The Commonwealth—Part Two

Volume XXX
Number 5

CALIFORNIA FARM LABOR PROBLEMS

The transformation of California into a vastly productive state is an economic romance which has involved prosaic problems. That of providing an adequate supply of farm labor has not been the least.

The report of the Agriculture Section of the Commonwealth Club of California, presented at the Club's dinner meeting of December 12, 1935, will, it is hoped, be one more step towards the solution of this ever-present problem of how to adjust, on the one hand, the needs of the farmer to the supply of workers at a wage which will permit him a profit, and, on the other hand, the need of the worker for a job, at a stipend which will provide him with the necessities and some of the comforts of life, to the supply of jobs.

This present Transaction of the Club is a record of the above meeting, condensed as to words but not as to ideas, so as to minimize both printing costs and the time demanded of the busy reader.

Other Transactions in this field, obtainable at 25 cents a copy, are:

- State Aid to Agriculture (1911)
- Rural Credits (1918)
- State Commission Markets (1915)
- Farmers' Problems (1927)
- Land Settlement (1917)
- State Water Plan (1931)
- Farmers, Gas, and Income Taxes (1932)
- Central Valley Project (1933)
Section on Agriculture

Study Record in Preparing This Report

February 28th Speaker: Harry Drobish, Director, Rural Rehabilitation Division, S.E.R.A. Subject: "Rural Rehabilitation or Emergency Relief?"

March 28th Speaker: F. J. Falomares, Manager, Agricultural Labor Board, San Joaquin Valley. Subject: "Agricultural Unemployment."

April 9th Speaker: Edwin W. Stillwell, Manager, California Prune Control Board. Subject: "The Effect of Controlled Marketing Upon Unemployment."

April 23rd Speaker: Prof. Frank Adams, Professor of Irrigation, University of California. Subject: "Factors Affecting the Employment Capacity of Agriculture."

May 7th Subject: "Round Table Discussion."

May 21st Speaker: J. Ruprecht, Mason, Investments. Subject: "Farm Employment and the 'Mason Plan' for Withdrawing Marginal Lands."

June 11th Speaker: John E. Pickett, President and Editor, Pacific Press. Subject: "How are California Lands Being Used?"

June 25th Speaker: L. A. Barrett, Assistant Director, California Fish and Game, University of California. Subject: "How are California Lands Being Used?"

July 19th Speaker: L. S. Wetmore, Agriculturist. Subject: "Three Men and a Mule."

July 23rd Subject: "Topic for Report to the Club."

August 6th Subject: "Labor Conditions in California Agriculture."


August 27th Speaker: Prof. H. E. Erdman, Professor of Agricultural Economics in the Experiment Station, and Agricultural Economics on the Gianini Foundation, University of California. Subject: "Labor's Interest in Efficient Marketing."


October 1st Speaker: H. E. Drobish, In Charge State Rural Rehabilitation. Subject: "California Agricultural Labor—With Details Recommendations As to Permanent Policies."

October 16th Speaker: Edwin James Cooley, State Director of Transient Service. Subject: "The Federal Transient Service and Agricultural Workers."

November 5th Speaker: Dr. Paul S. Taylor, Regional Labor Adviser, Reorganization Administration. Subject: "California Agricultural Labor—With Recommendations as to a State Policy."

November 26th Subject: "Migratory Agricultural Labor in California."

November 29th Subject: "Migratory Agricultural Labor in California."

December 3rd Subject: "Migratory Agricultural Labor in California."

December 10th Subject: "Migratory Agricultural Labor in California." (Program for Dinner Meeting of December 12th, Results of Postcard Vote, and Presentation of Section Report)

CALIFORNIA FARM LABOR PROBLEMS

Section Report on Migratory Farm Labor

By E. W. Wilson

Chairman, Section on Agriculture

President Edgar E. Robinson: The attendance at this meeting tonight is an indication that the members of the Commonwealth Club are still interested in getting at the facts in controversial questions. One of the first duties that I had, now nearly a year ago, was to find a chairman to lead this Section in the important study that was to be made. It was a matter of great satisfaction to me when I succeeded in obtaining the promise of Mr. Wilson to do this. It is a great pleasure to open this meeting tonight by calling on Mr. Wilson to present the report of the Section.

The Agriculture Section has been requested to present to you this evening—"Migratory Farm Labor in Northern California." In this presentation, it is our aim to have all interests represented and that when the evening is over, we may at least have a fair understanding of:

(a) What migratory farm labor is,
(b) What public service it renders,
(c) Why we have migratory labor, and
(d) What are the problems this labor creates.

Three kinds of farm labor in California

There are three kinds of farm labor in California. From these sources farmers must obtain workers for their peak labor periods:

1. People who live in the vicinity where the labor is required.
2. People who follow the harvesting of a particular crop, such as cotton, hops, corn and sugar beets.
3. People who migrate from crop to crop during the harvesting period, beginning with Imperial Valley truck crops during January and February, and finishing in the North when driven from the fields by the frosts.

Migratory labor is an unknown term in many States and is not understood by our citizens who are not affiliated with agriculture.

Members of the Section Who Attended One or More Meetings During the Section's Study

E. W. Wilson, W. E. Packard
Chairman, Chairman
Frank T. Swett, Kaspar Pischel
Chairman Emeritus, C. C. Powell
Frank K. Dobbins, Howard C. Rowley
Secretary, W. W. Robbins
Thomas Stead, Milton D. Sapio
Maurice Summer, Edwin W. Stillwell
F. F. Thomas, Jr., C. F. Thomas, Jr.
Henry C. Todd, R. L. Underhill
R. L. Underhill, Thomas Vahey
R. W. Dhonage, Stuart H. Ward
Raymond Halslip, Louis S. Wetmore
F. E. Harrison, L. A. Williamson
John B. Haver, W. R. Wilson
C. A. Hawkins, W. F. Wing
Abner Hitchcock, W. P. Wollner
Glen E. Hoover, Robert B. Donohue
William L. Hudson, Raymond E. Morgan
C. T. Keffer, Everette C. McKegge
C. E. Lastreto, Ray Nash
J. R. Lawler, Herbert Ormsby
A. E. Lockhart, James Morgan
J. B. Mason, Wm. S. Wollner
George H. McCalig, Robert B. Donohue
James Morgan, Wm. S. Wollner
Osgood Murdock, W. F. Wing
Evadette C. McKeage
Ray Nash
Herbert Ormsby
Charles A. Warden
To understand this type of our farm population, it is necessary to examine its history for the past fifty years, during which time the change took place from extensive grain fields to crops requiring higher cultivation, such as truck gardening, fruits, vine crops, cotton, etc.

To illustrate the gradual development of this farm labor situation, let me say that in 1879 only four percent or one twenty-fifth of California's paid labor was employed in harvesting our intensive crops. Fifty years later, in 1929, it required seventy-nine percent or about four-fifths of the total paid farm labor of the State to harvest the crops. Our soil production, during that fifty years, has changed from broad acre production, with a low yield in dollars, to intensively cultivated higher priced products.

Half of large farms in U. S. located in California

Other facts that contribute to the growth of migratory labor are:

In California there is located one-half of the large scale farms in the entire country. The term large scale means farms of $30,000 value or over. California has thirty percent of the large scale cotton farms, forty-one percent of the large scale dairies, forty-four percent of the large scale general farms, thirty-three percent of the large scale poultry farms, and sixty percent each of the large scale truck and fruit farms.

From another angle the present labor situation becomes apparent.

In 1930, reports show that in the United States, the wage earning farm population was twenty-six percent. In California our total farm labor was fifty-seven percent or more than twice that found in other States.

Harvesting needs swell employment rolls

The 1935 experience of a few of our Section members will enable you to see more clearly our labor needs for harvesting. Mr. B. Clemens Horst's company, with nine hundred acres of hops, used during the year something over one hundred men, while in the harvesting season, lasting three to four weeks, they required two thousand six hundred hop pickers. Foster Bros., with one hundred twenty acres of hops, employed twelve men throughout the season, while four hundred fifty to five hundred men were required to pick their hops.

Picking a fifty acre hop crop will require over two hundred people for twenty-five days, while in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas or Nebraska, one man will prepare the soil, plant, cultivate and harvest a corn crop of forty to fifty acres.

Our Section member, Mr. Charles Miller of the California Packing Corporation, says they used this year on their two thousand acre peach orchard in Merced County, about thirty regular employees, with two hundred to two hundred fifty men during the pruning period, seven hundred for thinning, and one thousand men for harvesting. In their two hundred-acre peach orchard at Wheatland, they have five or six regular employees, with two hundred transient men for harvesting. Our Section member, Mr. Louis S. Wetmore, reports that on two hundred acres of asparagus, they work about five or six men regularly, with thirty-three during harvesting; that for a peach orchard of five hundred acres they have twenty regular employees, with one hundred eighty-five transients along with one hundred high school students working in their drying yards.

Irrigation responsible for intensive farming

Irrigation in California has been largely responsible for converting our vast grain fields into smaller farms with higher yielding crops that require during harvest a large supply of labor. When this change, from field crops to orchards, vineyards, etc. began, George W. McNear and Carry Frelander were the largest shippers in the world to London of barley and wheat raised in California.

