6	3
9-10	9	4
11+	1	.48
U.S.		
0	0	0
1-3	15	7
4-6	23	11
7-8	21	10
9-10	9	4
11+	3	1
Prior Work Experience in U.S.		
Agriculture and packinghouse	179	86
Non-agriculture	29	14

6. Development of the Institutional Training;

Role of the California Department of Education

The institutional training segment of Farm Workers Opportunity Project was given through Oxnard Union High School District through arrangements from Sacramento and regional offices of the California Department of Education. After months of seeking and negotiating with Ventura County school districts, the department finally (in August 1965) arrived at a contractual agreement with Oxnard Union High School District to provide classroom institutional instruction. Delays in the agreement were caused by (1) a decision to revise the original MDT-1 form and (2) awareness of a second MDTA program proposed by growers themselves to meet labor requirements they said prevailed because of the end of the bracero program.

In February 1965, the project director met with Wesley P. Smith, State Director of Vocational Education of the State Department of Education. Smith later wrote a letter of support for the project to OMAT in Washington, D. C.

The State Department of Education becomes involved in such programs only after the State Department of Employment has submitted an MDT-1 document, which acknowledges and certifies the need for such training. The project chain of authority then extends to the California State Department of Education, which subsequently seeks a sponsoring agency -- usually a local school district such as the Oxnard Union High School District. Once the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Worker's project was funded in March 1965, the project director again met and was in frequent communication with State Department of Education officials in Sacramento and in the Los Angeles Regional office.

The Department of Education assigned the development of the "MT-2" form to Kenneth Cutler of the Agricultural Education Bureau in Los Angeles. The original MDT-1 form was signed as the project was funded by OMAT and Cutler began work with Charles Brady, Coordinator of Vocational Education of the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools' office, to locate a sponsoring school district.

These men found the original MDT-1 form difficult to interpret or implement, and asked for a new one. As a result, a meeting was called at the Department of Employment Southern Area office in Santa Ana May 12, 1965, to revise the form and, additionally, to discuss the implications on this project of another for 4,700 workers sponsored by growers. The resulting MDT-1 form included no more citrus harvesting training in the project plan and the emphasis instead rested on the development of a basic education project for farm workers. Job preparation or vocational education was to be developed later. A meeting on June 29, 1965 at a citrus industry function in Ventura County with officials of the Department of Education clarified the attitude of growers towards the project. Agricultural leaders declined to support the project in any manner. It was also learned that the grower-sponsored MDTA project announced in mid-March had been abandoned, although no official announcement was made by the agricultural industry.

Since there was still local school board resistance to the project, a meeting was held June 30 with Max Rafferty, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Sacramento. Present were Assemblymen Albert Song, Mervin Dymally and Philip Soto from Los Angeles, and Win Shoemaker from Santa Barbara; Max Mont of the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Wesley Smith, California Director of Vocational Education, and various officials of the Department of Education and the project director. The meeting drew top level support from Dr. Max Rafferty. A basic education curriculum was formulated which was later instituted in varying degrees by the Oxnard school administration. This is the curriculum as recommended by the project director to the State Department of Education to be later recommended to the local public schools.

FARM WORKERS OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

Recommended Curriculum

Subjects:	Hours recommended for majority of trainees
Basic Education	
English, Reading and Writing	240
Arithmetic	120
Consumer education	100
Civics, Citizenship and History	100
Driver Education	30
Vocational	
A) Fundamental agricultural knowledge (Essentials of Ventura County farming)	120
Total	710 Hours

B) Agricultural Skills*
(from 10 to 150 hours as needed to teach subject)

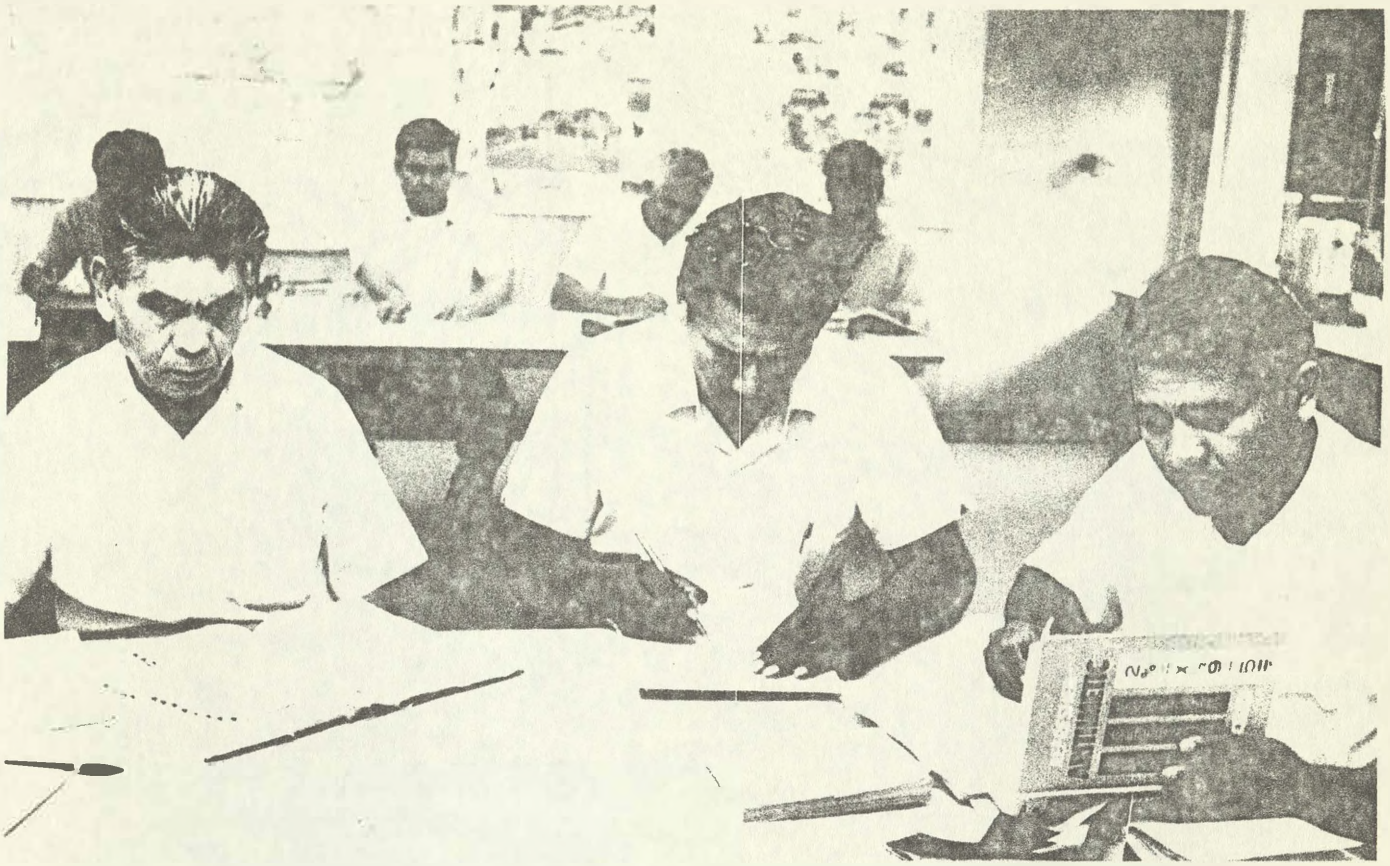
1. Tractor operation and maintenance
2. Nursery skills
3. Machinery on farms, mechanical harvest
4. Irrigation
5. Spraying
6. Other skills

(*These would be specific courses to be developed after program is underway upon request of a sufficient number of trainees and with agreement of sponsoring agency and school.)

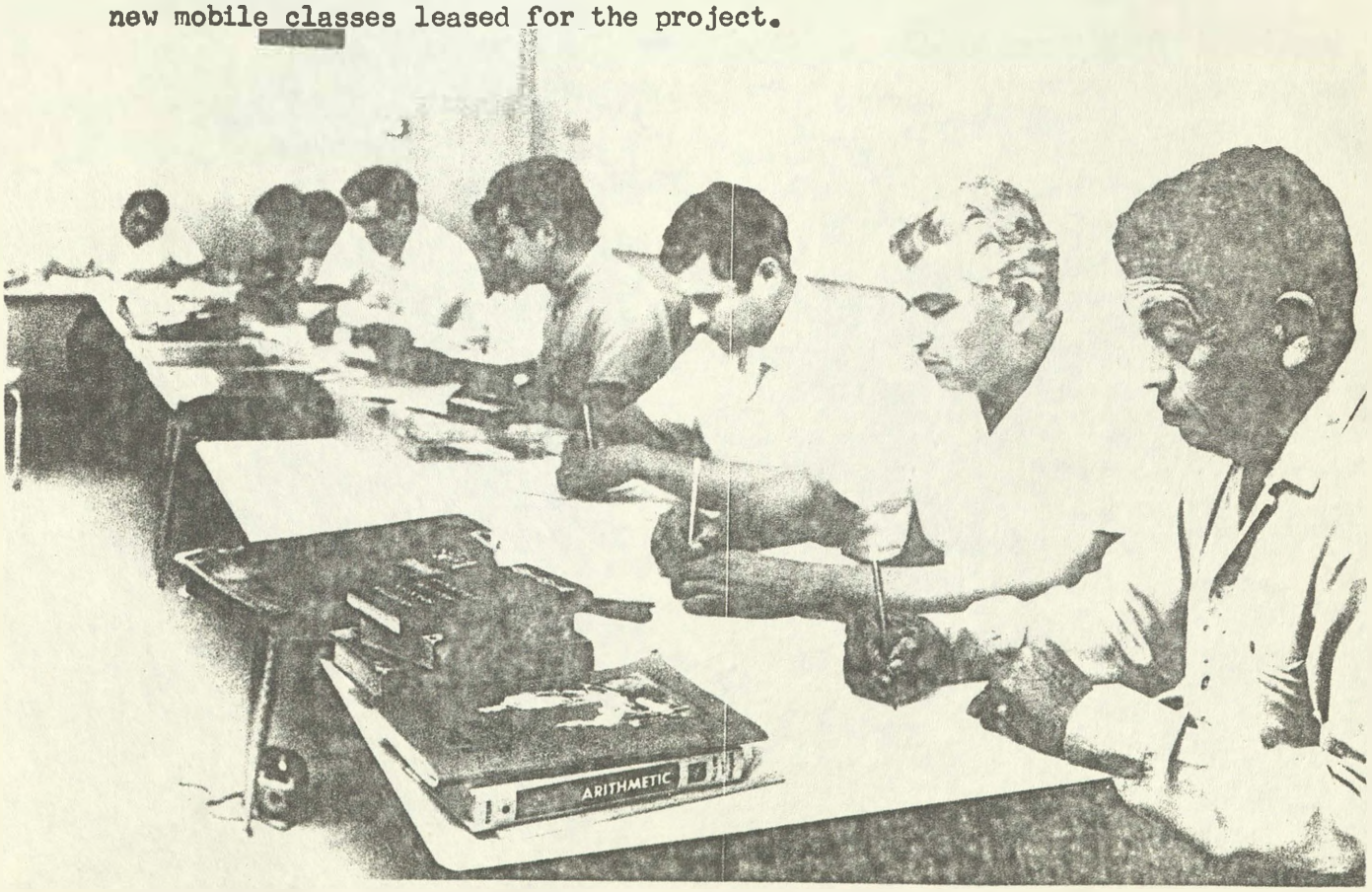
A subsequent meeting took place on July 16 in Oxnard between David Graf, of the State Department of Education, Kent Bennion, administrative assistant of program development of the Department of Education, the project director, and a large group of Ventura County persons who were in basic support of the program or willing to consider supporting the project. Also in attendance at the July 16 meeting were Dr. Joseph Crosby of the Oxnard High School District and Seawright Steward of the Elementary School District. The approach to the Oxnard Board produced weeks of bitter board dissent and haggling but finally approval, by a 3-2 board vote, on August 25, five months after funding.

It should be noted that the State Department of Education, not the project director, proposed the project to the Oxnard Board. The project director was at the meeting and testified in support of the project, but state officials made the official recommendation to the High School Board. The state appeal was a strong one, but never sold the project as an experimental one for disadvantaged people. The state official emphasis came more on skill training and employment upgrading than on the need for special education programs for the disadvantaged. A major point in the state presentation was that the state had never yet failed to get local school participation, because if a public school would not take the project, a private one would be found to sponsor the education program.

State Department of Education officials, in general, were hesitant to impose anything on school boards against board inclinations. These officials often brought up their dislike for having to urge local school authorities to take on programs such as the Oxnard Experimental MDTA Program. It is also worthwhile noting the official process is that of the local school being cast in the role of applicant for funds to implement the program. Obviously to call the Oxnard High School District an "applicant" in this case is to distort the meaning of the word. The School District "applied" in spite of itself, after six months of wooing, cajoling, haggling and bitter dispute among its Board members and officials. The California Department of Education officials found themselves in a maverick role in this whole process. They were carrying out orders "from above," and not operating within the regular framework. Kenneth Cutler found the task especially onerous. David Graf of the Sacramento Department of Education office told the project director that he had never had as difficult a project to handle in the four years since the inception of the Manpower Development and Training Act. Kent Bennion was sent out from the Sacramento office direct, bypassing Ken Cutler of the Los Angeles office, to expedite the process. By August 25, 1965, Kent Bennion was finally successful in persuading the Oxnard High School District to sponsor the basic education program.



Farm Workers Opportunity Project trainees attended English and basic education instruction provided by the Oxnard Union High School District in new mobile classes leased for the project.



7. Institutional Training

The first two classes of the MDTA experimental program were started on November 15, 1965. Two more classes were begun in mid-December 1965 and two more in late January 1966. Three more sections (with two classes per section of approximately twenty students) were started six months after the first three sections began. In all, 208 trainees received some institutional training at the Oxnard Union High School classrooms. The Oxnard Union High School District, under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Crosby took over the responsibility to hire personnel, administer the education program, teach the trainees and provide special classroom space and custodial service. All arrangements including the placement of classrooms, (new buildings were leased) the sizes of classes, teaching procedures and the guidance of teachers were in the hands of the Oxnard Union High School District office.

Little administrative personnel was used by the school district. The recommended co-ordinator for the education program was never hired and Dr. Crosby, the superintendent, administered the program himself. He was assisted by a full-time administrative secretary, who worked directly under Dr. Crosby in conjunction with the teaching staff of the program.

Dr. Crosby used regular procedures to hire the teaching staff for the program. Applications were evaluated and cleared by the High School Office, while Dr. Crosby gave all applicant teachers a personal interview to check on character, prejudices and attitudes of potential teachers. The training program began at a time of year that made it difficult for the administration to recruit teachers, for most regular teachers had already signed contracts and were teaching in the regular schools. This meant that the teachers were recruited from among retired teachers, or those among the ranks of substitute teachers or those not qualified to teach under regular school criteria.

The teachers (twelve in all) had a great variety of qualifications from training in sociology to agricultural sciences. Only one teacher remained in service for the entire program. The teachers had little insight or information about the purposes of the program prior to commencing the job of teaching. No conferences were held among the teachers as a staff.

None of the teachers were fluent in Spanish. Teachers were hired with the knowledge that they did not speak Spanish, as it was felt by the School Administration that the "direct" teaching method (language mastery culminating from necessity) would prove to be more effective for the group of adult Spanish-speaking trainees. Students, it was thought, would be forced to practice English when speaking to teachers and would not be able to use Spanish as a "crutch." Some students expressed their opinion that Spanish-speaking teachers would have made the students more comfortable and better able to learn their lessons. Other students even voiced the idea that some of the program should have been taught in Spanish only.

Space for the instruction was provided in the form of three portable buildings, (somewhat akin to trailer or mobile homes). Each building contained two separate classrooms, which were well-lighted and equiped with air conditioning and heating units. These buildings were placed on Oxnard Union High School property ajacent to older buildings that were used by the adult night school program for upholstery and sewing classes. Parking facilities were also constructed behind the buildings.

Classes were not limited in size to twenty students but varied from eighteen to twenty five students in number. Attempts were made by teachers and administration to group the students in such a manner that the trainees in any class would be at a comparable educational level, one with another. This "homogenous" grouping was not always possible, however, as students varied so greatly in their educational levels and background.

There was no special curriculum committee instituted, although one had been planned and recommended to the Department of Education and the High School District. No co-ordinator was hired, although it was recommended that there be a full-time education co-ordinator. All the coordination was managed by Dr. Crosby himself, who also carried on his full-time superintendent job.

Each classroom contained an adequate amount of equipment and supplies. Full-sized (3 ft. x 6 ft.) tables were purchased, along with individual chairs. All rooms had large, wall chalk-boards, bulletin boards and shelf space. Teachers were provided with a desk, file cabinet and necessary

teaching equipment, which included overhead projectors, movie projectors and screens as needed.

