

# ¿A donde vamos ahora?

(WHERE ARE WE GOING NOW)

A Report on the Problems of the Spanish Surnamed and Migrant  
Population in Iowa prepared by the Iowa State Advisory Committee  
to the United States Commission on Civil Rights

September 1970

IOWA STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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## PREFACE

### The United States Commission on Civil Rights

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent agency of the executive branch of the Federal Government created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957. By the terms of that act, as amended by the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1964, the Commission is charged with the following duties: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting denials of the equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

### The State Advisory Committees

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as amended. The Committees are made up of knowledgeable persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission upon matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission in matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

This report was submitted to the United States Commission on Civil Rights by the Iowa State Advisory Committee. The conclusions and recommendations are based upon the Advisory Committee's evaluation of information obtained as a result of its investigations and an open meeting held in Davenport on July 22, 1969. The report has been received by the Commission and will be considered by it in making its reports and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

## INTRODUCTION

The civil rights status of Spanish surnamed persons in Iowa was first brought to the attention of the Advisory Committee in its July 22, 1969 meeting. John Terronez, a member of the State Advisory Committee and the Iowa State director of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), told the Committee that it should turn its attention to this matter as soon as possible. He elaborated on this need at the Committee's meeting on August 16, 1969.

His statement to the Advisory Committee indicated the following:

- a. There are no accurate population figures on Spanish surnamed persons in Iowa.
- b. Spanish surnamed persons face problems as minority group persons in housing, employment, migrant health, education, and in their relations with law-enforcement agencies, at the local and State levels.

An action was taken by the Iowa State Advisory Committee at this same August meeting which called for an Open Meeting by the Committee in Davenport, Iowa, on Saturday, October 18, 1969. The Commission staff was asked to make the necessary preparations in order to ensure the appearance of appropriate community persons and public officials.

On Saturday and Sunday, September 6 and 7, the staff met with a group of 10 persons in the Davenport area, predominantly Spanish surnamed, for the purpose of ascertaining what were, in fact, the most crucial problem areas for this minority groups. It was mutually agreed that the areas to be covered in the Open Meeting would be Education, Migrant Health, Housing, Employment, and Police-Community Relations.

The Iowa State Advisory Committee wishes to express its appreciation to John Terronez, the members of LULAC, and the Community Efforts Organization of Muscatine, for their cooperation in helping to make possible the appearance of Spanish surnamed persons from Iowa cities in which a particular problem was felt to be most acute. The Committee also wishes to thank those public officials who accepted its invitation to appear, explain, and discuss the work of their respective agencies.

The Committee hopes that this report of its Open Meeting, as well as the fact of the meeting itself, will spur action on the part of both the public and private sectors to eliminate inequities and injustices where they are found to exist. It is with this idea in mind that the Committee, on the basis of the statements given, has included certain recommendations as a part of this report. In its continuing work, its members will be in touch with local, State, and Federal officials to offer the assistance of the Iowa State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in the implementation of the recommendations.

## EDUCATION

### Background

In order to understand the problems in any area of intergroup relations, one must have some knowledge of the underlying factors and conditions that create the problems. This is especially true when discussing matters affecting Spanish surnamed people in Iowa since less research and information exists on this minority than any other in the State.

This matter cannot be explained by observing that since they are migrants their problems are transitory and too variable in nature to establish any prevailing pattern. The fact is that a significant number of the Mexican Americans in Iowa are permanent residents or citizens of the State. As the chart on page 4 indicates, there are approximately 2,270 children with Spanish surnames out of a total enrollment of 658,393 in the Iowa public schools. This minority enrollment tends to concentrate in specific communities, in part because of the availability of employment for migrant labor. These are noted primarily as being in the Muscatine area in southeast Iowa and in the north central portion of the State in the vicinity of Mason City. The enrollment in eight school districts constituted more than one-half of the Spanish surnamed students in the public schools of the State--1,874 of the 2,273 total. These were: Council Bluffs, 455; Des Moines, 370;

Census  
1969

School System	S T U D E N T S				STAFF			
	Total Enrollment	Negroes	American Indians	Oriental	Spanish Surnamed	Total Staff	Negro	Other
Ames	6,037	45	4	47	36	324	3	0
Bettendorf	5,521	2	6	10	58	303	0	0
Burlington	7,985	216	8	10	19	577	4	2
Cedar Falls	6,717	4	7	21	4	345	0	2
Cedar Rapids	24,619	502	25	25	40	1,252	2	6
Clinton	7,426	86	0	1	10	317	1	1
Council Bluffs	15,642	187	13	4	117	734	2	3
Davenport	23,427	1,258	13	11	211	1,128	13	2
Des Moines	46,134	3,504	39	91	364	2,103	44	7
Dubuque	10,082	6	4	13	5	472	0	2
Ft. Dodge	8,075	213	4	5	49	413	0	1
Ft. Madison	3,996	85	0	2	141	192	4	1
Iowa City	8,905	61	4	26	26	533	3	1
Keokuk	3,769	155	0	1	3	211	0	2
Marshalltown	6,292	47	6	6	6	335	1	0
Mason City	7,764	60	1	8	240	447	0	0
Muscatine	6,411	49	3	7	145	310	0	0
Newton	5,279	7	0	5	13	271	0	0
Ottumwa	8,275	80	2	6	0	424	0	2
Sioux City	18,903	311	151	19	148	936	2	1
Waterloo	19,809	2,334	39	27	25	975	20	4
West Des Moines	5,911	45	0	6	61	276	0	0

(Compiled by Urban Education Division, State Department of Public Instruction from HEW. Form OS/CR-102 filled out by the individual schools).