This change in our crop production has continued until we now harvest each year over one hundred different crops that are marketed in carload lots. Harvesting these crops has created a peak labor period that is an economic necessity, and, whether we like migratory labor or not, it is here to stay and we must deal with it as an agricultural problem.

Thousands of migrants driven to state

Dust storms, drought and the long depression are driving to California a great number of people; some seven thousand arrived last month. Good roads, with our warm climate which seems to have been well advertised in the middle west and elsewhere, has aided us in getting more than our due proportion of these unfortunate people.

They are of all nationalities and bring with them varying opinions about how a government should be run, the amount of help that the State should extend them, and what they should do in return for that state aid. There are, however, many good people in this
group that will in time become responsible citizens, but few of them have any worldly possessions.

There are understood to be in our State from one hundred fifty to two hundred thousand migratory laborers, with something like thirty-five thousand children of various ages accompanying them. The situation presents to the State complications involving every aspect of:

(a) Social relations,
(b) Industrial complications, and
(c) Economic problems.

Clear understanding by all needed for solution

To solve problems of this type, where human nature is so greatly involved, a clear understanding of all interested parties must first be obtained. From this understanding, it may be possible, through the cooperation of all interests, to eliminate some of the minor troubles and minimize many others.

To aid in bringing out all the facts, the Section’s program will present to you tonight the following:
1. The large farmer’s viewpoint.
2. The small farmer’s viewpoint.
3. The migratory laborer’s viewpoint.
4. The migratory labor organizer’s viewpoint.
5. What the public’s viewpoint is.

Section presents recommendations based on study

We are neither informed nor do we assume responsibility for the statements or conclusions of the program speakers. Our aim and desire is to have a full, free and frank statement from each speaker so that all the known facts bearing on the problem may be given and made a part of the permanent records of the Commonwealth Club.

The Section, after many meetings, reached a further definite conclusion upon a number of the problems involved in migratory labor. Based on these conclusions a questionnaire was sent to the entire membership of the Section, and the replies that were received and studied reflect a uniform opinion.

The Section’s Recommendations

These replies, which constitute the official recommendations of the Section, are as follows:

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<tr>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Migratory labor is essential to California’s agriculture</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2. Raising standards for migratory labor living conditions will benefit California agriculture</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3. Federal labor camp experiments at Marysville and Weed Patch must be continued and extended</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>If you answer “Yes” to the above, should it be done by</td>
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<td>(a) The Federal Government</td>
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<td>(b) The State</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>(c) Sub-divisions of the State</td>
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<td>4. Counties and cities in agricultural centers should establish public labor camps, for the purpose of gradually eliminating squatters’ camps</td>
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<td>5. All migratory laborers at public labor camps should be registered</td>
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<td>6. Such registration should be coordinated with public employment agencies</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>7. Efforts should be made to eliminate as recipients of the benefits of the above camps all residents who indulge in unlawful propaganda</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>8. The present Immigration and Housing laws should be (check one only)</td>
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<td>(a) Enforced</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>(b) Made less stringent</td>
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<td>(c) Repealed</td>
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<td>9. Relief officials and employers should cooperate in distributing agricultural employment to persons on relief</td>
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<td>10. Resettlement organizations should be encouraged in aiding qualified migratory laborers to establish themselves on suitable plots of ground where they can in part time raise some of their own food</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Violence of any sort, by employers or employees, is to be deprecated, and where violence occurs, the duly constituted authorities should be called upon to impartially enforce the law</td>
<td>35</td>
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The Point of View
of the Large Farmer

By Roy M. Pike
General Manager, El Solyo Ranch, Vernalis

PRESIDENT ROBINSON: To present the view of the farmer of large acreage, Mr. Roy M. Pike. It is a pleasure to greet you in this forum.

I DO manage a large diversified farm property but it does not represent “corporation farming”; that term implies varied holdings, absentee ownership, control from a distant point, and the representing of many stock holders.

The El Solyo Ranch which I operate in Stanislaus County is a single body of 4,500 acres. I have lived there for 15 years. I started the project, and when my money ran out in 1924, it was taken over by Mr. A. C. Balch of Los Angeles. His great resources and his sound business direction have made the ranch the fine practical layout it is today.

From 250 to 700 workers employed on ranch

We employ at all times never less than 250 people and for several months of the year, up to 700. About 300 people live on the ranch; there are some forty families and the balance are of single men.

We produce, pack, ship and sell, operating diversified crops of fruits, grapes, vegetables, dairy and turkeys. We harvest milk every day and turkeys in November and December of each year.

Our main harvests of fruits, vegetables, grains, etc. start in May with cannery peas and onions; apricots and plums in June; peaches for canning, shipping and drying in July and August; grapes for raisins and wine, and dried beans, in September and October; and carloads of washed celery, lettuce, broccoli and carrots in November, December and January. Concurrently is carried on the production of alfalfa hay, silage corn and various grains for mixed feeds in the dairy and turkey departments.

Farm migratory labor
by no means unskilled

We operate a packing house for dried fruits, another for fresh fruits and vegetables. We also operate a mess house feeding never less than 150 per day and up to 400; also shops, a truck department, store, etc.

Mr. Balch keeps close daily check—business and human—of all matters pertaining to ranch operations, and I live on the property. In addition to the business reports necessary to this large operation, I have over ten years written a daily diary to Mr. Balch, which fairly well keeps him in touch with every human aspect of the operation. I merely mention this so that the implication of impersonal and distant corporation control may be refuted.

Ranch migratory labor is by no means unskilled labor, nor is it all of one sort. The conditions surrounding it vary greatly both as to crops and localities.

In practice it is divided into two classes—packing house labor and field labor. The packing house groups are for the most part considered more skilled labor. They are frequently highly paid. Their housing problems are more easily solved because for the most part packing houses are located in towns along the railroads.

Three-fourths of migrant workers “excellent people”

Those of us who have had years of experience with field migratory workers find that they are generally divided in about the following groups:

Three-fourths of them are excellent people, whether white, Oriental or Mexican;

One-fourth of them are a wretched, intractable sort.

Perhaps it might be said that twenty-five percent of them are the peak of the skilled workers—fifty percent are of medium good capacity, and twenty-five percent are this poor and bad sort who apparently care neither to live nor to work in decent circumstances. An example of this, I think, will be verified by Mr. Drobish, who is to follow me tonight: The story concerns the much discussed Marysville laborer camp. I am told that when the excellent manager there determined that the people living in the camp should be called upon to do a certain amount of sanitary policing per week, perhaps a half hour to an hour a day for a man or a family, that many of the groups left the camp and moved into the jungles where they could not be annoyed with any rules of any sort.

Shortage in migratory labor in 1935

Dr. Paul Taylor reports, I believe, that the migratory actual workers from July, 1932, to June, 1933, were 77,000; that in the period 1933 to 1934 they totalled only 64,000; but that in the same
period July 1935 to June 1936 there is an increase to about
120,000.

This last figure is very puzzling to a practical operator. We do
not doubt that migratory labor has been greatly and sadly in-
creased by the transients moving in from the drought districts
of the Middle West during 1934 and 1935; but, oddly enough, 1936
has shown a shortage in available agricultural labor. All of us
have experienced it both in the fruit and vegetable harvest, so it
is hard to match this with Mr. Taylor’s 1935 figures.

Of course, the answer might be, and perhaps is, that many of the
relief situations have been so badly handled that people could or
had to remain on relief rather than go to work; if so, it is a matter
for governmental correction and something about which ranchers
can do little.

Three racial classes among
migrant workers

Again the migratory workers are divided into three racial classes
—white, Mexican, Filipino and/or other Orientals. It is just as
wrong to consider these three races exactly akin in handling the
migratory laborer problem as it is in considering the quality and
capacity groups first described as being exactly akin.

The complexity of the classes of these two groups is comparable
to the complexity of all agricultural business which very few city
people or industrialists understand.

I turned to agriculture in 1920 after a considerable experience in
operating industries and utilities.

I think the rule may be set down that the same amount of capital
and effort will return more profit when put into nearly any industry
than when put into agriculture. Agricultural operation cannot be
formalized on any daily, weekly, monthly basis as can industry and
utilities. I do not believe it will ever be the same way. It will ever be a mode of living rather than a mode of large profit making. Timeliness is of such importance—an operation neglected in a particular twelve hours may ruin an entire year’s crop—that it means that an owner with proper knowledge of crop problems had best live on the property.

“Mode of life” part of
farm owner’s compensation

I believe that agricultural land will always be a poor investment
unless an owner does live on it and has operating ability.

And I think it a poor investment for even such a person living
in the land unless that person is content to take the “mode of life”
as part compensation rather than only the receiving of good profits;
also that that person must be willing to work harder and longer
hours to obtain comparable household conveniences and recreation
periods than is necessary for the city dweller or government sup-
ported social worker.

Agriculture will always be a “local” problem. A formula work-
ing on a particular crop of one county will likely not work in
another; the same may be said even of areas upon one large ranch.

