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SCHOOL BELLS FOR MIGRANTS.

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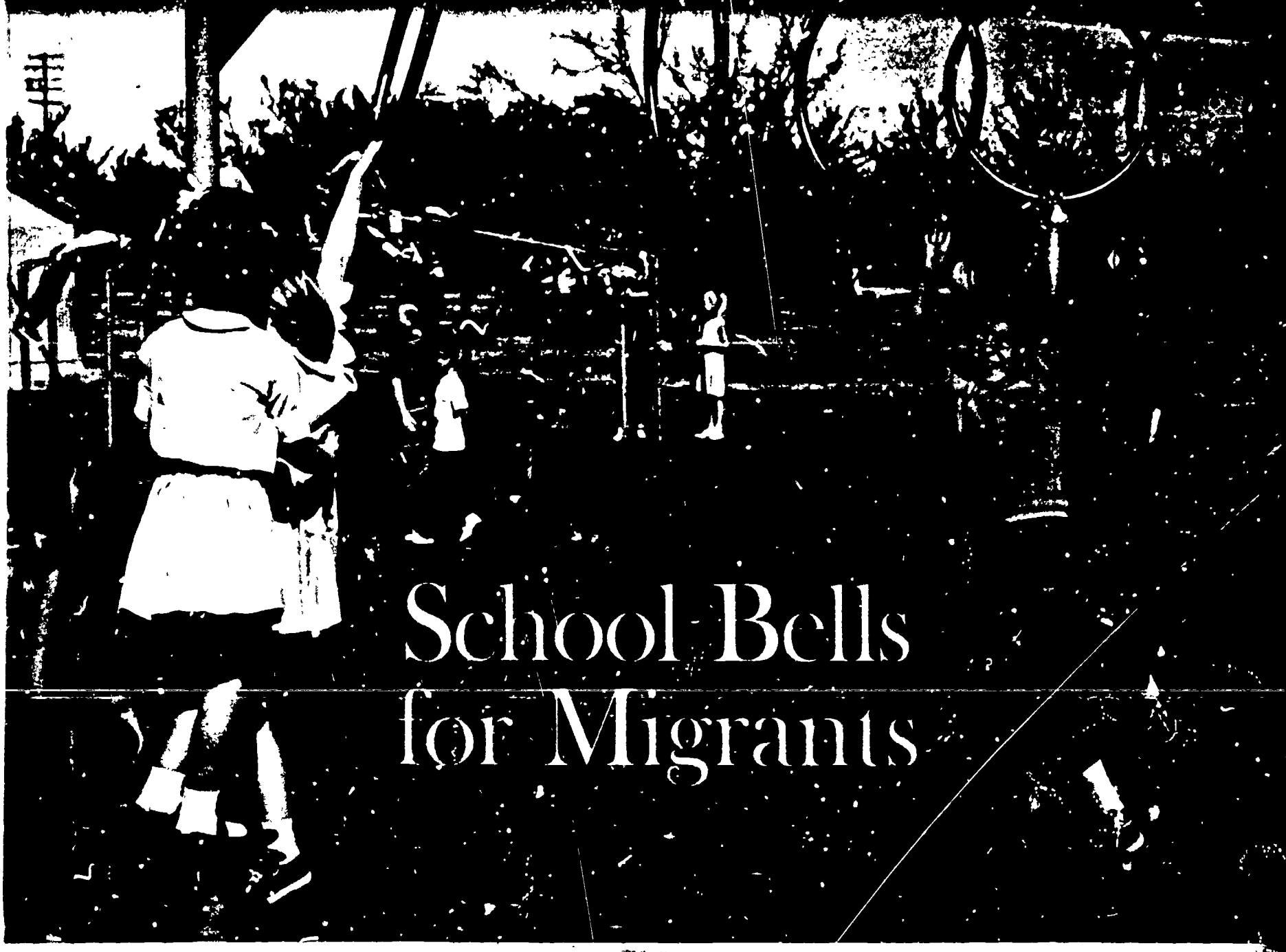
IN CALIFORNIA, 66 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN 43 COUNTIES HAVE SOME TYPE OF MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED $1.4 MILLION IN 1966, WHICH PROVIDED SOME ASSISTANCE TO 10,000 OF THE ESTIMATED 78,000 MIGRANT CHILDREN. A THREE-COUNTY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT CONDUCTED BY 14 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY PROVIDED--(1) INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION FROM BILINGUAL TEACHER'S AIDES AND LANGUAGE SPECIALISTS, (2) SPECIAL TEXTBOOKS AIMED AT THE PROBLEMS AND DEFICIENCIES OF THE MIGRANT CHILD, (3) FIELD TRIPS, (4) INTENSIFIED INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH, (5) EVENING TUTORING AND THE USE OF A LIBRARY IN THE MIGRANT HOUSING CAMPS, AND (6) SUMMER CLASSES. EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO COORDINATE RECORD TRANSFER AMONG THE STATES OF CALIFORNIA, TEXAS, ARIZONA, OREGON, AND WASHINGTON. CALIFORNIA'S DATA PROCESSING CENTER AT SACRAMENTO IS BEING UTILIZED AS A CENTRAL RECORDS REPOSITORY. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "AMERICAN EDUCATION," MARCH 1968, PP. 5-7. (SF)