Fort Madison, 343; Davenport, 286; Mason City, 240; Muscatine, 90; West Des Moines, 50; Cedar Rapids, 40.

During the summer of 1969 the State department of public instruction, aided in part by funds from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and with the assistance of local school authorities, established a series of summer educational centers for school-age children in Muscatine, Mason City, Reinbeck, and Lakota. This was, of course, at the peak of the migratory cycle in Iowa. A total of \$47,309 in Federal funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was expended in this summer program; enrollments in the centers amounted to 122 at Muscatine, 64 at Mason City, 23 at Reinbeck, and 5 at Lakota. In addition, 58 persons were employed in the implementation of these programs and the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided surplus foods to the centers. Furthermore, two organizations representing examples of cooperative federalism - Migrant Action Program (MAP) and Train, Rehabilitate, Assist Iowa's Needy (TRAIN) - helped with preschool children.

Representatives of the State department of public instruction explained that the educational aspects of the summer migrant school were founded upon the concept of teaching and strengthening the communicative skills of migrant children. The approach to teaching English as a second language was the key to the entire educational program, they observed. Prior to the opening of the centers, a 1-day workshop for the teachers who would participate in the program was held at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls on the subject "Teaching English as a



Foreign Language". Although this was obviously too short a time to devote to such a complex matter, State educational officials noted that, when interviewed later in the summer, the teachers indicated they had applied many of the concepts learned at this workshop. In addition to teaching English as a foreign language, the summer migrant schools also included in their curriculums mathematics, science, music, art, social studies, and physical education.

In addition, the State of Iowa is a participant in the Texas Interstate Migrant Program and the State of Texas hires and sends a teacher from Texas to Iowa during the summer months to act as a resource person to the teachers in the local school system. The bureau of social services also helped by hiring college students majoring in social work to assist the migrant adults. The last session of the legislature voted \$35,000 of State funds for educational programs for migrants. The fund was divided between school programs for the school-age child and adult education. In 1969, funds for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 were utilized to provide the services of two bilingual itinerant teachers for the West Liberty and Muscatine school districts. State officials said they planned a similar program for the Mason City area.

It should be emphasized that because of the fact that Mexican Americans are predominantly Roman Catholic, the parochial schools play a role in their education. There was disagreement among those participating in the Open Meeting over how significant a role the Roman Catholic parochial school plays in educating Mexican Americans in Iowa. Some contended that tuition precluded many, if not most, of the children in this group from attending parochial school. No figures of attendance of Spanish sur-

named students in parochial schools were available at the Open Meeting.

While barely scratching the surface, this suggests that State education officials are becoming aware of some of the problems of the Mexican American in Iowa.

### Problems

The many facets of education may well be the root cause of the problems afflicting Mexican Americans in Iowa. Their dimensions affect the Spanish surnamed communities in Iowa from the preschool child to the underemployed adult, and run the gamut from such basic concepts as recognizing English as a foreign language to the absence of basic technological skills of underemployed Spanish surnamed people residing in communities where industry is begging for workers possessing such skills.

At the outset, in analyzing problems of education one must recognize the fundamental cultural clash between Spanish-Mexican culture with all of its manifestations on one hand and American culture with its vast assortment of nuances on the other. There is more involved here, of course, than the mere difference of language as a variety of persons who appeared at the open meeting were quick to point out. Concepts of aspiration, modesty, value of education, pride or lack of it in cultural traditions, religious attitudes, and the role of the family all serve to complicate the life of Mexican Americans in Iowa and throughout the United States.

The language barrier, especially as it applies to the migrant Mexican American, is probably the most obvious obstacle he confronts. Many observers have commented upon Americans'-- especially Midwestern Americans'-- oblivion to the necessity for knowing languages other than English. It is probable that the refusal of school systems, employers, and citizens to make the necessary adjustments to meeting the real and legitimate needs of foreign language-speaking persons is as much due to ignorance of the dimension of the problems such a person faces as to overt prejudice. This in no way makes such practices less objectionable, of course.

The language difficulties are wide ranging in their impact. The psychological problems confronting the Mexican American youngster are acute when he becomes aware that the heritage of his parents is not only rejected by the school authorities but that he may be ridiculed or even punished if he reverts to his native tongue. The irony of this was pointed out during the meeting when it was noted that public school teachers have no difficulty developing programs to ease the linguistic difficulties of foreign exchange students, but the identical teachers are confounded by how to help the Spanish-speaking migrant child.