Even common farm labor more
resourceful than industrial labor

When I had to do with industry I could sit in a central office and
keep fairly well in touch with the business by reviewing pieces of
paper reporting activities of production and merchandising divi-
sions. Men working in these could be checked because they were
generally doing the same thing week in and week out.

But in agriculture it is scarcely ever possible to operate a man
or a crew doing one thing more than a week or two at a time. This
experience has proved to me that even common labor in agriculture
is more resourceful and skilled with a knowledge of more things to
do than is common labor in industry. I think, by and large, that
agricultural labor “thinks through” its problems better than indus-
trial labor, just as I believe that farm groups try to “think
through” problems better than do comparable groups in industry.

Group action and
planning necessary

The remark is frequently made, “You cannot get farmers to
agree on anything,” but the records do not support this criticism.

My experience with them in the last fifteen years is that they get
together for group action in better, more patient and more cooper-
average manner than do comparable groups in industry.

Farmers in California learned because of their difficulties in mar-
keting surpluses of their specialty crops of fruits, etc. in the 1920’s
that group action and group planning were necessary, long before
agriculture in general or industry throughout the United States
paid much attention to such planning.

In 1933 the country was startled by a Federal Administration
basing its policy upon the principle that “there could be no indus-
trial or urban prosperity without agricultural prosperity.” Thought-
ful economists had long known this. But those of us in industry
and finance apparently paid little attention previous to 1930, to long range economics in relation to our own businesses.

The pity is that during the last three years groups of idealists appointed to put this principle into practical operation have gone far afield in many impractical experimentations. Many of us are inclined to believe that the same thing is being done today in relation to the migratory labor problem in California.

There is no “constant” labor camp formula for state

Of course migratory labor is needed in California and more labor camps are needed, but there is no formula for the establishment of such which would work as a “constant” all over the State. Some individual farmers and some districts have well handled the problem. Some have not. The larger concerns have generally handled the problem best because large concerns must plan ahead, whereas many individuals do not have this forced upon them.

For twenty years or more the public utilities in carrying on great construction works which had to do with much migratory labor, generally provided excellent housing and living conditions. The lumber industry during this period was much slower to do its job well, though today I understand there can be little reasonable complaint; but that wasn’t the truth when I was in the lumber business twenty-seven years ago.

Canneries have been excellent example

The various canneries, little and big, throughout California have been an excellent example where good provisions for migratory labor have been maintained for years.

You all must have seen, passing through the agricultural districts, groups of small houses closely located to the big cannery establishments where seasonal workers to the number of hundreds at each plant have been reasonably and satisfactorily provided for.

Most ranch operators have accepted responsibility

The State Division of Housing and Immigration has been a fine factor in the development of plans for these camps and the regulation of them. This Division, I believe, started under Hiram Johnson’s governorship and grew out of some conditions where both large and small ranch operators previous to 1915 had neglected their responsibility to field workers, particularly in the hop fields.

All ranch operators today have not accepted the responsibility they should to the migratory worker, but a large majority have, and there is little unwillingness on the part of any agricultural community to accept this responsibility once leadership arises.

But means have been lacking. When the amazing spending programs of the Federal Government were initiated small wonder that for appeared to be a “means” to improve some agricultural labor conditions.

Fear expressed at governmental approach

But the methods of relief operations the last three years have not all been sound and many experiments carried on under the guise of relief have frightened many thoughtful yet generous people who have had training in long time planning, particularly in relation to labor.

And so, with the present day question in migratory camps in California—those of us who have had training in long time planning and have had real records in finding employment for people, which perhaps is one of the finest evidences of social service; those of us who have accepted the principle that despite advantages of rugged individualism there are now group actions necessary in both agriculture and industry where “the majorities must surrender some of their freedoms to coerce recalcitrant minorities”; those of us who have had these experiences are a bit frightened at the trend now apparent in the government approach to migratory camps.

Local control of farm labor camps essential

This approach has shown too much evidence of the neglect of past available experiences; too much evidence that these camps may be constructed and operated from central government control which has no sympathy or actual experience with the employers’ needs and responsibilities.

The solution to the migratory camp problem is merely that whenever they are established they be locally controlled and operated by the ranch operators in the districts for which they are established. Proper regulation of this control from the general public and employee angle can be given by the State Division of Housing and Immigration—a State Department with men in it well trained in the actualities of the problem . . . or by the county supervisors who may appoint local governing bodies for labor camp operations under the State Public Service District law passed in 1927.

In these days when Federal funds are available the use of them
for migratory camp construction is undoubtedly defensible, but it
must not carry with it the penalty of Federal Government bureaus
taking control of their operations. These Federal bureaus are not
too fast changing complexion and personnel to give confidence in any
consistent policy, and although many are manned by worthy men,
not all have had any practical experience in the agricultural business
being operated.

I have no quarrel with social workers in Federal bureaus who
have high ideals to abolish poverty and to make living easy for
every element in our population, but I have a quarrel with them
when I see them smugly insist on the principle that because one
has ideals one must necessarily also have the practical ability to
make them work.

We feel the prerequisite to the proper solution of the migratory
laborer camps is the acceptance of the principle that they be estab-
lished not according to any standard formula, but that they be
constructed in a manner best suited to each district which they are
to serve, and that they be operated in a manner which will best
serve the development of agriculture in such districts.

Let the money be provided when it can by outright Federal grant
or by loans to camp districts on reasonably long term at low interest,
but let them be run locally under the review and regulation of the
State Department or County Boards long skilled in such work.

We believe that the establishment and operation of these camps
should follow the well established American principle of local
autonomy.

I believe that the government without becoming a prying bureau-
cracy can act as a check, to secure initiative, life and a chance to
work. We must go back to first principles. We must make Ameri-
can individualism what it was intended to be: “equality of oppor-

tunity for all—the right of exploitation for none.”
dreds as compared with two or three for the immense agricultural areas in the central and southern States.

Most small farmers do not have adequate camp grounds provided with ordinary sanitary facilities. In some cases, transients, who travel nowadays with automobile house trailers, prefer to camp on the ranch with limited sanitary facilities or, when they are allowed, to make their camp in the owner's yard using the ordinary ranch facilities of water and sanitation. The majority, however, camp in local camp grounds and use their automobiles to go to and from work. The fact that most migratory laborers own automobiles, in my opinion, makes a central camp ground practical.

Why should camps be provided cost-free by Government?

It is undoubtedly true that properly equipped central camp grounds would increase the comforts and sanitary facilities of these laborers. I really see no reason, however, why they should be provided without cost by the Government or any of its subdivisions any more than the farmers' own facilities should be provided him without cost. In my opinion, such camps, if provided by the Government, could be self-supporting and the cost amortized over a period of time at a low rate of interest by nominal charges for the facilities. I think they should be controlled by local advisory boards and should be absolutely protected to serve the purpose for which they are constructed.

Workers threatened with violence if did not join strikers

The chief objections by small farmers to the establishment of such camps is the fear that they will become breeding grounds for discontent and strikes promoted by radical agitators. Two years ago, the district in which I farm had a very costly strike of agricultural workers which you have undoubtedly read about in the papers—the Lodi strike of 1933. This strike was promoted by radical agitators undoubtedly of communist origin and practically paralyzed the harvest for two weeks. The workers employed in the vineyards for the most part were satisfied with the work and wages and other conditions and it took nearly two weeks of goading by radical exhortations in nightly meetings in the public park in Lodi before the strike was accomplished. It was then done by truckloads of unemployed outsiders traveling around throughout the country and by threats and vituperations, driving the workers off the job.

At the time, I had a crew harvesting grapes who had worked for the year after year for some six years. They had a regular cycle which they followed: working in the Delta celery fields immediately after the grape harvest, followed by the asparagus harvest, then the apricot harvest, and then the peach harvest in Stanislaus County.

We had come to a mutual agreement on a piece-work basis for their remuneration. They were threatened with violence and possible death if they did not join the strikers and finally were afraid to come to work until the strike was over.

I visited one of the night meetings and was shocked to hear the denunciations against the Government and all constituted authority by the radical agitators who were promoting the strike. Their denunciations were based practically entirely on misstatements and false interpretations of existing conditions.

Serious violence, bloodshed prevented

The farmers of the district finally organized and elected Col. Walter E. Garrison of Lodi as their leader. There is no question in my mind whatever but that serious violence and bloodshed were prevented only through the level-headedness of Colonel Garrison's leadership and his ability through the sheer strength of his personality to prevent them. The strike was finally broken up by the arrest of the ringleaders on charges of trespass and disturbing the peace. The only bloodshed occurred after the strike was settled and the men had gone back to work. A disappointed Communist agitator killed the foreman of one of the local picking crews when he went to the agitator's cabin to find out why he had not returned to work. This man escaped and as far as I know has not been apprehended.

S.E.R.A. discourages migrants from following usual routine

During the last few years, under the S. E. R. A., migratory laborers have been discouraged from following their usual routine by the fact that S. E. R. A. part-time employment during winter was available only to residents. Under these conditions, outsiders from other States have been coming in and taking the harvest jobs, thus increasing the relief burden in the State. To again cite my own experience, my grape harvest this year was done by some young men from Kansas. They had never picked a grape before in their lives, but were young huskies and willing to work. Under the leadership of my very competent foreman, these men completed my harvest in a very satisfactory manner and earned wages of four
dollars per day or better, which, according to my best information, ranks very high as a wage for agricultural labor.

