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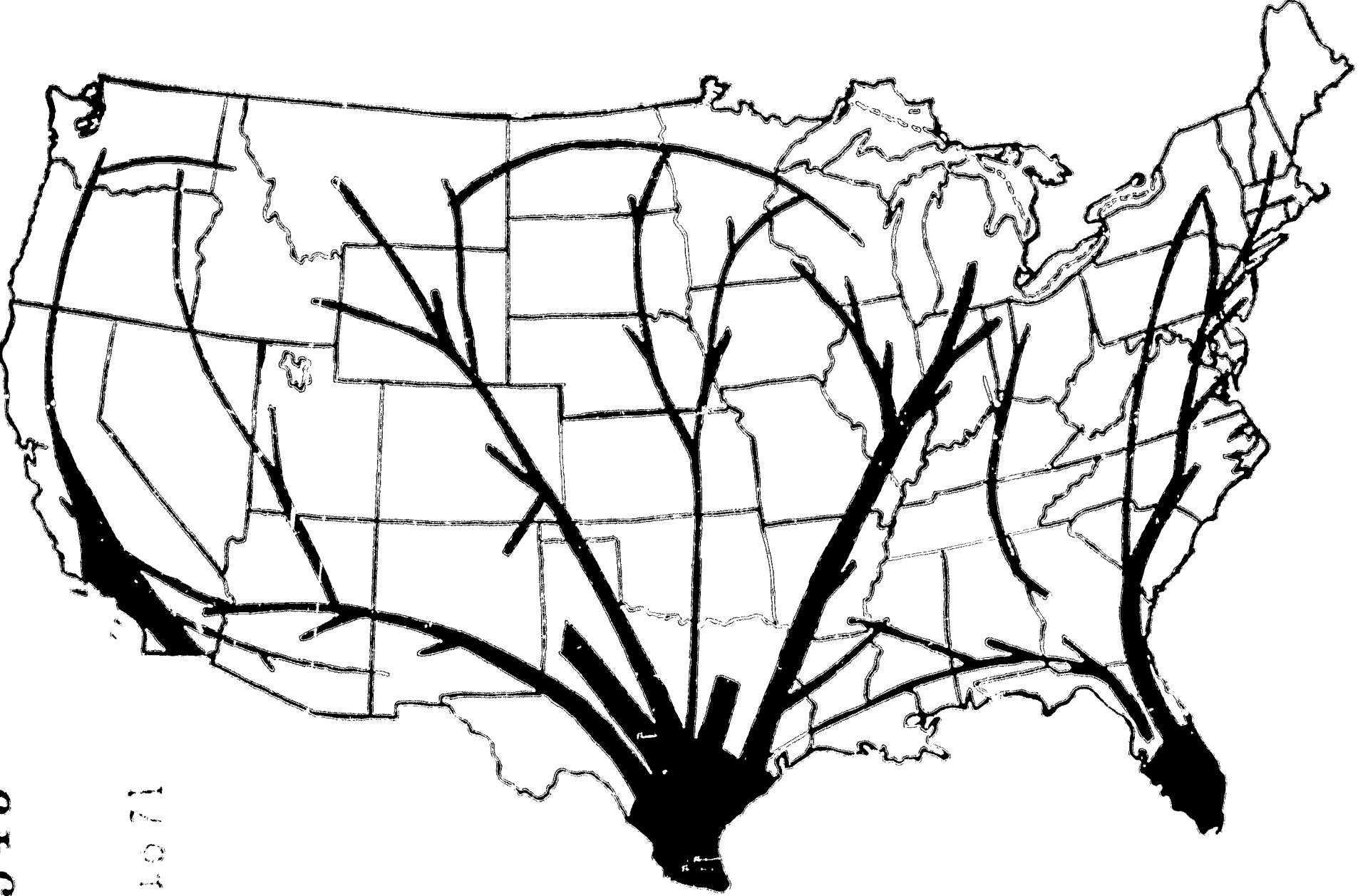
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Migration patterns in Texas, Florida, California, the Southeastern States, and elsewhere are examined through official reports, statistical data, migrant statistics at rest camps, migrant children's registrations in New Mexico, conversations, and informal observations. It is concluded that the plight of the migrant worker will grow more dismal unless he masters new skills to cope with today's industrial revolution in agriculture. (SW)

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ARMY OF DESPAIR:
THE MIGRANT WORKER STREAM

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INTRODUCTION

The needs of America's rural population have been currently brought into focus by the report of the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty.¹ In this report, The People Left Behind, unemployment and underemployment are listed as major rural problems. Contrasted with the national unemployment rate of 4 percent, rural unemployment averages 18 percent and rural underemployment reaches heights of 37 percent.