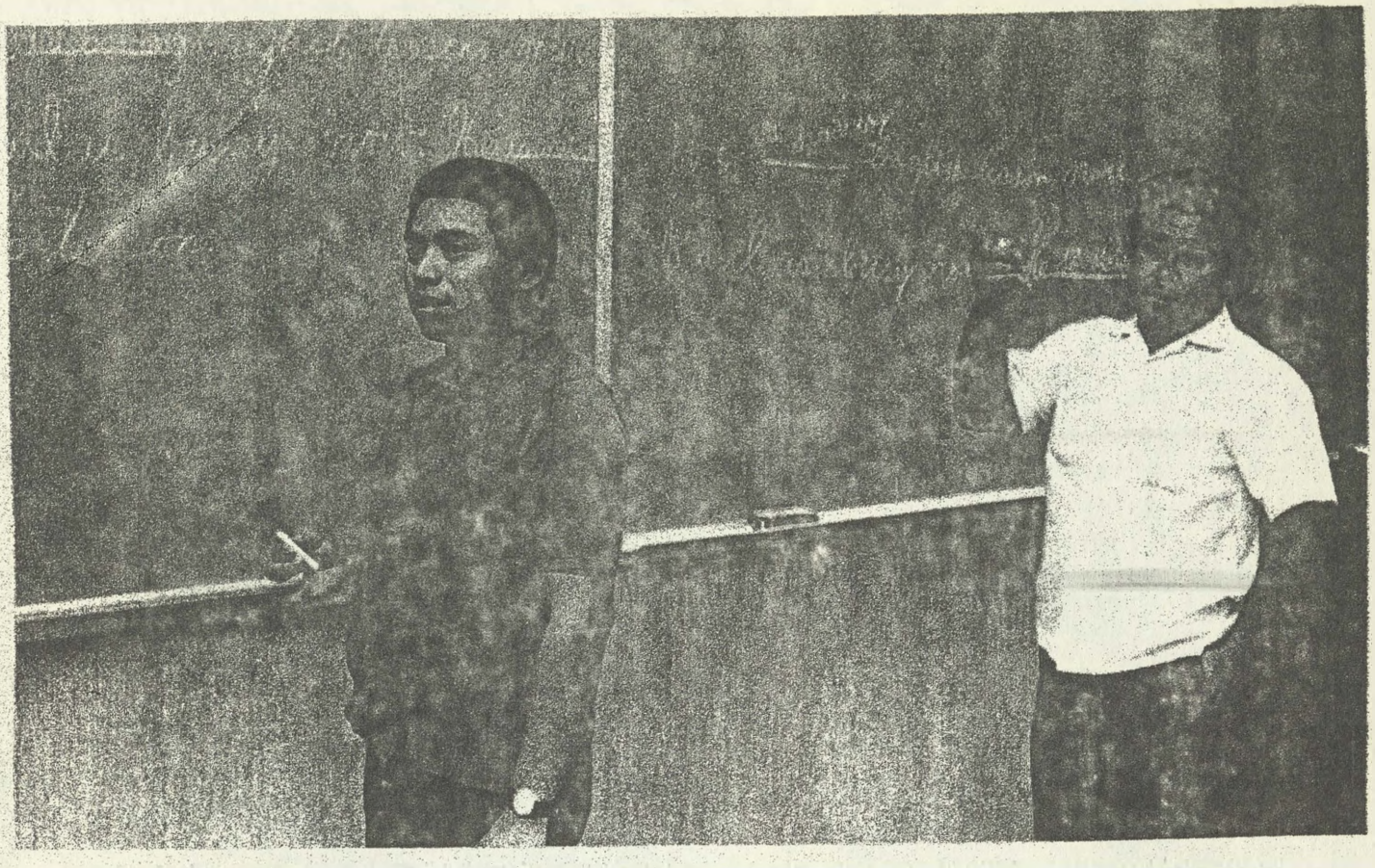
Teachers remained in their rooms with the same group of students six hours each day, five days a week. The classes began at 8:30 A.M. every day and continued through the day until 3:15 P.M. in the afternoon. Lunch breaks of 45 minutes were taken as well as ten-minute breaks at the end of each hour of class. This routine "schoolhouse" procedure ran throughout the training program, (with the exception of field trips). At the end of the training project, each trainee that graduated was given a "certificate of completion" that stated the individual had completed a total course of 720 hours of basic education.

Dropout

The overall dropout from training rate among the students was 36%. The reasons for dropout were many and varied. About half the dropouts left class because they found new jobs, most of them in agriculture. The program required that trainees be unemployed or underemployed when entering class and specified that students should leave class whenever they had a chance to obtain a job.

Trainees attended classes six hours a day, five days a week. Class size varied from eighteen to twenty students.

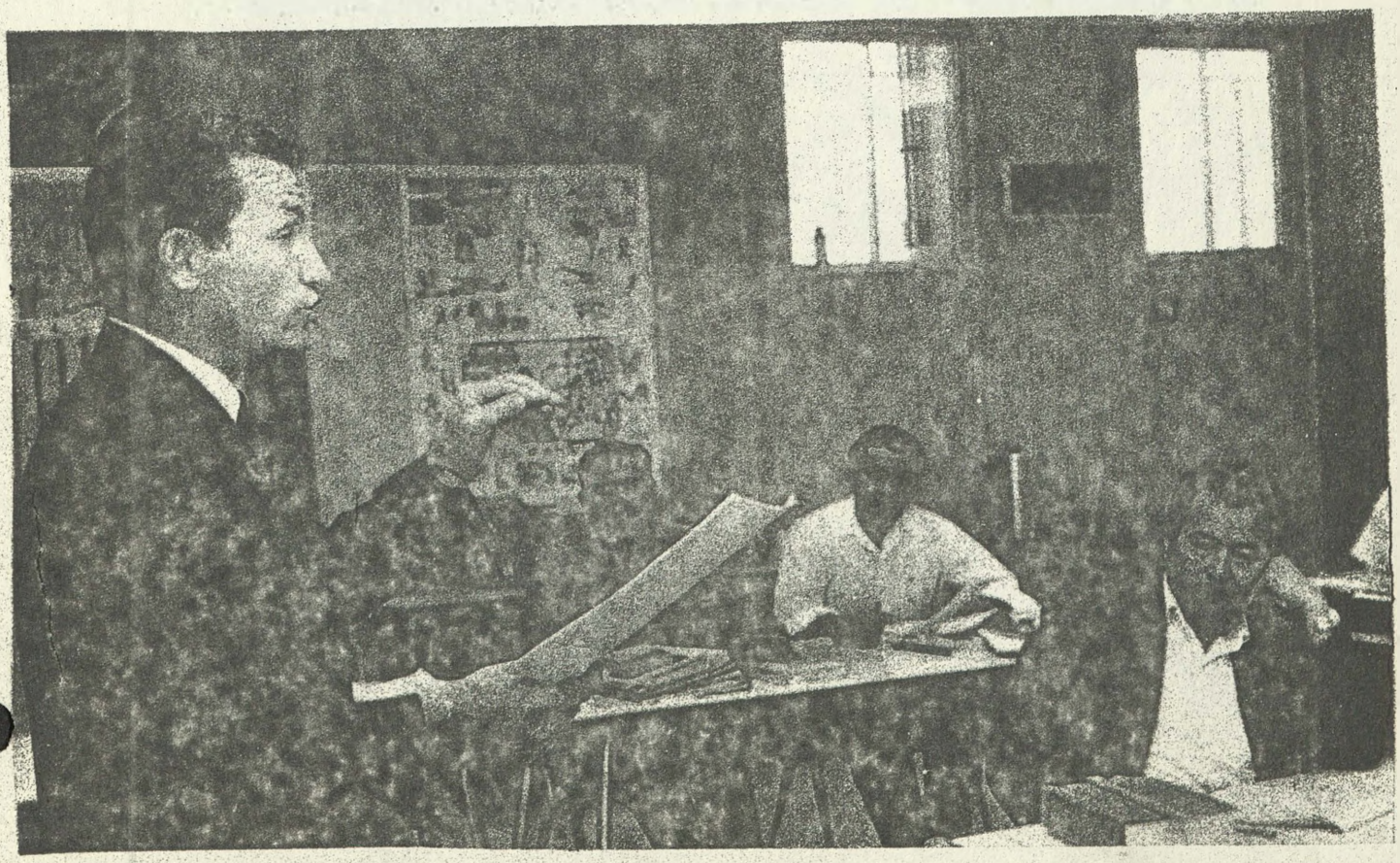
Below: "...teaching techniques emphasizing the day-to-day interests and requirements of the trainees.....succeeded best."



Above--F.W.O.P. trainees complete written exercises on the blackboard.

Below--Teacher Gene Francis with his class, October, 1966.

Teachers were hired by the Oxnard Union High School District.



8. Curriculum and Teaching Methods

The basic curriculum that was outlined and recommended to the Oxnard High School District has been set forth in an earlier portion of this chapter. (See (6) Development of Institutional Training.)

As no curriculum committee was formed, nor coordinator hired, the curriculum and materials used were decided upon by the Project teaching staff and administration. Teachers indicated that they had considerable freedom to choose materials they wished and decided upon teaching methods themselves. One of the teachers stated that the faculty "built the curriculum themselves" and also expressed the view that teachers "felt" their needs, wants and capabilities. A general suggested curriculum outline was given to the teachers as follows:

A. Basic English, Reading and Writing (360 hours)
   1. Speech skills
   2. Listening skills
   3. Comprehension skills
   4. Word recognition skills
   5. Vocabulary building skills
   6. Writing skills
   7. Structure of the English Language
   8. Spelling skills
   9. Functional writing skills

B. Basic skills in mathematics (120 hours)
   1. Computation skills
   2. Using mathematics in measurement
   3. Using mathematics in money management
   4. Buying skills and use of credit

C. Basic skills in the social sciences (120 hours)
   1. United States and California history
   2. Understanding government in action
   3. Knowing the local community as a social economic and political unit.
   4. Government agencies
   5. Health, safety and laws enforcement
   6. Driver education

D. Basic vocational skills and knowledge (120 hours)

The above curriculum was to be instituted through the use of suggested materials and tools provided by the school district (see final report by

Dr. Crosby in appendix of this report). A wide selection of texts, workbooks, films, equipment and resources (both purchased and rented by the School District) were used on a random basis by the teachers. The teachers used these materials to support their day to day lectures and classroom discussions.

One teacher reported that she used an "audio-lingual" technique to teach English to non-English speaking workers. The technique involved a process that began with simple, common idiomatic words and phrases. "Good morning, class" is a phrase with unmistakable intent and meaning in a given context and easily conveyed in an everyday situation. From this developed the use of common words and the development of simple sentences such as: "This is a chair", or "This is a desk."

Another teacher reported that he would "stage" situations which helped dramatize the use of idiomatic phrases. Thus he might bump into a student's desk and then immediately apologize to the student with a "I'm sorry", or "Please excuse me." Everyday American English was emphasized.

One of the teachers organized his teaching in the following manner:

Goals for Student Progress

A. English (workbooks #1, 2 & 3 from S.R.A. laboratories)
   1. To learn ABC's, vowel sounds, simple sentences, simple paragraphs and spelling (1,000 common words)
   2. To read short stories
   3. To write letters and checks
   4. To fill out applications
   5. To converse in simple English
   6. To speak in English to groups

B. Arithmetic (Stein Text and workbook #5)
   1. Learn negative and positive
      a. Addition
      b. Subtraction
      c. Multiplication
      d. Division

      (Above in percentages, fractions and decimals)
   2. Learn how arithmetic is beneficial in occupational and avocational skills (Micrometer reading and carpenter's rule)

C. Economic Training
   1. Budget
   2. Group economy
   3. Where to buy and how (local and other)
   4. Taxes and forms

D. Driver Training
   1. Signs and rules
   2. License, standard state laws, alien requirements and registration
   3. Problematic situations

E. Field Trips
   1. Santa Barbara
      a. Natural museum
      b. Mission
      c. Art museum
   2. Dairy (Chase)
   3. Library (local)

F. Social Studies
   1. Introduce all states and capitals
   2. Introduce Presidents and dates

G. Physical Sciences
   1. Planets
   2. Space progress
   3. Science experiments--light refraction and latex development

H. Government
   1. Learn historical background
   2. Learn government branches
      a. Local
      b. State
      c. Federal
   3. Learn citizenship requirements
   4. Learn flag salute
   5. Learn National Anthem - introduce and sing
   6. Learn leadership discussion - student government

I. Occupational Materials and Information as Concerns Agriculture
   1. Farming procedures
   2. Seasons and rotational crops
   3. Machinery and its use
   4. Erosion and irrigation
   5. Plant and animal cycle
   6. Local occupational opportunities
      a. Farm
      b. Other

Major Teaching Techniques

A. Assigned individual responsibilities with follow-up on same

B. Used direct method - no Spanish

C. Set goals for instruction and listed them on the board

D. Instituted informal attitude by various methods:
   1. Coffee in room
   2. No special seating arrangement
   3. Freedom of conversation between individuals

E. Explained learning curve

F. Had inter-instructions by fellow students

G. Incorporated use of:
   1. Buzz groups
   2. Team work
   3. Group instruction
   4. Audio-visual
      a. Tape recorder
      b. Overhead viewer
      c. Language master
      d. Reading laboratory

H. Self-governed penalty system

I. Explained why and how instruction related to practical living

J. Assumed a learning position along with students

K. Other media used in room:
   1. Mirror
   2. Calendar
   3. Guitar
   4. Multiplication table
   5. "Bust" of a favorite U.S. citizen (Kennedy)
   6. Visual games
   7. Major production map of U.S. and color map of U.S. and Mexico

L. Maintained and added to a small model library in room with assigned student librarian

General Teaching Methods and Equipment

There were more than a score of books, workbooks, films, and other materials used in the project curriculum. Typical of them was the book-workbook combination entitled I Want To Read and Write, by Harley A. Smith and Ida Lee King Wilbert, educational specialists in Louisiana school systems, and published by Steck-Vaughn Co., Austin, Texas.

The magazine-sized soft cover book with lessons and spaces for work participation by the student was planned "for helping adults to learn to read and write," the introduction says. With a vocabulary of 291 words, the book was organized from words found in a study of ten basic readers of third grade level.

The 128-page book uses lessons built around stories of "adult interests and problems such as individual health and safety, the family and home, work, leisure, church, banking, manners, letter writing, and citizenship," the introduction says. The stories in the beginning are short and the vocabulary easy. Both gradually grow more difficult.

The book "is built on the assumption that students not only need to recognize many sight words but that they also need to develop essential reading skills to be able to attack new words independently." Each story is accompanied by a practice lesson that introduces and develops essential reading skills.

Books and Workbooks

Among the other materials used was a workbook entitled "English for Spanish-Speaking People" and a series of lessons by Robert Dixon to supplement their classroom lecture. The public school's text for citizenship classes for Mexicans, a regular offering in district schools' evening classes, was also used. Teachers offered some reading and interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. They also used the S.R.A. reading and spelling laboratory design and took students at individual pace through elementary to junior college levels with that material. These "Fourteen Science Research Spelling and Reading Labs" for grades 1 through 14 were progressive color-keyed lessons for various grade levels. The answering mechanism of the tool worked at the students' individual levels and paces and he could go as far as he could by himself.

Films

Teachers found in showing certain films, "Sentence: Subject and Predicate," for example, that the lesson held little relevance for their students. Handled in such purely analytical ways as grammar's sake means little to an adult trying to learn a new language. Such films "failed to tie in . . . to have any application, any meaning in a real life situation,"

one teacher said. Teachers found most success dealing with language training in terms of the daily life and problems of the students. Another film, "The Story of Citrus Fruit," succeeded because "it was relatable to daily experiences" and was simultaneously informative, a teacher said. A third film, a sort of canned pronunciation lesson entitled "Improve Your Pronunciation" was helpful in that it "helped overcome some of the students' Spanish accent hangover." Three other films, "Life in a Cubic Foot of Soil," "Genetics: Improving Plants and Animals," and "Plant and Animal Communities--Physical Environment" were simple and useful.

(See tables of workbooks and teaching materials in Appendix)

Summary

Regardless of curriculum content, teachers in this project found that teaching techniques emphasizing the day-to-day interests and requirements of the trainees in pragmatic application succeeded best. Academics as such and the conventional academic approach will be less successful in reaching such trainees. Teachers emphasized that grammar for grammar's sake, for instance, was not as successful a language training tool as dramatizing real life situations by language or in using real life problems in teaching English recognition and reading with a pragmatic emphasis. There was strong agreement on teaching in terms of day-to-day life, vocabulary of "that life" and language idiom, but little on the technical aspects of grammar and "proper English."

9. Special Medical Program

Health Problems of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers in Ventura County

Through intense classroom and counseling contact with more than two hundred seasonal farm workers in Ventura County, California, the Farm Workers' Opportunity Project (1965-66) provided a framework for understanding the health problems of this part of the American labor force. The Project was directed towards job re-training; but in the course of selecting, screening, and day-by-day teaching, it also offered a unique perspective on the health conditions and environment that the seasonal farm worker experiences.

The citrus industry of Ventura County employs about 7,500 persons in the seasonal chores of orchard care and harvesting. Until recently, about half of these were County residents, and half were "braceros", that is contract labor brought up from Mexico for specific jobs. With the termination of the bracero program in 1964 there was a sudden influx of farm workers from other areas to fill the 4,000 vacant jobs. This created a significant change in the labor force of the County; the nine-to-one predominance of Mexican-Americans to other groups continued, but the resident status of the workers had changed.

When Project counselors contacted local physicians and health workers, they found a consistent response to questions about the problems of health of farm workers: "There is no problem". The physicians and the County Hospital treated occasional farm workers, often at reduced rates, and they felt that the very presence of such facilities resolved any health problem. The County Health Department held clinics for immunization and prenatal care in several locations near the workers' homes, but did not encourage new families to come. According to one official "They stay on their side of the river and we stay on ours". When the bracero program ended and migrants began coming in, there was a brief flurry of concern that facilities would be overburdened, but when no change occurred in hospital admissions, clinic visits, welfare applications or other services, it all quieted down.

Even though the farm workers did not have "health problems" from an official point of view, they were regarded as something of a health nuisance.