School Bells for Migrants

California's schools welcome the 78,000 children of its crop-followi families into the new master plan

By RONALD BLUBAUGH

For nearly two months Alicia Rodriguez worked on her English in Virginia Phillips' special reading class at the Esparto Elementary School near Sacramento, Calif. Then, one morning in late October, Alicia was gone. Mrs. Phillips was not surprised. It was part of a familiar cycle.

When the crop is harvested from nearby tomato fields, the students leave with their parents. Most likely, Alicia would return to Texas for the winter. Most likely, Mrs. Phillips would see her again next fall.

There are 78,000 youngsters like Alicia who either lived in or passed through California in 1967. They are the children of migrant farmworkers and their education has become a major concern to the State of California, as well as to teachers like Mrs. Phillips.

Prior to 1966, only sporadic attention had been given to the problems of migrant children in California's schools. A few districts in the Imperial and San Joaquin valleys had recognized that migrant children had special problems. But not more than three or four districts had any significant efforts underway to help them. By June 30, 1967, the number of districts had jumped to 66.

Impetus for the new interest in migrants has come from the "Migrant Amendment" to title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This amendment channels Federal money for compensatory education into programs for migrant children. With the extra financial help, schools now are willing and able to do something for the youngsters of the workers who help make agriculture California's leading industry.

A special section of the California State Department of Education, the Bureau of Community Services and Migrant Education, guides the statewide effort to help migrant children. The bureau coordinates the projects of the various districts according to its recently prepared "California Master Plan for the Education of Migrant Children."

