

WHAT IS THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FARM FAMILY LABOR CAMP PROGRAM

For

YAKIMA VALLEY?

1. HOW DID THIS PROGRAM HAPPEN TO BE PROPOSED IN YAKIMA COUNTY?

The Yakima Chamber of Commerce in 1935 appealed to the Resettlement Administration (now Farm Security Administration) to establish a subsistence homesteads unit in Yakima county to stabilize families engaged in seasonal orchard and farm labor. One of the leaders in the movement was O. F. Hagie, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, who is now secretary-manager of the National Reclamation Association. They sent a second appeal to the Farm Security Administration in 1937 and went so far as to secure an option on 120 acres of land deemed suitable for a site. The FSA was unable to secure an allocation of funds at the time but was impressed with the justification for such a project and for the need of securing such a project as soon as funds could be made available.

Savings in funds allotted to this region and a special earmarking of funds last spring to provide housing and sanitary facilities for farm families engaged in seasonal agriculture work, particularly in regions where the situation was intensified by migration of families from drouth areas, made it possible for the Farm Security Administration to propose such a project for Yakima Valley. The plans were fully presented at a meeting of nearly 100 business, welfare, farm and labor leaders held at the Donnelly Hotel, September 18. All questions regarding the camp were answered as fully as possible and no action was taken at that time opposing the camp proposal.

After careful review of the proposal with the welfare and related groups in the valley and a thorough review of the social and economic backgrounds of the deplorable housing health and sanitary conditions in the concentrations of migratory labor as set forth in the State College of Washington experiment station bulletin No. 361, "Migratory Farm Labor and the Hop Industry on the Pacific Coast, with special application to problems of the Yakima Valley, Washington", U. S. Department of Labor serial No. R. 610 "Seasonal Agricultural Labor in the Yakima Valley", and a study by George B. Horington, regional FSA labor relations adviser, and Dr. Omer Mills, FSA rural and social economist, the proposal was submitted to Secretary Wallace and subsequently approved.

2. WHAT NEED IS THERE FOR SUCH A PROJECT?

Everyone in the county recognizes that housing, health, sanitation and social facilities of families engaged in the valley's seasonal fruit, hop, sugar beet and similar employment are deplorable. The State

College of Washington studies present a comprehensive array of these conditions based on scientific research through the sampling method.

Discussing living conditions in the camps the bulletin indicates that conditions under which the transient workers live are unsanitary and inadequate for health and decency standards, although they varied greatly from one camp to another. It further pointed out that dysentery and social disease were prevalent in nearly every camp, toilet facilities were generally insufficient, water supply inadequate or impure, trash and garbage disposal often ignored, and that it was common to find families of 5 to 8 persons occupying one shelter.

Aside from the need for providing the humanitarian facilities for living conditions that approach a decency standard, the need for stabilizing the economic aspects of securing, routing, handling and caring for seasonal labor is one of the major problems of the valley. A central camp at Union Gap serving both the upper and lower valley within a radius of 20 miles together with portable units for location up and down the valley as the season demands, with facilities for trailer outfits and individual operators, would serve not only to make available a supply of labor when needed but also where needed.

Through cooperation with the United States employment service and local growers, available labor could be much more efficiently routed and it would serve to give these families a maximum of continuous employment rather than the present haphazard distribution which results in many families securing employment only a fraction of the season, using up their meagre earnings in looking for the next job. It is also reasonable to expect that where decent housing, sanitary, health and recreational facilities are provided in a camp, that the morale and efficiency of the workers themselves will be greatly improved.

3. WOULD THE PROPOSED CAMP BE A TRANSIENT CAMP?

The camp will in no sense of the word be a transient camp in that it will become a haven for single transients, reliefers and outside-the-state families more interested in relief than work. The FSA camp is being established exclusively for families and former farm families whose livelihood is provided largely from seasonal agricultural work and who are now resident in the county. The camp in every sense will be a farm family workers camp.

4. WHAT WILL THE CAMP PROGRAM INCLUDE?

A central or headquarters camp at Union Gap, which will include:

50 low-costing houses semi-modern with small acreage for garden for selected families who can secure enough employment to maintain themselves and pay a monthly rental of approximately \$8.