The Manpower Report of the President² notes that rural population poverty in March 1965 reached a high of 43.4 percent as compared with a poverty level of 29.2 percent in the central cities. While there has been some improvement in other populations, poverty has remained persistent in Southern rural areas, in Midwestern rural areas, in areas of the Southwest where Spanish Americans reside, and in various other pockets of rural America.³

Whereas most resident rural poor have some possibility of securing either public or private assistance, the migrant and seasonal worker is not reached to any appreciable extent by established aid programs because of his mobility and "social distance" from established populations and communities. Motivations for moving are, in the case of potential migrants, primarily of an employment nature.⁴ Once the family has moved away from a community where the breadwinner feels "boxed in" on a marginal job or, more often, where he has no employment at all, migrancy quickly becomes a way of life. At first the pattern of moving is purposive, but the fruitless search for disappearing employment soon becomes an existence in "limbo" or an entry into the urban ghetto.

Mechanization, restructuring of farm organization, and other problems are expected to continue.⁵ Despite the expected shrinking of opportunity availability within the migrant employment streams, however, the rural population source will continue to feed the present migrant stream. This conclusion is based on specific projections for 1970 derived from the Manpower Report.⁶

Migratory farm workers are discussed in the rural poverty report in relation to their housing needs also.⁷ It is particularly noted that this population is often not welcome to take up residence where they work for a brief period or where they come seasonally. They are tolerated only as long as their labor is required to harvest crops. "Established residents and service organizations have little contact with them." Migrant workers are encouraged to stay on the move, and yet, no centralized migrant labor information service exists to point out geographical areas where such labor is actually required.⁸ Travel from one location to another is necessarily based on informal, usually unverified, information of actual employment market openings.

The plight of migratory farm workers has been reported publicly, but no careful gathering of information on the patterns of migration has been maintained. Epstein, in 1963, discussed the problem and referred to a population of approximately 500,000 people, including approximately 350,000 to 400,000 workers. At that time he indicated that about 250,000 children traveled with their families, and that about one third of these children worked alongside of their parents in the fields.⁹

At the time, Epstein reported that there were three major migrant streams. The largest, containing about 250,000 workers, was made up of Mexican Americans coming from South Texas. Of these, 100,000 workers usually went to the Western States and to the Pacific Coast States, while others went to the Midwest and to other

points. Another stream of about 100,000 workers, mainly southeastern Negroes, some Puerto Ricans, and some east Texans, moved from Florida to North Carolina to New York and New Jersey and then back to Florida.

Siegel in 1966 also dealt tangentially with the problem of migrant labor.¹⁰ He described four main streams: (1) one stream along the Eastern Seaboard, composed principally of southern Negroes based chiefly in Florida and southern Georgia with small contingents of Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Cuban refugees; (2) one stream from South Texas of Mexican American migrants who travel as extended families; (3) a small stream of displaced "Anglo" tenant farmers from Texas and Indians from the South Central States who move northward into the North Central Mountain and Great Lakes States during summers and then return to Texas for cotton harvesting; and (4) a western stream made up chiefly of Mexican Americans beginning in Southern California and joined by significant numbers of Anglos and some Negroes and Indians "who trek through the valleys of California and up into the Pacific Northwest." Siegel estimated that there were probably a million migrant Americans in these streams and believed that 500,000 of these were children, many of whom were also workers. Siegel drew his data not only from Children's Bureau sources but also from U.S. Public Health Service files and from data secured from colleagues who deal with migrant child health problems. No specific figures for each of the streams were listed by Siegel.

Current data on the streams has been secured from Mr. James Nix.¹¹ His reports indicate a continuance of the Texas stream at about 90,000 persons: some going to the Far West, (California, Oregon, Washington, etc.), many via the Rocky Mountain States for sugar beet crops; and others going to the Central States. He verifies the continued streams from Florida north and from Southern California northward. (Each of these streams will be discussed

in detail later in this report). Mr. Nix estimates a total of 350,000 to 400,000 of reported migrants currently. In view of other information, this estimate, which is based on official reports to Washington by State Employment Services, appears more conservative than the reality situation in the field.

The Great Lakes stream has, of course, been almost entirely eliminated. The fields of grain are now annually harvested by "trains" of combines which start in Texas and Oklahoma and head for the Plains States. According to Mr. Nix, the migrant population may be reportedly declining, but if so, it is at a rate lower than the total agricultural work force.