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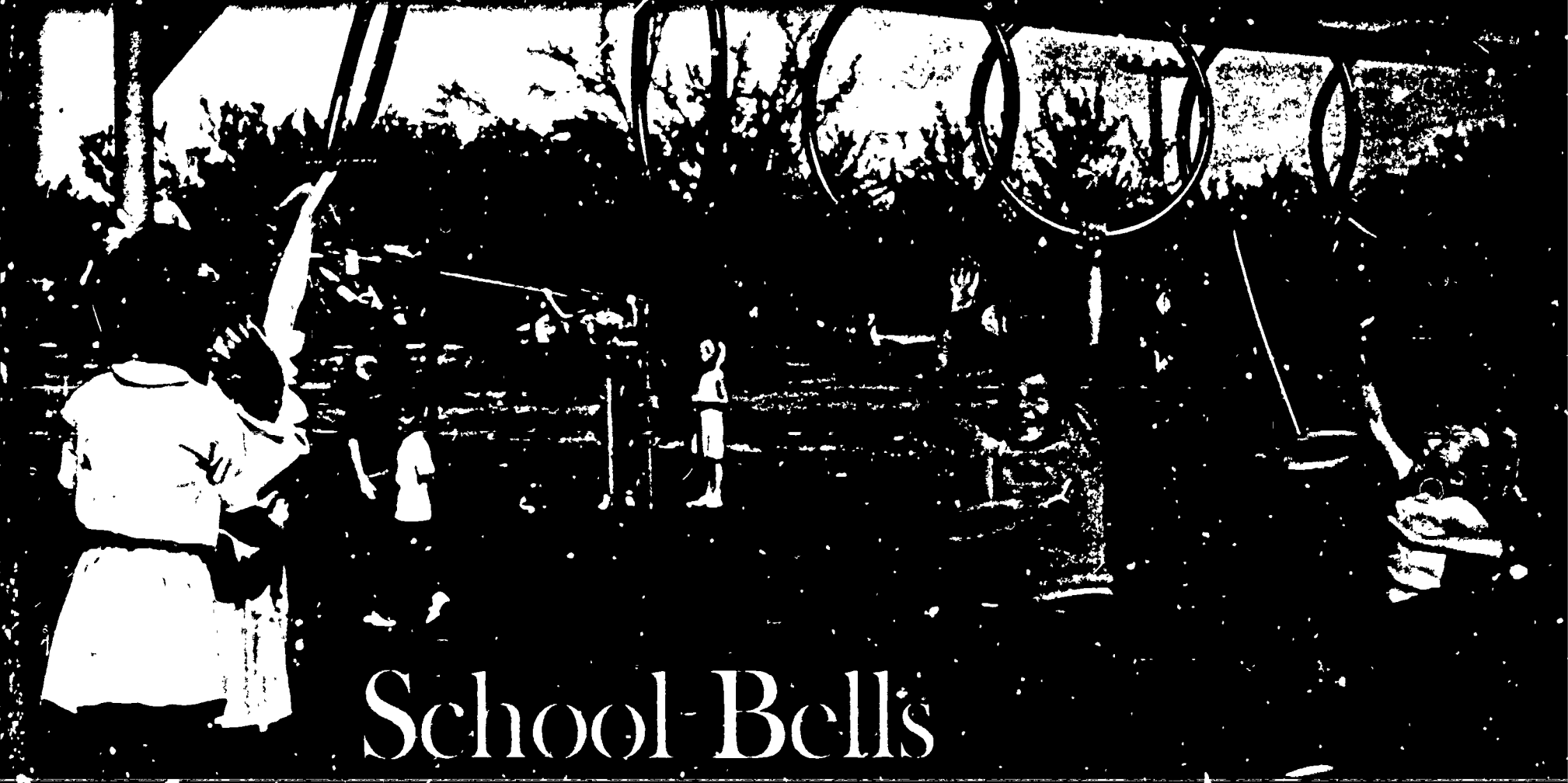

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In 1966, during the first months of the new effort, the Federal Government supplied $1.4 million to California for the education of migrant children. This year, the amount is $6.2 million, still not enough to help all of the State's migrants.

Ramiro Reyes, assistant chief of the Bureau of Community Services and Migrant Education, explains the massiveness of the problem: "By my calculation, we would have needed $10 million in 1966 to provide some assistance to each of the 78,000 children. With $1.4 million we were able to help only 10,000 of them."

Forty-three of California's 58 counties have migrant children some time during the year. Since the $6.2 million in Federal help is not enough to aid every child, the State has directed the funds to the 27 counties that have the

largest number of migrants rather than spread the money thinly over all.

An early result of Federal aid was a dramatic increase in the number of migrants in summer programs. Prior to the new financing almost no migrant children enrolled in the summer school offerings of local schools. Last summer, 5,412 migrant children participated in summer programs.

Summer programs also have been started for preschool children in various farm labor camps in California. Financed with Economic Opportunity Act funds, these preschool centers help children with their English while ensuring that they get proper food and rest. However, in places where preschool centers have not been opened, parents still face the choice of leaving their young ones unattended at home, locked in a hot car, or letting them run loose in the fields.

Although school district programs for migrants vary greatly in size and scope, there has been one common feature. Because 85 percent of California's migrant farmworkers are Mexican-Americans, virtually all programs have put a stress on reading development.

Typical of the programs in small districts is that of the Esparto Unified School District. Here a major portion of the money goes to summer school activities. Buses were rolling daily last summer to take the children on field trips to places like the Sacramento zoo and the State capitol. Remedial instruction in English was frequently worked into the field trips or into the preparation for them.