One of my neighbors had a similar experience, but less fortunate. He had some transients in his grape harvest from Oklahoma. Some of them earned as low as fifty cents per day and seemed satisfied with that amount, feeling that they could get State or Federal relief when the harvest was ended.

Card system used to record employee qualifications

The Federal State Employment Service in San Joaquin County, in cooperation with a committee of growers from the Farm Bureau and the Agricultural Committee of the State Chamber of Commerce, tried an experiment in registering all migratory labor this year. Many of the large employers agreed to recruit through the Service. In cases where workers of previous seasons came back they were asked to register with the Employment Service also. They were given cards to the employer to be mailed back to the Service as a report as to the qualifications of the laborer.

It is hoped by this system to make a record of capable and skilled employees as against those who are agitators or who do not want to work at any price. Of course, this could be done by a system of blacklisting, but such a system is distasteful to everybody, both laborers and employers. If this system works out satisfactorily, which I hope that it will, we will accomplish the same result by means of a merit list rather than a blacklist. A very satisfactory progress was made during the past season by this plan.

I feel that the sooner the fact is recognized that a fluid supply of this class of migratory labor is necessary to the success of California agriculture, the better off the farmers and the migratory laborers will be.

The Migratory Laborer's Viewpoint

By Jack Neill
Migratory Farm Worker

MIGRATORY workers start out in the spring. Some of them, like myself, start in the north and wind up in the Imperial Valley. Others start down there and wind up here. These jobs, with the exception of the peaches, which are the final Imperial Valley crop harvested in the fall, last about three weeks each. The peach season sometimes lasts a month.

"Fruit tramp" arrives in advance of harvest

The "fruit tramp," as he is often called, always figures on getting to the new job a little bit ahead of the time it starts. As a rule he has but very little left when he starts for this new job and he spends a great part of it on the way. Often things that neither the large nor the small farmer can control come up and that makes it just as bad for the farmer as it does for the worker, except that the farmer still has a roof over his head and probably he has some credit. If a frost comes along, the workers have to wait to see how badly the fruit is frosted. So much of the fruit may fall off that there is no thinning to do. If the migratory worker has any money he can leave. If he has no money he must either sell what he has or go to charity. I will tell you later what that means.

Employees do not draw pay-check in five years

The migratory worker as a rule has no "kick" at the small farmer because we realize that the small farmer is worse off than we are. Few small farmers own their own farms. In many cases if they had their fruit harvested for nothing they still would not make anything. The living conditions on the small farms are usually all that you could expect. There is good water and often wood, and most of the time a good tree to put our tents under, and sometimes a house, but very seldom, and when we do get a house it is a house in name only, for this reason: A great percentage of the farmers have not even a decent house for themselves. To build quarters for a farmer's ten to thirty workers suitable for human habitation, it would cost considerable money. We do not expect him to do so.

I can take you to large ranches where the quarters are good, and to others that are directly the opposite. The owner of one of the
largest ranches in the State raises cotton, peaches, apricots, grapes, and hay. He has dairies, his own school, his own cotton gin, his own warehouses, his own store, his gas station. At the end of the school term this man gives to the boy and the girl who have made the best record for neatness and industry, a complete outfit of clothing from head to toe, and he takes the entire school to the city to a moving picture show, and treats them to ice cream and so on, which tickles the kids half to death.

I heard this man make a speech. He said, "I took this ranch when it was practically a desert, I have improved it, I have built and built and built, and I am going to continue to build so I can make a home for my employees and they will never have to leave this ranch." The truth of the matter is he could have stopped improving five years ago. I can show you employee after employee that has not drawn a pay check in five years and I will tell you how it is worked.

Men get credit at store—
and get in hole

When you go to work on this place you get an identification card which is good for credit at the store. I think there are six camps. The houses are good and they are clean and they are painted, and wood is furnished, but there are no cupboards in the houses. Cupboards are not needed. You can get credit at the store—and you can get in the hole. When you get in the hole far enough so that the owner begins to feel a little bit ticklish, he puts you to work. You must understand that when you pay back one dollar, you have to make two, because while you are paying this one dollar you are eating up another dollar. You work until you get two or three dollars ahead and if you are found buying anything with these three dollars in the city, you get a dishonorable discharge.

That man doesn't have to improve his ranch any more to make the employees stay there. I can take you to the ranch today and show you men who had to sell their automobiles to eat. I do not say that all large ranches are this way, but still those conditions exist.

**Pace-setter's row is re-thinned**

At that ranch there is a pace-setter in the orchard. He keeps two trees ahead of the others when they are thinning—and the others, of course, work like the dickens to keep up. After they get through, the row that this man thinned is re-thinned. He is the pace-setter.

They will tell you that this is not true but it is. You can easily prove it for yourselves.

At the time that wages were thirty-five cents an hour, thirty-three cents were paid on this ranch. If at any time one of the ranches think you are not getting wages enough, you go to the boss and say, "I would like a raise." He will say, "No, I cannot do it. If you do not like your job you can quit. I will get another man." And he gets him. If another man comes to him it is a repetition of the same thing.

**When worker strikes, curiously he becomes "Communist"**

Suppose all the workers decide they want more wages. The only thing to do is to go to the ranches collectively and demand a raise. I believe an act of Congress and our President gave us a right to organize, to strike and to picket peacefully. But try and do that and see how it works! As soon as you start an organization, if there is not a law to cover it some way, they pass an emergency ordinance. This migratory worker is a good fellow, but the minute he strikes it is a curious fact that he suddenly becomes a Communist. Mind you, that is a great word. You can picture it in your mind—a man with a bomb in one hand, a knife in the other.

In the strikes we have had, with few exceptions—I think there was some violence in the Lodi district—there has not been a single instance where violence was caused other than by the ranchers and the constituted authorities as they call themselves. I saw this last summer an old grey-headed man, and a little bit of a fellow—a brave policeman, armed with nothing but a club and a pistol, knocked this old man down and kicked him unconscious. Why? Because he grinned. They will tell you this isn't true, but it is. I saw a policeman who did not weigh over two hundred pounds tackle a fifteen year old boy and hit him right between the eyes and smash his glasses. You cannot show me an instance where a firearm has ever been found on a striker. At their meetings the strikers do not allow carrying of firearms. They caution the workers on picket lines not to start any violence.

**Strikers refused to start violence**

In the strike at Sebastopol, there were at least four or five hundred deputized, including the authorities and the American Legion. Not a man in that country could hoe his garden—the handles were all sawed off his tools to use on the strikers. They
tried every way they could to make the strikers start something so they would have a leg to stand on, but the strikers would not do so. What did the strikers do? Before the strike was called, they worked four or five days and they had none of them drawn their money. When the strike was called, the S. E. R. A. or some Federal institution supplied bread, hamburgers, potatoes and one thing and another. The authorities told the Federal officials not to provide the strikers with these supplies because they would not work if a job were offered them. The relief head said, "I am working for the Government, and I take my orders from them; just try and stop me."

Apples knee-deep on ground
as strikers evicted

The farmers tried every way to get the strikers out and they could not do it. They took a few of them to Santa Rosa and the district attorney turned them loose because he had no charge against them. Finally the farmers went to the State Housing Committee and got the committee to condemn the camp and run the strikers out. They loaded the strikers into a little caravan of old automobiles. When I left there, apples were knee-deep on the ground. Then the ranchers advertised in the Oakland Tribune for pickers at thirty-five cents an hour. If they had paid thirty in the first place there never would have been a strike.

So, organizing is the only way we have of doing anything. And if we cannot organize, we cannot do anything.

President Robinson: One more minute.

Mr. Neill: I must tell you then about another problem that gets under our skins. It is the problem of our children. We like to have them go to school. I would like to have my children get a better education than I have. But we cannot do it.

How do children feel when going to school ragged, barefoot?

Picture how you would feel with two or three little children headed for school, almost barefoot, ragged—their clothing has probably been given to them by somebody, and it is ill-fitting. They head for school, and you see them going down the road with a paper bag in their hands, with two baking powder biscuits maybe, and some beans in between. And if you were a little child, how would you feel going to school in that way—and when it comes noon, and you sit down in your little bunch, like we are here now, and draw out those two sandwiches full of beans when the rest of the little ones are sitting around you there, the children of more fortunate people?

How do your children feel? It is almost impossible to keep them in school.

County, Federal relief countered

When it comes to relief, the Government relief has been fine: we never met a better bunch of people in our lives. But the county relief, the Declaration of Independence would look like a short story alongside of what they ask you. The county relief workers ask you questions about your ancestors, clear back until the time they were hanging in the trees by their tails, eating coconuts.

Now, I would like to have about fifteen hours more, but I think my time is up.

President Robinson: We will give you five minutes after the close of the discussion. We have a long program and we will give you another opportunity.