High accident rates, high incidences of tuberculosis, venereal disease and dental disease were all seen as characteristic of the group. The manager of a major citrus association went so far as to say that health problems were a significant cause of lost time, and contributed to the extremely high turnover of employees. He felt that health screening facilities for workers would be useful to the growers, but could not arouse the interest of others in this. The braceros had been given such screening at the border, and had health insurance while working, but the new migrants often had neither. Moreover, most were not residents of the county long enough (one year) to be eligible for care at the County Hospital. If seriously ill, they tended to drop out, stay behind, and become part of the skid road society.

As the project got underway, and counselors began door-to-door soliciting of trainees, they encountered a number of specific health care problems. All seemed due to misunderstanding between the worker and representatives of the county facilities. One expectant mother refused to deliver her child at the County Hospital because she had heard rumors that Mexican-Americans were poorly treated there, and that the level of care was substandard. When she went to a private hospital, she was given a bill so large that she could not pay. Others were not aware of the services available, or were uncertain whether or not they were eligible. All were concerned about the language barrier, and knew that the County might have no Spanish-speaking person in its health or welfare offices.

Once trainees for the project had been selected, physical examinations were given to as many as possible. Teams of medical students and nursing students from U.C.L.A. volunteered to take health histories in English or Spanish. A local physician (not Spanish-speaking) was hired to do the actual examinations, and to make recommendations for further care or diagnosis. In the initial group of trainees, the following were noted by history:

History of TB in family	10%
Cardiovascular complaints	16%
Genito-urinary complaints	16%
Musculo-skeletal complaints	30%
Wear glasses	25%
Seen M.D. or hospital in past 5 years	70%
Lab work of x-ray in past 5 years	30%
Immunization in past 5 years	33%

On physical examination, the following were found in a total of 123 trainees:

Severe dental problems	79%
Need ophthalmological care	24%
Respiratory disease	11%
Asthma (8) Lung defects (4)	
Other (4)	
Cardiovascular disease	23%
Hypertension (13) Hypotension (7)	
Coronary (8)	
Obesity	6%
Musculo-skeletal defects	4%

In addition, a variety of other conditions were found: hernia, glycosuria, albuminuria, hearing defect, malnutrition, and tumor of the tongue--one each.

The reaction of the medical and nursing students to participation in the program was consistently one of great interest and appreciation, and many expressed desire for more opportunities of this sort.

The examining physician summarized her reactions as follows: "Lack of communication with the proper medical agency or medical authority is directly due to the language barrier. Research indicated that 85% of these people visit a doctor only in dire emergency, and then usually only a clinic or hospital. We find that those who speak little English sometimes like to return to this office, if only to try out their newly-learned language."

She concluded: "Basically the main medical problems facing the farm worker are due to poor health conditions and (lack of) proper housing. Certainly these are contributing factors to their inability to concentrate on basic education. Poor eyesight, heart disease, lung disease, ear defects and rheumatism, without adequate or regular medical checkups...tend to interfere with...holding a steady job."

Once the examinations were completed, however, many difficulties arose. It was not possible to pursue most of the referrals; the Project could not pay for them, or for further medical care. It was only when TB was identified in one trainee that screening chest x-rays were obtained for others in his group at the County mobile unit. Drug addiction was found in several members of one class; they blamed it on frustrations, inability to find work, and employer indifference to them and to their families. It was never possible to mobilize sufficient community interest to organize meetings of

health workers on the problems of health care for farm workers. Although it was apparent that the trainees needed health education, it was not possible to work it into the curriculum.

Thus although the Farm Workers' Opportunity Project brought to light many of the health care problems of the seasonal farm worker, it was not able to deal with many of them. The students, nurses, physicians and health officials were made more aware of the problems, but did not find solutions. The farm worker trainees were made more aware of health, but did not learn to deal better with health problems. The gulf between the two societies, which seemed itself to be the chief cause of the problems, was seen but not bridged.

Staff members felt, in retrospect, that only through concerted effort to mobilize local interest in the health of farm workers, would it be possible to organize meetings of local health workers and find appropriate solutions. Education is needed on both sides: the farm worker needs to learn what is available to him, what his rights are, and how to overcome his fears of society. On the other hand, the health official needs to recognize that the farm worker has unique health problems, that he will require assistance in overcoming the social and language barriers, and most of all, he can only obtain real health when treated with the respect and dignity deserved by all human beings.

NOTE: A full analysis of the special medical screening program is in the project report appendix.

10) Special Testing Program

In order to assist counselors and teachers better understand the capabilities and levels of achievement of trainees in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project, a testing consultant was employed to establish a special testing program. Nicholas Seidita, a counseling and testing consultant with the Los Angeles City Schools System, established a special testing program for project trainees in reading, arithmetic, picture vocabulary, and response to oral directions. The testing program was the only such manpower program for seasonal and migrant farm workers (in the project leadership's knowledge) that provided test evaluation of intelligence, language and arithmetic skills before, during and after classroom instruction.

Though the test findings are incomplete and of limited usefulness because of a variety of factors such as size of tested samples, the findings showed a number of significant findings for hard-core seasonal farm workers.

The median age of the 165 students tested was 36.4 years with two-thirds of them between 26 and 47 years old. Nine out of ten of the trainees came from an agricultural employment background. Six out of ten of the student body were non-U.S. citizens, immigrants from Mexico. Twenty-nine of the 165 tested were women.

The median years of schooling in either country was 3.7 years, with two-thirds of the students attaining between 2 and 7.4 years. Fifty-six percent were schooled in Latin America, almost all in Mexico. Sixteen percent only had received schooling in California.

Median I.Q. scores of those tested was 88.5, with two-thirds of the students between 75.7 and 102.7 (ranging from "sub-average" to "average".) One test showed that the students have a comprehension of their native tongue, Spanish, on an average that is higher than a sample of Venezuelan National workers of comparable origins, culture and schooling.

An arithmetic test showed the entering students placed at a median U. S. grade level of 4.4, with two-thirds of them scoring between 3.1 and 5.3 grades of American students in arithmetic achievement. One hundred and sixteen persons who were tested at the end of six month's instruction made average 12 academic months beyond the average 4.2 level of 123 entering students.

Note: A comprehensive and detailed analysis of the total testing program is to be found in the appendix of this report.

11) Counseling Program

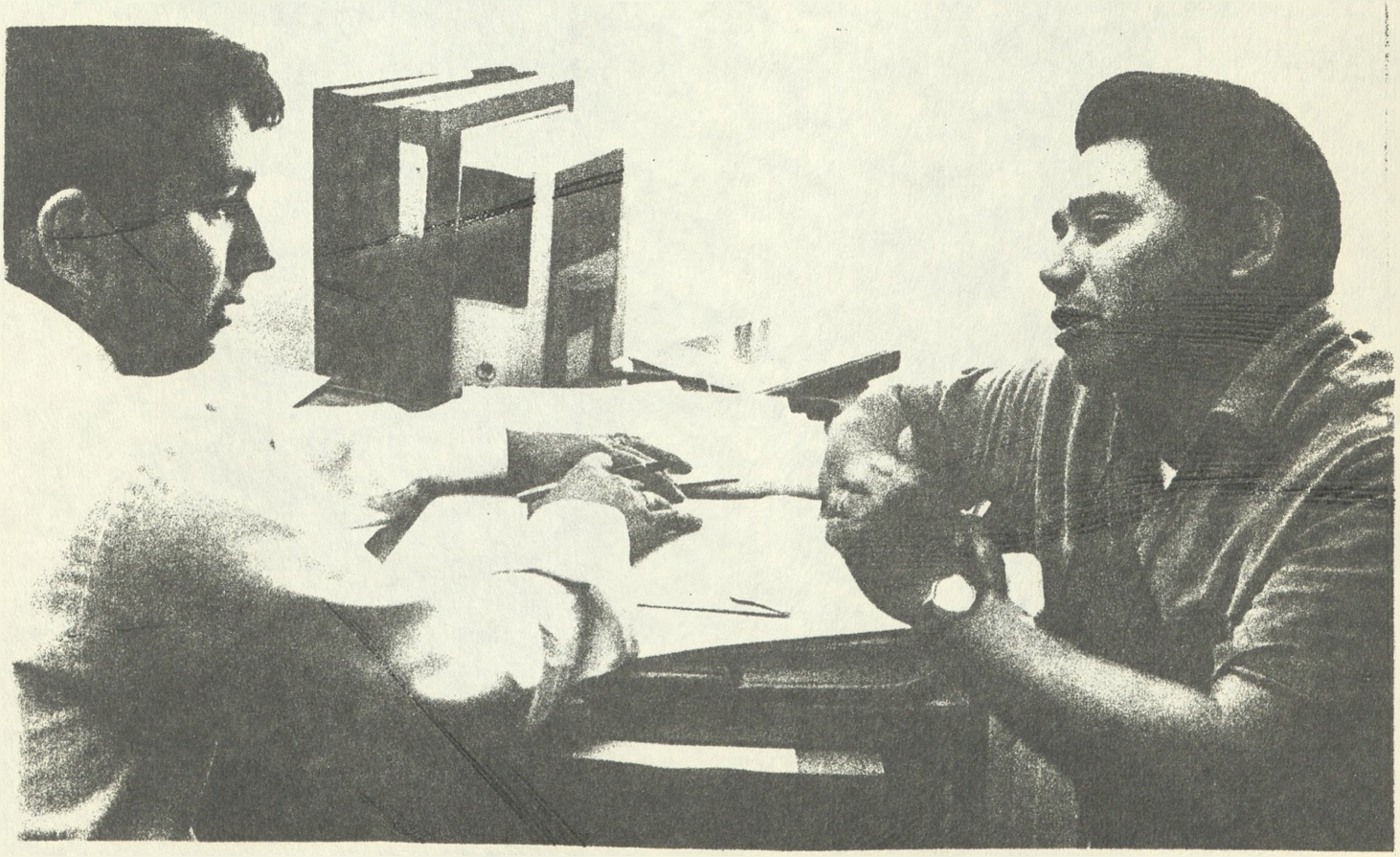
The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers hired a staff of counselors to provide intensive group and individual counseling for the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. On the average, there were at least five full time counselors attached to the Project. The functions and jobs of these counselors changed with the development of the Project. There was, however, a continuing program of group and individual counseling both for the 203 trainees in the Project and hundreds of other farm workers who came into contact with the program, from the earliest days until the end of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. The counseling program, both group and individual, reflected the needs and desires of the seasonal and migrant farm workers themselves. Flexibility was the key word for project counselors. Trainees often needed personal help and advice at the beginning of the program, but as the counseling and education projects advanced, the trainees became more adept at taking care of themselves. This counseling program became the responsibility of the American Friends Service Committee after the summer of 1966.

Individual Counseling

Trainees in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project had the typical individual problems that plague low education, low income farm workers--those of trouble with the law, evictions from homes, repossession of furniture or other items purchased on credit and the problems of obtaining drivers' licenses or filing income tax returns. The counseling staff came across numerous examples of how students learned to handle many of the problems that would have left them helpless without exposure to the project. Individual problems were often viewed in a group or community context. Trainees learned how seasonal farm workers often share similar problems through small group or community based meetings. In many instances the student-workers visited counselors in their homes on informal friendly visits. The workers saw their counselors as members of their own community. Relaxed and unihibited discussions between counselors and farm workers made for friendly relations.

During the early portion of the Project each trainee met his counselor not less than once a week at a regularly appointed time. The regular meeting was an opportunity for the trainee to visit with his counselor and discuss anything he desired. Some of the more timid students came out of their shells and started to talk about problems they had not discussed before. Moreover, the practice was a safeguard that assured that counselors divided their

Farm Workers Opportunity Project counselor, Armando Lopez, discusses a problem with a trainee in the project. The above photograph was taken outside the F.W.O.P. office at 128 Colonia Rd., Oxnard.



available time among all trainees so that no individuals were slighted. The counselors asked trainees to write up their past life history (in English) to indicate what they, as individuals, felt had most influenced their lives. The "histories" were then discussed in weekly sessions with the counselors. Counselors also had an opportunity to develop individual programs for workers, programs adjusted to individual talents or aspirations.

Many trainees, under counselors' guidance, started bank savings accounts and deposit regular amounts of money into their accounts every week. Many workers also obtained library cards for the first time in their lives. Counselors would also discuss the reading that a student had done during the past week. Some outstanding examples of individual progress could be observed on the part of some of the trainees as with one student who went to court on his own and filed a request that he both be allowed an extension in his case and that the court appoint an attorney for him. Another student successfully obtained the cooperation of local health authorities who removed a dead animal as a health hazard from under the student's home. These problems may seem minor to some but they are of the type that daily burden seasonal farm workers and make for great unhappiness, expense to the worker or even cause workers to be jailed.

Group Counseling

Counselors in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project had an average caseload of eighteen individuals. The counselors split their caseload into two sections of from eight to ten individuals making two groups for each counselor. The counselor then held meetings with each group on a regular basis, usually every other week. These meetings were used for informal discussions in which the workers talked about their own concerns and anxieties in a relaxed and free atmosphere. Often these meetings were held in homes or in the meeting room (which had sofas and arm chairs) of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. Past meetings often centered around such questions as the necessity of education in modern times, the value of minority cultures in the American Scene. Prejudices and biased attitudes often emerged in these group sessions. Many farm workers feel that the compulsory education law is unfair for they feel that their children should be allowed to work and help to support the family as soon as they are physically big enough to do so. Others argue that if their children get a good education they will be able to get better, well paid jobs and that therefore the initial investment in sacrificing to allow the children

to be in school will ultimately pay dividends. Many of the workers who are predominantly of Mexican descent feel a strong sense of inferiority. Having accepted the sense of alienation in an Anglo-American Society, they often have little drive. Others are very proud of their heritage and realize that there are strengths and weaknesses in every culture.

The group counseling sessions have been very effective in bringing about an awareness among the trainees of their similarities and common bonds. As these individuals learn that each one is not unique in this society so they discover that many problems can be solved through group activities rather than by individual action. The development of these group activities is explored in greater detail in Chapter IV under Project Impact.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT IMPACT

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1) Introduction

The total impact the Farm Workers Opportunity Project had on the individual trainee, the government agencies, and the Ventura County community can never be measured with precision. However, by observing the trainees at their studies, by holding casual conversations with them, by their response to organizational activities, and by seeing a very noticeable growth in their self-awareness, one can conclude that the project has been a force that will change the meaning of their lives. The never-ending flow of people into the FWOP office asking for help, advice, transportation, and on occasion for a place to sleep, is indicative of farm worker community acceptance. The effort by the California State Department of Employment in job placement for graduate trainees provides another index for determining the influence the project had on that agency. Lastly, the local press coverage, especially in the Oxnard Press Courier and the Ventura County Star-Free Press, reactions by Grower Associations and influential citizens, provide indices for measuring hostility to and acceptance of the project.

Beyond these considerations, are the intangible effects of a project that was willing to take a political stand on basic issues affecting seasonal farm labor, even when that stand was strongly opposed by various elements of the agricultural industry. There is little doubt that the Farm Workers Opportunity Project had a profound effect on the agricultural community in Ventura County. It assisted the political and civic growth of the Mexican-American and farm labor communities in the area. The Project, in its early days, called the bluff of those agricultural employers who claimed that there were no domestic agricultural workers to pick the crops. As a training program, the Project was never given a chance to replace imported braceros with trained domestic workers. The impact of the $600,000 Project was constant nevertheless. As much as a MDTA project can be, the Farm Workers Opportunity Project was politically successful even before one trainee entered the classrooms.

2) Impact of Institutional Training

All of the students expressed an intense interest in learning English or in improving their command of the language. One trainee, unaware of existing night school programs until counseled by a staff member, later enrolled in night classes four nights a week to improve his English fluency. Thirteen other students followed this same pattern. They had not done so before either because of ignorance of the existence of the program or fear of the unfamiliar. Asked why she did not go to night school before, one woman replied, "I was working in the fields and didn't know about the school." She made an even more telling point when she said that even if she had known about night school, she would have been too tired to attend after working in the fields all day.

Many new trainees learned a new language and approached fluency in it, enough to make it a new tool for social and economic betterment and integration.

The 31 trainees called "readers" of English, who understood a little of the language when entering the program, when re-tested after six months' basic education, showed an average 1 to 1.1 grade increase in reading speed, vocabulary and comprehension.

The 53 who took the picture vocabulary test and who knew some English scored lower than almost all the adult American population initially. When re-tested after six months' instruction, they raised their scores to the sixth centile of adult Americans. "Non-readers" despite improvement, remained below U. S. adult norms.

"Readers" taking a tape-recorded test to show how well they comprehended English instructions improved their centile ranking from 16 to 46 after six months' instruction. Non-readers improved from their third to ninth centile of male textile mill workers (U. S. unskilled workers).

"Readers" improved their arithmetic level from grade 4.3 to 6.1 in six months and non-readers from 4.1 to 5.[1]

These new purely intellectual tools enabled trainees to partake of a new culture and society that they had only felt and seen from its bottom rungs, only as it sped by in shiny new cars. This new tool has and will continue to unlock doors of opportunity that were once closed to them. Many found that they now had the courage to apply for employment in fields other than agriculture. Some found that it was much more meaningful and pleasant to attend city council

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[1] For complete testing results, refer to "Special testing section in Appendix.

and community action meetings because they could understand the procedures, the interworkings and complexities of a meeting. But most significant, these people could now "stand and be heard." During one of many field trips, Eudaldo Lopez stood with shoulders back, head high, as he spoke to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to show how well he had learned English during the six months training period.