When the regular school year began, Esparto authorities visited the nearby Madison farm labor camp many times to encourage parents to send their children to school. Children who went to school received continued instruction in English.

A much larger migrant program is that conducted jointly by 14 school districts in the San Joaquin Valley counties of Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus. State authorities consider the three-county effort to be a demonstration project, an example to other districts with similar problems.

The 1,575 children involved in the plan receive such services as:

- ☐ Individualized instruction from bilingual teacher's aides and language specialists.
- ☐ Special textbooks aimed at the problems and deficiencies of the migrant child.
- ☐ Field trips.
- ☐ Intensified instruction in English with programs to teach some children English as a second language and Spanish as a first.
- ☐ Evening tutoring and the use of a library in the migrant housing camps.
- ☐ Summer classes.

The program also provides night adult education classes in the camps for the parents of enrolled youngsters.

Another large effort is underway in Monterey County. Eleven school districts are cooperating in a project to help 3,000 youngsters. Similar to the San Joaquin Valley project, the Monterey program stresses English and language development. Each teacher is supplied with a 91-page book developed by the county office of education that gives instructional tips and some cultural background about Mexican-Americans. Monterey County educators note in the book:

"It is certain that for the first time in their history, the schools of the Salinas Valley have been able to work adequately to lighten the education burden forced on the migrant child by his nomadic way of life."

Teachers who work with the migrant children frequently report changes in the attitudes of the participating youngsters. Pat Lowrey, a kindergarten teacher in the Winters School District near Sacramento, explained: "One outstanding improvement noted by other school personnel was in the active participation of the student in regular classroom
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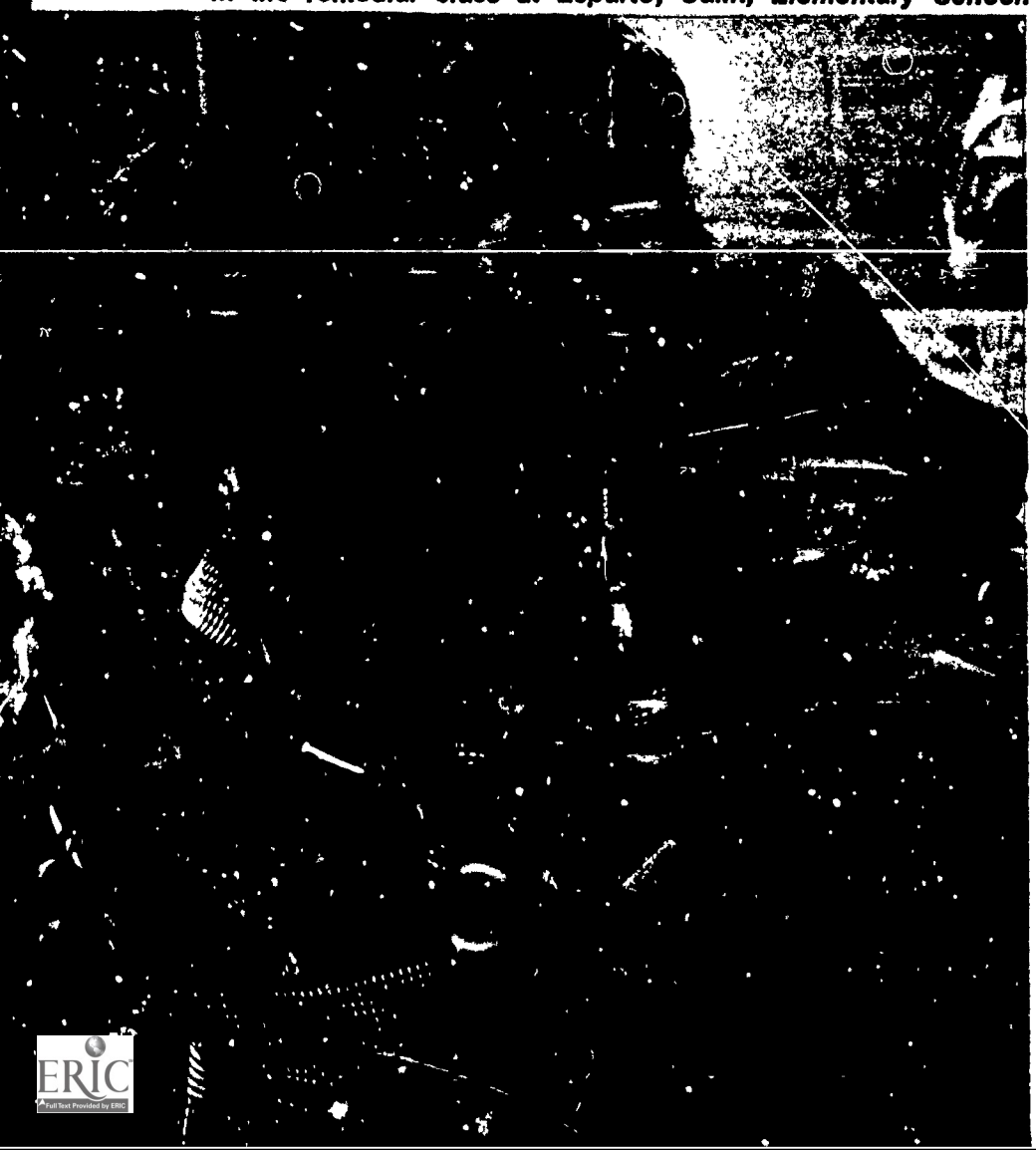
Alicia Rodriguez and Olita Balderas improve English reading in the remedial class at Esparto, Calif., Elementary School.