The Migratory Labor
Organizer's Viewpoint

By Julius B. Nathan
Organizer of Farm and Cannery Workers Unions

President Robinson: As in all discussions of this nature, the question of organization comes to the front. The Section naturally wished to get the views of a man who was interested in this aspect of the problem. They have asked Mr. Julius B. Nathan to present that to us.

We are here tonight to discuss the problems of an industry which cannot support its own workers; an industry in which the employees must go on relief in order to have immediately after the season's work is completed. Many interests have been spreading the idea that the problems arising out of a migratory farm labor supply are new, quite new, caused by an influx of indigents driven from their homes by dust storms, drought or the economic depression.

Myth built up of patriarchal paradise—until agitator arrived

A myth has been built up by certain farm groups that, heretofore, there had existed a patriarchal paradise in which the worker lived under the benevolent wing of the farmer. Then the agitator came in, today a Communist, yesterday an I. W. W.—and disturbed the pleasant relations that existed between these two economic groups.

But here is a reference from the California Fruit Grower of
1891, page 99, which shows that even then, the problems that are facing us, were bothering the farmers and laborers of that period: "Since work in the vineyards has slackened up, the towns and vineyards have been overrun with vagrants who are committing innumerable petty robberies." On March 21st, 1891, the same paper states that some intelligent farmer intends to build a large number of comfortable cottages for the accommodation of his workers' families. On March 5th, 1892, it states: "Many of our farmers and fruit growers have better accommodations for their beasts of burden than for their laboring men who have to pack their blankets about upon their backs. They are allowed to sleep under a tree or in a bunk tacked up on a wall." In June, 1892, the same paper: "A meeting of some 200 raisin growers was held at Fresno last Saturday in order to set the scale of wages and the scale was set by the growers themselves.

These references show the problems in 1891—low wages, seasonal unemployment, inadequate and indecent housing conditions and a refusal to consider that laborers had some right to be represented when labor conditions and wages were being discussed.

Workers inarticulate because unorganized

Elwood Mead stated in one of his books that farmers were listened to because they attended conventions and voiced their grievances; but workers were inarticulate because of a lack of organizations to represent them.

I would like to bring up another viewpoint on the Lodi grape strike of 1933. The attitudes and actions of the growers in this strike were not exceptional but typical of the treatment accorded to workers who have tried to ameliorate the conditions under which they work. These quotations are from California newspapers: "On September 8th, 1933, a group of ranchers asked to be deputized to clean up the county over night with a shot gun patrol." On September 10th: "Number of arrests grows. Sixteen officials express fear of night terror, say can control situation daytime but powerless at night."

Newspapers cited for vigilance committee reports

Who are these people that are going to cause all this trouble? From the Fresno papers: "Grape growers again threaten to take matter into their own hands." In Lodi, from which the second speaker came: "Rumors that growers plan to form vigilance com-

mittee." In Lodi again: "Water sprinklers turned on strikers at a large mass meeting. In the middle of the meeting all the sprinklers were turned on in the park. Within a minute sprinklers were conquered and the meeting continued." On October 2nd: "Fifteen hundred growers and residents of Lodi held mass meeting at the Lodi Theater. They discussed means of breaking the strike. Garrison, Sheriff O'Dell, Williamson, counseled meeting against violence."

This is a confidential report which was made by one of our friends among the farmers. "Growers quite willing to form vigilante list. Business men's association and American Legion joined in the midnight meeting."

Law officials reported as looking other way

To show you who starts violence in agricultural strikes, I will quote from the Examiner of October 4th: "A figure from the farmers' group darted across the street, then another. 'Come on, boys, run them out of town. To hell with peace talk—let us clean this up right now.' The farmers' group then charged the silent, sullen strikers in front of the California Cafe. Traffic officers turned their backs with eyes averted from the fracas. The Sheriff was somewhere else. So was the Chief of Police." The night of October 3rd volunteer firemen played the firehose on a group meeting at Lodi: "And the semi-military machine of W. E. Garrison was functioning effectively." It should be stated that Mr. Garrison was opposed to the method used by the citizen mob under his command, but he was powerless to check them. "Strikers decided to accept forty cents an hour from all growers. Miss Ruth Snyder was fired at. Strikers at first suspected but investigation shows she was fired on by vigilantes who thought she was a suspected striker."

Peace officers charged with inciting violence

The Oakland Tribune of October 6th quotes Judge J. K. Solkom as saying, when a defendant wanted a jury trial: "These men are nothing but a bunch of rats, Russian anarchists, cut-throats, and sweepings of creation. This defendant does not know when he is well off." When the attorney objected the judge replied: "In some places they would take him and the rest of his kind out and hang them from the town hall." The attorney interrupted: "But they would not dare to do that here." "Don't you be too sure about that. This town may see a few hangings yet." The attorney insisted on a jury trial. "Juries be damned," replied the judge, "juries are a
means of escape for guilty men. If I was innocent, I would rather

\[ \text{do not go before a judge. They usually get twelve boneheads to serve on a jury.} \]

Anderson, the attorney, got a transfer to another court. I
do not blame him.

Here is a report by Rabbi Reichert: “In recent labor disturbances
involving the fruit pickers and other industries, it was a disconcert-
ing fact that in a great majority of clashes between peace offi-
cers and the strikers, the former were responsible for inciting to

\[ \text{violence.} \]

Salinas growers disperse Filipinos at point of gun

The San Francisco Chronicle of October 5th, after whitewashing
the Lodi vigilantes, said: “Laborers, nevertheless, do have the right
in a proper case to make exactly the sort of trouble that employers
do not want them to make,” and suggests that an impartial body
be set up to handle the strike. The Chronicle of October 7th stated:
“This vigilante business spells trouble. The right to strike and to
stir up strikes is a legal one. Within the law there is no right to
stop it, and beyond the law it must be stopped only by the law.”
And the Oakland Tribune, having a change of conscience, on
October 7th, criticized Judge Solkmore for using, in the courtroom,
language inciting lynching.

During 1934 in the Salinas lettuce strike, a group of growers and
shippers dispersed a number of Filipinos who had gone to work for
certain growers at the increased pay demanded by the union, at the
point of a gun—just the sort of treatment with which strikers have
been faced continually.

Imperial Valley strike causes held
low wages, bad conditions

During the last year I completed a study of causes of strikes and
analyzed those strikes that had been investigated to find out what
were the causes that were behind these distressing farm strikes.
There were three strikes which fell under that heading. In 1918 the
Wheatland hop riots occurred. After an investigation made by the
Immigration and Housing Commission, the causes of the labor dis-
pute were given: Low wages, insanitary housing and camp sites,
lack of sufficient uncontaminated water supply, difficult job condi-
tions, lack of responsibility on the part of the employer and an
agitating group. Mr. Carlton Parker advises better housing as a
way of changing conditions.

In 1930, the Fact-Finding Committee, after an investigation made
in 1928 of a strike of Mexican workers in the Imperial Valley,

\[ \text{stated that the causes of the strike were demands for higher wages and}
\text{better housing accommodations, defaulting contractors, refusal of}
\text{employers to deal collectively with the representatives of labor,}
\text{and urged that these conditions be remedied.} \]

In 1934 a commission sent to the Imperial Valley by the National
Labor Board made an extensive report and it gave as the strike
cause the surplus labor supply, low wages, failure to pay for mini-
imum hours, contract labor, the unsanitary conditions, and opposi-
tion by employers to organization of employees.

From 1913 to 1934, every outbreak has been caused by the same
things: Low wages, unsanitary housing conditions, a refusal of the
employers to deal with labor, and an agitating group of some kind.

Agitators do not cause strikes

You would not risk your life, your liberty, your family’s welfare
for an agitator. Agitators do not cause strikes. But as long as
intolerable living and job conditions exist, as long as employers pay
low wages, and insist that they cannot afford to pay more, you will
have strikes. An agitating group will always spring up out of the
people themselves.

I organized an International Cannery Workers’ Union as an inde-
pendent organization. Later we affiliated with the American Federa-
tion of Labor, and we continued to strike until so much pressure
was brought on the State Federation that our charter was revoked.
The reason is that the State Federation of Labor as a lobbying
group refuses to organize in the agricultural field because it would
interfere with its labor legislation program. Country legislators
would not support its bills. But there are many who differ with Mr.
Scharrenberg on that point. There may yet be a chance that the
American Federation of Labor will begin to actively organize in
this field.

Low wages detrimental to small growers

I opposed the organization methods of the Cannery and Agricul-
tural Workers Industrial Union because I thought their tactics were
entirely wrong. They usually used general strike methods, calling a
strike over an entire area, against big and little growers, against
those willing to pay higher wages and those who were not. I
thought tactics of that sort caused vigilante-ism. Our tactics in
organizing a strike, or trying to settle, have always been, therefore,
to settle as quickly as possible with those willing to pay and concentrate on the big growers who refuse to pay the higher wages. Low wages benefit large growers and are detrimental to the small growers who have none or very little labor because the prices of produce are reduced by low, direct labor costs.