Various persons appearing before the Iowa State Advisory Committee noted that Mexican American students tended to be older than their classmates because of the language difficulties. Moreover, in their first years in school they face enormously greater difficulties than their classmates; not only must they learn the skills, information, and techniques taught in the classroom, but they must attempt to acquire this in a foreign language. The fact that migrant children tend to be older than their

classmates is an important reason why their motivation to finish school is significantly reduced because their age as well as linguistic difficulties are sources of embarrassment to them. This, in turn, has a direct bearing on their employment opportunities.

Evidence presented to the Iowa State Advisory Committee showed that in the Cedar Rapids area, for example, the average educational level of heads of Spanish surnamed families was the third grade. The Kirkwood Community College is attempting to remedy this situation through basic education courses in reading, writing, and arithmetic. There is much underemployment because of lack of technological training in this area where a variety of job opportunities exist but require some technological competence. But even skilled workers of Mexican American descent can be affected adversely by the linguistic barrier. For example, a skilled welder cannot follow directions if he speaks little or no English, and it would be rare indeed if his foreman spoke Spanish.

Information was presented showing that 89 percent of Spanish surnamed students drop out of school before completion. A most disturbing aspect of this information is that the figure does not appear to be declining. (The data are not clear as to whether these figures were for the entire State or merely for its eastern section.) The effects of such a dropout rate upon the number of Mexican Americans in the professions is obvious. For example, it was noted that there is not a single lawyer in Iowa of Spanish-speaking background.

The reasons given for the dropout rate were, in part, to be expected. The schools lacked adequate guidance and counseling programs; teachers either did not understand the linguistic, cultural, and other difficulties Mexican American students labored under; or they were apathetic or in some instances actually hostile. It was pointed out to the Committee that in one area, at least, some teachers openly commented they were glad when the migrant children left because "they just brought chaos and disruption to the classroom."

## EMPLOYMENT

### Background

Several Spanish surnamed people appeared before the Committee in the morning session to protest the discrimination experienced by them. The essence of their presentations is that Spanish surnamed people are discriminated against in Iowa whether they are migrant workers or people who have "settled out" of the "migrant stream".

Each summer, some 2,900 migrant workers and their families arrive in Iowa and southern Minnesota to work in the fields. The first to come are the asparagus and nursery workers, followed by those who thin and weed the sugar beet crop. Finally, near the end of the summer, the tomato harvest begins in eastern Iowa. Many migrants remain until early winter to work in the smaller poultry and food processing plants scattered across the State. In 1967, the migrant who combined nonfarm wage work earned \$2,149 and worked 168 days. Wages for workers who did farm work only were considerably lower.

Once the migrant agricultural worker begins to work for a particular grower, crew chief, or processing company, he may find himself bound to that employer by a "two-cent-per-basket chain". This is an amount withheld pending the completion of a season's work, an amount usually deducted from his earnings. He may report to a worksite to find little work available to him, and be required to stay with that employer well past the peak of harvesting to a point where he can hardly earn enough to pay his daily expenses. His children work in spite of child labor laws, because he is unaware of these laws or because of economic necessity, and in spite of the hazards of chemicals used.

For several reasons migrants may be without income during large segments of the summer. Some of these include the weather and the fact that they are recruited early. They may receive food coupons from the grower or processing companies which may be used in any store. Occasionally only one store is approved for their use, thus preventing the migrants from shopping to obtain the most for their money. They are not allowed to withdraw money credited to accounts or to turn the coupons in for cash. For example, the Committee was informed that this past summer one grower deposited \$100 with a local supermarket as credit for food purchases without the migrant's consent. Payment to migrants based upon poundage presents an opportunity for the migrant's record of his earnings to differ from the record kept by the grower.

#### Problems

The Committee was informed that employers often make promises to migrants concerning wages, hours, and working conditions when they recruit the workers in Texas. The worker signs what he thinks is a contract for employment but is actually a non-binding agreement. None of the oral promises are put into writing, and often the family arrives to find sub-standard housing, and no work available for several days or even for several weeks.

A "Bonus" system is utilized by growers, processing companies, and crew chiefs to make it difficult for the migrant to leave before the end of the crop season without losing a substantial amount of money. One person appearing before the Committee explained: "As one company notes of its bonuses, 'This refund will be made only to those workers who stay and complete the full season, or who are excused by mutual

agreement by the crew leader and the company management. The worker must have done a satisfactory job, in that he worked when necessary, moved from farm to farm with his crew when necessary, and did a clean job of snapping asparagus." The full season may last until late fall when only a few hours of work are available each day. The "Bonus" may not always be a bonus, but a deduction from wages, or wages earned and withheld until the end of the season. In other instances, it may be an advance to enable the family to travel from Texas, or it may be an additional amount paid for poundage over a certain figure.

Garnishment of wages along with other vaguely stated weekly deductions, further deprive the migrant of his earnings. He is not given his gross wages and allowed to pay off his debts. "In many instances, families may gross a hundred dollars or more but clear only a few dollars after deductions," the Committee was told. Garnishment for other services is practiced. In one community a local physician providing health services for migrant workers presented his bills to the employer rather than to the worker. The company made deductions from the workers' checks. These deductions include a "small additional amount" for the labor involved in collecting the bill for the physician.