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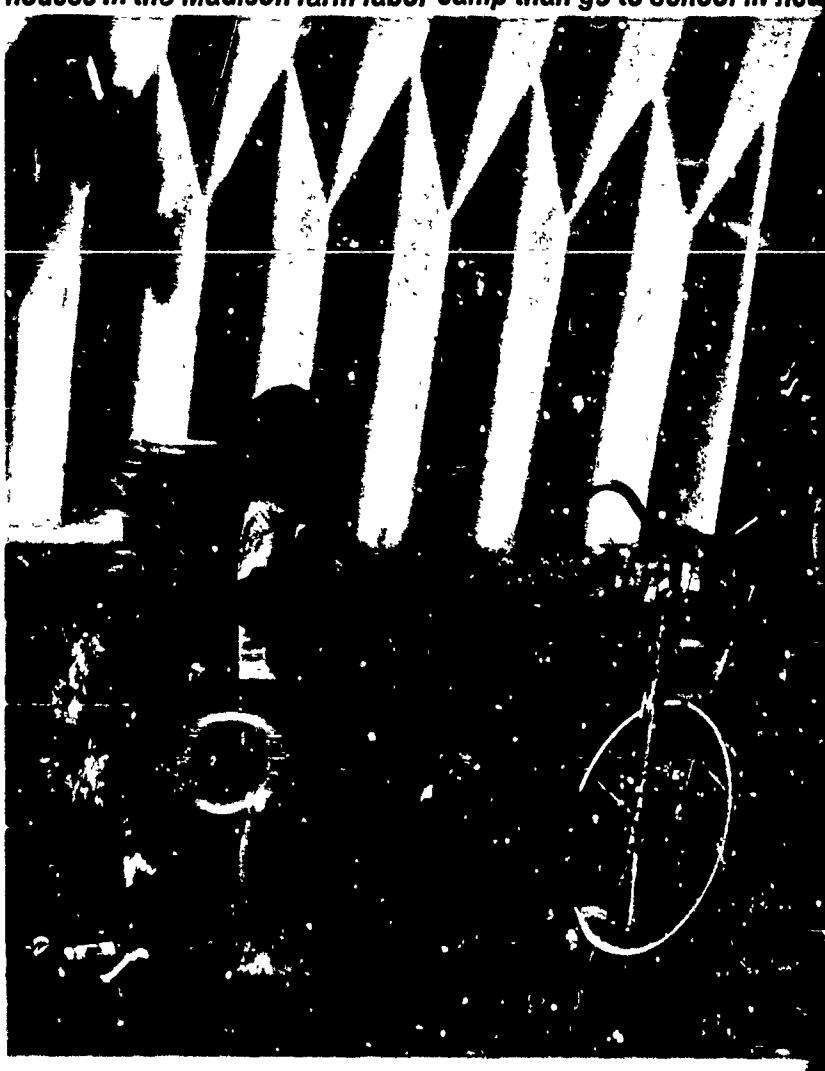