Small growers cannot afford decent labor camps

The small growers are handicapped because they cannot afford decent labor camps. They cannot invest money in them; therefore they must draw their laborers from the community camps or from squatter camps. The best labor goes to the big growers, with their well guarded and sanitary camps, who usually exact a differential in pay; if the prevailing wage is thirty cents, they will pay twenty-five cents. In the Brentwood District, Balfour Guthrie was paying twenty cents an hour when the small growers were paying from thirty to thirty-five cents an hour. These small growers need good camps and if these camps are directed by a central authority on which labor is represented that cannot be pulled to one side or the other during labor disputes, these camps will be a benefit, not only to the laborers who live in them, but also to the small growers. They will take away the advantage the big grower now has against the small grower.

Collective bargaining must come in agriculture

Collective bargaining must come in agriculture. The farmers are the most backward economic group in the United States. California farmers, despite their good agricultural earnings, are just as backward as those of the south. They refuse to see that labor must now be considered as an interested party in the formulation of policies affecting the industry. Wages must rise, labor must have its representatives and its technical advisers to help it adjust the price at which labor power shall be sold; and they use every means of terror available against laborers whenever they attempt to organize. Although every farmer is himself in some sort of a union, farmers refuse to permit the laborers to form unions and whenever a group of laborers attempts to do so, whether in the A. F. of L, whether in an independent organization or a so-called "Red" organization, the cry of "Communist" is taken up against them.

I feel that many organizers in the agricultural field are not Communists. We do not belong to the Communist party and we do not want their tactics in the agricultural field because, to begin with, they know nothing about trade unionism. We feel that our farm workers' unions are economic organizations whose purpose is to protect the wages, hours and conditions of the workers, and the only way we can do it is by organizing anybody and everybody. We do not think we can make Communists of them, or Republicans or Methodists or anything of the kind. All we want is to get these workers together in a union in order to bargain collectively with the farmers' union so as to give us a chance at least to find out what profits are made, what wages a farmer can afford, and have a hand in establishing wages, hours and conditions. But whenever I or any other organizer has tried to bring this point before the farmers' organizations, they have usually told me or anybody else to "get out of town and the quicker you get out the better." That is the way they have met any attempt at organization among the laborers. For that reason I have read to you about the Lodi and other strikes, and if any of you doubt these statements you can refer to the files of the newspapers from which I took them.

Peaceful collective bargaining urged to replace labor war

This problem is old. It is becoming more and more severe—a proletariat growing up under factory conditions. Farming right now in California is factory farming: it is formalized, despite Mr. Pike's statement that it cannot be. You can set piece work rates of different kinds for repetitive operations such as fruit picking. It is true that some conditions are not similar to industry. California agriculture is an industry in which competitive bargaining can develop if the farmers will listen to those who are organizing laborers on an economic basis. If they listen to us on that basis, then the industry will be benefited. Instead of this war, there will be peaceful collective bargaining, which is what the laborers want, and which is what the farmers should want.

But whether the so-called leaders of farmers like it or not organizations of laborers will be formed. And when the rank and file of farmers learn that it will be better to bargain with their workers than to resist their efforts, we will see a more prosperous agricultural industry based not on miserable exploited workers but on well paid, well housed, and contented laborers.
What I Consider the Public's Viewpoint

By Harry E. Drobish
Regional Chief of Farm Laborer Project, Rural Resettlement Administration

President Robinson: To answer the question "What I Consider the Public's Viewpoint?" the Committee has called upon Mr. H. E. Drobish, who is in charge of Rural Rehabilitation, Resettlement Administration.

It is impossible for me to stand here tonight and tell you what the public's point of view is. In the first place, I can only surmise what it is. Probably the public knows very little about how migratory laborers live or why they are needed in California agriculture.

The time the public becomes concerned is when it reads in the paper that a strike has been declared, or that disease has broken out at a squatter camp or bad moral conditions created in schools in the vicinity. It is then that we become interested in this problem which concerns over half our agricultural population, for, according to the 1930 census, over half of those gainfully employed in California agriculture are classed as farm laborers—not owners or tenants or share croppers or ranchers, but farm laborers.

Definitely farmer's responsibility to care for laborers

It is true that some growers have excellent houses for their agricultural laborers. But it is just as true that many growers have not, and that their employees are to be found in the river bottoms, on the ditch banks and along the roadside. I agree with Mr. Pike that some of these people belong to the lowest order of society and if you gave them something good they would not appreciate it. But a large percentage are good folk. They are poor, but aspire to better living conditions just as you and I.

It is definitely a responsibility of the farmer to care for these laborers, to provide them camps, camping places, or houses. Even in the slave days of the South, houses were provided for the slaves, and the slaves did not go hungry. But today, in California, people go without homes and frequently—certainly if not for the S.E.R.A.—go hungry. We have a condition that is a challenge to the thinking people of this State. But while we say that the farmers ought to provide the needed housing, we must recognize that the farmers have been going through a depression which dates back to the War days. Many are unable to provide better housing for laborers. The position of the large farmer is quite different from that of the small farmer. The man with a large diversified acreage is better able to care for labor, because he can use that labor over a long period and justify an investment in good housing. A man who has twenty to forty acres of peaches or grapes can only use extra labor for three or four weeks or, at the outside, two months.

Farm owners are used to assistance from Government

Like business men generally, farm owners have become used to receiving assistance from the Government, through the A.A.A., the seed and feed loan program, the buying up of farm surpluses for relief purposes, the Farm Credit Administration and the like. But just two things have been done for this larger group, representing over half our agricultural population, the farm laborers: direct relief and work relief. How can these people be placed on a higher plane of living?

In the first place, the farmer who wants to improve his living conditions can borrow money from the Farm Credit Administration, if he has enough equity, to build on that farm a camp, provide sanitary conditions, or even put up houses, and that money is now available at low interest rates.

Second, group camps can be set up by groups of farmers as a W.P.A. project.

Third, the Resettlement Administration is working in two ways to aid these migratory workers. One is through migratory camps, and the other is through the establishment of the better class of farm laborers in homes on small, part-time farms.

Migratory camp program developed in California

This migratory camp program is not something handed to us by Washington. It was developed right here to meet the particular needs of this State. At first we had difficulty in getting support for it from Washington, but we did get enough money to set up two demonstration camps. One is located at Marysville and the other was opened today in Kern County. Those camps provide minimum facilities: A good camp ground, proper sanitary facilities, flush toilets with adequate sewage disposal through septic tanks, hot and cold water for showers, and facilities for the campers to wash their clothes. That is about all we supply besides supervision and an educational program.

Camp committee takes care of disorderly conduct

This program is experimental, and the most valuable part is the operation and management of the camps.

We have operated the camp at Marysville since July. While it
was being constructed we managed the squatter camp at the same location, and we gained some experience. We appointed as supervisor a man who was trained in handling this type of people. He has done very well indeed. He did not strut around with a star on his lapel and a club at his side. He strove to get the campers to work out matters with him. He organized a local camp committee to assist him in managing the camp. If any trouble developed, if men came in drunk and disorderly, the members of that committee took care of the drunks, got them out of camp, without requesting official assistance.

The cost? We have not spent a dollar to date for cleaning up the camp. Yet few public latrines are kept cleaner than the Marysville sanitary unit. The sanitary units are scrubbed out with hot water daily by the campers themselves. The organization assigns various campers to different duties. Care of the children is one. In the Marysville camp we had more than seventy children at one time. They were well organized in playground and nursing activities. There was also a local committee of business men and farmers with whom we advised in adopting camp policies.

County operated camp

Should the Federal Government operate these camps? We are in favor of any program that will provide better living conditions for migratory workers, whether it is operated by the county, the state, or the federal government. But to date I know of but one county operated camp, and that one is no model. I do not know of any group that have met together to form a camp under local supervision.

All we can do in the Resettlement Administration is simply to stage a demonstration. We have built these two camps. We have submitted proposals for fifteen more. If our proposals are accepted, we may provide for perhaps four to five thousand people. There are more than one hundred and fifty thousand people classed as “migratory laborers” in California. Many of them are virtually homeless.

We cannot ignore this problem.

Trouble is ahead unless we improve the living conditions of these essential farm laborers. It seems to me we ought to center upon giving encouragement to whatever effort is made to provide better living conditions for this large group of our people.

Five-Minute Discussion

From the Floor

By the Members

PRESIDENT ROBINSON: At this time we turn the discussion over to those who wish to speak from the floor under the five minute rule. Several men who have spoken wish to have a moment or two in rebuttal. We shall have to save some time for that. Who will be the first to speak under the five minute rule?

Remarks by Hugh R. Pomeroy
City and County Planning Advisor

MR. POMEROY: As western representative of the National Association of Housing Officials, I have been serving as chairman of the California Conference on Housing of Migratory Agricultural Laborers. Four such conferences have been held, one at the Marysville camp. The conferences have consisted of representatives from all interested Federal and State departments, the California Farm Bureau Federation, the California Federation of Labor, the County Supervisors' Association, and many other organizations.

Divesting myself of the impartiality which that chairmanship imposes, I should like to say that a condition in California agriculture which requires from one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand people to have no fixed abode, with their children able to attend school for only a few weeks at a time, with no opportunity to become parts of some community, is not healthy. California agriculture, as at present constituted, vitally depends on migratory agricultural labor. But Dean Hutchinson of the College of Agriculture of the University of California sounded the keynote at one of the first conferences when he said that a regional diversification of agriculture is desirable, both so that the economic stability of individual communities will not depend on a limited crop, and to spread the seasonal needs of agriculture within a given region so that the community itself may provide the labor.