All of the students strongly believed that the learning of English and the opportunities it provided was the most important reason for the program. They also realized that the instruction in local and national government and politics gave them a new awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and members of a community. The trips to the Ventura County Court House, the city council meetings, and the Community Action Commission meetings were first experiences for most of the trainees. Many started to take an active part in school board meetings, city council meetings, and poverty commission meetings. They saw very clearly that for democracy to work in their community all citizens must be involved. Outside the classrooms the counselors encouraged them to be active citizens in their communities. Many of these students now realize that the project was funded only because some people in a community banded together to ask for its implementation. These trainees have learned that in a democracy benefits can be obtained by those citizens who actively seek benefits and opportunities. The Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty and its federally financed program is a direct outcome of this learning. This group is composed of a former FWOP counselor and several graduates who organized themselves into a very active grass-roots group in the county.

Perhaps the most important achievement of the counseling program and the educational program is that of the worker's new view of himself. Many of the trainees who thought that they would never learn to speak English, found themselves speaking English in the classroom. Overcoming a sense of inferiority, these workers heard other workers, like themselves, trying to speak a strange language. Nobody laughed at them. Teachers were there to help them. Most farm workers have developed a sense of social inferiority just because they are farm workers. The low status of seasonal farm work plagues them. Many of them do not want to admit that they are "field workers," although they will not deny that they work in the fields.

A new pride has emerged in many of the trainees, a pride that can only come from finding a value in onesself. The following casestudy is manifest of this pride, this new awareness:

From: R. H. (3/25/66)

Re: J. S.

J. S. was born in Mexico. He has been in this country and county three years. His wife and two of his children live in Tijuana where they are waiting, while he tries to immigrate them. J. S. had six years of schooling in Mexico.

I have known J. S. for one and a half years and never until one month ago did he speak English. He joined the program in November, 1965, but even after he had studied English for a few months, he could not speak any. J. S. can play the violin quite well and so I introduced him to a semi-professional group of musicians in Los Angeles. The group plays Mexican folk music from all over Mexico, and at first J. S. was quite frightened and unsure of himself because he was only used to playing Mariachi music. Twice a week the group practiced music. One day they would practice in Los Angeles and the other in Oxnard. On the days when he had to go to Los Angeles, I would drive him and we would discuss the value of Mexican folk music he was playing as a cultural contribution to American culture. We discussed the fact that his culture did have value. They finally put on one concert at a coffee house in Claremont. The students were very interested and the music was well received. The value of his culture became evident to him. Between the experience of being applauded by University students and meeting and getting to know the other members of the group (non-Mexican college students and a professor) and studying English in school, J. S. has begun to show signs of his new self-assuredness. He has begun to be able to do things that a few months ago he would have asked for help in doing.

Other trainees who were born in Yucatan, in southern Mexico, put on displays of Mayan Indian songs and dances. Instead of the all-too-often denial of personal background and culture, these Mexican-Americans are finding new pride in their heritage. Pride in oneself is the first step towards self-improvement.

Case studies of the FWOP show that exposure to the project sometimes helps workers integrate into the community, betters earning power, job opportunities and community organization in rural barrios. The project also had profound effects emotionally and psychologically on trainees. It even helped a man "get off the bottle" after years of sporadic alcoholism. The case of R. C. exemplifies such a story.

A 38 year old father of three, R. C. came to Oxnard 29 years ago with his divorced mother. She soon remarried and began a number of successful restaurant endeavors.

R. C. grew up with little supervision and attention and had little regard for his step-father. His first jobs were in gardening and yard cleaning in the early 40's. He also worked in packing sheds and in vegetable harvesting.

His elementary school studies were hampered by the segregated schools in Oxnard, though his classmates recognized him as a leader. He dropped out in the first year of High School and joined the Air Force. After a two year stay with the Air Force he returned to school only to leave after a few weeks because of what he described as persistent anti-Mexican teacher prejudice. His counselors always insisted he take shop instead of academic courses and this angered him.

After leaving school again, he worked in the fields and was soon married. He started developing a business of his own. It was hard to make ends meet and he was twice convicted of petty theft and jailed.

During his school years he took his frustrations out on his classmates, sometimes brawling with them. In adulthood he turned to the bottle. By the time he entered the project, he had been in and out of alcoholic institutions a number of times. FWOP gave him a new world, a new opportunity, perhaps the only real time in his life to help him cultivate the same emotional and intellectual abilities that were frustrated in public school. He found new hope and self-confidence. He especially liked what he learned about communication:

"If you want to communicate with anybody you must understand them. Otherwise you're stuck. And I tried to take full advantage of the project, too. It gives a guy a little morale. It was so long since I was in a group like that. It gives you an understanding of what's going on. I think it helps build initiative. You know you're there for a purpose and you want to better understand problems today. It all adds up to bettering oneself. It gives you an idea what your ability is.

"A guy thinks he can only go so far but something like the project helps you really know yourself. Otherwise a guy figures he's just a farmer and that's it. But now maybe you believe you can be something else.

"School brought me into a different environment, gave me a different outlook, a different purpose. Before something like this, you think life is a big burden. Som think the poor lack motivation to help themselves. That's beside the point. They have problems and spend most of their time worrying. You have to get out and tell them about these projects. Everybody would be interested in them."

"If you're ignorant you don"t know what are the issues, who to believe, which way to go."

"When I went to school I didn't drink so much any more and everyone in my family was happy. As far as I'm concerned my drinking problem is over with."

Another case study, that of J.G.V., revealed that the project staff was directly instrumental in helping remove a debilitating birth mark on his face, thus helping to produce a telling change in his personality.

J.G.V. first came to the MDTA project headquarters on December 27, 1965. He had been living at a local labor camp in west Oxnard. He said he was married and had one other dependent, Sharon Lee, his daughter.

Jose was very aggressive at this first interview with project staff, even showing some sign of belligerance upon further counseling. A graphic picture of his former life in Mexico revealed experiences as a bank clerk in Jalisco, a liquor store clerk in Tijuana and then as a police officer in that same border city. During this time Jose simply had to demonstrate to his co-workers a toughness in dealing with the situation where shady deals of graft and corruption were widespread.

He immigrated into this country seeking a better life and found that his opportunities were limited, and he had to accept employment much beneath his station in Mexico. He worked for several years in farm labor all over California meeting unscrupulous labor contractors, foremen, and growers who reminded him of his former life in Tijuana. Because he had a burning desire to make something of himself in this country, he sought schooling in the local schools only to find that night classes in basic english and education for the foreign born were not adequate for most of the students. He saw the opportunity to study English when he picked up an MDTA Project brochure prepared for farm workers.

Once in school, his anti-social tendencies began to disappear with the help of project staff, plastic surgery on his face removed a European birthmark which covered 60% of his right cheek, after which his personality changed significantly.

Now, more than a year since his participation in the program, Jose is the proprietor of a Mexican restaurant in Oxnard. Apparently he has found not only his studies rewarding but he is also considered a member of the local business establishment.

The case of J.S. typically demonstrates the raised aspirations of trainees in the project.

Like most Mexican Immigrants, J.S. decided to migrate to California once he received his visa in 1947, but unlike most Mexican immigrants he was born in metropolitan Mexico City to working class parents.

Jose attended school in Mexico and after 9 years of elementary schooling, at the age of 15 in 1942, he began to work for a living.

In 1944, Jose was employed in a printing shop. Jose learned the trade fairly well and succeeded to remain employed by the same firm for three years.

By 1964, a socre of years later, Jose had been in this country 17 years on a dead end job doing farm labor in Ventura County. His one great obstacle for better employment was his lack of adequate English.

J.S. first learned of the FWOP in Oxnard from other farm workers who discussed and heckled skeptically about it. However, he was inspired to look into the matter and once having done so, applied for training and basic education.

Because of his earlier experiences with school, other MDTA students looked up to him for leadership and he was elected student representative. Upon completion of the short course, he immediately sought employment outside agriculture to break the apparent hopelessness of his situation.

Now Jose does janitorial work at a local aerospace firm at $425 per month.

Jose has three children and his wife who reside with him in a low income tract home in Oxnard. His one big desire is to see his children well-educated and established in this community as professional people.

3) Impact on the Farm Worker Community and its Concern for Organization

The FWOP director and staff were convinced that seasonal farm workers need not remain intthe poverty that afflicts them. The trainees in a significant number of cases proved that they can develop a sense of identification with middle class culture if given the opportunity. The project helped these individuals identify these opportunities and provided some of the basic tools to take advantage of them.

The project leadership's overriding concern was to instill in the trainees, individually and as a group, the kind of social, economic, and political power that other dimensions of society and special interest groups wield so successfully. The staff was not content with getting trainees a steadier job in agriculture or for that matter employment in a different field. It was not only concerned with teaching basic arithmetic, history, or English. For the question immediately raised by both staff and trainees: "Arithmetic for what? History for what? English for what?" As one of the trainees put it so succinctly, "Now I know English. Do I go back to the orchards and talk English to the lemons?" His expectations were too high for him to be relegated to the orchard. He could now see his potential. But, he also realized that his expectations would only be achieved by organizing at the grass roots level. Ralph Guzman, assistant director of the UCLA Mexican-American Study Project and son of a former migrant summed it up well in the May 9, 1966, issue of the Los Angeles Times:

> Many of the firebrands have moved out of the barrios and many of the young people coming up have bypassed the old militant phase. You hear a different language... less anger. They're talking politics now. They want more Mexican-Americans elected. Mexicans have little to bargain with. They have to organize.

FWOP had realized considerable success in organizing and developing grass roots leadership. Out of this leadership came the FWOP Alumni Association, the Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty, the participation, and in many cases leadership given by the FWOP staff to War on Poverty efforts in Ventura County. Numerous aspects of FWOP community relations form a skeletal framework of farm worker community organization. These are the seeds of cohesiveness among the Mexican-American community that give them potential solidarity vis-a-vis the Anglo middle class society surrounding them.

Seven leading project graduates met February 1, 1967, determined to establish an alumni association. Much enthusiasm was displayed as the group elected three temporary officers and set up a committee to draw up a constitution for the Farm Workers Opportunity Project Alumni Association. A dinner-dance held on the following Friday financed the initial organization. This organizational effort was putting into practice what had been learned in the classroom and observed on field trips.

The most successful community development experience has taken place in Santa Paula, where fifteen FWOP graduates came together to form a determined grass roots organization called the Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty. Working with numerous seasonal and migrant farm workers and under the guidance of Ernest Jenkins, former FWOP counselor, the group is seeking to establish a credit union for farm workers, a mechanic co-op group to cushion car maintenance costs, and to offer part-time training for aspiring mechanics. This group hopes to organize the farm worker community in the Santa Clara Valley of Ventura County to the point where this community will become a civic and social force. After graduation from FWOP, this group of crusaders informally started their own English class at the Santa Paula High School under the guidance of a volunteer teacher. This class of seven grew to forty-seven in exactly one year. The high school has since agreed to continue this program.

This Crusade Against Poverty group has recently instituted an adult basic education program for farm workers in cooperation with the California Lutheran College of Thousand Oaks. Large numbers of volunteer student teachers came out from the college to teach classes in Santa Paula and in the farm labor camps. In April, 1967, this grass roots anti-poverty group was awarded a $68,000 grant by the Office of Economic Opportunity to provide adult basic education and automobile vocational education to 900 farm workers in Ventura County. The Board of Directors of the Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty is now composed of poor persons only, the majority of whom were trainees in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project.

The Ventura County Community Action Commission, the local community action agency, has provided the opportunity for another form of leadership. Antonio Del Buono, FWOP counselor, led an aggressive attack on the Commission demanding that it appoint poor people as members of the Commission. After he won an appointment to this established agencies dominated group, Del Buono organized poor people from the target areas who also demanded that the poor be properly represented. To some degree, their demands have been met. Two other counselors

of FWOP, Armando Lopez, a Mexican-American native of Ventura County, and Ernest Jenkins, an Anglo middle-class school teahher, are the most articulate and forceful representatives of the target population on the commission. They form a countervailing force on the commission to the representatives of the established agencies, which include appointees by each of the five County supervisors, including two commission members who are supervisors. The resulting changes in the commission direction and policy are covered in a subsequent section of this report.

One of the highlights of the project was the responsibility the trainees undertook to organize meat and dairy buying clubs. These clubs approximated the co-operative buying system whereby members save money by buying food in groups rather than individually. At the outset of the educational program, eight trainees volunteered their spare time in obtaining discount food for their fellow students. Two students worked on the bread project; two worked to obtain reduced prices on eggs and milk, while two others tried to obtain a bargain on canned foods. The counselors remained in the background as the trainees did most of the organizing.

Two trainees "negotiated" a most significant arrangement with the Meat Cutters Local, 506. Significant - because the trainees and the business agent worked together to fashion an identification card for FWOP trainees only. The card permitted the trainees to purchase meat at a ten percent discount in the local markets. The ten percent discount was insignificant compared to the display of initiative, organization, and courage by these two imaginative trainees.

Occurring throughout the history of the project were the many "fiestas" which proved to have importance beyond that of mere entertainment. Out of these "fiestas" developed the idea of community-based meetings. Over 700 people have been recorded by the FWOP office as having attended such meetings. More than 200 attended one meeting alone, and there after the counseling staff held two per month. One evening meeting was held to discuss Medicare and Social Security problems while on another occasion, the legal rights of farm workers were discussed.

The "fiestas" and the community meetings also attracted many to the FWOP office located on Colonia Road, one of two approached to a densely-populated target area. Dozens of individuals, men and women of all ages, lined up day after day seeking counsel on myriad problems. Many would come

after work, which for most was at sunset. Few noticed or cared about the leaks in the roof, the exposed wires, the peeling and crumbling plaster, as able counselors listened and compassionately helped to unravel their many confusing problems. This office and staff identification with the people of this barrio can be hailed as one of the great successes of the program. The office and its staff symbolized reform.

Even after classroom instruction had terminated, the office staff continued to motivate and cooperate with the organizations they have fostered. Individuals from many of the poverty pockets of the county continue to find their way to the office. Many of these people bring their problems, others come looking for a place to hold group meetings. The staff of the Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty often consult with the FWOP staff. This Santa Paula group, led by Ernest Jenkins, Thomas Williams and an executive board composed of poor people only, often found itself at odds with powerful vested agricultural interests. It is very evident that influential citizens, like T.A. Lombard, President of Rancho Sespe, find the teaching of English unnecessary for seasonal farm workers. The Executive Board of Santa Paula Crusade Against Poverty however strongly believe in this program. They will use all the power and influence at their disposal to see that it continues. This grass roots anti-poverty group existed for many months without funds. Now they have federal funds that will help them continue the many programs they initiated with volunteers. The American Friends Service Committee's Farm Workers Opportunity Project will also continue to keep its office open on a day by day basis. Some of the staff members have offered their services on a volunteer basis. This isn't the first time; they have a history of such service. It is their hope that the gains made in past months and years can be strengthed and consolidated.

4) Impact on Job Placement

The job placement for the Project was the responsibility of the California Department of Employment. This responsibility was to be implemented in theory by the Oxnard Farm Labor office. The Emergency Committee counseling staff was to "assist" the employment service in their job placement task.

As it turned out, the Oxnard Farm Labor Office seemed to be quite unable, or unwilling to place graduate trainees in new jobs. The Farm Placement Service officials appeared to be quite confused by the task of finding permanent employment for any of the trainees, with the end result that they refused to take any initiative in this area and were immobilized for the duration of the Project. After the first three groups of trainees had graduated, the Project Director appealed to the Ventura Department of Employment for assistance with job placement for trainees about to graduate in October and November, 1966.

The Director of the Ventura office of the California Department of Employment (Francis Bawdin) responded well to what appeared to be a significant job placement challenge. Mr. Bawdin and one of his assistants addressed a joint meeting of all the trainees in mid-October, 1966. The trainees were told about the "job market" in Ventura County and given assurances that jobs did exist even though it would not be easy to obtain employment. Officials of the Ventura Office then came down to the Oxnard Farm Labor Office for several weeks in order to give every trainee in the program a job counseling "interview." These interviews would last approximately twenty minutes. One of the Department of Employment officers was fluent in Spanish. In all, seventy trainees were given intensive interviews over the next three months. In follow-up conversations with the Department of Employment, the officials state that they were definitely successful in the job placement of three (3) individuals.

In follow-up interviews, many students and their wives asked if the interviewer was there "to help us, to find us a job." A number of trainees and their wives complained that the program staff "didn't help me find a job after I graduated." They had been counseled that they would have such help. Others complained that the training they got was not the job training that the project promised. Part of the confusion may have come from changing circumstances and goals of the project. In the beginning, the project sought to evolve a permanent local farm labor force to replace braceros. As the project wore on, the vocational trade-training aspect of the project

didn't materialize. The local agricultural industry obtained all the labor it needed without training new workers and soon there was a labor surplus in agriculture as in other industries in Ventura County where unemployment is twice the national average.

In the last months of the Project, one of the FWOP counselors spent his full time at work in job development and job placement work--both working independently and assisting the Department of Employment as best as he could. The staff counselor did locate jobs for several trainees but failed to provide a meaningful job placement service for the majority of the graduates. Finally, however, after both the Project and the Department of Employment failed to achieve any notable success with job placement, relations between the two offices increasingly strained. The Department of Employment felt that it was doing all it could under the circumstances, while the Project staff felt that the trainees had been badly let down by the inability of the Employment Service to locate jobs. Expectations of the Department of Employment on the part of trainees and Project staff were high. The almost total failure of the job placement program was therefore a bitter pill for both trainees and staff to swallow. The Department of Employment was target for criticism among certain students. It was uncertain how prevalent the unfavorable view of the department was, but one student volunteered that department officials "only want to send you to work in the lemons."

Regardless of where the blame lies for failure to develop jobs or place trainees in jobs, the inadequacy of the job placement portion of the Project looms as one of its biggest failures. Despite the failures of the agencies, the individual graduate trainees have located employment and in many instances have permanent employment at wages well in excess of those they ever earned prior to entry into the Project.