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Mrs. Lowrey's remarks also show another key aspect of the California migrant program: integration. It is the basic philosophy of the California approach that migrant children should be placed in classrooms with regular students. The State board of education policy forbids the operation of separate schools for migrants.

In addition to its efforts for students, the California migrant program last summer included a pilot project to help prepare potential teachers for future classes of migrants. Because only 14 teachers-to-be were enrolled in the initial effort, the name "mini-corps" was given to the project.

Modeled on the Teacher Corps program, the mini-corps drew its recruits from young people with junior college backgrounds and a desire to teach migrants. They worked alongside experienced teachers and also went into the State migrant camps where they each lived for a month. Representative of the reaction of the partic-

Rodriguez and Olita Balderas improve English reading remedial class at Esparto, Calif., Elementary School.

Fun-loving migrant youngsters would rather play in the sun outside their houses in the Madison farm labor camp than go to school in nearby Esparto.

ipants was that of the girl who had seen migrants on her father's ranch all her life. No longer, she said, would she consider migrants as "inferior."

To fund their programs for migrants, many California school districts have tried to draw money from a variety of national, State, and local sources. Through this approach, they have been able to expand their programs measurably.

The San Joaquin Valley districts of Cutler-Orosi Unified and Woodlake Union High School have made a particular effort in this respect. There were 333 youngsters in their program last year, all attending grades seven through 12. The students received instruction in basic subjects as well as some vocational education and on-the-job training. During the summer, they worked 32 hours a week and were paid $1.40 an hour. They also went to classes for five hours a week and spent three hours either in recreation or counseling.

Federal funds for this effort were drawn through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and the local Office of Economic Opportunity. County agencies also contributed. Among these were the Tulare County welfare and health departments and the county office of education.

"This is an effort to get all of the existing agencies to focus on the needs of migrants," explained Cutler-Orosi superintendent Laurence Elrod. "We tried to get all the agencies to supplement each other. We had to get them to bend a little and work together to solve the problem."

In addition to its efforts at the local level, the California Master Plan for Migrant Children also calls for more interdistrict cooperation. Under the plan, the State is establishing a central records repository in Sacramento for migrants. With a central records center, a teacher who gets a new student will be able to determine his educational background.

Many migrants travel solely through California, Texas, Arizona, Oregon, and Washington. Carrying the idea to these other States, California has agreed to a records transfer with them. A teacher in Fresno will now know the title of a textbook a student was using and the page he was on when he left Texas.

Although the migrant plan has been a major step toward helping the State's wandering children, some problems have developed. There is, for example, a serious shortage in California of bilingual teachers. It is estimated that not more than 50 of the 257 teachers employed in the various projects speak both English and Spanish.

Planning must be done in advance. State officials complain they never know the amount of Federal money that will be available to local schools until it is almost too late for the schools to take action. In its last session, the U.S. Congress made provisions to eliminate this uncertainty.

Wilson C. Riles, State director of compensatory education, also complains that the Federal money which went into the migrant program was removed from other compensatory education efforts. "The Federal Government has not given more money to the States to operate this program," he said. "It has simply earmarked money which formerly was going to other compensatory education projects. This means you have to dilute other programs. We welcome an attack on this problem, but it tends to jeopardize other activities which are underfinanced."

Throughout the entire California migrant program there has been a sense of terrible urgency. California is rapidly mechanizing its agriculture, and farm jobs are swiftly being eliminated. In the last five years, the number of farm labor jobs in the State has dropped from 284,000 to 135,000.

Machines already have been introduced into the tomato fields of the Sacramento Valley, greatly reducing the number of av jobs. The University of Cali has developed the first mo a grape harvester. Other ma are making their way to the and nut orchards.