THE ANNUAL TEXAS OUT-MIGRATION STREAM

According to the Farm Placement Office of the Texas Employment Commission, migrant workers who out-migrated from Texas in 1967 were officially listed at 86,500.¹² Unofficial estimates, which include the "free wheelers", were as follows:

1964	129,000	people
1965	167,000	"
1966	162,000	"
1967	158,000	"

The official report¹³ indicates that the 86,500 workers are part of a moving population of 115,000 people, going off to 38 different states. The report indicates that 1967 problems were aggravated by Hurricane Beulah, which destroyed crops usually harvested by non-migrants who, in turn, may have sought work elsewhere.

The interstate stream from Texas to the various states is described in detail in the Texas Migrant Labor 1966 Migration Report.¹⁴ This report indicates approximate concurrence with the unofficial estimates

listed above. It is obvious that any decline in either the official or unofficial figures can well be due to lack of reporting by non-conforming migrant crews, despite the shrinking of employment harvest opportunities outside of Texas.

THE FLORIDA MIGRANT STREAM

Current reports indicate that the Florida stream of migrants continues at a steady pace.¹⁵ In 1967, 40,000 migrant workers traveled north, according to the official reports. The Florida group, joined by two to four thousand persons from Georgia, worked its way up the Middle Atlantic States to New York and New Jersey. The estimate by reporters is that this current will continue at the same pace and strength in 1968. The 1966 figures were also approximately about 40,000. In the earlier 1960 years, there were between 50,000 to 60,000 persons "on the move" but this had lessened by 1965 because of farm mechanization. Since regulations have been tightened to some extent for crew chiefs, it is not possible to determine without further study whether or not the families are still listing their travels as crews.

THE CALIFORNIA AND WEST COAST MIGRANT STREAM

Reports indicate that this stream is continuing at a rate of 30,000 to 35,000 persons, going from Southern to Northern California and further north in some cases.¹⁶ Since tomato harvesting has become mechanized, this figure has remained constant at between 30,000 to 35,000 and is expected to continue. The earlier population of 50,000 to 75,000 who used to work in the fields has declined, mainly as a result of this mechanization. This will probably be in-

creased with the introduction of a new grape picking machine which is currently being brought into the California vineries. The problems of the migrant workers who are either no longer "migrating" or who have "settled into the poverty of Southern California without adequate employment and housing" have been described in the 1967 report on the War on Poverty.¹⁷

THE TEXAS INTRASTATE MIGRANT STREAM

It is difficult in many instances to distinguish between interstate, intrastate, and seasonal workers. The Good Neighbor Commission report¹⁸ indicates that most out-migrants also work in Texas before, after, and during travels. The Farm Labor Statistics Office¹⁹ states that some 25,000 to 30,000 intrastate migrants have been identified in their reports, and these figures have been confirmed by the Texas Employment Commission.²⁰ Here too, the potential inaccuracy of figures is obvious due to lack of official reporting of crews in cars who go out from county to county to seek work. The estimates of persons seeking (and not necessarily finding) work in Texas are probably incongruous with the realities of the population. The earlier figures of the 1960 years of 50,000 are probably valid. With the introduction of the mechanical cotton picker, the number of persons traveling in search of other employment has probably lessened, but the high birth rate and desire for other employment must also be considered.

THE SOUTH EASTERN STATES STREAM

In late fall each year, some 15,000 migrant workers start from Georgia, Ala-

bama, Mississippi, and Louisiana for Florida for the citrus and winter vegetable harvest.²¹ This has been a steady annual trek because the citrus crops have not yet been mechanized. Mechanization is bound to come in the near future, and thus another 15,000 migrants will be added to those seeking employment. In addition, the existence of a continuing harvest opportunity will obviously draw other migrants to the Florida fields as their own crops become eliminated from the list of work stops.

OTHER STREAMS

Other streams exist with limited numbers of workers, and small "rivulets" are noticeable about the country. One example is the annual movement of some 2,000 workers from Virginia into eastern Maryland.²² Other stream movements can be traced through the Labor Department study of current annual labor demand areas by months and crops.

INDICATIONS

Official reports and statistical estimates are often less than reliable because poverty groups and marginal employees, particularly, are unwilling to "check in" with official employment agencies. Another factor which adds to unreliability in the agricultural employment field is the reluctance of "marginal" crew chiefs and employers to make reports which may place extra restrictions upon them.