5. Follow-Up Studies

Post-graduate statistical profile:

Follow-up interviews were conducted on project ex-trainees in three periods, fall, 1966, and winter and spring, 1967. Significantly, roughly half (78 of the 158 trainees sought for follow-up interviews) could not be located by project staff. Eighty-one ex-trainees, both dropouts and graduates of the project, were found and interviewed. But interviewers, through repeated tries at the homes of the other 78 sought, concluded they had moved from their prior addresses. This suggests a nearly 50 per cent transiency rate after being exposed to the program within a year after leaving the project. Interviewers also noted the fluid nature of the farm workers' seasonal and sporadic employment and suggested continuing follow-up interviews tracing the development of project ex-trainees would be of further value. The evidence of the moving rate is inconclusive, since many of the ex-trainees were never home when interviewers called. However this does not necessarily mean that they had permanently moved from their addresses. But if the 50 per cent transiency rate is accurate, it is significantly higher than the transiency rate among trainees before entering the project. Only 37 per cent of the trainees had been in the county less than a year when entering the project.

Project policy required all entering trainees to be unemployed or under-employed when coming to the project. But in fact virtually all entering trainees were or had been employed in agriculture-related jobs. In contrast, only 33 ex-trainees, roughly 40 per cent of those interviewed, were working in farm-related work, which is regarded as a significant statistic by project staff. Twenty-four ex-trainees out of the 81 interviewed (roughly 30 per cent) were working in non-farm jobs when interviewed. The rest contacted were unemployed, on public assistance or in jail. (See Appendix for full statistical rundown).

Follow-Up Interviews

Trainees interviewed	80
Ex-trainees in farm employment	33
Ex-trainees in non-farm employment	24
Ex-trainees on welfare, disability allowance, jail or other	23
Number of trainees project attempted to reach	158

Comparison of Pre-training and Post-training Employment

	Farm	Non-farm	Unemployed or Other
Pre-training work experience	90%	10%	----------
Post-training work experience	40%	30%	30%

Unemployment statistics are partly misleading, however, as at least four of those unemployed at the time of the follow-up interview had a number of jobs since leaving the project and then had fallen unemployed. The 90 per cent pre-project employment statistic also includes those unemployed when entering the project.

Job mobility (or transiency) among the ex-trainees was also excessively high. Most ex-trainees had held at least two jobs in the brief period since they left the project and a project staff person contacted them on the follow-up study. The project has serviced farm workers with as many as 10 employers annually. Five of the 33 per cent of the trainees unemployed in follow-up interviews without work, but only after having worked on at least one job and in some cases as many as four jobs since graduation, further evidence of the job-to-job nature of the workers' seasonal work life.

Trainees Responding to Mail Follow-Up and Not Otherwise Interviewed

Employed on farm-related work	4
Employed on non-farm work	5
Unemployed	1

(See Appendix for further statistics)

Chart comparison of Mexican-American percentage in the Ventura County population according to U.S. Census, 1960, and of Mexican-American Proportion of Farmworkers in Project Classes:

	Spanish Surname 17%	Other 83%
Ventura County		
Number of People	33,980	166,020

	Spanish Surname 90%	Other 10%
Project Trainees		
Number of Trainees	189	19

The statistics on "drop-outs" vary from each of the three agencies involved. (The school district reported 69 dropouts; the State Department of Employment 67 and the FWOP staff records 66.) Thus the drop-out rate was roughly one-third. The fact that 40 out of the roughly 70 dropouts left for work, however, is significantly as a majority of the dropout rate was for positive, not negative, reasons. The biggest disparity in the dropout statistics, 3 students, is not as important as a subsequent breakdown of the reasons for dropping out. The school district showed 23 dropouts to take jobs; FWOP records 41 and there was

no state breakdown available for employment dropouts. Since the project policy encouraged students to take jobs if they found the opportunity to take employment such drop-outs can hardly be considered a detriment or failure of the project purpose. Sixteen students, however, dropped out because they "lost interest" according to school district records, including four who were dropped for excessive absences. Such dropouts may have reflected the dissatisfaction with the project voiced by some who wished the teachers spoke Spanish or who were dissatisfied with teachers for other reasons, which will be further explored later.

All the following dropouts left during the first six months of training. One dropout, (H. A.), 28 years old, married, father of four left the project after a month because the stipend was too little and went to work in the vegetable fields. Interviewed afterwards, he said he had no complaints with the program and that he learned some English reading and writing. He praised his teacher.

Another, V. F., 34 year old father of four, left after four months to work in a cannery also because the stipend ($65 weekly) was too little. But he says he now feels "more equal" to non-Mexican Americans because he learned a little English. He used to see little value in belonging to organizations like CSO (Community Service Organization) or the Mexican American Political Association, but now he does and plans to join such, though he has not yet done so. He praised the program and his teacher.

Negro C. J. 21, single, dropped after four months because of insufficient stipend and went to work picking lemons, and also because he doesn't "feel the program helped me that much."

D. A. 34, single, mother of four, left the same section also after four months for a job in agriculture. She says in a follow-up interview she "left before the program ended so she profited little from it."

M. E. 27, married, father of two, left after a month because he moved out of the county to get a job elsewherein agriculture but has no complaints about the program in a follow-up interview.

O. C. 37, mother of four, separated from her husband, was dropped for excessive absences and now works as a waitress.

Far and away the most common reason for leaving was employment, augmented in importance by the relatively low stipend paid to students ($45 plus $5 for each dependent). The characteristics of the dropouts were not statistically or visibly different from those who remained perhaps valued the schooling enough to take an economic cut while pursuing it.

The dropout rate, however, doubtless could have been lessened with higher stipend allowances.

While 6 out of 10 students were Mexican citizens, only roughly one out of three of the dropouts of initial six-month sections were Mexican citizens while the remaining two-thirds were American citizens.

Twenty-one of the dropouts of the initial six-month program (37 percent) were Mexican citizens. Thirty-seven of the six-month dropouts (63%) were American citizens. As one American citizen, six-month dropout, put it, the project "wasn't doing me any good....I understood it was some kind of trade training. I didn't get any training like that."

Her statements and the American citizen dropout rate reflect that the program including class instruction was slanted toward the culturally and economically disadvantaged Mexican citizen, not acculturated Americans of Mexican descent. The instruction was on too primary a level for American citizens who, even though still of Mexican culture though living this side of the border, had attained a certain Americanized level of sophistication and culture. Those of Mexican culture and less diluted Mexican heritage found the project more to their liking and use. For the same reason, when extensions into a subsequent six-month training were granted to some, all American citizens were excluded.

Graduates Statistics

FWOP records show 125 individuals graduated, some after six months of schooling, others after one year; State records show a similar total of 127 graduates. This two-thirds graduation rate among the 203 entering students is perhaps the most dramatic index of trainee attitudes toward the project and its goals.

Note: See Appendix for more statistics on trainees.

6. Impact of Project as a Vocational Training Program

Roughly one-third of the graduates employed when located for follow-up interviews had taken jobs outside of agriculture. A number of graduates who had learned English or upgraded their English and could have gotten jobs outside farming seemed to drift back to the fields as much by habit as for any other reason. But 24 of those interviewed took jobs in other industries or in commerce.

This is one of the perplexities of the project. The project was originally to supply basic education and farm skill training to unemployed or underemployed seasonal farm workers who were heads of families. The overriding desire of farm workers in the project was to learn or to improve their stunted English. If there was a sense of gratitude among farm workers who had benefited from the project because of any vocational re-training, it was an inadvertent by-product. No vocational instruction of on-the-job training was offered in or out of class. The instruction was confined mainly to English and less arithmetic, civics, government and history. But in effect the project was a successful manpower program.
Learning English, for any Mexican who doesn't speak it, amounts to being retrained for a new and usually better paying job. Not knowing English, and far more than half the trainees knew none when they entered the project, is all that is necessary to keep such immigrants and impoverished Americans in the fields and out of higher-paying factories. Learning English for these people opened many new doors for better jobs. For the first time they could consider leaving their jobs of hoeing, harvesting or fruit picking in agriculture. Many have taken advantage of it. One learned enough English to enroll in a local beauty school. Another, who had experience in a packing house on a fork-lift, obtained a job with a major aerospace research contractor also as a fork-lift operator. But his new employer, outside agribusiness and available to him because of his new command of the language, offers hospitalization insurance for his family and other fringe benefits that make it worthwhile to drive to Malibu (in neighboring Los Angeles County) daily with a car pool group he has joined in Oxnard.

The program disappointed many of the Mexican immigrants who expected to be taught viable and saleable trades for the labor market-place. The project to them concentrated too much on learning English and on other academics. They cannot get better jobs without knowing English. But

neither can they get better jobs if they are untrained. Not so many of the immigrants are restricted to farm experience as it appears. Many of them had experience at wide ranges of trades and even professions in Mexico. When they come here, they find themselves shunted into the fields because, as one Oxnard Mexican-American woman put it, "that's the only place they get hired." In one sampling of the work backgrounds of Mexican immigrant farm workers there were as many different kinds of job experience as individuals. Only some had farm experience of one kind or another in Mexico.

It is a waste of skilled and semi-skilled manpower to confine many of those workers to thinning lettuce or picking lemons. They can do much more for themselves and society. "These men can, many of them, do so much better than field work," said the woman, who now works for a federally financed family counseling service in Oxnard's Colonia district. "But they have to go to the field because farmers are the only ones who'll hire them. Just because they can't speak English--that makes them ineligible for better jobs. But many of these men have been tradesmen, plasterers, policemen, builders, skilled men in Mexico." Her husband returned to Mexico three years ago. "He left in disgust because he was stuck in the fields here. He knew how to grow cotton. He had done it in Mexico with his uncle. Here he had no chance. He used to wait for the (farm labor) bus every morning at Camacho's (a local contractor) and that killed him." "But he left too soon. He will never have a chance at a project like this again. I think it's worthwhile helping people before they leave for Mexico...Every time I hear one of these men is back in the fields I feel so disgusted."

But for those who learned English to fluency or even near fluency, the project was a boom. Again and again project research interviewers hear the same grateful comments: "Now I can talk English. I can get any job I want . . ." One graduate of a year of classes told how he had tried to work for the Post Office in Los Angeles not long before. "I worked 12 or 18 hours a day because I couldn't understand them when they told me my hours," he said. He kept that job only two or three months and then went back to the fields. Now he has applied for a Post Office job here and has passed the civil service examination. The interviewers had to talk slowly to him because he is still unpracticed in English. But he became very angry when English speaking persons talked to him in Spanish.

A significant number of graduates, and even dropouts, took jobs at which they earned more money than they had ever earned solely because they knew the prevailing language. But the satisfaction of knowing English

went far deeper on many more dimensions of their lives than economic. Knowing the new language fostered greater security in an alien society for many, broke down old frustrations and reinforced families to the point of near revolution in some cases. One father spoke to his wife only in Spanish before and seldom in any language to his children, who learn English in public schools. Having learned English in F.W.O.P., he now reads the comics to his children.

Another housewife, a born U.S. citizen who married a Mexican citizen with no knowledge of English, was openly glad her husband had learned English at the project. "We talk English almost all the time now. You have to talk slowly but he's learning. I can talk English to a friend and not feel guilty when he's around. He can pick up some of what we are saying. We are much closer now."

Some graduates appeared disappointed at what they saw, a lack in help to get jobs upon graduation. A number of them mistook follow-up interviews for job interviews and asked help getting jobs. One wife of a trainee bitterly complained that the project "never helped my husband get a new job." Others, however, seized the initiative in getting their own jobs, which they may not have done before the project because they lacked confidence or the language. Three of them set up individual small restaurants in Oxnard. Many applied for citizenship papers during school and after graduation. Others joined community organizations or say that they want to. One of the most popular such organizations is Citizens Against Poverty, an activist group of grassroots poor Oxnard's Colonia neighborhood. Another trainee said he wants to join Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Work Attitudes

The problem of work and attitudes toward it play an undeniably big role in the testing of the re-training hypothesis of F.W.O.P. While the project leadership and staff remain convinced of the basic general validity of trying to put Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to work on a more regular, permanent and less seasonal basis, the Mexican cultural attitude toward work at times conflicted with that of the prevailing Anglo-Saxon attitude. State Department of Employment officials told staff of one trainee graduate being interviewed by department staff, of contacts with employers being made and of thorough job arrangements established. Then the trainee remarked that he just recalled he would be going back to Mexico for the holidays to visit his family. The arrangements and whatever job may have resulted were thereupon cancelled. No one would begrudge a man

his desire to see his family on Christmas. Even middle-class families in the U.S. cherish that tradition and many working people manage leaves convenient to take advantage of the holidays. Yet the job level of the trainee and the circumstances of his unemployment and tenuous relationship to the labor market doubtlessly unfavorably disposed his interviewers toward him as a marketable worker.

Another trainee mentioned to a staff member he was applying for jobs at various local naval bases, swollen with jobs and payrolls because of the deepening Viet Nam war. He also said he was returning to Mexico for the winter holidays. Asked what if a job offer came when he was away, he shrugged the question of as if it were irrelevant. Though farm workers by any standard work physically at tougher and more exhausting jobs than probably anyone else in the economy and couldn't by the farthest stretch of the most straining imagination be rightly termed lazy, their priorities on work seem clearly to differ from the middle-class, who, after all, seem to work harder and say they do at softer jobs.

7) Impact of Project on Agribusiness Community

The staff of the private sponsoring agencies of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project, the American Friends Service Committee and the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers have had numerous dealings and communications with California growers in recent years. Significantly, these two agencies seeking mainly to better the lot of farm workers have helped evolve notable advances in farm labor relations in California. They have also played major roles in the most recent 20th Century face-to-face confrontations between farm labor and growers.

While ostensibly at least the relationship of the two private agencies and the grower establishment has seemed cordial to the point of stories in the public press to that effect, relations behind the scenes became progressively and sporadically strained when it became clear the basic interests in both sides did not always correspond. It became clear, at the outset, in fact, that the leadership of the sponsoring agencies often sought organizational and economic advantages for farm workers that were strongly resisted by growers.

Farm worker organization, unionization and keeping foreign workers from displacing farm workers from their jobs, have been the policy determinations deemed imperative to accomplish the other social and economic improvements among this forgotten segment of Americans. The Emergency Committee's stand in support of farm labor organizing colored all subsequent relations with growers, who had long warded off unions. The Farm Workers Opportunity Project would not be a party to more delays in bring justice to farm workers. Relations between leaders of agribusiness and the Emergency Committee staff were based on mutual service to growers and to labor--to all of agriculture. Public statements early reflected, as printed in news accounts, "the makings of friendship between worker and grower."

However cordial relations may have appeared on the surface, fundamental purposes of the groups would move leadership into opposing stances. The agribusiness group felt their economic interests were being threatened by the various "doings" of the Emergency Committee. The Emergency Committee staff strove to implement the basic purposes of their Committee and recognized that this would mean that a bigger share of the economic and political pie should go to the farm workers. Most also realized that the bigger share of the pie would come mainly from the agricultural industry and partly from the rest of society.

Controversy soon came stridently in, especially during the bitter battle over approving the Farm Workers Opportunity Project by the Oxnard High School Board, reported elsewhere in this report. With that milestone behind, the project leadership set to work patching up agribusiness relations and the project director met more than once with agribusiness representatives. The director's letter of December 9, 1965 to Ivan McDaniel, a lawyer for Sunkist, reveals at least a surface cordiality of a meeting November 24 at Limoneira Ranch, a major Ventura County citrus establishment. "I hope the meeting was just the beginning of a free and cordial relationship between us and others interested in a healthy agricultural industry and good rural community relations," the director wrote. "All working to build a strong and viable agricultural community will surely recognize it is to everyone's benefit to build good community relations between growers and farm workers."

The next month, January, 1966, a pulp self-styled "monthly digest for Republican Associates of Los Angeles County," Inside Politics, charged that Farm Workers Opportunity Project and another Emergency Committee-sponsored project, Operation Buenaventura, financed under O.E.O., were "using public funds to support...unions." The two page notice said Sunkist lawyer Ivan G. McDaniel had complained to Sargent Shriver that various employees of both projects have "substantial experience only in labor organizing work of agricultural workers" and that any teaching by such people "would lie primarily along labor organizational lines" and that the main purpose of the project "is to train...labor organizers." Of Farm Workers Opportunity Project, McDaniel continued, "inquiries in the neighborhood brought out the response that it is a union office...It appears the remedial education and proposed training is overshadowed by the unionization objective." (see appendix)

"Another project operating in connection with Farm Workers Opportunity Project is Operation Harvest Hands," the statement says. "Apparently the activities of the National Farm Workers Association in Kern, Kings and Tulare Counties are part of or coordinated with the Harvest Hands project," McDaniels' letter says. "Those operations consist mainly of union activities in disrupting harvesting, picketing ranches and otherwise trying to coerce farmers into acceding to demands of Agricultural Workers of California and the National Farm Workers Assn."

McDaniels' observation extend to the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, which at the time was sponsoring all three farm worker projects mentioned, all funded by the U.S. government. "These grants to organizations

directed by union-connected individuals are especially interesting in light of the fact that plans are being laid for an all-out organization campaign in Ventura County in the spring similar to that now planned for Tulare County. It will be interesting to watch the activities of those trained under the Ventura project when this campaign begins."