Spanish surnamed people are seldom upgraded either by private or public employers. When employed, most are given unskilled jobs such as back-breaking work in a foundry, where little opportunity exists for obtaining the training within the industry which would permit advancement.



Migrants are victims of institutionalized discrimination when they seek training to permit them to acquire skills necessary for permanent full-time employment. "Administrative discretion" in the interpretation of program guidelines is used to "select out" many would-be trainees. An interview at the State employment office used two clauses in the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) regulations to deny training to Mexican Americans: "Applicants can be accepted who are 'hindered from seeking work,'" a phrase sufficiently vague to exclude almost any applicants and there "should be a reasonable expectation of employment upon completion." The possibility that a migrant may not complete training before returning to Texas is another excuse used to bar some applicants from a program which has as its primary objective the training of the unemployed and underemployed with particular emphasis on minority groups. Some employment office personnel feel that they should protect the potential applicant from frustration and disappointment by not referring him to jobs on which he might experience discrimination. Thus, he is denied the opportunity to work out those problems for himself.

In the private sector the migrant who attempts to "settle out" also faces institutional discrimination. Entrance requirements for apprenticeship and training programs are often unrealistically high and are inflexibly interpreted. An example of this was shown when a migrant was administered tests by a company and scored slightly below the norm level set. In spite of the fact that the local representative was impressed with the applicant, personnel in the main office vetoed his employment. Further, the certificate obtained by taking the GED examination

was not accepted as the equivalent of a high school diploma. Another example given was that of a Mexican American who was employed, but was given 4 days of training as a machine operator when other employees were customarily given as much as 6 weeks of training for the same job.

If he attempts to "settle out" he is likely to encounter a language barrier in seeking employment. Few companies provide instructions or warnings in his native language which would enable him to protect himself against the danger from the machines on which he must work. After encountering the language barrier, the migrant may give up trying in the face of insurmountable obstacles and simply return to the "stream". If he is fortunate enough to encounter someone at the employment office who speaks his language, he may persist in seeking employment. Some of these men are skilled machinists, carpenters, or welders. Iowa needs skilled workers.

Iowa cities were criticized for having no Spanish surnamed people on the police force, or in the fire department and only a few in the other public agencies, except as laborers. Two organizations, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and the Iowa State Employment Office were criticized by Mexican Americans for not being more aggressive in reaching out to people with Spanish surnames and for not having Spanish surnamed people on their staffs and advisory boards. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission is limited by the requirement of a degree from a 4-year college for employment in a staff position, which restricts the

potential number of Mexican American employees.

An official of the Rock Island Arsenal, a Federal installation, reported that out of 7,000 employees, 74 are people with Spanish surnames. Forty-three of these are in the blue-collar classification and there are 27 at the GS-5 level and above. Fifteen are at the "supervisory 9" level. In the white-collar group <sup>1</sup>one is employed as a supervisory mechanical engineer at the GS-13 level, with three others at the GS-9 and GS-7 levels. The white-collar employees and the blue-collar workers at and above the GS-5 level are in "career" fields and can hope for advancement.

While a Spanish-speaking receptionist and an assistant receptionist in the personnel office were once employed, these positions are now vacant. A counselor program has been established at the direction of the Civil Service Commission and the Department of the Army. Twenty counselors have been appointed from nominations made by employees. One is a person with a Spanish surname. An eight-member Equal Employment Opportunity Council has been appointed. One member is a person with a Spanish surname who does not, however, speak Spanish. During a period of questioning an official from the Arsenal pointed out that civil service requirements make it mandatory that when certain positions are to be filled, persons on the register compiled from recruiting stations all over the Nation must be considered. Staff members from the personnel office of the Arsenal go to colleges and universities to recruit.

It was reported by a representative from the Spanish surnamed community that the John Deere Company, with a payroll of about 10,000 in the Quad City Davenport area, employs approximately 275 Spanish surnamed workers out of a total area population of about 11,000 Spanish surnamed persons. Approximately 17 Spanish surnamed persons are in supervisory and professional positions. This appears to be an inadequate number at all levels of employment especially in view of the fact that the company has a minority relations department.

## HOUSING

### Background

Housing for Mexican Americans should be viewed from two aspects:

(1) housing for the migrant agricultural worker and (2) housing for those who settle-out of the migrant stream for more sustained types of employment. In both situations, they are discriminated against.

Moving with the availability of work and the readiness of crops, the migrant worker and his family go from worksite to worksite during the season.

Mexican Americans are recruited without having the opportunity to inspect either the housing or the working conditions and they must depend either upon governmental agencies or upon blind faith to ensure that growers live up to their part of the "contract." Often neither does the job.

Federal standards for migrant housing are virtually useless since the only method of enforcement is the withdrawal of inter-State recruitment services from noncomplying labor users. This is not a serious threat to the growers and processors who simply recruit by private means, thus avoiding the recruitment to provide housing that complies with Federal standards.

Inspection of camps by Federal agencies is easily avoided since these agencies are limited to inspecting housing for migrants who are recruited across State lines. Operators simply do not go to the Department of Labor for assistance in recruiting. Federal money is not available through the Department of Labor to provide housing for migrants. Some pressure can be exerted to the end that more housing is provided that is nearer adequate standards. For example, where the operator is under contract to provide

produce to a processor, the processor may ensure adequate housing to avoid bad publicity.