350 sanitary tent platforms, including 150 with shelter structures, for rent to bona fide farm family seasonal workers at 10 cents a day.

Community building for recreation, childrens' play, camp meetings and emergency school rooms.

Central heating plant with hot water, washing, laundry, ironing and bathing facilities.

Child nursery and first-aid clinic with resident registered nurse.

Machine shop with facilities for repair of workers' cars, trailers, and etc.

Modern garbage and sewage disposal plant and approved sanitary toilet facilities.

Facilities listed above are available to every one in the camp at no extra charge.

Supplementing the central camp, two portable units, each designed to care for 200 families, will be constructed and will be used to follow the work up and down the valley being located at strategic centers. These camps will include:

200 tent bases each.

Central Heating Plant.

Garbage and sewage disposal plant.

Facilities for trailer outfits.

5. HOW WOULD OCCUPANTS BE SELECTED?

Families for the subsistence homestead units would be selected by the Farm Security Administration family selection section and chosen on the basis of their ability to secure semi-permanent employment, their farm experience, and the possibilities of eventually assisting them in establishing locally their responsibilities and then in locating on a farm where they can become substantial and tax paying members of the community.

Families selected for the more temporary rental of the shelters and tent platforms will be selected by the manager of the camp on the basis of their willingness to work, their need for facilities and willingness to cooperate in maintaining the camp on a high standard. Each family signs a short form of tenure agreement on entering, agreeing to abide by all rules and regulations.

Only bona fide families of farm laborers and former farmers located in Yakima county will be eligible for the camps.

6. WHAT WOULD BE THE PROVISIONS FOR LAW AND ORDER?

Policy of the camps in regard to law and order has always been that of fullest cooperation with local enforcement officers particularly where felonies or serious crimes have been committed. Experience of officers in California where camps are established has proved that where recreational and sanitary facilities are provided in the camp, misdemeanors and infractions of law have been cut to a minimum as well as the tendency of many workers to spend their evenings in beer parlors and pool rooms.

Regulation of the camp itself, under definite rules is enforced by the camp manager and staff. He is aided by camp committees elected by the residents of the camp. They will be responsible to the camp manager and their acts are subject to his veto, if necessary. These committees aid in self-help activities, in policing, in maintaining and developing various activities and amusements.

7. WOULD THE CAMP AGGRAVATE THE LOCAL SCHOOL SITUATION?

As families selected for the camps would be those in Yakima county, the children are already there and present the same school problem each fall. Some adjustments in cooperation with the county may be necessary at the Central Camp, but in every similar instance in California, the problem has been worked out to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. The Farm Security Administration can and expects to provide temporary school facilities in the community building where the retarded children may again be geared into the normal of school curricula, without ostracism, under cooperative supervision of the school superintendent and so handled as ultimately to receive Average Daily Attendance credits. There is also a reasonable possibility that federal funds can be secured for an addition to Broadway school, if this seems more desirable after an experimental stage has been worked through.

8. WOULD THE CAMP PROGRAM INCREASE LOCAL TAXES AND RELIEF COSTS?

The Farm Security Administration camp program will reduce local taxes for relief expenditures by providing health assistance and emergency medical care for all occupants of the camps and providing more continuous employment for those in the camps. County expenditures for medical care of migrants will be reduced because there will be better health and sanitary standards.

Meanwhile the Farm Security Administration will continue its program of making emergency subsistence grants to destitute families of farmers and farm laborers. As of September 30, 1938, the Farm Security Administration has expended \$114,213 for direct relief of these families in Yakima County, most of whom would have been eligible for local relief funds. During the same period the Farm Security Administration has made standard rehabilitation loans totaling \$312,745 to 320 Yakima farmers and orcharders unable to secure adequate credit for their farming operations. Many of these families were on the verge of applying for local relief when they received the loans.

An additional \$46,245 has been allotted to Yakima for initiation of the tenant-farm-purchase program whereby qualified tenant farmers could attain ownership.

9. WHAT HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE IN KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, WHERE SIMILAR FACILITIES WERE PROVIDED IN 1936?

Kern County, California, because of its geographical location in relation to the Great Plains drouth states and due to the long period of seasonal work afforded by its crops, has become the center of California's migrant problem, a situation which cannot be compared with Yakima Valley.