But the intent here is not to dramatize the political party partisanship of politics or public affairs in Ventura County. Indeed, Democrats in high office have been as antagonistic to the forces opposing such bellwether issues as braceros. The State Assemblyman of Ventura County during the termination of the bracero program and the farm labor revolution accompanying it, was Burt Henson, a Democrat since appointed by Former Gov. Brown a municipal judge in Ventura. Henson vocally condemned the end of the bracero program and forecast layoffs and dislocations in produce processing and shipping. In addition, there are Democrats in the so-called non-partisan elective posts in various Ventura County communities, city councils, school boards. But regardless of party label, these men in power suggest a solid unity in conservative political and social outlook in their public statements and actions regarding agricultural labor. Party labels pale in significance next to the manner in which Republicans and Democrats rub shoulders with those in established agencies and economic institutions. When the Farm Workers Opportunity Project first came into existence the bracero program was an established institution that had won "bi-partisan" support.

The Ventura County Tax Payers Association also joined the outcry against Farm Workers Opportunity Project and Operation Buenaventura with charges of salaried executive secretary, Norman Blacher, that both projects used federal money to unionize farm workers. Farm Workers Opportunity Project counselors once heard the President of the Ventura County Farm Bureau remark that he saw no point in remaining on the War on Poverty Community Action Commission unless that group had control over projects such as Operation Buenaventura and FWOP. The Farm Bureau President(Robert Mills) later resigned his seat from the Community Action Commission. This occured after he learned that the Commission could not gain power over such projects.

The Emergency Committee and its leadership and farm worker projects came under attack that same month, January, 1966, from a source closer to home, Rancho Sespe. It was to be perhaps the most far reaching conflict in the FWOP history. A number of pickers living in Rancho Sespe company housing sought to attend FWOP classes six hours a day, five days a week, with

allowances. The controversy, however, centered about Mario Soto and his family of ten. Mario Soto was a trainee who was admitted into one of the first classes. He continued to live with his family on Rancho Sespe. Soto's wife, Anita, was unable to work on the ranch because of a back injury suffered from a fall off a ladder while picking oranges. The eldest son, Roberto, continued to work at the ranch. Then Roberto was drafted into the army. Two months after entering the Project Mario Soto was evicted from his house on Rancho Sespe, a house for which he was paying rent. Subsequently, a group of forty trainees motored up to Rancho Sespe to watch the official eviction notice being handed to Mario Soto by a deputy marshal.

It was a spontaneous demonstration of support by a fair sized group of workers. The event was well publicized in the local newspapers. The leadership of Rancho Sespe was incensed by the bad publicity for the Rancho and hit back by attacking the Project. Rancho Sespe president, T. A. Lombard, charged the Project was "pirating" employed citrus pickers and the charge echoed in the halls of Congress. He wrote Senator Thomas H. Kuchel of "severe crops losses" because of the labor shortage after the end of the bracero system. "Now we find our own government, through the Department of Labor's FWOP has actually removed much-needed and fully-employed farm workers by soliciting on our private property to suggest attending a training school...This type of thing will destroy our ability to harvest crops and further help to put us out of business, for our heavy tax burdens are paying for these schemes."

Rancho Sespe vice president, K. K. Glen later wrote Dr. Joseph Crosby, superintendent of the Oxnard High School district, providing classrooms instruction in the project, that the ranch "had lost" more "full-time employees to the FWOP." Soon after Dr. Crosby telephoned the project director to discuss the complaints from the Rancho Sespe and told the director that the whole affair "had probably set the project back six months." Aside from the political overtones of the charges, the heart of the matter was how to define "employed" or "unemployed" or "underemployed." Lombard maintained, as is evidently standard practice among growers with their own housing for workers, that if a worker lives in their housing they are bound to the ranch. They maintain the house is a kind of fringe benefit as long as the worker lives there, whether he is picking in the orchards or not, he is a company worker. Workers in such housing

are without legal recourse and may be evicted on a day's notice according to the ranch "housing agreement." The Sotos moved from their house when it became clear that they were to be evicted in the long run. The director met with California Department of Employment director Albert Tieburg who determined that the project might properly register for training any farm worker able to work but who is not , or member of a family, making less than $1,200 per year. The project maintained the standard set in the beginning that no one employed would be enlisted. The director wrote in subsequent correspondence that there had never been any need to solicit or recruit workers for the project, that on the contrary a "veritable crowd of unemployed farm workers are turned away every day."

The Project had some direct and indirect relations with the vegetable growers association leadership. Correspondence between the State Department of Employment and the Ventura County Farm Labor Association, the main recruiter and dispenser of labor for row crops, shows a peculiar logic by the Association manager, Jesse G. Frye. A letter dated February 4, 1966 to Frye from Niels Pederson, Southern Area manager of the department, showed Pederson's "encouragement at learning that one of the major farm employing units in California is interested in working with the training facility (FWOP) for prompt placement of successful graduates...the primary purpose of the training is to assist culturally deprived and impoverished individuals to become productive and self-sufficient members of the labor force." Five days later, Frye wrote to Pederson that "it appears that since I lacked correct understanding of the program and participants that I was wrong in asking the information (and expressing interest)." Since the program had been advertised for farm workers and "I believed the local residents who desire work in agriculture after their education...I believed that I or some member of my association would have had prior contact with them...that I would have some knowledge of their skills...and that your local (Farm Placement) office appeared logical for me to approach to identify those students. You said in your letter the main purpose of the training is to assist culturally deprived and impoverished individuals attain a level of education and understanding to enable them to become productive and self-sufficient members of the labor force. This being true, apparently they have no relation to farm workers...apparently the graduates will seek work anywhere their ambitions might lead them and I don't see that I would be effectively occupying my time and efforts by pursuing the matter further..."

Such was the odd logic of Frye and not a few others among agribusiness.

Anyone not known by Frye or by his member growers could have nothing to do with farm labor and anyone culturally deprived or impoverished "have no relation for farm workers." Frye similarly had no use for workers who "will seek work anywhere their ambitions might lead them."

The U. S. Department of Labor backed the project director on the Rancho Sespe housing issue and Curtis C. Aller, director of O. M. A. T. wrote to Ventura County's Congressman, Charles M. Teague, that FWOP "has as its objective recruiting seasonal and migrant farm workers for training to provide them skills for year-round employment. We think it perfectly proper that this effort would reach people who obviously benefit from job training." The director responded by offering to meet with Lombard of Rancho Sespe on such matters and wrote to Charles Gilmore of O.M.A.T., that "community and public relations with California agribusiness are not easy for us. In fact, the degree to which some growers or grower 'spokesmen' react to the advances of the project may be one indicator of its effectiveness. We will steadfastly refuse to renounce our principles in the face of unfair or unjust treatment of individual farm workers. It will continue to be FWOP policy to bring employers and employer associations into an advisory capacity to this MDTA program. They have been involved in meetings regarding the project from the outset--the planning months before the project was funded. Growers and their representatives have never been refused information or involvement in any stage of the program. I have met with individual growers on numerous occasions to explain the project and to elicit support."

Advances in Farm Labor Relations, Improvements for Farm Workers

It should be observed that agribusiness relations have not been altogether frustrating and futile for the leadership of Farm Workers Opportunity Project, the American Friends Service Committee or the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers.

As mentioned earlier, local agribusiness, government, school and civic leaders met occasionally with FWOP leadership in the formative stages. On April 23, 1966, some 200 visitors from the community including farmers, civic leaders and curious citizens, crowded the project office to meet project students and to learn about it. (See news story in Appendix). Notably, this meeting was after the height of the Rancho Sespe controversy.

The California agribusiness establishment, most notably citrus growers, seem to be taking a new look at their labor relations. In recent years, doubtlessly at least partly because of such projects as FWOP, the lapse of the bracero system, the general pressure for unionization and better wages and working conditions for workers, growers have instituted new policies and programs for workers. The successes of farm worker organization efforts in the San Joaquin Valley are having an impact on agribusiness throughout the state.

The California-Arizona citrus establishment has voted various new unemployment and fringe benefits for workers. Some individual growers and associations have been more aggressive than others, but the overall effect seems to be an improving climate for citrus workers. Most dramatic has been the increase in wages since January, 1965. Wages in row crops and citrus industries have risen generally from approximately $1.00 to $1.40 an hour, or more. Piece rates yield higher per hour returns. Probably the new policies of Coastal Growers Association of Oxnard most dramatically illustrate new attitudes from growers about labor relations. Coastal Growers, which operates one of the biggest labor barracks in the State of California and which has a peak labor force of 1,000 workers at the height of the citrus season, has instituted health and life insurance free for its employees and at a premium for employees' families, a paid two-week vacation after twelve months fulltime work, and "employee counseling service," and has opened the association building for evening classes operated by the Oxnard High School District. The Association has also begun a "pension plan and trust" to which employees contribute two percent of their salary up to $550 monthly and 4 percent if the salary is more. The firm contributes one percent of the salary under $550 and 1.7 percent of the excess beyond $550. Since the plans are less than a year old, there are no figures available on how many workers are covered by them. Another major ranch, Limoneira, has begun eliminating family housing on its grounds, according to reports in the area. It is the opinion of some that the project, along with confrontations between staff and ranch management may have assisted in hastening this decision.

Further, and most important, is the decision by the agribusiness in Ventura to drop any more requests for imported labor from Mexico under Public Law 78. Interestingly, Bill Craig, manager of Limoneira Ranch, is

quoted as saying, "It wasn't the workers we objected to; it was the program." The headline in the Ventura Star Free Press reads: "We Don't Want Bracero Program to Come Back." Bill Craig was speaking at a semi-annual meeting of the California group that the average hourly wage of lemon pickers was now $1.86. "Further," he stated, "We don't have any trouble with the labor unions because they have little to offer that we don't give our workers." This would betray a feeling on the part of agribusiness that the best way the agricultural industry can prevent unionism is by offering free workers good wages and working conditions. This, we feel, is a progressive and desirable end, regardless of the motivation. After all, it was only yesteryear that many agricultural employers felt that the way to prevent unionism was by importing braceros from Mexico.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ISSUES

CHAPTER V

1. General Manpower Policy - Problems of Formulation

Ideally, Manpower Policy could be formulated with respect to three distinct areas. First; the existence of Manpower Policy indicates that the Department of Labor is interested in influencing or changing certain aspects of the labor market for those individuals concerned. This implies that the Department should be aware of the various problems which confront farm workers in the labor market. The first step in any Manpower formulation for farm workers should be based on a detailed analysis of the problems of farm workers. Second; Manpower Policy cannot be expected to solve the entire economic problems of any economic group, but the policy should help bring solutions to major economic problems. Therefore, in formulating the goals of Manpower policy, two ideas should be kept in mind. The goals should bear a close relationship to the problems that have been set out in the preliminary analysis, and the goals should be realizable within the legal limits of Manpower Policy. Third; after appropriate goals, relating to an analysis of the problem, have been set out, there comes the third problem of program and implementation. In this area the most appropriate way of realizing the goals of Manpower Policy must be found. Institutional drawbacks on the local and state level must be considered, and the relative efficacy of different approaches for realizing the same goals must be considered in the light of the peculiarities of the local scene.

In the light of the above, it is surprising that there are so many unanswered questions in the realm of Manpower Policy as it relates to the farm labor market. Before goals can be formulated there must be some understanding of farm worker problems.

2. Possible approaches to Manpower Policy for the farm worker:

It is the purpose of this section to point out some possible directions which a manpower policy for farm workers might take. It will be noted that close analysis of

these possible directions reveals that there are many unanswered questions concerning manpower policy.

Many of the farm workers' problems could be subsumed under the general category of a lack of earning power, low wages, low annual income. This general problem can be said to lead to other problem areas such as welfare, education, housing, etc. What should Manpower Policy be in the light of this consideration? The proper approach of Manpower Policy depends on the factors which are seen as contributing to the low level of earnings. There are many possibilities. We would like to discuss four possible reasons for the low income status of farm workers.

(1) The farm worker is unskilled. In brief, the farm worker is getting a fair return considering his productivity; that is, considering his contribution in economic terms to the final product.

(2) The farm worker is skilled, but lacks the necessary force in the wage bargain. In brief, wages in agriculture are determined under competitive conditions, unlike the wages in most of industry. Agriculture is also primarily still in an open shop situation, with individual wage rates being set unilaterally by the grower, or by consultation between the individual worker and the individual grower. In this bargaining process the grower, as the employer, has more leverage than the farm worker, particularly when there is a labor surplus. This is true because when labor demand is exceeded by the labor supply, replacements for an individual farm worker who will not go along with a wage bargain are easy to find.

(3) Some farm workers are doing all right, but others are not. This approach sees substantial differential benefits accruing to different members of the farm labor market. Usually these differentials are attributed to skills which only some workers possess. Thus, it is the belief of many that training programs of the vocational nature will upgrade their skills within the farm labor market. This can take the form of training programs to make them more highly skilled at one particular job (aiming

therefore at a higher rate of compensation) or it can take the form of programs to make the individual more well rounded in an employment skills sense, so that he will be able to find year-round employment as opposed to seasonal employment and thus increase his earnings.

(4) The earnings of farm workers do not necessarily reflect a certain skill level, but rather reflect the special conditions in agriculture. This view, or variations thereof, is a favorite with the Council of California Growers, other farm organizations, and farm apologists in general. This view combines extreme sympathy for the position of the farm worker with the relation of his problem to the problem of agriculture as a whole. The most common expression of this view concerns the fact that (a) labor is one of the few costs within the growers' control, (b) growers are unable to pass on additional costs to the consumer, and (c) as a sector of the economy, agriculture is on the defensive. Stated baldly, this view maintains: "We would like to pay our workers more, but we can't afford to." In the case of California, this view takes on special forms such as (a) California pays the highest agricultural wages in the nation, (b) California has the greatest shipping costs to the East Coast markets, (c) the work is only seasonal, etc.

These four positions represent some of the reasons which might be given for low annual incomes among farm workers, and as each position implies a different goal and approach for Manpower Policy it might be well to examine the implications of these analyses.

Position number two (that the worker lacks bargaining power) implies a somewhat special goal of Manpower Policy which can be said to be outside the scope of the current legislation. At present, although agriculture is heavily subsidized in many ways by the Federal Government, national policy does not include subsidizing all members of the agricultural community. This is to be expected, however. Those elements which are dominant in the society can hardly be expected to support efforts

which are conceived as undermining their economic position. Although it may be beyond the scope of Manpower Policy to directly encourage unions, this fact has important ramifications for other forms of Manpower Policy.

Position number four (that earnings reflect special conditions in agriculture) is also somewhat special because its implication clearly is that the job situation in agriculture cannot under normal circumstances be expected to produce decent earnings. Every year agriculture is getting more and more capital intensive. Employers have been encouraged to substitute capital for labor as a factor both by the development of new machines as well as because the end of Public Law 78 ended the supply of cheap labor from Mexico. Undoubtedly, the increased pressure to organize farm workers into unions, and thus secure higher wages for agricultural workers, will hasten this process of factor substitution. The natural reaction to this development is to train agricultural workers for employment in other sectors of the economy. This position is reinforced when farmers argue that they may not be able to pay higher wages which would be justified to the more highly skilled workers which would issue forth from a training program. Although this position is understandable, and even desirable in view of the large numbers of people that are being displaced from agriculture, it does not constitute manpower policy for the agricultural sector. It is merely training workers for other sectors of the economy. In this way, it really constitutes appropriate manpower policy for non-agricultural sectors who may need added manpower, unless one thought that manpower policy in agriculture could be solved simply by removing excess workers.

Position number one (that all agricultural workers are unskilled and therefore getting what they deserve), and number three (some farm workers are more skilled than others and are appropriately rewarded) are somewhat analogous. They both imply that with added skills the farm worker will increase his earnings, or as his productivity increases his earnings will increase. It is important to understand that this position assumes that: (1) there is a substantial occupational skill hierarchy in agriculture,

and (2) that there are significant economic gains to be associated with moving up this occupational ladder, or in becoming more skilled, more productive. Keeping these two assumptions in mind, if manpower policy set as one of its goals the increased productivity of farm workers within agriculture, having as its ultimate goal a higher level of annual earnings, what approaches and programs might be associated with this position?

Policy and programs in this area generally fall into two categories: (1) basic education, and (2) vocational education. The former is usually characterized by English classes and other forms of basic education. The content of the programs is surprisingly reminiscent of early twentieth century secondary school social studies: English, History, Civics, etc. The second category is characterized by many different programs run by different agencies, some of them public in nature, some of them employer oriented, some of them employee oriented. Some of the programs are oriented toward the most routine skills, such as training programs in how to pick tomatoes, or lemons. Other programs are designed to produce workers that are well rounded, or highly skilled at some particular task, like welding or machinery maintenance. Often, the more complicated and conscientious of these programs are accompanied by a counseling component, which could be termed a complementary component to the two main ones listed above. What are the problems associated with this approach?

Perhaps the most basic problem relates to the two assumptions that were mentioned above. Can one assume that in the agricultural labor market individuals are rewarded in proportion to their productivity? It is a common American assumption that the individual gets what he deserves in the end. Thus, it is supposed that if an individual has superior training he will be appropriately rewarded. There is no guarantee that increased productivity will be rewarded in an economic sector which is virtually without unions, where certain farmers are clearly marginal and thus unable to pay for the higher productivity, where there is at best a limited skill hierarchy, and where, despite the elimination of the bracero program, there is a continual labor surplus because of

mechanization and the higher wage differentials in California. In a situation where there is no guarantee that the benefits of increased skills will be passed on to the farm worker in the form of increased wages, training programs amount to another form of federal and state subsidy for the farmers. In fact, it can be shown that a large portion of the increase in output per man hour has come from the increased skill of the work force as well as from more capital intensive techniques in agriculture.