What may be done is partly illustrated by Mr. Pike's farm, which provides housing throughout the year for many people. The Tagus Ranch in Tulare County at one time employed about twelve hundred migratory laborers for a short season. It now houses and employs some six hundred laborers throughout the year, with greatly reduced seasonal increases.

That is the long term problem. Meantime, the immediate problem is to provide decent living conditions for these people. So long as many of them must live on ditch banks or on the road sides, I am
for any agency that can improve that condition. I commend the
Resettlement Administration for their work in setting up demonstration camps, and I do endorse the suggestion for a local advisory
committee to determine policy for the local camp in order that it may become as much a part of the local community as possible.

Remarks by Prof. Glenn E. Hoover
Department of Economics, Mills College

PROF. HOOVER: Migratory labor has made possible a greater
degree of agricultural specialization in California than in any other State in the Union. Without that labor we cannot produce as
cheaply as we now do, nor in present volume. Migratory labor for
us is more than a convenience—it is a necessity if our present agricultural system is to endure. If we are concerned only with
our economic advantage, we must accept the present degree of
specialization and the migratory labor it entails.

There are some of us however who believe that any agricultural
system which depends, in any considerable part, upon the continual
shifting about of farm-labor families, is socially unsound and indefensible. Farm costs should be kept low and production should be
stimulated, but low money costs, as in the sweated trades, sometimes
necessitate social costs that are higher than any community can
afford.

We hear much talk in this country, at least when tariffs are
discussed, about the American standard of living. We may not
agree in detail as to what that standard is, but we should agree, I
think, that children brought up according to the American standard
will have a fixed abode, a home provided with the minimum essentials for health and decency, and reasonable access to a public
school, except possibly during the school vacation.

If our present system of agriculture requires families of migratory laborers to follow the crops for six or eight months out of the
year, then that system should be modified, whatever the economic
cost. No system of publicly operated camps will enable these migratory families to live as we expect good citizens to live. In my
judgment we have thus far tolerated the migratory farm-labor families because they were largely drawn from our Mexican population, and this fact, in our good American eyes, justifies our indifference to their condition. If our families, or the families of the
social and economic level represented here this evening, had been

forced to move about from squatter camp to squatter camp, with
no homes or educational facilities for their children, the situation
would have been remedied long ago, whatever happened to the costs
of farm products.

I concur in the suggestion that all squatter camps should be pro-
hhibited, and that regulated camps be provided for male migrants,
and perhaps for families during school vacations. But we must
never accept the homeless, migratory family as a permanent feature
of our agricultural system, let the reform cost what it may, either
in decreased production or in higher costs. When the choice lies
between opulence on the one hand and, on the other, the normal
life which makes for good citizenship, we must not falter.

Remarks by C. A. Hawkins
President, Hawkins Improvement Co.

MR. HAWKINS: I am just a farmer. We employ a number of
migratory laborers and furnish them with tents, sanitary facilities,
water, milk, and vegetables without cost. We have operated our
ranch at a loss for ten years.

California agriculture depends absolutely upon an adequate supply
of labor. The only adequate supply available is migratory labor.
The only way to improve the condition of migratory labor is by
paying better wages. How can the farmer, operating at a constant
loss, pay more wages?

The cities must realize that they are dependent upon the pros-
perity of the rural population, farmer and laborer. The price paid
the farmer has gone down to about sixty-five percent of the 1920
index number. The price of the things the farmer buys has gone
up to about one hundred and sixty percent of that index number.
That gap is constantly widening. Mortgage holders have foreclosed
on tens of thousands of farm owners, who, rendered homeless, become
migratory laborers.

The real problem is to bring back to the farmer an adequate price
for his product, to balance his purchasing power so he can become
a good customer of yours and make your business prosperous. If
you will give him a decent price for his farm products he will pay
decent wages to his labor.

Remarks by Ralph H. Taylor
Executive Secretary, Agricultural Council of California

MR. TAYLOR: In every phase of life, there are problems of human
relationships that have not been solved. Agriculture does not have
them all by any means. We must give fair consideration to both
sides of this controversy rather than just one. Let us look at the problems the farmers must face, the fact that many farmers are struggling to survive on far less income than the men they hire. Compare our migratory labor problem with that of the tenant farmer of the southern States. I leave it to you which condition the laborer himself, the farmer, or the whole commonwealth will prefer—the relatively high wages we pay in California, the highest paid agriculture in the Nation, the general situation that prevails in California—or that which prevails in the south.

Mr. Nathan has referred to the treatment farm workers have received. He has not begun to tell the whole story. As much or more can be said on the other side. Anyone can pick out specific cases to support any contention so long as human nature remains what it is. We should hear the other side as well, and the other side of Mr. Nathan's story has hardly been told here tonight.

Remarks by Ted Reynolds

Mr. REYNOLDS: I am a migratory worker. I differ with Mr. Neill and Mr. Nathan in several things.

I have been a migratory worker for thirteen years and in that time I have worked for some twenty-five or thirty employers. Of those employers only one was not doing the right thing for the men that were working for him. I was in a strike once. I belonged to the Packers' Association. The wages were not too low, the housing conditions were not bad. We had been getting nine cents per pack of cantaloupes. The average packer can handle three hundred a day which is twenty-seven dollars. The packers wanted to cut the wage down to seven. Agitators caused that strike—nothing but agitators. At seven cents, three hundred packs is twenty-one dollars. That is a fair wage. Anyhow, we went to work for seven cents after several of the boys who had worked there five or six years lost their jobs. That was all caused by agitators and some Communists.

Some improvements should be made about housing conditions. A lot of them are good and some are bad. But housing should be controlled by the farmers of a district because they know their needs better than anyone else: how many men and what class of men they will need—and there are two or three different classes among the migratory workers.

The government can lend the money at low interest rate to the farmers, but the government could not run the camp because it does not know the camp needs.

I have read the reports in the papers of agents who have investigated conditions in territories where I have worked, and they did not see things as I saw them all. Any of the farmers could have told what conditions were, but the government agent could not.

Remarks by Jack Warnick

Former Organizer, Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union

Mr. WARNICK: I want to call your attention to an error made on your program announcing this meeting tonight. That was that there would be represented all sides to the migratory labor problem. There is one side, and a very important side, that has been left out. It is the side that cut open, in the first place, this migratory labor problem. I am referring to the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union.

This union led about fifty strikes involving fifty thousand agricultural workers in 1933 and 1934. I was an organizer of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union—the agitator, if you please. Under the hammer blows of this union, agricultural wages in this state were raised from approximately an average of twenty cents an hour in 1932 to twenty-five in 1933, and thirty cents in 1934. There may have been some other causes for the rise in wages but, essentially, wages were forced up by this union, and for no other reason. People who engage in agriculture are no different from industrialists. They are in business for profits and if they can pay cheaper wages they make more profits and they won't pay higher wages unless they are forced to do so.

For the pains of attempting to organize the migratory workers of California, the secretary of the union, Caroline Decker, and the head organizer, Pat Chambers, were framed in Sacramento on charges of criminal syndicalism and they are now in prison, serving long sentences of one to fourteen years. They spent seven months in the county jail in Sacramento before they were brought to trial. Already they have spent eight months in prison.

I do not know how you are going to settle the problem of the migratory worker. There have been very scant suggestions here tonight. Personally, I do not think you are able to find a solution for the migratory labor problem.

Some day—we will.

Remarks by Dr. Lynn T. White

Chairman, Section on Industrial Relations

DOCTOR WHITE: Chairman Wilson asked me if we had learned anything in the Industrial Relations Section that has any bearing
on the problems of the migratory agricultural laborer. We have studied recent State and Federal legislation, the Wagner Labor Act and the State Unemployment Reserves Act, from both of which agricultural labor is excepted. I am not authorized to speak for the Section, but the conviction has grown upon me that the less able a man or a group is to take care of himself or itself, the less likelihood there is of getting aid from society.

Isn't this but a new aspect of the old conflict between the urban industrial laborer and the rural agricultural laborer? The advantages of the former over the latter are very great. The industrial laborer has relatively stable employment which does not require him to move himself and his family frequently. He is organized for collective bargaining, and now he is included in the Unemployment Reserves Act of this State and in the provisions of the Wagner Act. If this latter legislation survives the inevitable decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, it will make available to him a new strength in his collective bargaining.

It seems to me that the agricultural laborers have been shown, by the industrial laborers, the way out of their problem, provided they are prepared to walk in it. But so far the agricultural laborers have been left out of this very definite advance in our social legislation.