Urban renewal tends to worsen the plight of the migrant laborer by removing much of the available housing which he can afford. Further, the group finds a reluctance on the part of Iowa communities to provide low cost public housing for the low- and moderate-income family.

### Problems

The Committee heard a report from the Iowa State Department of Public Health on the new State law "relating to the standards to protect the health, safety and welfare of the migrant labor camps. The Iowa Agricultural Labor Camp Inspection Program was instigated about the first of July 1969, when an appropriation [of only \$20,000] was made available for the implementation of the operation." It will be noted that this date was too late in the season for the State department of health to take effective action to see that "decent housing and a sanitary environment is provided for the agriculture workers."

The department of health is further limited by the inspection law in that it does not specify standards for construction, sanitation, or recreation facilities. An operator is required to file an application for a permit to house workers 6 days prior to occupancy. If his camp is found to have deficiencies, he may receive a provisionsal permit valid for from 30 to 90 days allowing him to house workers in his camp. Sixty or 90 days are often enough time to complete his harvest. In addition, the operator may file for

a "variation" on the basis of hardship to him, providing no health hazard exists. Of 48 camps inspected from July 1, 1969, five received full permits. Thirty-seven were found to have deficiencies, but were issued provisional permits. Some operators, 19 in all, closed their camps rather than spend the money necessary to bring them up to minimum standards.

The Iowa law apparently has other built-in loopholes, such as the provision that for living quarters to be defined as a "camp," they must house seven or more migrants or be made up of more than two or more structures. The average migrant family numbers six members. Further, the law is reported not to cover the quality of the structure, while water supplies and sewage disposal are covered.

Under questioning by Committee members, it was admitted that a substantial number of facilities used by migrant workers are not covered by the laws establishing the Iowa Agricultural Labor Camp Inspection Program. It was further admitted that there were camps housing 30 to 50 migrants which were not covered because the migrants were not engaged in agricultural work. This law specifies that the camp is not covered unless that person is engaged in agricultural work.

The Committee heard a report of the results of a survey of housing needs of Mexican American families in Muscatine, Iowa, based on questionnaires drawn up by the Migrant Action Program. The Muscatine Migrant Committee and the Community Efforts Organization assisted the Migrant Action Program in following up and securing the completion of the questionnaires. Fifty-nine questionnaires were completed and are the basis of the report. The

study had a threefold objective: (1) to determine the housing conditions and needs of Mexican American families living in Muscatine; (2) to identify the probable impact of code enforcement and urban renewal on the families; and (3) to outline the policy alternatives open to interested citizens and the city of Muscatine in coping with the housing problem for both Mexican American and other low-income families.

Housing occupied by Mexican Americans was found to be in violation of many of Muscatine's housing codes. Ten percent lacked both cold and hot running water, 45 percent lacked the minimum space requirements, 20 percent had structural defects such as inadequate wall, ceiling, or floor supports. Twenty-five percent did not meet the electrical requirements of the city's code. When the housing was evaluated according to the three classifications used by the Bureau of the Census, "sound," "deteriorating," and "dilapidated," 89 percent was found to be deteriorating or dilapidated; 26 percent was the national average for renter-occupied housing in 1960.

For those attempting to settle-out and find decent housing, discrimination is a hindrance in an already tight housing market. They have found that real estate people show them potential housing in pre-determined areas, and if they attempt to find houses for themselves, they often find the price increased over that which was advertised. If they attempt to rent, they encounter restrictions on large families, poor construction and maintenance, and extras which should be the responsibility of the landlord such as painting and repairs. "Nondiscriminatory real estate practices will not, by any means, solve the housing problem for Mexican American families, but it could appreciably improve the housing market," was the statement made by



the Migrant Action Program. One example given by a witness was that the listed price of a house was raised when a Mexican American family attempted to purchase. With a high percentage of families having incomes below the poverty level and having more children than the average, their housing needs are not easily met. Ninety-one percent of these families were renting as compared with 61 percent home ownership for the Nation as a whole.

The Committee was informed that the cost of home ownership has risen faster than rental costs. Rentals are high in that they take a higher percentage of the income of the settled Mexican Americans. They paid 24 percent of their income for rental as compared to the national average of 14.3 percent. Thirty-eight percent of the families were paying between 26 percent and 45 percent of their income for rent. Rent costs are kept as low as they are by the expediency of renting less than adequate space. One hundred percent of those Mexican American families with incomes below the "poverty level" live in houses where there is more than one person per room and they were not happy about such crowding. Over 75 percent of those living with more than one person per room expressed a desire for less crowding.

Iowa cities which have had difficulties in meeting the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Workable Program requirement for urban renewal programs, have usually found that inadequate housing codes were their problem. The State housing code has provisions below standards acceptable to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Another problem is the inability to provide sufficient low-income housing to handle the expected displacement. However, most of the urban renewal programs active in Iowa now involve downtown areas and generally are not relevant to the problem at hand. Iowa law requires that a referendum be held before low-rent public housing

for families can be built. Many feel that this law, together with a general lack of desire in the State to provide housing effectively, prevents family housing in the public housing program.

