**Labor Issues**


[Ad for cotton pickers near Phoenix.]  *Daily Oklahoman*  (Oklahoma City)  1937 September 11: 10.

Allen, W.V.  "California’s Migrant Labor Problem."  [publication info]  September 1939: ??.


"Another 'Grapes of Wrath'?”  *East Bay Labor Journal*, 3 May 1940.

Draws a sharply negative parallel between the ostensibly growing demand for labor being advertised by California's aviation industry and the handbills promising employment in California for migrants from the Southwest during the mid-1930s as featured in The Grapes of Wrath.


Examines California’s history of handling relief problems as they affected strikers and their families from 1935-1939.  Study analyzes the circumstances under which persons engaged in or affected by labor disputes received relief payments from the California State Relief Administration under the California Unemployment Relief Act of 1935.  Author concludes with an evaluation of policy stating that the history of the policy of "administrative determination" was a major departure from the "federal policy" which preceded it.  Chief among its changes were the requirement that former employees accept jobs under strike conditions there the plant is operating at near to normal capacity, and that any wage which may be prevailing at the moment be accepted, regardless of the existence of a labor dispute.  Athearn recommends a reexamination of the policy of “administrative determination” in California and in other states where similar policy exists.


Surveys the farm tenancy in the United States from 1880 to 1920.  Provides an analysis of the results of the 1920 U.S. census relative to farms classified by tenure.  Part I addresses the problem of farm tenure in the United States from two points of view: (1) the status of the farm tenant compared to that of the farm owner; and (2) the status of the farm tenant and that of the farm laborer working for wages.  Part II discusses the growth of farm tenure from 1880 to 1920 in the United States.  Contains detailed tables from the U.S. census, figures, and graphs.

Reports on the number of individuals who arrived in California by car from drought states during June through December 1935. Provides statistics of refugees by race and state of origin. Information based on data provided by Paul S. Taylor.


Details the tasks resettlement developers performed in carving farms out of forests, bogs, and grasslands in the mountainous West. Faced with opposition from Congress and politically conservative groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation, Cannon discusses the various bureaucratic and legal hurdles the Resettlement Administration (RA) and its successor, the Farm Security Administration (FSA), faced in acquiring and rapidly developing land for its resettlement programs. Among the reasons for its demise, Cannon cites legal difficulties, the magnitude of land development work, dependence upon other federal agencies, lack of coordination within the resettlement agencies, reliance upon inexperienced relief labor, and the difficulty of adapting to environmental conditions.


Contains source material for the California Farm Bureau Federation, the California State Grange, The Associated Farmers of California, and personal interviews with persons active in farm politics during the 1930s. Includes references to newspapers and periodicals that were a valuable source of political views.

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“Cotton Pickers Will Get Food.” *Arizona Daily Star* March 24, 1938: 1, E0A.

“If there is no mob action and everyone goes home,” declared Governor Stanford to the organizers of the Committee for Industrial Organization, he would see to it that the destitute pea pickers residing in the squalid camps west of Phoenix would receive aid. However, only six case workers would be assigned to assess the needs of the families. “It is the best we can do,” said the secretary of the Maricopa County Board of Social Security and Welfare. “And to do that much, we will be taking food
out of the mouths of Arizona residents." Governor Stanford intends to "evolve a plan" by which to return the pea pickers to their home states.


Appeal from the Superior Court of the State of California in and for the County of Yuba. Fred F. Edwards was convicted of violating St. Cal. 1937, p. 1406, s 2615, making it a misdemeanor for a person to bring or assist in bringing into state any indigent person who was not a resident of the state, knowing him to be an indigent person, and from a judgment of the Superior Court of California affirming the conviction, Fred F. Edwards appeals. Reversed.


"Gratifying Response to Appeal for Funds Aid Needy and Jobless." *Wasco News* December 19, 1930: 1, 10.


Argues that migration from Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas to California was not limited to the 1930s but had been occurring since the 1910s and lasted into the 1960s, that not all of them were poor sharecroppers, and that the employment opportunities presented to them by the state's emerging aerospace industry let many escape farming but did little to attenuate their identity as a group, which could be succinctly described as populist yet conservative in politics, evangelically religious, and fiercely self-conscious, especially through country music.


Defines elements that give the migrant worker the appearance of a separate "ethnic group" in some California communities. Author sees their organization into unions for collective bargaining as a way of improving their economic position. The problem in California in adjusting to this influx of migrant families is unique and has made their permanent absorption into the community a difficult and slow process.


Written by an anonymous "Worker Correspondent," he recounts his observations at several Buttonwillow labor camps of the "big cotton bosses," many of which were owned by Miller and Lux. The correspondent accuses these bosses of luring unemployed workers from Alabama to a worker's paradise in the cotton fields of Kern County. According to the author, the bosses advertised across Alabama "telling the unemployed that they needed several families to take to the Garden of Eden." The ads promised workers a house on an acre of land complete with a cow, chickens and a pig. But what these Alabamans got when they arrived, according to the article, was dirt-floor shacks with no beds or mattresses nor did they receive the promised livestock. In addition, they had to repay their bosses for their ticket to the "Garden of Eden." The article concludes that the workers of Kern County must organize to fight for better pay and worker's rights.


Discusses the problem of transient farm labor in the Pacific coast states citing two Farm Security Administration (FSA) measures that helped improve the social and economic conditions of these agricultural workers: (1) a socialized health program that would benefit the general welfare of farm laborers; and (2) the development of a chain of sanitary farm labor campus financed mainly by the federal government that improved their standard of living.


"Many Tulareans Want to farm With Uncle Sam.” Fresno Bee January 16, 1938: 1.