The second basic problem relates to the fact that it is not now clear what effect the programs, particularly the ones dealing with basic education, have on productivity. Generally it can be assumed that workers who are better educated and more highly skilled will be more productive. The problem is more of deciding which approach is the best, and the most relevant. For example, it is not clear whether, given limited resources, it is best to teach English to 1,000 individuals for two months, 500 individuals for four months, or 250 individuals for eight months. It is equally unclear what are the best techniques for teaching English. Nor is it clear how valuable English is as opposed to skill training. Finally, it is uncertain how effective worker organization would be in increasing productivity as well as earnings, and what concessions should be made to organization in any program dealing with basic education or skill training.

The final problem in Manpower Policy concerns implementation of the program once analysis of the problem has resulted in a goal, which in turn has resulted in a program. It is obvious that a program which appears to be sound in the abstract may have rocky going on the local level. This is probably something to be expected, and for which plans must be made. Depending on the approach of the program, local interests may feel that their economic and social position is being undermined by the Federal government, and by outside forces. These assertions may be valid. Programs must be funded that challenge the local economic situation, particularly in agriculture, but at the same time if the antagonism between those implementing federal policy and those on the local level is too great the program obviously cannot proceed. There is

a threshold that should not be crossed, but only approached, although the toleration level might be higher in some communities than others.

In the face of local opposition, whether it be based on real disagreement over the goals of the project or because of a general distrust of the federal government, one should not underestimate the resources which are at the command of the government. These powers can heavily influence local opinion, and can create working relationships in situations that were deemed impossible before the influx of Federal funds.

3. The Relation of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project to General Manpower Policy

The principal reason for the lack of any clear manpower plan in the Farm Workers Opportunity Project relates to the method and motives for funding. The project plan was dictated by political considerations emanating from Washington, rather than by true economic and manpower analysis. As the bracero program had been kept alive by sheer weight of political power rather than by actual economic need, the controversy surrounding the termination of Public Law 78 was essentially political rather than economic in nature. By calling the growers' bluff in promising to stabilize the work force, help bridge the bracero gap, etc., the project personnel were buying the growers' version of what the economic realities were. These perceptions changed almost immediately, but as a training program the project was off to a false start.

The vocational education component was eliminated early in the game, although the project had called for a mixture of basic training, basic education, and counseling. The grower resistance to the vocational component can be explained in terms of the problem of control. The growers wanted to control the training, and therefore control as well as channel the productivity which would result from the training. Their desire to retain this control was undoubtedly motivated by their perceptions of the motivations of the Emergency Committee counseling staff, which was inclined to see farm worker organization as necessary to guarantee returns on productivity. It is also

possible that the elimination of the vocational education component merely reflected an admission on the part of the growers that, after all, there was plenty of skilled labor in the county. This admission came about after the original project goals had been established and about three months after the Project had been funded.

It is clear that the counseling aspects of the program were valuable, and perhaps it represents the limit to which the Department of Labor through Manpower Policy can directly encourage organization. However, it is clear that this sort of counseling is only a weak substitute for more direct and frank forms of organization. Apart from this relation to productivity, it is clear that the counseling aspects of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project concentrated on the total development of the individual and presented a radical alternative to the manner in which education was presented in the classroom. John Dewey made a distinction between two forms of education: education for life, and education as life. The classroom experience of the trainees was clearly education for life, predicated on the assumption that the trainees as individuals were unable to cope with the demands of a technologically complex society.

The counseling experience, on the other hand, was clearly education as life, based on an attitude of mutual self respect between the counselor and the trainee, and dedicated to the total development of the individual, whether he be counselor or trainee. Thus it was a process of mutual assistance and growth, and not a one-way street which tried to acculturate a group of people who were deemed as being outside of the main stream. This aspect of the program was freed from some of the narrower goals of Manpower Policy, and represents a needed corrective to any program which is concentrating merely on skill and education factors relating to productivity.

With the elimination of the vocational education component, the project became primarily interested in basic education, with a heavy emphasis on English and counseling. Here there are all kinds of questions that could be raised in the light of the foregoing analysis. What was learned from this experience in terms of the best techniques

for teaching English? What was learned about the contribution of English to productivity? Answers to these questions are necessarily vague, although recommendations can be made in the area of class size, nature of instruction, qualifications of teaching staff, and screening of students.

One problem relating to an understanding of the benefits of learning English revolves around the labor market. It has been pointed out that the project staff had a somewhat artificial and inaccurate understanding of the labor market. It follows from this that only tentative conclusions could be reached concerning the effects which education would have on job mobility. Generally, the project staff followed the American way, a blind faith in education.

The opposition of local vested interests to the program had unfortunate effects. The varying motivations of the agencies involved limited the effectiveness of the program.

4. Analysis of Supporting Services

One of the major experimental purposes of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project was to demonstrate that it was in fact possible to recruit and train farm workers in a basic education program. Every program which has previously undertaken to train farm workers has been faced with problems of finding farm workers at all, screening in those most likely to benefit from the program, and then providing sufficient support to hold the trainees during the project. Cultural, ethnic, economic and social barriers have prevented effective contact by most public agencies. Nearly every project report has included at least one anecdote testifying to the sense of anomie which seems to prevail among farm workers.

Farm Workers Opportunity Project was remarkable for not having these problems. The project was more than successful in recruiting trainees and retaining them through a long period of basic education. Much of this success is due to the high level of motivation of the trainees. It is apparent that public agencies, out of ignorance or

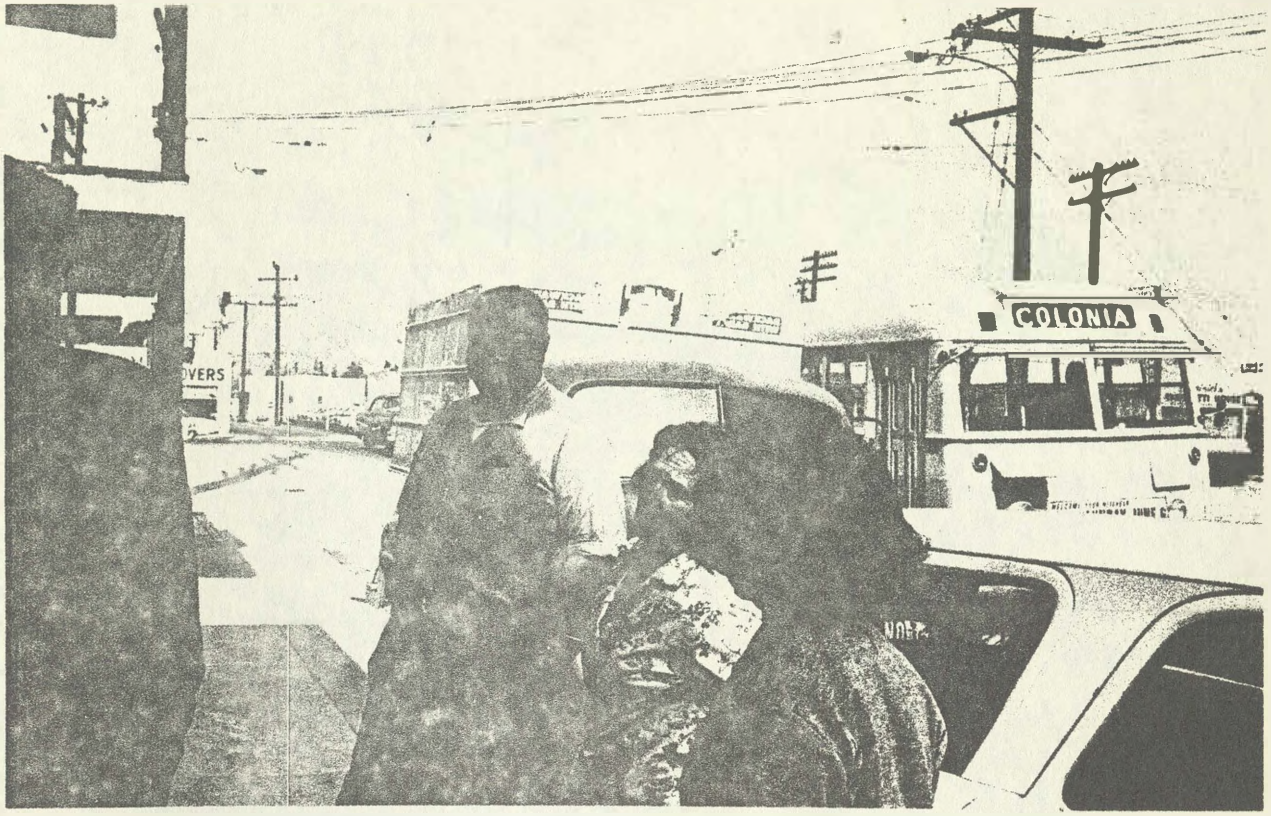
cupidity, have underestimated the seasonal farm worker. He is unusually ambitious and anxious to improve himself. At the same time he is bound by his culture and his occupation to a severely restricted range of responses. He quickly discovers that docility is rewarded and independence discouraged. To break this self-perpetuating cycle, the experience of FWOP would indicate, a special type of catalyst is necessary. The ingredient in this case was a private agency which was separate from the established institutions and had a reputation for being sympathetic to the interests of farm workers. This element of sympathetic and informed concern was provided to the trainees through the counseling program.

It is unlikely that many of the FWOP trainees were aware of the reputation of the Emergency Committee as an advocate for the interests of farm workers. What is clear is that the Emergency Committee quickly established its good faith by hiring a counseling staff composed of people who had traditionally been active in the Colonia area in behalf of farm workers. The project, to some extent, hired from among beneficiaries of community projects which had been operated by local volunteers over the preceding ten years. The counseling staff was then both known and visible in the community. Significantly several of the counselors had grown up in the area and most lived in the area during their period of service.

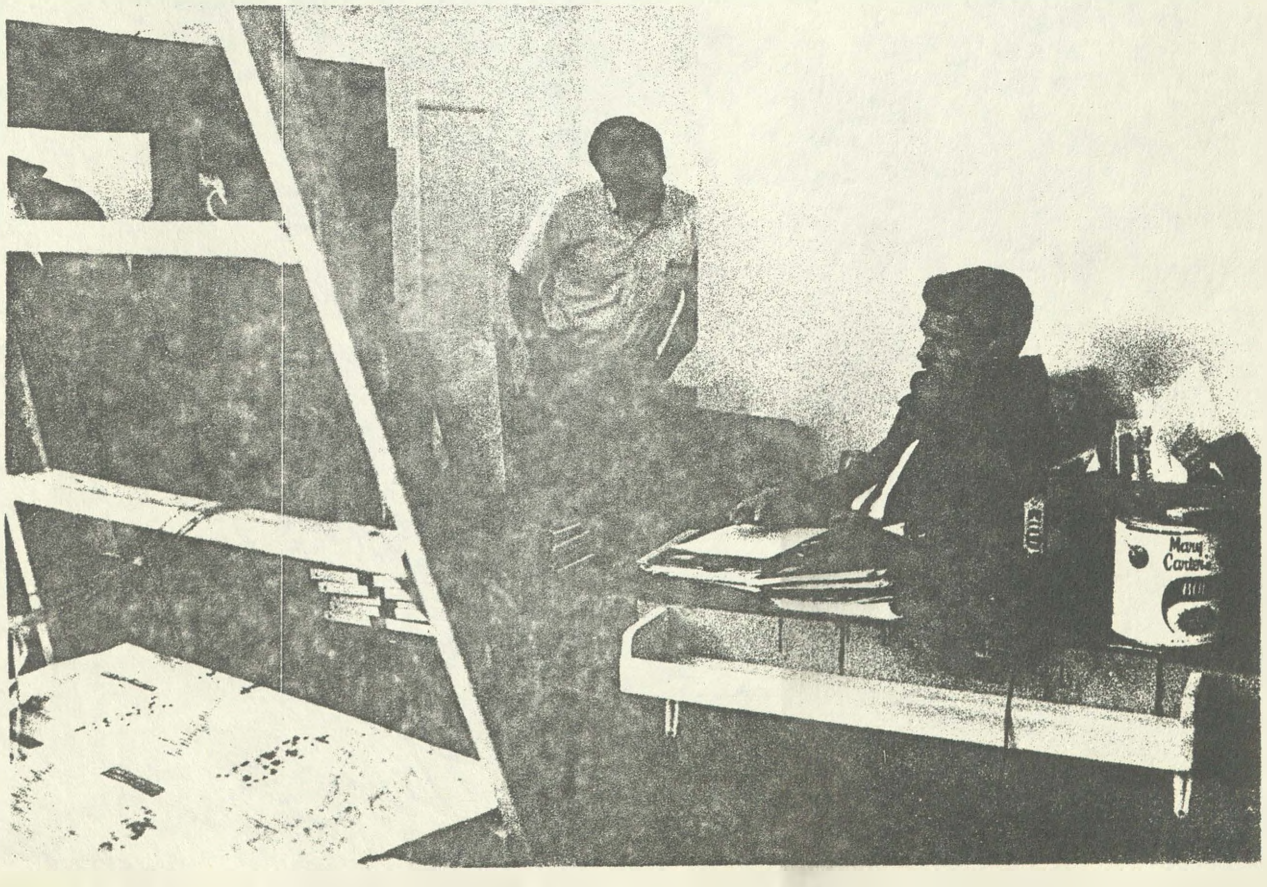
Beyond merely using local people, the project demanded a level of commitment and understanding which the trainee immediately perceived. Even farm workers who were not selected for training were able to benefit from project counseling services. The services ranged from individual assistance in solving personal problems to group counseling and community action.

The Development of Confidence

Confidence and trust among trainees was established by project counselors long before the project began any actual training. A project office was opened a year before the first trainees entered the project. This office was located, in full



The office of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project "was located in full awareness of the symbolism, on the ghetto side of the railroad tracks on one of the two roads which lead out of the Colonia into Oxnard." (See: Chapter V, p. 114.)
Below--"By being free of institutional restraints, project staff was available to work at whatever problem level was relevant to the trainee." (See: Chapter V, p. 117.)



awareness of the symbolism, on the ghetto side of the railroad tracks on one of two roads which lead out of the Colonia and into Oxnard proper. Volunteer staff from the area under the supervision of the Emergency Committee was offering counseling services from this office to potential trainees for twelve months during which the project was developed with OMAT and forced upon the reluctant Oxnard High School District. During this period, counseling was directed at solving the problems of farm workers without any preconceptions about the nature of the problems or the form of the solution.

During the year before training, volunteer staff worked closely with staff from other programs of community action and improvement. This coordination broadened the project base before training and assured effective recruitment when training became available. Prospective trainees participated with Emergency Committee staff in the campaign to force the school board to provide the educational services required by the project. In this effort, the Emergency Committee was clearly identified with farm workers against the school board and grower interests which opposed the project. The campaign and its success established the confidence and trust of the farm worker community in the project staff.

The conflict arises where the community development becomes the goal rather than merely a support for change in the individual. Yet, to be effective and have the confidence of the trainee, the supporting service must be willing to face the problems which the trainees identify.

This tension between group process and individual change existed throughout the Farm Workers Opportunity Project. It was more evident in the relations between the counseling staff and the public agencies where it was seen as harrassment rather than as a valid alternative approach to problem solving or even as a supplement to the traditional employment and education services. Several minor incidents have been described in this report where project staff and agency staff have been in conflict. Most of these were a function of institutional misunderstanding and noncommunication.

In general, they do not seem to have adversely affected the training.

The conflict in approaches to change seems to have had a healthy impact upon project trainees. The success of group ventures such as the Yucateco project, the cooperative meat buying and the participation in community affairs, provided a visible and concrete success experience which built individual confidence and made relevant and functional the classroom education. The group success, even for trainees who did not participate, and the formal curriculum were mutually reinforcing.

The interplay of agencies and attitudes, although a nuisance to the structured agency, is of major importance to the trainee who too frequently has concluded from bitter experience that all agencies are the enemy. Flexible counseling will only succeed if it is free of a vested interest in the agency.

The Need for Community Development Support

Other manpower projects have faced similar problems and experimented with alternative solutions. An interesting apposition is the Modesto Multi-Occupational MDTA program in which supporting services were administered by the educational institution. Initiated by the local Junior College, the Modesto project was based in the attitude that "traditional academic approaches must be materially modified when working with groups of undereducated adult students," (1966 Report, Vol. II, p. 176). Modesto can be compared to Oxnard as a large city (60,000) set in rural California. Because the dynamics for change arose in the college, educational innovation was possible; however, the project identified two nonlearning factors which inhibited trainee progress. These were personal problems and "isolation" in the community. It seems apparent that the general social and cultural alienation of the unemployed has been internalized by the trainees to such an extent that they were unable to take best advantage of an opportunity. This estrangement from the dominant culture was discovered to be as important as the lack of skills and style in perpetuating the problems.

The project attempted to minimize these non-learning factors through psychological counseling and other supporting services which were essentially oriented toward changing the individual trainee. Due to institutional constraints, the project staff was limited in the emphasis that could be placed on community change and group action.

After two years experience, the staff concluded that "the most effective means of attitude modification lies within the concept of involvement . . . the adult who becomes actively involved with his peers and members of the total community in seeking the solution to a problem begins to perceive society and his own potential in a much different manner" (Ibid., Vol. II, p. 2 - 3).

Counseling as Community Development

The counseling program of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project was successful because the trainees trusted the counseling staff. The trust grew from the availability of the staff to assist the trainee in solving whatever problem he felt was important. The proximity of the staff to the problems created a sense of immediacy and relevance which a more structured agency could not offer. By being free of institutional restraints, project staff was available to work at whatever problem level was relevant to the trainee. This essentially community development approach of working without preconceptions about techniques or even goals is not possible in a structured public agency. Where the agency sees its purpose as the achievement of a goal, this approach sees the process itself as the goal. Where the agency offers a single type of solution, the community development process is nearly unlimited in its resources. Where the agency stresses achievement of a predetermined goal, community development can accept failure if the participants can use it as a learning experience.

