

velop both a group drive and a group quality of intelligence which transcends at the moment that of any one interacting individual, young or old. And he should feel in it the security which is the basis for his adult independence.

- Finally the members of a group help each other manage their own experiences in relation to their common and individual needs by coop-

erative group planning. The teacher or parent or other adult is the expert in such process who guides children in its use permissively and affectionately until all are *free* to continue their own growth and development for the benefit of themselves and their fellow men. This is the meaning of infancy, this the purpose of education, and this the qualitative environment.

Spring—and the Migrants

FRANCES MARTIN

A Michigan community provides educational and health services for migrant workers and their children, as described in this article by Frances Martin, Professor of Psychology and Education, Central Michigan College of Education, Mount Pleasant.

"EACH child in our democracy has a right to teachers who like and respect him as an individual and who will help him plan and prepare for what he may become." The professor spoke earnestly. Glancing around at the faces of seniors in the class in education, her eyes lingered on the face of Rosa Romanez. Here was understanding and appreciation. Rosa, as usual, was the most intently interested member of the class. She participated in discussions with clarity and conviction. She read widely because she wanted to learn. She reached out for experiences. Intelligent and sensitive, she was indeed a joy to have in the class.

Rosa had come to Mt. Pleasant with her Spanish-American parents when she was a small child. She could tell of working in the beet fields in the broil-

ing sun. She could remember the promises made to her family by the labor recruiters. These promoters had assured her family that they would find comfortable homes, good pay and no racial discrimination. Theirs had been, indeed, a glowing picture. She could remember her family's bitter disappointment at finding, instead, an inadequate, dirty shack with hard wooden beds, a cook stove which furnished the only heat, and hardships without end during that first year.

Rosa's father was a hard worker and was willing to learn new skills. He found work and remained in the community. Through the years other members of his family joined him, and together they made a place for themselves in the community life. Just this year a cousin of Rosa's had been elected

queen of the high school homecoming festivities.

Rosa is now ready to teach. Her gracious manners and innate refinement will make her an addition to any group. Her experiences have given her depth and maturity of judgment that many other college students lack. She has spoken before church groups and women's clubs on the problems of migrant workers. She has poise and objectivity. Rosa is a young citizen of whom all Americans may well be proud.

Spanish-American Council Organized

Rosa is one of a small minority of Spanish-American migrants who have settled in the community and who have sent their children through the schools. Most of the several hundreds of workers who come to the community to plant sugar beets do not send their children to school. They arrive in April or early May, near the end of the school year. They leave in late July to go farther north to pick cherries. In October they return for a few weeks to harvest the beets. By the end of November the trucks loaded with shivering men, women and children are all headed south. Constantly on the move, they have little feeling of belonging anywhere. They remain isolated and set apart as a group. These feelings of isolation and insecurity are far more serious in the developing personalities of the children than the fact that they do not have adequate opportunities to obtain formal education.

"Spring is here—and the migrants will be coming," a fellow citizen called across the street to me on a warm day in March. That was a reminder that the Spanish-American Council should

get under way. This Council is made up of any and all who show a flicker of interest in the problems which brought it into being. Various organizations in town are urged to send representatives. The A.A.U.W. and the women's clubs have been faithful backers. Ministers and priests are invited and some help greatly. The health and welfare departments and the Red Cross are usually represented. The personnel director of the Sugar Beet Company always comes. Sometimes a member of the Growers Association comes with the county agricultural agent. The superintendent of schools and the county school commissioner have been most cooperative. Several members of the college faculty, as well as some of the faculty wives, are much interested. Last, and probably most important, are representatives of the local Spanish-Americans who have helped steer the work and given much valuable information concerning the point of view of the migrants themselves.

Health and Recreation Programs Provided

The council generally starts the year by reviewing the problems and laying plans for various aspects of the program. People usually volunteer to help with jobs which are related to their own work.

The health department may be asked to check on the purity of the water supply at the wells used by the migrants. Usually half the wells have become contaminated. Provisions for sanitation are checked also. A publicity committee member may go along on the tour of inspection and take photographs to be printed in the local paper. The

Sugar Beet Company representative explains their program for improving housing—windows are being screened, houses are being cleaned. He may raise the problem of how the houses can be kept clean. One year, brooms were furnished at cost by a blind couple in town, and the council added supplies for cleaning.

Plans must be made for collecting warm clothing. The migrants arrive clad in thin cottons and must face the freezing weather of April and early May in Michigan. A group collects old clothing and takes it to the local dry cleaners to be cleaned and disinfected. Space in a store or church or garage must be found where the clothes can be sorted and arranged. These garments are then taken to the homes or they may be given away in the schools. It has usually been easier to collect the clothing than to find a satisfactory way of distributing it.

A group plans the work of the recreation program which is held twice a week, in two different parks. An evening is arranged for baseball, square dancing and movies. A local member of the Spanish-American group is paid by the council to organize this program. This worker calls at the homes to inform the people of the recreation program and also to give them a letter from the council telling them about facilities in the community. This letter is prepared by the language department of the college.

The recreation leader is assisted from time to time by college students who want to help with the ball games or the dancing. The migrants are encouraged to bring their musical instruments and to suggest ideas for these evenings

of fun. The visual aids department of the college has been generous in lending films and furnishing operators for showing these films.