McWilliams, Carey. Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California. Little, Brown, 1939.


Explores the concept of México de afuera, "Mexico outside of Mexico," in Los Angeles through three studies that analyze the troubled relationship between the Anglo-American and Mexican American communities. Of particular interest is the collision between labor organization by Mexican Americans and Anglo-American interests that led to a series of agricultural strikes during the mid-1930s in which Mexican consuls sided with growers and the anti-union activities of the Los Angeles Police Department led to further strife between police and the ethnic community.

"No Work, No Eat Plan Inaugurated in Tulare County." Fresno Bee, April 17, 1934: 1.


"Relief Appeals Heard by Governor Stanford." Arizona Republic, October 31, 1937.


Attacks the rise of "farmer organizations" in Arizona's Salt River Valley that, having failed to pay cotton pickers and other harvesters fairly while providing clandestine support for suppressing efforts by harvesters to air their grievances, are directly responsible for their present poverty and poor health.

Snyder, Fred. "Red Drive to Recruit Migrants (part of title missing)." San Francisco Examiner, February 28, 1939: 12.


Within the context of subjectivity and condescension, Taylor discusses the effect the migrants from the Midwest are having on California agriculture. Migrants from Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma are replacing the Mexican laborer who is returning to Mexico to work land offered gratis by the Mexican government. According to Taylor, the white migrants who are replacing the Mexican workers are a "major social burden" for California. Unlike the Mexican laborers, Oklahomans, Texans, and Kansans lack the "sensitive touch for fruit," their legs are too long for stoop work (Mexicans are "well adapted by nature for stoop labor"), and prefer settling rather than "disappear[ing] over the horizon" out of sight of the Californians.

Growers were threatened by the high numbers of Midwestern "penniless work hunters" coming to California because they might be vulnerable to "radical leaders" intent upon organizing them in a "militant and hostile labor army." However, no labor army has arisen; apparently, the Midwesterners are apolitical, unlike the Mexicans, who are "susceptible to radical leadership" because "they are easily aroused emotionally and accustomed to acting in groups." In addition to causing problems for the growers, the dustbowlers have too many kids, prefer living in unsanitary conditions, and encourage their relatives to come West. Taylor questions whether California can support these new migrants.


Taylor explains that drought, dust, and depression are the factors that drove residents from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and adjacent states to immigrate to California. Moreover, floods not drought drove blacks out of Mississippi to California. Although many migrants expect to come to the land of milk and honey, they are confronted with something much different: land is scarce; farm labor job market is glutted; and they are unwanted. The California legislature is considering a bill that will exclude “all indigent persons or persons liable to become public charges.” Many migrants flock to rural California where they are caught in labor conflicts. For example, many of these migrants break strikes to earn money to feed their starving families. Taylor predicts increased conflicts between farmers and workers. In order to protect themselves from strikes, farmers have organized. Taylor predicts that the migrants will continue to be caught in these labor disputes as well as living in squalid conditions unless a “protecting government intervenes.”

Taylor surveys the issues concerning the peculiarities of California farm labor needs, which occur because of the industrialization of farmland. This large-unit agricultural structure depends upon an abundant labor supply. Since the 19th century, farm labor supply has been composed of dispossessed peoples, including Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Hindustanis, Filipinos, and whites migrating from the southern region of the U.S. Of rural America, California has a record of the most intense labor conflict. Over the few decades, there have been repeated attempts to organize the workers. Taylor concludes his survey with a list of resources related to labor relations and California.

Taylor surveys the refuge families who received relief from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Report’s data claims to disproved the myth that these refugees are primarily irresponsible and "addicted to wandering." Concludes that the needs of migrants are no different than those of residents. Recommends that to provide migrants with adequate care, the federal government must assume responsibility for reducing or eliminating the states' residency requirements. Includes detailed narratives, tables, and maps on migratory patterns and the socio-economic characteristics of migrant families.

Taylor and Kerr provide an overview of the labor unrest in the U.S. in the last few years, citing specific strikes. Discusses the causes for unrest, racial division and strife between laborer and employer, and organization by communists.

Examines patterns of migratory labor in California for the period from June 1934 through June 1935 and its effect on school enrollments. Routes of migration were varied up and down the San Joaquin Valley. Authors distinguish between Mexican and white agricultural workers. Focus in particular on
Imperial Valley. Graphs show seasonal mobility with monthly fluctuation of enrollment of Mexican children for a three year period. Fluctuations in enrollment are reflected in seasonal crops. The extreme mobility caused educational problems for Mexican and non-Mexican children for authorities in elementary schools.


Reports statistics gathered on those "in need of manual employment" entering the state by the major highways, noting that nearly ninety percent were white and seventy-five percent were migrants from the "drought states" who entered through Arizona. In contrast, the number of Mexican migrants dropped significantly in the same period due to the saturation of the labor supply by white migrants.

_____. "Historical Background of California Farm Labor.” Rural Sociology 1(3) September 1936:281-295.

Discusses the growth of intensive agriculture with highly capitalized, large-scale farming methods and concentrated ownership that has given California an industrialized agriculture.


Taylor, Robert. "Hard Times: Values Forged in Dust Bowl Days Led Many to Eventual Success.” Bakersfield Californian September 1993: 5; B: 1, 2.

Tenant Purchase Program Aids Tulare Farmers." Fresno Bee January 21, 1940: 1.


Uses oral histories of Mexican migrant labor in California agriculture during the 1930s to examine both the paradoxical empowerment of growers by the New Deal and the active resistance by migrants to the same through community, family, and habits that formed a tradition of collective action which, although not immediately successful, remained independent of outside support or leadership.


Discusses 20th-century migrant farm labor in western United States, in particular, Mexican workers in California.