Of course, there are many particularly exasperating phases of the farm labor situation. Last summer I stood with a large hop-grower in his hop-field and heard him tell of exasperating experiences that he has had. For thirty years I have known him as a fair-minded, hard-working business man. But I am afraid that I might become a Fascist, or something equally un-American, if I had had his experiences with some farm laborers, who were laborers only in name. On the other hand, I was with Mr. Drobish and Dr. Paul Taylor at the dedication of the Federal Camp for Migratory Laborers at Marysville a few weeks ago, and heard successful orchardists, migratory pickers and the superintendent of the camp tell what the camp had already done for better labor relations in "The Peach Bowl of the World." A few of us were going among the tents—clean, neat and comfortable. We saw a man dressed in clean overalls and his young wife and children, all of them as clean and neat as could be. They spoke with a southern accent. "Where are you from?" we asked, and the wife said, "From Tennessee." I asked, "How in the world did you get out here?" "Well," said her husband, "I lost my farm in Tennessee and had to take to the road and here we are.

My wife and me are on the road with our children, but we hope we are going to get back the little farm in Tennessee some day." I believe that that man and his wife and children deserved something better than they had been getting in the squatters' camp which was displaced by the Federal Camp at Marysville. That fellow—I have seen thousands of his kind on the farms of Tennessee—is a hard-working, home-loving, God-fearing, loyal American citizen of the old stock. He and his kind should not be driven radical by harsh treatment or lack of opportunity to pay his way in this, the richest agricultural State of the Union. It is this type of people that I met in that Government camp, and I am for that camp. If the conditions under which they render all of us indispensable services make effective organization difficult if not quite impossible, as I believe they do, then all of us, organized as government, should afford all of them the decent living conditions which only a relatively few employing farmers are either able or willing to provide. I do not believe that the American people desire to enjoy food that has been produced at the cost of the deterioration of the family life of any participating working group. If collective bargaining by migratory agricultural workers is, for the present at least, impossible, then, in common fairness, its benefits should be made available to them by the collective action of government. The Resettlement Administration is pointing the way, but only a beginning has been made.

Remarks by Franklin P. Nutting
President, American Seedless Raisin Co.

Mr. Nutting: I have been twenty-five years an employer of people of the type described here. The publicity before this meeting and the speeches here have over-emphasized, I believe, the strikes, lockouts and troubles of that kind. Such troubles have affected only a few districts and only a relatively small proportion of the many thousands of migratory laborers in the San Joaquin Valley where I operate eight or nine raisin farms. In but one year have we had any trouble on any of our farms, and that was not serious.

The statement has been made twice that farming cannot be carried on at a profit in California. But farming in this State, except for a few years of the worst of the depression, can be carried on at a profit, and can pay wages adequate to support the labor it needs. It needs this migratory labor and should and can pay for it.

I would like to suggest that, in addition to the Federal labor camps, which are a fine step towards correcting evils in the indus-
try, there should be clearing houses of labor information to reduce
the time lost by these migrants. They have few means of finding
where the jobs are and they lose a great deal of time in going from
place to place and in waiting for work. They usually arrive penni­
less and have to be supported by the farmer for a few days before
the work begins.

Remarks by Roy M. Pike
General Manager, El Solano Ranch, Yermo

Mr. Pike: Agriculture should be profitable in California, but the
fact remains that it has had a hard time since 1921. Few people
realize how little profitable were many lines of agriculture long
before the depression started in 1930.

It is true that there must be a parity between industry and agri­
culture. When California agriculture essayed its first step toward
this parity through an approach to "planned economy" (and that
was before the Federal Government started its efforts in 1933), it
did so by passing the Agricultural Pro-Rate Law giving groups of
producers of any given commodity the right to move their produce
to the cities in an orderly manner so as not to glut the market.

We had learned in agriculture that every American community
will pay a solvent price for agricultural products if their markets
are not glutted with this produce. That proper volume can be
measured each season. If this proper volume of 100 units is shipped
they will always pay a solvent price for it, but if 115 or 150 units
are shipped the farmer frequently gets nothing. Thus too often agri­
culturists cannot themselves receive their costs and thus cannot pay
wages to others.

The migratory camp situation has been improved in these late
years. One of the great difficulties has been men like Mr. Nathan
and the young man, Jack Warnick, who spoke. They give no appre­
ciation for the efforts of employers to improve these conditions. Mr.
Neill tells of the Togus Ranch, which I know. I think he has drawn
some fantastic pictures of it. They do not accord with my knowl­
dge of the facts.

As to Mr. Nathan, who also speaks without appreciation of the
facts of today, I may say, with Voltaire, "I disagree with every­
thing the gentleman has said, but I will defend with my life his
right to say it." I know you will all learn a great deal just from
the strange manner of Mr. Nathan's talk.

I can only say that this is a problem which is in the process of
being settled. We welcome the discussion, we welcome the help of

urban districts and of government departments to help provide, in
some manner, the means to make the necessary improvements.

Remarks by L. K. Marshall
Lodi Farm Owner

Mr. Marshall: Some of the statements Mr. Nathan made about
the Lodi strike were typical of principles that radical agitators use
in promoting strikes. He gathered his information, I take it, from
lurid accounts in the San Francisco Examiner. That paper sent a
reporter to Lodi just to find something sensational about the strike
to peddle its paper, and it was not true. He did describe part of
what happened in front of the California Restaurant, but he did
not tell you that Colonel Garrison was at the headquarters of the
Growers' Organization in the next block, heard the disturbance,
and went out and stopped it.

The workers were not driven out of town. I was at the midnight
meeting in the theater, called by some of the hot-heads in the dis­

tinct. There are always hot-heads who do not use proper judgment.
They did want to "clean up" this squatters' camp, which was
housing most of the agitators, who were unemployed and trying to
keep anybody else from being employed. Colonel Garrison got up
in that meeting and by the sheer strength of his personality, turned
the tide of the meeting, which was headed for violence, and said,
"We will go ahead and do it this other way," and that is the way
it was done.

Remarks by Jack Neill
Migratory Farm Worker

Mr. Neill: It is true, as Mr. Pike says, that the whole sche­
me of the thing from the migratory workers' viewpoint is a fantastic
picture. But I must take exception to the man who has been a
migratory worker for thirteen years. He stated that men made
twenty-one dollars a day packing cantaloupes, but he failed
to state what a small part the cantaloupe packer is in the general picture.
You cannot use an isolated case to judge the migratory workers' condition.
We have isolated cases, of course, of migratory workers
who make a good wage, but let us not—either side of us—use such
cases as a basis to figure from.

He also says the farmers collectively could solve this problem.
A man that has had thirteen years' experience ought to know what
they have already done collectively. I do not favor camp operation
by small communities. The camps would become concentration
camps, and the wages would gradually go down until they were so
low that the worker could not exist, and if he did not work for these wages, he could not stay in the camp. He could neither make a living nor get relief.

I figured out the relief we obtained one time from the county in terms of twelve ounces of food per day, of all kinds, for each person. How many of you people eat that little? You have all consumed more than that in one meal.

Remarks by Julius B. Nathan
Organizer of Farm and Cannery Workers' Unions

Mr. Nathan: Of course, I should not believe such radical newspapers as the San Francisco Examiner, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Sacramento Bee, the Fresno Bee, the Sacramento Union and the Stockton Enterprise. They are so anxious to show the radical side in a favorable light that they accuse growers, peace officers and magistrates of deliberately breaking the laws. In referring to labor disputes, I have used only official reports: The official report to Governor Hiram W. Johnson, by the Commission of Immigration and Housing in 1914; the report to Governor C. C. Young of the Mexican Fact-Finding Committee, 1930; and in 1934 the National Labor Board Report.

I want to apologize to Miss Caroline Decker and Mr. Pat Chambers for not telling of their efforts in helping to bring wages up from 1932, when they went down as low as seven cents in the Santa Ana District and twelve and fifteen cents in other parts of California. Through that series of strikes they did bring wages up to the present, although too low, level. That is history. We are interested in the future. The Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union is dead. Now we must build on a different basis. We must recognize that workers have a right to organize and that these workers are not Communists when they do so. They are trying to better their condition, and they have a right to be heard under the American tradition of democracy. These workers must be represented in agreements on wages, hours, conditions.

At the same time the employers have a right to organize also and deal collectively with the canners' organizations and other organizations to which they sell, just as they are dealing with each other in the prorating agreements. If they will give the workers the right to organize, and not prevent them by bloodshed and terror, there will no longer be the conditions that have existed in the past in California agriculture.
stability. Their education is broken up. Already the children of these families are finding their way into the juvenile courts and the correctional institutions of the State as serious anti-social problems. The migratory worker problem can in my opinion be solved only by the breaking up of large agricultural holdings into smaller farm units and wider county diversification of agricultural production. If we are to have large corporation farming, production must be so organized that most of the employees can be retained on a yearly pay roll.

Mr. E. W. Wilson. I have two suggestions: (1) that the discussion continue; (2) that the people who desire labor organize to arrange for their labor as far in advance as possible. When a laborer appears on the ranch and peaches are ripe and about to fall, he is in a position to contract for an increase of wages. If the farmer were to make his contracts in advance of that time, he might save money and help save the peaches.

President Robinson: I think you will agree with me that this has been a most interesting meeting. Doubtless this Section will go forward with its investigations. That is its business. We thank you, Mr. Wilson, and each of you gentlemen that have given your time to presenting this program.

The meeting is adjourned.