Because of this question of reliability of estimates, and the questions relating to the continued flow of the migrant stream, a number of travel indications were checked out. Three checks on migrant statistics

INFORMATION ABOUT
SIKESTON, MISSOURI
MIGRATORY REST CAMP

were made at rest camps where workers and their families stopped enroute. A fourth was the examination of migrant children registration in New Mexico, an "enroute" state for many Texas migrants.

In 1967, 12,265 people passed through this rest camp. It is estimated that in 1968, approximately 13,000 migrant workers will pass through the camp.

Presented below is the total number of people who passed through the camp from 1960-1967.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number Passing Through Sikeston, Mo. Rest Camp²³</u>
1961	12,795
1962	13,176
1963	12,748
1964	13,490
1965	12,952
1966	12,829
1967	12,265
1968	13,000 (estimate)

A breakdown of the number of migratory workers in 1967 shows origin of last work area and destination of new work area as follows:²⁴

Origin	Number	Destination	Number
Ala.	8	Ark.	19
Ark.	35	Del.	27
Fla.	25	Ill.	393
Ill.	300	Ind.	640
Ind.	1374	Mich.	3646
Kyn.	3	Minn.	12
St. Louis	2	Mo.	20
Mich.	2387	Ohio	957
Mass.	15	Okla.	39
Mo.	5	Tenn.	7
Ohio	1989	Texas	6109
Tenn.	36	Wis.	406
Texas	5955		
Wis.	141		

The number of actual workers who passed through the camp in 1967 was 5,958.²⁵ Thus, with 12,265 persons traveling through the camp, it may be estimated that 49 percent of the travelers are workers and a bit over 50 percent are either non-working wives, non-working children, or non-working aged. Because of the high birth rate reported among migrants, it appears that very young children and sick and aged are either left behind or are involved in work when it is available.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE
HOPE, ARKANSAS
FARM LABOR CENTER

"The Migrant Farm Labor Center at Hope, Arkansas²⁶ was opened in 1959 to furnish

up-to-date farm labor information to migrant farm workers enroute to agricultural work in the Midwest. Traveling workers were able to stop at the center to obtain information on crop and labor conditions all over the Central United States."

"The national office of the Farm Labor Service became increasingly aware of the limitations of the Hope Farm Labor Station, and in 1964 suggested expansion of the facility to an overnight rest stop."

"No one knew how many farm workers were in the migratory pattern from Texas to the Midwest; an estimate goes as high as 100,000. It is known that a large number of workers passed by without stopping when the station was filled to capacity." However, data obtained from the Hope Information Center Overnight Station showed the following: In 1965, 17,905 people passed through the station; in 1967, 41,676 people passed through the station. The estimate for 1968 is for 50,000 people to pass through the migrant farm laborer center.²⁷

Despite the existence of the facilities, the Mexican American poverty culture background usually makes families avoid an "official" location if there is any fear of the immigration or other legal status of any one member of the group. Thus, the numbers given above are probably far less than the actual number of persons passing by in migrant employment.

INFORMATION ABOUT
MAUMEE, OHIO
MIGRATORY RECEPTION
CENTER

In Maumee, Ohio, a new migratory reception center has been established because of observed need. In 1967, 2,339 workers passed through. The figure is expected to remain constant since the climate necessary to raise the tomato crop picked by these workers does not allow for mechanization

at this time.²⁸ Therefore, the number of migratory workers needed to harvest the crop should remain stable for some time. The presence of a constant seasonal source of employment for migratory workers, no matter how limited, can become a diversionary attraction for other unoccupied migratory workers seeking employment. This camp may even be expected to become overwhelmed in time with workers who do not usually seek out this crop.

NON-RESIDENT MIGRANT CHILDREN IN NEW MEXICO

Documents examined^{29,30} indicate that in the fiscal year 1965-1966, a total of 3,184 school age children of migrant workers from outside of New Mexico stopped off in various school districts in New Mexico and received schooling in summer, fall, and spring. In the fiscal year of 1966-1967, however, a total of 10,188 children were reported, which includes pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children. The school age children alone totaled 8,153. The school age children in the elementary grades totaled 5,435.

This condition would indicate one or more of a number of possibilities in view of the high unemployment rate in rural New Mexico. These are:

- 1) That some children too young to work are left with friends and relatives in New Mexico by out-migrants and picked up again on enroute return. (This is in part born out by state of origin data in the report).
- 2) That the schools of New Mexico have changed in terms of quality and quantity of service between the two years in such a manner that location of the children in these schools has been preferred.