A representative from the Chicago Regional Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development explained how HUD provides loans, grants of money, and other assistance to State or local agencies, private individuals, or groups upon the initiative of the applicant. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) insurance program for low- and moderate-income housing coupled with rent supplement can be helpful for lower-income families. However, the participants were not aware of any program "designated for a Spanish surnamed neighborhood". It appears that HUD programs in Iowa offer little to the Spanish surnamed family, unless they are being displaced, or are discriminated against in attempting to secure housing which has been built with the assistance of Federal funds.

Another participant suggested that the Farmers Home Administration has the potential for helping Spanish surnamed people. It has jurisdiction over rural areas with 2,500 persons or less and provides direct interest subsidies. Its assistance can be used to help a small group of families construct their own homes and a construction supervisor can be provided for this purpose.

It was noted by one Federal official that "shelter is not a privilege to be granted or not, but a civil right to be enjoyed by all." This is not the case for migrants in Iowa. Despite Federal weakness in pushing their programs, it was observed that State, county, and local levels of government are not using programs available through the Department of Housing and Urban Development to meet the housing needs of the Spanish surnamed Americans in Iowa.

## MIGRANT HEALTH CONDITIONS

### Background

A distinction could be made between living conditions of settled-out Mexican Americans and the seasonal migratory families who depend in varying degrees upon agricultural work as a means of livelihood, even though similar problems are experienced by those settled-out but still in the farm labor pool. The intention here is to explore the nature of the conditions under which migrants (especially Mexican Americans) are forced to live and work in the State of Iowa. This task will overlap with other areas of concern, but attention will be given to working as nearly as possible within the framework of health, safety, and contributing factors.

The statements presented described calculated and systematic abuses in the field of health and housing. A justified pessimism characterized the statements of the individual citizens and State and Federal representatives. Migrant health, safety, and living conditions correspond directly to the enforcement of employment, housing, and law provisions. An immediate conclusion can be drawn that the maintenance of good health practices is difficult when legislative provisions are not enforced.

### Problems

The Committee heard charges that in Muscatine "...houses are so bad; since last year they have just accomplished a little bit, not too much; bathrooms not being fit for a human being to use; no hot water; five to six families live in each home. These housing conditions, which contribute

to poor health, continue to exist because migrant families can't say anything. If they leave, they lose their bonus automatically. Housing is deplorable in winter for those who remain with a view toward settling-out. The crew leader, grower, and office personnel work together to exploit the migrant and don't care what happens to him. The crew leader is interested only in himself and the grower's concern is harvesting his crops. ..."

In regard to assistance programs, the feeling was expressed that none of these families will be eligible to receive help especially if they stay together, as most of them do. Again, it was charged that local, State, and Federal agencies responsible for regulating practices that affect the health of agricultural workers do very little good.

As has been noted, health of migrants is impaired by food and diet problems which stem from their financial plight. Sometimes delay in availability of work due to a number of factors, requires some families to rely upon advances for food from the employer. Many growers and food processing companies also issue food coupons during the waiting periods. In some cases, these coupons can be used in any store, while in other instances, only one store is approved for their use. This practice not only prevents migrants from doing comparative buying, but also subjects them to high food prices with an income already too low for an adequate diet.

The food stamp program is of little avail. Most migrant families could benefit from participation in this program. Yet, it has become increasingly

clear that the regulations guiding the food stamp program, and interpreted by local offices of social welfare, tend to exclude migrant workers from participation in the program.

Most of these families experienced serious medical problems in the past year. Among these are a kidney transplant, one serious, circulatory ailment; diabetes; hysterectomies; serious eye problems; and children hospitalized for malnutrition.

Food, clothing, and proper shelter are seriously inadequate. These problems follow a vicious cycle from unfair employment practices and services, to inadequate food and unbalanced diets, to impairment of child and adult health, compounding serious illness. These factors result in low productivity of migrants and losses to growers which complete the cycle of lamentable conditions for migrants.

In all of these related problems detrimental to the good health of Mexican Americans, the U.S. Department of Labor is almost completely prevented from intervening. It was reported that no regulation can be enforced by that Federal agency, unless the agricultural workers are recruited through that agency. As a result, growers do their own recruiting, using various enticements, and bypassing existing Department of Labor standards. Furthermore, the State of Iowa is limited in enforcement to camps not specifically identified as agricultural work camps.

This indicates that neither local, State, nor Federal agencies can effectively provide adequate health and safety conditions--even where enabling legislation, or general rules (as with the State department of health) have been set forth. The key to this lack of enforcement at any level of government is the inadequate amount of funds and personnel made available for inspection and enforcement.

Regular and meaningful inspections are severely hampered. The access to camps for government employers or private citizens is difficult because the camps are closely guarded. It was reported that a labor camp in Fort Dodge will not allow migrant workers to receive visitors.