Community Development and Manpower

The community development approach to problem solving is not entirely sympathetic to traditional manpower concepts. The principle of manpower programming is that, as a

practical operating premise, the labor market is a fixed entity which makes identifiable demands of its labor force. To employ the unemployed, it is necessary to equip them with the skills required by the labor market. This sees unemployment essentially as an individual problem related to the individual's lack of skills. It is a matter of making changes in the individual which make him usable in the labor market.

The community development approach accepts the notion that the individual must change, but it refuses to eliminate other types of change. Often group advancement and social change are necessary prerequisites to individual change. Traditional agencies have discovered this in recent work with racial minorities, former inmates and every other identifiable group. Group counseling, psychodrama and group action are generally accepted techniques in creating a context within which individual change is possible.

Other Supporting Services

In addition to counseling, Farm Workers Opportunity Project included medical and testing services. The medical screening was used after trainees had been selected, to identify health problems which might act to impair learning. Many such problems were diagnosed and the individual was started on a voluntary program of treatment. Project services supplemented health services available to the medically indigent under the California state program. These services were offered in an orderly and efficient manner in support of the training project. Unlike many earlier manpower programs, trainees were not forced from the program for reasons of personal health.

The project contracted a special testing program to an outstanding educational psychometrist. Trainee selection was controlled by project staff who referred prospects to the employment service which interviewed them and certified them for the program. The school accepted the referral from the employment service and offered only cursory placement and diagnostic testing. The project staff had minimal control over the placement or curriculum. The special testing program thus became an after-

the-fact measure of trainee progress. Although they were not used by the school in determining placement or progress, testing data were used by project staff to focus later selection on trainees who could be expected to benefit from the program. The testing program also gave the Project staff a unique before and after measurement.

Summary of Supporting Services

Farm Workers Opportunity Project offered a fully developed set of social services which were in support to the education and training curriculum of the Oxnard High School District. These services were available to trainees on their terms, free of institutional limitations and independent of agency bias. Counseling particularly was in a constant tension with the cooperating public agencies. This tension appears to have been generally healthy and supportive to the trainee.

Trainee confidence was the most important factor which contributed to the effectiveness of the supporting services. This confidence was based on simple factors including the location of the office in the target neighborhood and the hiring of counselors from the area who were known community leaders. This experienced and sympathetic staff was able to provide crucial counseling support to trainees which prevented many of the problems which have been experienced in other manpower projects.

5. Problems of Implementation

Inter-Agency Coordination

The Manpower Development Training Act assigns responsibility for various elements of national manpower training to agencies with traditional responsibilities in those areas. The Employment Service is assigned recruiting, screening and post-training placement in addition to the responsibility for identifying training needs through labor market analysis. Responsibility for training is delegated by Congress to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Both federal departments work through counterpart state agencies. Overall coordination is provided by the Department of Labor.

In California, the State Department of Employment describes a need for training and notifies the State Department of Education, which prepares a curriculum and approves the training institution. The Department of Employment then screens and refers workers to the institution for training.

The model seems reasonable with each agency, in full good will, providing the services in which it is competent. In fact, the Department of Employment has been reticent until recently to certify a need for training except in occupations which were low paying, low skilled and usually non-union. This meant that an inordinant share of training resources was being used to train women. The Department of Education generally prepared curricula which were traditional in nature and seldom suited to the special needs of a client population which required training precisely because they had failed in previous attempts at traditional education. Traditional curricula also demanded high entrance qualifications from trainees. The Employment Service screened in those trainees who were the most employable rather than those most in need of training.

The model division of responsibilities proved adequate to train Licensed Vocational Nurses and similar standardized occupations. It failed to confront most occupations which the unemployed would find attractive. This perversion of national manpower policy also did violence to the concept of structural unemployment which sees the solution to national manpower requirements in moving the unemployed into entry level jobs and upgrading to fill identifiable labor demand at higher skill levels. This analysis of the labor market justifies a manpower policy which does not include economic expansion as a prerequisite for full employment. In local application, labor market demand was interpreted literally, which nullified much of the theory of structural unemployment.

In situations where the normal pattern proved grossly inadequate or where a client population proved particularly hard to reach, the Department of Labor was authorized to contract for special services. Often special experimental programs are

operated in the standard manner with the exception of single modifications to cover the special services. In general, there was no anticipation of the type of situation which prevailed in Oxnard where the labor market as well as the public agencies was antagonistic to the project and opposed to improvement in the labor force.

The Oxnard Context

The trauma of bracero termination extended over a period of nearly five years. Statewide grower organizations, in an attempt to broaden support for the program, had been publicizing the importance of bracero labor to agriculture and of agriculture to the economy. In Ventura County where the bracero system was well established, the crisis appeared to the non-agriculturalist as imperiling the whole economy. Public agencies were particularly vulnerable to the adroit manipulations of the agricultural industry.

The Schools

The Oxnard High School District Board had changed composition during the decade before the project. Growers who had previously dominated the board had been replaced by business and professional people from Oxnard who, although not themselves users of bracero labor, accepted the prevailing opinion that the federal government was forcing the ruin of Ventura County with its idealistic notions about the availability of domestic farm labor. The transition from direct to indirect representation of growers strengthened the control which local agriculturalists could exert over the board. Where growers could previously act for themselves, the new middlemen on the board had to remain responsive to a broad range of opinions and attitudes. The shift, while increasing the base of support and participation, did not effectively free the schools from domination by the agricultural industry which had historically dictated social and educational policy in Ventura County.

The Department of Employment

The Farm Placement Service of the State Department of Employment had never been more than a service to employers. The staff and policy was little changed from the period during which Farm Placement had been administered by the county farm advisor. During the fifteen years immediately preceding FWOP, Farm Placement had been responsible for certifying that sufficient domestic labor was not available to harvest the crops.

The Department of Employment had lost the confidence of the farm employers it was striving to serve due to its inability to deliver the farm workers demanded by the industry. Labor shortage panic is endemic in the Farm Placement Service. As the dreaded termination approached, Farm Placement staff became almost pathologically sensitive to growers' whims. The Oxnard Farm Labor Office had not initiated any training project, although this had been one of the major recommendations of the University of California study After the Bracero[1] which the Department of Employment had commissioned.

Farm workers have no more confidence in the Department of Employment than the growers. Many consider the Department as an agent for the growers while the majority ignore the farm placement system and find their own jobs. A 1963 study in Stanislaus County showed that the Department of Employment is not in effective contact with farm workers and that few workers of any kind use the services of the agency.

The general distrust of the Farm Placement system was aggravated in Oxnard, where there has been a tradition of conflict between farm workers and the Farm Labor Office. Some of the counseling staff on the project and some of the trainees had participated in "gate hire" demonstrations where groups of domestic farm workers had presented themselves for work at ranches where braceros were employed. The farmer would refuse

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1. Fred H. Schmidt, After the Bracero. University of California at Los Angeles, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1964.

to hire the farm workers because he already had braceros. The workers would then stage a sit-down and vainly file an official protest which was usually delayed in the bureaucratic machinery until the harvest was completed. (The reaction of the California Department of Employment to demestic farm workers in bracero dominated areas is described in the 1963 testimony before the Subcommittee on Manpower, Equipment and Supplies of the House Committee on Agriculture.)

The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers

The Emergency Committee had been the major Southern California agency working on behalf of farm workers since its inception during the Imperial Valley lettuce strike. The committee was not well known by the general public, although it was immediately recognized by agribusiness interests for its previous efforts against the bracero program. The committee had previously been critical of the Department of Employment. The committee had no history of relationships with the Oxnard Schools except for personal contacts made in earlier years by project staff members.

Project History

These three agencies with entirely different, even opposing goals and constituencies were forced together by Department of Labor policy. The project was developed through negotiation between the Department of Labor and the Emergency Committee. It was modeled after Visalia Experimental MDTA project from which it drew its staff. The schools and the employment service did not seek the project, and participated in its development only as reluctant observers. The project was approved early in March 1965, so that training could begin prior to periods of peak harvest labor demand. Although approved, the project required an educational institution to provide basic education, which was to have been followed by skill training using on-the-job techniques. Opposition from employers ended the possibility of any direct skill training. This limited the project to institutional basic education which the Oxnard High School District

agreed to provide after several months discussion and negotiation.

The delay in obtaining an educational institution and the shift from training to basic education effectively eliminated a basic purpose of the project. This purpose was to upgrade farm workers within the harvest labor force through vocational skill training in anticipation of increased labor demand due to the termination of the bracero system. During the five month delay Ventura growers, contrary to all their threats and protestations, were able to develop a domestic labor force which was adequate to their needs. They did this without even meeting the minimum standards required by the Secretary of Labor. This meant that, by the time Oxnard High School was preparing the curriculum, basic education without any skill element was perhaps appropriate to the modified training goals.

Project Operation

Once in motion, the three agencies appeared to be carrying out their assignments like sleepwalkers. Coordination was limited to simultaneity. No coordination of purpose or method was apparent.

The Employment Service Operation

The Farm Labor Office, after once being over-ruled for excessive rigor in selection, relaxed and provided no service except an automatic approval of any prospective trainee recruited by the project staff. Over 98% of all trainees were recruited by the project and referred to the Farm Labor Office for certification. By refusing to take its recruiting, selection and referral responsibilities seriously, the Farm Labor Office demonstrated its apathy and tacit opposition to the project. The FWOP staff assumed these elements of the project with success. The Employment Service lost the benefits of increased service to clients and the opportunity to establish contact with a new element of the labor market. The performance of the Farm Labor Office confirmed the mistrust and doubt which clients had about it.

The Employment Service was equally apathetic and inept in its placement responsibilities. The Oxnard office, after forcing trainees to sign a declaration that they would be available for agricultural employment, refused to cooperate with the project staff in developing job placements. The treatment of trainees by the Employment Service was ineffective in providing job placement. The routine service which they received brings into question the whole existence of the Employment Service. Except for the payment of unemployment insurance benefits, it appears incapable of carrying out any manpower function.

The Training Institution in Operation

Once the Oxnard School Board had agreed to provide training for the project which had been modified to alleviate grower opposition, district staff prepared a curriculum, ordered equipment and supplies, and hired staff. The curriculum was a retread of the adult education curriculum offered in the night school. There seems to have been no attempt to modify the standard fare for this experimental and demonstration project. The curriculum did not reflect any basic awareness of the goals of the project or the nature of the prospective trainees. Teaching equipment purchased for the project was progressive but more appropriate for compensatory and primary programs for children. Teaching staff was hired from among substitute teachers in the district.

During the course of training, there seems to have been no major modification of curriculum or method based on project experience. Trainee placement seems to have been arbitrarily based on the grossest sort of evaluation. Once placed, discipline seems to have been the major factor which required that the trainee be moved to another class.

Class size was excessive throughout the project. There was no attempt to develop competence among the teaching staff through any sort of in-service training program. There seems to have been no attention to recently published research in the field of adult education which is available from the National Association for Public School Adult Education. There was no use of specialists in the area of minority group

education or consultants to upgrade the curriculum or the material in cooperation with the teachers. Individual teachers were left on their own to improvise and develop curriculum as they saw fit. Teachers sought guidance and assistance in developing teaching materials for the trainees. However, as the High School District administration failed to hire a coordinator the teachers were given no continuing support or encouragement to develop the best materials they were able.

In summary, the school district acted as though it had been forced to undertake a project in which it did not believe. The administration of the institutional portion of the project was remarkable in its capacity to insulate itself from the purpose of the project with an inappropriate and unevaluated curriculum.

Coordination of Effort

The two public agencies engaged in FWOP demonstrated how little could be done to actually implement the training program. The aggressive counseling staff of the Emergency Committee compensated for many of the inadequacies and much of the apathy of the other agencies. There was no effective coordination between agencies. Cooperation at the staff level was interrupted when the public agencies refused to deal with project counselors. The purposes of FWOP as a manpower project were either not defined for the public agencies or they chose to ignore them in structuring their services.

The Emergency Committee staff, in its contact with the agencies, was unsuccessful in creating an awareness of the problems or the purposes of the project. On two occasions, project staff appealed to a higher level of authority to overrule local decisions. This process, although successful, was slow and created bad feeling between the agencies. There was no attempt at coordination by agencies at the state or federal level.

Summary of Inter-Agency Coordination

The bifurcation of responsibility between education and employment which is a part of national manpower policy is reasonable when the various agencies are in substantial agreement about the purposes of the program. This division is dysfunctional when there is confusion about project goals and is complicated by the intrusion of a private agency. In the situation where there is conflict and disagreement between agencies, the division of responsibility is wholly inappropriate. The Farm Workers Opportunity Project would have been far more successful if the two public agencies had been avoided entirely and the training function carried out by an independent contractor. This system has proved effective in some of the Job Corps programs where universities and private corporations have contracted to provide specific educational services. A second alternative would be to develop standards which the training institution would have to meet before being approved. The Department of Labor could assist in improving quality by requesting closer supervision of the Office of Education.

A possible administration might be to contract with a contractor who would administer all aspects of the project through subcontracts with local agencies. This, although it might improve the coherence of the project, would dilute the quality control that should be provided by the supervising state and federal agencies. The prime contractor system also risks a project which is monolithic and without the beneficial tensions of the countervailing theories and skills of a variety of agencies.

The experience in Oxnard would indicate that some type of coordinating body should be mandated which would have representation from all the participating agencies. Regular meetings and formalized communication procedures would not necessarily eliminate disagreement, but it would force awareness of the nature of the disagreement and might stimulate change. At worst, such a body would be a forum for disagreement.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations

The staff of the American Friends Service Committee's Farm Workers Opportunity Project made the following recommendations regarding manpower policies and training programs based on three and a half years of experimental and demonstration project experience with seasonal and migrant farm workers throughout California.

I. Recommendations regarding training programs for farm workers

The Department of Labor should continue experimental and demonstration projects with a particular emphasis on community development. Barriers to individual achievement may demand group change and improvement. The experience of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project indicates that community development activities can give meaningful training experiences to individual farm workers besides helping implementation of manpower policies.

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project demonstrated the critical importance of using a private agency to recruit and to retain the hard-to-reach immigrant labor force through heavy counseling and related supportive services. These supportive services themselves are critical to the success of a manpower training program for immigrant farm workers. We recommend the continued use of private agencies that enjoy the confidence and support of migrant and seasonal farm workers. We also recommend the continued use of the supportive services including group and individual counseling, social casework, community development and health services.

The staff of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project also recommends that a maximum degree of flexibility be allowed to social workers and semi-professional counselors to design and implement counseling programs. The counseling programs, to be effective, must reflect the needs and desires of those to be served. This can best be accomplished in unstructured situations by indigenous semi-professional aides who are close to the target group to be served and in sympathy with the aspirations of the people.

The ambiguous results of the adult basic education indicates the need for more experimentation with different educational institutions. Basic education is not

well understood as a manpower or employment tool for farm workers. More experimental training programs are needed that will help our understanding of various basic education programs and approaches. Experimentation is needed in non-institutional and non-traditional adult education.

II. Specific recommendations regarding manpower policy and farm worker:

It is the recommendation of the Farm Workers Opportunity Project staff that the separate farm labor placement services of the state employment offices be discontinued and abolished. The bracero system of labor halted or hindered social advances for seasonal farm labor and destroyed the free labor market system in agriculture. Without a large foreign labor program the segregated farm labor placement service no longer serves any real function. Both the farm worker and the agricultural community as a whole will benefit from service by one integrated employment service.

The Department of Labor and state employment offices should discontinue the traditional farm labor policy that makes parts of government an extension of the agricultural industry. The traditional farm labor policy of most local employment offices presupposes that the farm labor market is inadequate. Should the local agriculture leaders demand more labor any time, the local farm placement offices try to deliver whatever they can regardless of wages and working conditions. This submissive policy should be dropped in favor of a policy that views agriculture as one industry among many in our free society.

The Department of Labor should undertake an extensive study of the farm labor market, independently of existing data provided by the local farm placement service. Such a study would help the Department to achieve a fuller understanding of the general manpower trends in the farm labor market and would give the government the facts and data on which to base meaningful and updated farm labor manpower policy. Research is now needed into manpower problems affecting farm workers rather than into the needs of the agricultural industry for farm labor as a commodity.

We recommend a labor skills analysis study be conducted of the immigrant Mexican-American, those in the U.S. and those in Mexico potentially immigrants in the near future. The Farm Workers Opportunity Project encountered many trainees

who, although they had held skilled jobs in Mexico, had been limited to agricultural employment in the U.S. We need a deeper understanding of the resources of these hundreds of thousands of immigrant folk in the Southwest U.S.A.

The U.S. Department of Labor should seek through its funding power policies that would insure co-ordination between local operating agencies. This end could be assisted by a required coordinating body of the staff directors of any and all the local participating agencies.

III. Fundamental questions requiring more exploration:

The Department of Labor should identify manpower goals that are appropriate to the farm labor market and to the immigrant Mexican American farm labor force.

The Department should seek to determine the value of adult basic education as a Manpower Development approach to the problems of farm workers.

Investigation of the contribution of adult basic education to productivity and increased income of farm workers who remain in the farm labor market is needed.

The Department should explore the most effective application of adult basic education, given limited resources.

Projects should seek to determine what is the most effective training institution and what are the best pedagogical techniques to improve the basic skills of farm workers.

The Department of Labor should seek to determine what is the optimal mix of vocational education, basic education, and counseling for the improvement of skills and motivation of farm workers.