The superintendent of schools worked with the State Department of Public Instruction in Lansing on problems involved in financing a summer school for migrant children. These children are always counted in the annual school census which is taken in May. Some schools draw membership funds from the state for these children and then do not provide them with a program. Most of the children, in fact, have not been accustomed to attending school and little apparent pressure has been exerted upon their parents to send them. The superintendent of the Mt. Pleasant schools found the state department most cooperative and eager for Mt. Pleasant to start a summer session. He learned, too, that the school hot-lunch program could be extended for the migrants and that the school buses could be used to transport the children to a school center. The college also allowed one of its buses to transport children.

School Committee Improves Relations

The school committee of the council has many duties and responsibilities. Homes must be visited and the program explained. Local Spanish-Americans are invaluable here. They can answer questions and dispel the very natural suspicion of some of the parents. Members of the council who drive Rosa or one of her relatives around to the homes are often much impressed with the cleanliness and order in the tiny shacks. They are amazed to find several families—perhaps as many as seven-

teen or twenty people—living in one home. They sometimes find serious illness, a severely handicapped child, and evidences of great poverty. Nearly always they find graciousness, humor and gayety. Through interpreters who speak Spanish they explain that the children are very welcome in the schools which are in session and also at the special summer school.

The school committee must collect equipment and supplies for the summer school. This involves everything from beds for babies to art supplies for thirteen-year-olds. The problem of an adequate program for the babies and toddlers must be worked out. Part of the reason that many of the older children have not gone to school is that they must care for the younger children while their parents and the older youths work in the beet fields. The nursery school group cannot be supported by the public schools, so this involves collecting money and recruiting the services of many helpers. A certified teacher is employed and volunteer assistants are gladly welcomed. In one session three high school girls gave their entire day to the program. They rode out on the buses and collected the children and then returned them to their homes in the evening. The parents of the children were pleased with the friendliness, gayety and interest of these girls.

The older children are taken on walks and trips as a part of their school program. They sometimes walk to the college laboratory school to enjoy a pet show or a program. They may be invited to a backyard picnic in the neighborhood and allowed to go through the house from top to base-

ment. They join local children in their playground activities. Recreational leaders attached to the school playgrounds have been quick to see the value to local children in becoming acquainted with these Spanish-speaking children.

Summer Sessions Held

One year the college was given funds to operate a summer session for both migrant and local children. This proved to be a wonderful experience for both groups. Many of the local children enjoyed the daily Spanish lessons and still talk about the interesting experiences they had. One weakness of the present summer schools is that the migrant children are being dealt with as an isolated group.

Every effort is made to give the children nutritious lunches and snacks both in the morning and in the afternoon before going home. The regular manager of the school lunch program has been most cooperative in planning food with which the children are familiar as well as the usual nutritious foods.

The health department has examined the children and, with permission of the families, has given them various immunization shots. A high incidence of tuberculosis has been found in this group. Since the state hospitals can accept only citizens of Michigan, as patients, a difficult problem is presented when a migrant is found to be suffering from a disease of this type.

One of the important committees in the migrant council is that which raises funds to pay the salaries of the nursery school teacher and the recreational leader, and to pay for food not supplied by the hot lunches and for other

supplies for the school. Many local churches and clubs have budgeted special funds for this work. Individuals have been generous. The Sugar Beet Company has been willing to contribute also. There are never any funds left over, but somehow there always seem to be enough for the program.

Those who have participated in this program have tried to make life a bit more livable for these fellow Americans. They are aware that at times they have done a superficial and inadequate piece of work. They deplore the unfairness and injustice of an arrangement which requires the use of seasonal laborers and yet makes no adequate provisions for them or for their children. Since agriculture depends on seasonal labor, the following problems must be met:

- Adequate housing, not shanties where seventeen persons huddle in two rooms in freezing weather.
- Wages paid weekly or monthly so that the migrants can buy at inexpensive stores and not run up large bills at credit stores.
- Health inspections and provision for hospitalization.
- Checks upon school attendance—perhaps specially trained welfare workers following groups to make arrangements for school attendance at each community where they work. Many times the schools are at fault in not welcoming the children for the brief stay of a few weeks.
- Organization by churches of special programs welcoming migrants to their services and fellowship.
- Aid by farmer neighbors who will give them a hand in trouble and

show them how to plant gardens and do simple carpentry so that they may make themselves more secure. One farmer near Mt. Pleasant has had a family of migrants return to his farm for many years. They have fixed up the house and planted a garden, and have a strong sense of loyalty to the farmer. Such laborers can be taught to drive tractors and do many other things while waiting to thin the beets.

- "Odd jobs" and work for these laborers in farms, industry and homes, especially when weather ruins or delays the crops.
- Adult education classes conducted in a variety of subjects such as English, nutrition, consumer buying, child care, carpentry, machine shop and agriculture.

In Mt. Pleasant we hear rumors to the effect that our sugar beet industry is moving away. We hear that our farmers are no longer raising as many beets. Last year, Puerto Rican laborers were flown in without their families. We are not sure we shall need a Spanish-American Council this year. We do know, however, that all over Michigan as soon as spring comes the migrants will be needed, and in many other parts of the United States farmers will be asking for this seasonal labor. We think of the children growing up outside of the heritage which should be theirs as Americans. It is our sincere hope that this report of our experiences may be of value to other communities facing the responsibility and privilege of bringing isolated groups into a comfortable and respected place in our community life.

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