Probably the only positive note sounded was related to health and medical services in the Cedar Rapids area. In this area, approximately 18 families plan to settle-out. Local hospitals were very willing to admit the new residents to the health clinics. In addition, there has been excellent cooperation on the part of the public health nurses in following through on observation of problems in the homes and in detecting need for treatment before things got out of hand.

It was asserted by participants that migrants don't want sympathy and hand-outs. Rather, they need a fair contract or agreement system that would provide "better wages, better housing, and better opportunities for their children."

## ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

### Background

The scope of the concern in the area of administration of justice as it relates to Mexican Americans and Spanish surnamed people in Iowa, can be itemized as follows: Deficiencies in employment practices; lack of representation at policy-making and review levels; day-to-day problems of discrimination in contact with law enforcement agencies; and the need for vigorous enforcement of State and Federal legislation.

No active recruitment is being pursued by the State department of public safety to obtain minority persons for employment. The Iowa Crime Commission was optimistic that cadet programs would be effective. These programs are designed to recruit young persons prior to the legal age for employment and prepare them for law enforcement jobs. It is anticipated that such programs will become more common in Iowa and are viewed as a definite recruitment aid for the employment of minorities.

The Iowa Crime Commission is a new organization under the direction of the Governor's Office. Its 30 commissioners are appointed by the Governor's Office under Federal regulations that require its membership be at least one-third State-level people and one-third local-level people. The Commission is a policy-making organization established by the State legislature. Its chief function is to investigate law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and corrections, probation, and parole. It now has 10 staff members with a possibility of four more to be added. None of these is Mexican American or of any other visible minority.



Through the use of funds under the Omnibus Crime Control Act, some programs in police-community relations are underway. Examples are the "Pot Lot" programs in Davenport and the "Disciples of Peace" in Waterloo. These efforts were identified by officials of the Crime Commission as community-based programs for prevention of disorder by alleviating causes rather than treating the effect. Another effort underway is the revision of the Iowa Criminal Code.

### Problems

Statements made at the meeting revealed examples of outright discrimination, and cases of mistaken identity due to lack of careful investigation because of the stereotype that "all of them Mexican Americans are the same."

Racism was recognized as an underlying factor working on the emotions, attitudes, and practices of police personnel. It was charged that arbitrary discrimination, harassment, and abuse are common, based on national origin and the relatively high visibility of Mexican Americans. Procedures for complaint and redress of grievances were represented as being interminably involved, and nonproductive.

Mention was made of the practice of identifying the race of an individual on a driver's license by the numbered code, although information was given to the effect that this practice has been discontinued.

A general feeling of distrust of law enforcement policy and procedure was expressed, especially where accountability for abuse, physical or verbal, is very obscure. To many Mexican Americans, police community-

relations means a calculated effort to make personnel and financial resources available to control them. It is believed by them that the purchase of hardware has priority over training for improvement in human relations.

A statement was made by one State official expressing the opinion of the high probability that a minority group person would have been in trouble with the law. This was based on personal experience with the socially and economically disadvantaged. It was clarified, after questioning, that this was a personal feeling and not the official position of State law enforcement agencies in dealing with minority groups. It was noted that there were some implications in the statement with regard to a possible different standard of application in the administration of justice.

The language barrier was generally minimized as a factor in police-community relations, because the means overcoming this problem was so obvious. Hiring Mexican Americans or other Spanish speaking persons, use of interpreters as consultants, and printing written materials in Spanish have been neglected.

It was reported that progress is being made in improving the quality of human and community relations training for law enforcement personnel who have direct contact with people. Statements were made reflecting a general willingness to print manuals and other essential data in Spanish for those to whom Spanish is the mother tongue.

In response to a question inquiring into what is being done to reduce the use of force, the answer came that "the pressure is building" to accomplish this. Accountability for using force in the various local, county, and State law enforcement agencies was recognized to be "extremely variable," with specific mention being given to positive efforts being made in Des Moines.

Priorities of the Iowa Crime Commission in a comprehensive plan for law enforcement were stated. These priorities, an official of the Crime Commission indicated, "can be arranged, it will not be oriented on the billy club principle."

Some of the priorities are: hire more probationary and patrol officers and a pretrial release system. It was asserted with regard to the comprehensive plan that "We can't push this program on anybody."

The hardware for law enforcement (including grenades, short-range shells, and semi-automatic weapons) was purchased before the Crime Commission was formed through direct Federal grants to the localities. One reason given by law enforcement officers for the need of grenades by police departments was "because there is a lot of organized crime in this State," a fact that "we are mightily worried about. ..." However, they added, this was not to be used for "justifying the use of grenades here or an arsenal or any particular type of weapon."

In response to the "possible political implications" as to whether "there will be room for some very active and forthright programs and steps...in dealing with the total range of criminal justice and law

enforcement," the answer came that "this won't be a timid program... it will actually move."

With the exception of two persons in Des Moines and West Des Moines, employment of Mexican Americans in law enforcement agencies (State patrol, department of public safety, sheriffs' departments, local police forces--a total of nearly 1,000 jobs) was nonexistent or could not be documented. The corresponding policy making bodies of these agencies reflected the same picture with regard to representation-----none!