(This has been checked out and found to be not true).

- 3) That migrants in the stream who find themselves without a crop to pick will tend to seek out a new location temporarily where crops are rumored to be available. (This may have been the case).

In any event each of the four indications at check points shows that migrants are continuing to move, and that there is no dilution of the stream. It is quite possible that, even after hope of work is given up, the crew tends to "ride it out" to the next rumored crop, wherever it may be, only to find no work. In a number of instances, reports by Vista workers accompanying the crews support this view of current patterns of movement. Thus, the plight of the migrant, as was reported in the "Migrant Diary",³¹ is even more dire than was previously envisioned. Even worse is the plight of the crew which finally "breaks up" en-route because there is no hope for work and which loses the group strength that has, in the past, upheld the migrants despite extreme difficulties.

THE RURAL TO URBAN MOVEMENT

The mechanization of farming and the restructuring of the farm industry has obviously caused a move of rural population to the cities. While this move has occurred steadily over past decades, current information on the process is related specifically to the migrant problem. It is important that this matter be examined in depth.

The report of the President's National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty states that:

Rural low income areas have lost population for a number of years, mainly through the exodus of rural farm people. From 1790 to the present, the nation's population has grown from about 4 million to nearly 200 million persons. In the process, it has switched from about 95 percent to 30 percent rural. As late as 1910 a third of the entire population was on farms, but this figure has dropped to only 6 percent. The more than 6,000 cities contained 125 million persons in 1960, or 70 percent of the total population.

The strictly rural areas, and areas with the lowest incomes, have the heaviest out-migration. Consider, for example, the counties classed as all rural -- lacking a city (or place) of 2,500 or more population. By 1960, aside from the natural increase (births minus deaths) these counties had lost almost two million people, or 15 percent of their 1950 populations through migration. In contrast, the mainly urban counties (with 70 percent or more of their population in urban centers) gained more than 5 million, or about 6 percent through migration.³²

The President's Manpower Report confirms that the net out-migration from farm and rural areas has been higher since 1960 than it was during the 1950's.³³ For the period of 1960-1966, the annual net loss was 5.9 percent. Those leaving the rural areas include, for the most part, the southern Negroes, the uneducated, the young, and the landless. Projections are that farm employment will decrease in all regions continuingly through 1980, and only farm workers with high skills will be required.

In order that current developments might be checked, conversations were held

with a demographer,³⁴ students of migrant sociology,³⁵ and a vocational trend scholar who made further inquiries for this study.³⁶ In every instance, the continued move of rural to urban population was verified except in the case of those migrant groups who either feared the inner city as a way of life or had not yet given up hope of finding a new crop.

A careful examination of the current population reports for the years 1960-1966 for each county in Texas was also conducted.³⁷ It was found that the non-rural urban-related counties had a gain of 2.3 percent per year in population. Thus, in Texas, which represents one fourth to one third of the entire migrant originating population, the non-rural areas had a net gain in population each year which was 33 times that of the rural areas. The gain in the rural areas was negligible; and in relation to the growth of the cities of Texas, it actually might be considered a loss in terms of viability of community life.

INFORMAL OBSERVATIONS

Informal conversations were held with Dr. Joseph Cardenas, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory; Brother Victor Naegle, Sociology Department, Saint Mary's University; Mr. Chris Alderate, Office of the Democratic National Committee; Judge Robert Sanches of McAllen, Commissioner on Migratory Labor, American G.I. Forum; Father Henry J. Casso of the San Antonio Diocese; and Robert Vela, Executive Secretary of the Social Action Department of the San Antonio Diocese. Each of the above persons is well acquainted with the Rio Grande Valley or East Texas and has visited in these areas recently. Their reports indicate that the migrant labor population is no

less a problem in terms of need or number than in the past. The move still continues. The children leave with the family, but they may be dropped off temporarily with friends or relatives if there is no food or work, especially if the group passes through New Mexico where there may be friends or relatives. The picture presented is a very grim one, with thousands of families going from one "dead" location to another, always hoping that they can get to the new crop before the machine. As Father Casso states it, "They move up and back, and are becoming an army of despair. They follow the traditional routes looking for crops to pick -- that is all they know, and when they don't find them, they move on to some other rumored crop, and bit by bit, they are losing hope."