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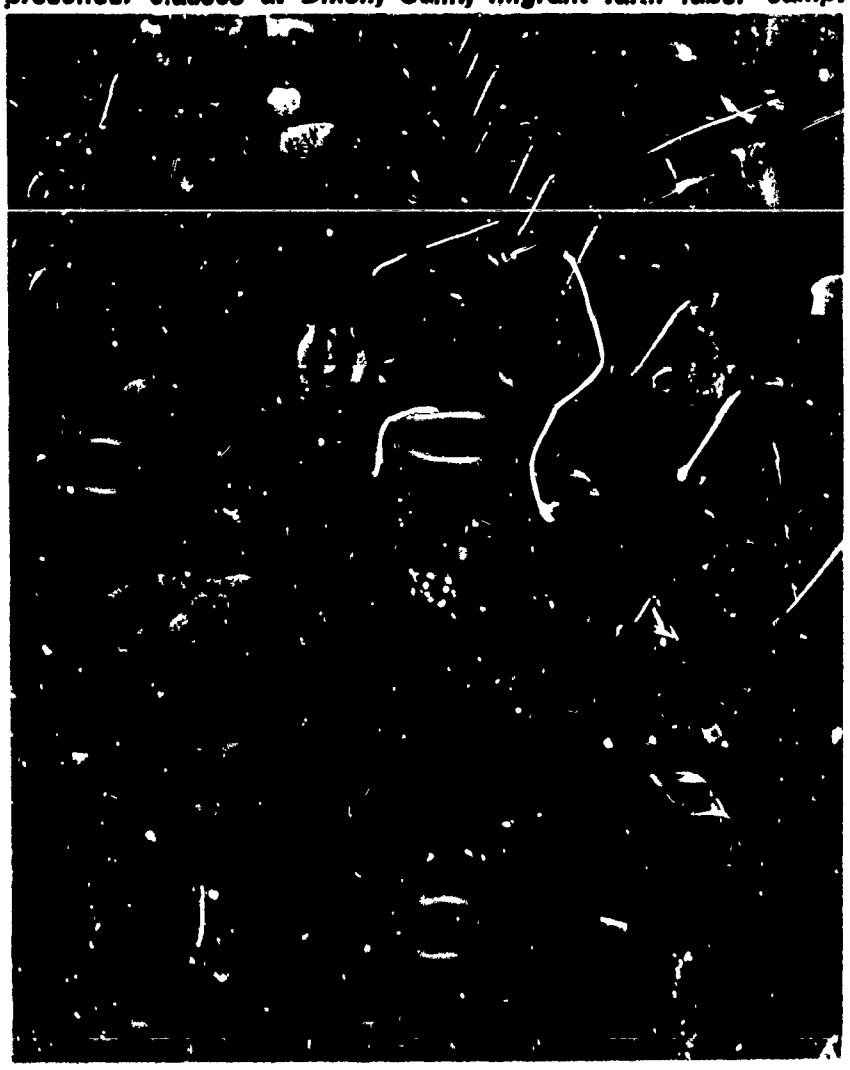
Further information conc migrant education pro funded under title I of the is available from Jea Park, OE's Division of Co satory Education, Wash D. C. 20202.

It's after-lunch siesta time for the small nomads who attend preschool classes at Dixon, Calif., migrant farm labor camp.



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Xavier Del Buono, a consultant with the California State Department of Education, warns that the educational problems of the migrant child must either be solved now or they will haunt the cities later. "We already can see that there are not going to be migrant jobs forever," he says. "As the need for migrant farm laborers is reduced, it does not eliminate the problem. The same educational needs will be there. Studies have shown that these people will move to the large urban centers. If we don't help now, we will just add to the problems of the large central cities."

Forward-looking educators in California, with fiscal assistance from the Federal Government, State and local agencies, are now bending to the task of sparing the cities this additional burden. ■

Mr. Blubaugh is a California newsman and National Observer *correspondent.*

Further information concerning migrant education programs funded under title I of the ESEA is available from Jeanne S. Park, OE's Division of Compensatory Education, Washington, D. C. 20202.

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