Heavy migrations began in the early drouth years on the Great Plains, together with those "tractored" out by large-scale farming and as early as 1930 the Biennial Report of California's Department of Education in its school census listed 2,000 children of migrants in the Kern County Schools.

Local welfare agencies and related groups took cognizance of the problem in 1935 by establishing a small camp in cooperation with the State Welfare Department. When funds became available through the Farm Security Administration, the Farm Security Administration was asked to take over the facilities that had been established. These were taken over in 1936, enlarged to care for 400 families and extensive improvements added.

Medical care and hospitalization for families in the camp were provided through grants made by a non-profit corporation formed with Farm Security Administration funds. To supplement the heavy local relief expenditures which had begun with the heavy migrations since 1930, the Farm Security Administration carried on a subsistence grant program that provided direct relief for as high as 2,137 families a month and has averaged over 1500 during the past year. As this migration to Kern County was entirely a process of social and economic forces, the state and county took the leadership in working out school problems not only for the children of families in the camp but for children of all migrants.

Migration in California is largely from the cotton states. Kern County has the first cotton found in California after migrants enter the state. These people work north from Kern County during the summer on fruit, etc. and work back south picking cotton until they can again winter in Kern County. The Farm Security Administration's 400-family facilities have provided for only a minor percentage of the terrific influx during the past few years due to disestablishment causes elsewhere. But the Farm Security Administration has its shoulder to the wheel in substantially aiding the community by caring for this heavy load which is there a serious problem indeed.

Since the first camp at Arvin in Kern County in 1935, another in Kern County at Shafter and nine more camps have been established

in the San Joaquin and other valleys of California. Three are under construction in Arizona. Letters are on file in the San Francisco office from many civic and social organizations requesting similar camps for their communities. Copies of a letter from the Buttonwillow Chamber of Commerce, Napa County Farm Bureau, and the Yuba City Grange are attached.

10. WOULD SUCH A CAMP PROGRAM INCREASE MIGRATION TO YAKIMA COUNTY?

Experience in California has been that establishment of camps did not increase migration of drouth and seasonal workers' families. Migrations in California, like the intensive migration into Yakima County from drouth areas in recent years, are due to social and economic forces not a matter of local control.

The Farm Security Administration is on record both in letters and newspaper stories widely advising farmers in drouth areas not to come to the Pacific Northwest unless they had sufficient funds to establish themselves on a farm while at the same time advertising for orchard and other seasonal workers extending to the middle west brought hundreds of additional families with promises of work, only to find none available.

Meanwhile the Farm Security Administration has expended nearly \$3,000,000 in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho to help establish drouth families already here and \$1,500,000 in grants to destitute farm families and farm laborers in trying to ease excessive local relief burdens.

11. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANCE OF CAMP PROGRAM TO ROSA AND GRAND COULEE RECLAMATION PROJECTS?

The primary purpose of the Farm Security Administration is to aid and enable a vast group of unfortunate farm people to maintain themselves and establish themselves securely on the land. It is equally responsible to the farm laborers on the land, so many of whom are now laborers who once were farm operators and whose whole background has been that of farm occupation until conditions over which they had no control set them on the move, disestablished. One of the basic purposes of the subsistence units of the camp in the long-time program is to serve as an intermediate step where the family now engaged in seasonal work can make the transition from farm laborer to a farmer in his own right and a tax-paying citizen of the community. The Farm Security Administration has already helped establish nearly 500 families on the Vale-Owyhee project in Oregon and Idaho, and is the logical agency to play an important part in settling many drouth and farm labor families on lands in the Rosa and Grand Coulee reclamation projects as they are opened to settlement.

12. HOW WILL THE CAMP AFFECT BUSINESS?

While establishing housing, sanitary and recreational facilities for some 800 farm families engaged in seasonal work, the expenditures

of \$250,000 for construction material and labor in Yakima county during the next six months will offset every business in the valley to some degree. Each dollar spent for both wages and materials will inevitably contribute to payment of a few more bills, taxes, buying of needed goods and generally stimulate every activity.