CONCLUSIONS

The migrant stream starts out from Southern California, from Texas, and from Florida despite its invisibility to most city dwellers. It flows as it did in the past, but not with even the bit of achievement of past years when migrants could come home with some savings. Now they are fortunate if they do not come home heavily in debt or if they come home at all. Cars break down, busses of crew chiefs don't "make it," and trucks have payments missed and are sometimes repossessed. The machine and the big farm, which were once the threats, are now joined by other competitive migrants who previously had their own fields to seek out. In addition, the reports of the Labor Department state that for 1968 "Farmers should not have much trouble recruiting from among their usual sources of supple young workers,

non-whites, and members of farm families who have given up farming. The teenage labor force is expected to be just as large as it has been in recent years."³⁸ "Today's farm worker cannot survive the industrial revolution in agriculture unless he broadens his capacities and masters new skills. For employment... he will need skill, flexibility, and the ability to adapt himself...."³⁹ The migrant is apparently still in the stream which leads nowhere. Someone will have to help him adapt to the new scene; otherwise, he and his family will become an added pressure upon America's "inner cities."

FOOTNOTES

¹The People Left Behind, President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. x.

²Manpower Report of the President and Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization and Training, U.S. Dept. of Labor (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 103.

³Ibid., p. 106.

⁴Ibid., p. 103.

⁵Ibid., p. 119.

⁶Ibid., pp. 104-106.

⁷People Left Behind (above, note 1), p. 98.

⁸Ibid., p. 27.

⁹Leonore Epstein, "Migratory Farm Workers," Social Security Bulletin, XXVI, 5 (May 1963), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰Earl Siegel, "Migrant Families: Health Problems of Children," Clinical Pediatrics (Oct. 1966), pp. 635-640.

¹¹Information in a telephone conversation between the author and James Nix of the Bureau of Farm Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Washington, D.C., March 6, 1968.

¹²Texas Farm Labor: Annual Report - 1967, Texas Employment Commission (Austin, 1968).

¹³Ibid.

14 Texas Migrant Labor: The 1966 Migration, The Good Neighbor Commission (Austin, 1967), p. 3.

15 Texas Employment Commission (above, note 12).

16 Information in a telephone conversation between the author and James Nix on March 3, 1968.

17 Ralph Gunderson, Examination of the War on Poverty in Senate Committee Hearings, Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, II (Washington, 1967), pp. 3688-3691.

18 Good Neighbor Commission (above, note 14).

19 Nix (above, note 16).

20 Texas Employment Commission (above, note 12).

21 Nix (above, note 16).

22 Ibid.

23 Information in a telephone conversation between the author and Gene Grant, Camp Director at Sikeston, Mo. Rest Camp, March 3, 1968.

24 Ibid.

25 Information in a telephone conversation between the author and Ed Scheopner, Bureau of Farm Labor, Dept. of Labor, March 7, 1968.

26 Lloyd E. Curtis, "Hope -- Migrant Rest Stop," Employment Service Review, IV, 1 & 2, pp. 31-32.

27 Information in a telephone conversation between the author and Ed Scheopner, March 3, 1968.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Application -- Description of Program Organization and Administration, FY 1968, Title 1, ESEA Migrant Program, PL 89-750. Submitted by Leonard J. DeLago, Supt. of Public Instruction, New Mexico State Dept. of Education, August 18, 1967.

³⁰State Annual Evaluation Report for FY 1967 for Public Law 89-10 as Amended by Public Law 89-750. Projects for Migrant Children of Migrant Agricultural Workers, New Mexico, Title 1, ESEA, Migrant Program. Submitted by Mildred Fitzpatrick, New Mexico State Dept. of Education.

³¹Toney Gomes, "Migrant Diary," VISTA Volunteer, IV, 2 (February, 1968), pp. 3-13.

³²People Left Behind (above, note 1), p. 6.

³³Manpower Report (above, note 2), pp. 103-106.

³⁴Information in a telephone conversation between the author and Dr. Fabio DaSilva of Notre Dame University, February 5, 1968.

³⁵Information in a telephone conversation between the author and Brother Victor Naegle of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, February 5, 1968.

³⁶Information in a report and a telephone conversation between the author and Irving R. Brown of New Mexico State University, February 5 and 6, 1968.

³⁷Data based on Raw Data in "Population Estimates for Texas Counties, April 1966," Texas Business Review, XLI, 1 (January 1967).

³⁸Robert G. Ainsworth, "The Outlook for Farm Labor in 1968," Farm Labor Developments (February 1968), p. 15.

³⁹Cora S. Cronemeyer, "The Changing Structure of Agriculture," Farm Labor Developments (February 1968), p. 39.