13. WHY HAS THE CAMP PROGRAM BEEN OPPOSED?

Most of the opposition to plans for the camp has been due simply to a misunderstanding of the purpose and operation of the project. In the light of the extensive local publicity given to the so-called "Kern County Report" setting up a situation which cannot be in any way compared to Yakima Valley (as has been explained on page 5) it is easy to understand how many business men and farmers could be sincerely opposed to the program. On the other hand, those who have been able to secure complete information as to the purposes and operation of the farm family labor camps have unanimously endorsed it as something the Yakima Valley has long wanted and needed as an answer to many of its pressing relief, labor and welfare problems.

14. HOW WILL THE CAMP PROGRAM BENEFIT THE FARMER?

Establishment of the camp program will benefit every farmer in Yakima Valley by making an important beginning in the campaign to eliminate the health, morale and social hazards due to present ditch-bank and shack camp conditions. Through providing housing, camping, sanitary, health and social facilities for approximately 800 of the families engaged in seasonal work and through the FSA grant program for destitute rural families, Yakima county relief expenditures should be substantially reduced. This means that ultimately the farmer will pay less taxes.

As the farmer and the farm laborer are mutually interdependent and have many interests in common, decent living conditions for the seasonal workers would make possible an improved working relationship that would be of benefit to both. Not only would the camps make labor available when needed in cooperation with the farm placement bureau but would provide more efficient labor and more continuous employment for those depending upon this work for their livelihood. While some large farmers are able to provide adequate housing facilities for their workers, the smaller farmer and orchardist as a rule is unable to make such provision for his workers.

15. WHERE CAN I SECURE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE CAMP PROGRAM?

Additional information is available by writing the Farm Security Administration, Portland, Oregon.

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BUTTONWILLOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
"Center of Kern County's Cotton Industry"

Buttonwillow, Calif.
December 7, 1937

Mr. Jonathan Garst
Regional Director
Re-Settlement Administration
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Garst:

With the understanding that when funds are available for the building of another Migratory Camp and that Kern County has been considered as a likely place for same, we, the Buttonwillow Chamber of Commerce, wish to bring before your notice the crying needs of this community for such a camp.

Our district is building up and growing very rapidly and the housing situation is very acute.

Approximately 15,000 acres were planted to cotton this year and the cotton pickers have been listed as high as 3,000 during the peak.

The Buttonwillow School District commenced the season with an enrollment of 233 and at the present moment has reached the 600 mark with prospects of still climbing higher.

The bulk of the Cotton Farmers have good camps but they have been inadequate to care for the influx of pickers and we have a bad situation here. Many pickers who have been unable to get into the camps are squatted out here and there on waste ground without any sanitary conditions what-soever and the health authorities have been condemning these places and ordering the occupants to move on. Probably the most pitiful part is the fact that some of these people are living in tents, some in improvised shelters made up of cardboard packing cases and burlap and anything else that can be picked up in a junk pile, and in such places as these, women and children are sleeping on the ground. We are fortunate that the winter has been dry, but the nights are frosty and bitter cold.

We hope that when the time comes that you will consider our district for a Migratory Camp.

Yours very truly,

BUTTONWILLOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

John Thomson, Secretary

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Yuma City, California
3-28-38

Mr. Tom Collins
Migratory Camp Manager
Visalia, California

Dear Sir:

Our Grange in Sutter County has a committee making a study of the labor camps. I am a member of this committee, and yesterday I was shown around the Gridley camp by a caretaker, Mr. Gates. It is a wonderful place; good for both the worker and the community.

.....
How would we go about the matter of getting such a camp for Sutter County? Please give me some data and advice on this matter. It certainly is a fact that Sutter County employs a very large number of seasonal laborers in peaches, prunes, cherries, cots, grapes, beans, beets, etc., and it is also a fact that these laborers live in dirt along the public roads, without any sanitary advantages.

Will you be in this part of the country soon? Please may I hear from you.

Thanking you for any information you may be able to give, I am

Yours very truly,

Rt. #2

C. U. HARTWIG

NAPA COUNTY FARM BUREAU
1028 Coombs St. Napa 243.
Napa, Calif.

February 21, 1938

Mr. Johathan Garst
U.S.D.A. Farm Security Adjustment
85 Second Street, San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mr. Garst:

Napa County Farm Bureau at their regular session today asked to have Napa County placed on the waiting list for a Migratory Labor Camp, and as soon as there are funds ready for that use, to let us know.

Yours very truly,

GEO. E. DUTTON
Secretary