Exploitation by growers was mentioned as a factor in encouraging illegal entry into the United States and the State of Iowa, compounding the law enforcement function.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### EDUCATION

The Iowa State Advisory Committee recommends:

1. That the colleges and universities develop new programs and techniques to overcome problems unique to the needs of Spanish surnamed students.
2. That the high schools institute programs for teachers and counselors to increase their understanding and awareness of the problems of the Spanish surnamed student.
3. That State and privately supported institutions of higher learning continue to increase their efforts to disseminate information about grants and aids available to Spanish surnamed students and to actively recruit them.
4. That a series of bilingual preschools be established to aid the Spanish-speaking in acquiring ability in the English language before being faced with the demands of formal schooling, such as those available under Project Head Start.
5. That teachers be recruited from Spanish surnamed groups who have an understanding of the emotional, cultural, and educational problems of Spanish surnamed pupils; and that they and others professionally qualified develop courses on the Mexican American heritage which will be taught in the areas having significant numbers of Spanish surnamed people.
6. That a curriculum on Mexican American studies be instituted on both the elementary and secondary levels.
7. That because of the paucity of information on the history of Mexican Americans in Iowa, research studies be done to provide such information.

8. That all tests given to Spanish surnamed individuals be re-evaluated.

9. That guidance counseling programs be expanded in those schools with a high concentration of Spanish surnamed pupils.

### Employment

#### Federal Employment

1. That Executive Order 11246 and other Civil Service regulations which require not only nondiscrimination in hiring and promoting but continuing affirmative action be more strictly enforced and monitored by the appropriate Federal agencies.

2. That a compliance review be done in the State on all programs that receive Federal assistance to determine their compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

#### State and Local Governments

1. That State and local governments develop and maintain an adequate program of recruitment that will increase the number of Spanish surnamed individuals on their payrolls.

2. That the benefits of MDTA (Manpower Development and Training Act) apply equitably to Spanish surnamed persons.

3. That the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and the State employment office employ Spanish surnamed individuals.

#### Private Employment

1. That the Iowa Legislature pass laws that will ensure the enforcement of equal employment and fair wages to migrant workers.

2. That the Iowa Legislature provide for the enforcement of child labor laws.

3. That the Iowa Legislature enact a law requiring employers to pay migrant workers on a weekly basis and prevent employers from withholding part\_of earned wages until the season has ended.

#### HOUSING

The Iowa State Advisory Committee recommends:

1. That the State provide adequate funds to implement an effective program of inspection of all labor camps which house migrant workers.
2. That laws be enacted that will specify standards for construction, sanitation, and recreational facilities at migrant labor camps.
3. That the permit system be reviewed with the view toward tighter control.
4. That camps not be allowed to operate on provisional permits when deficiencies are found.
5. That the Iowa Legislature enact low-income, housing legislation.
6. That the Iowa Legislature enact laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex, in the sale or rental of housing or real property.
7. That the State review, evaluate, and revive the State housing code with higher standards.
8. That Urban Renewal relocation requirements be met when families are displaced, so that decent, adequate housing is provided.
9. That the Des Moines Regional Office of FHA publicize and promote the program for Home Ownership of Low Income Families (Section 235), to aid in making housing available for qualified Spanish surnamed families.

## Migrant Health Conditions

The Iowa State Advisory Committee recommends:

1. That the State government implement a program that will provide and guarantee decent health services to migrants.

2. That decent and sanitary shelters for migrants be provided and laws enforced that will not allow growers and processors to manipulate the law to the disadvantage of the migrant workers.

3. An extension of the 1969 Iowa Agricultural Labor Camp Inspection Program to include:

a. coverage of farms employing less than six migrants----one building; and

b. stricter guidelines for certification.

4. State legislation to deal with the following issues:

a. broader regulating powers for the State department of health;

b. a wage collection law in Iowa;

c. firm and binding "Agreement" procedure between grower/worker;

d. the "Bonus" system and garnishment of wages;

e. enforcement of penalties for violations of the Iowa Agricultural Labor Camp Inspection Program;

f. company store, food coupons, and discriminatory prices;

g. verifying income--proper records; and

h. weights and measures -- poundage picked.



5. An investigation by the appropriate Federal agencies to determine the impact of the following on the lives of the Spanish surnamed in Iowa:

Fair Labor Standards Act/migrants - National Labor Relations Act  
Child Labor Law - Minimum Wage Law - Inspection Programs.

6. An investigation of the administration of Welfare Programs, Food Stamp Programs, etc., with a view toward making such services available to migratory workers.

7. An extension of the Department of Labor's experimental project to improve services to migrants and facilitate "settling-out" into productive jobs as the need for migrant labor diminishes.

8. An investigation of employers in Iowa who use migrant workers to determine whether social security laws are being complied with.

9. An investigation by Federal and State government of the use and effects of pesticides and farm chemicals on migrant farm workers in Iowa.

#### Police-Community Relations

The Iowa State Advisory Committee recommends:

1. That all law enforcement agencies in Iowa begin an immediate recruitment program to attract Spanish surnamed citizens to their staffs with particular focus on the State department of public safety and on local governments that have a concentration of Spanish surnamed residents.

2. That criminal code revisions of the State be vigorously pursued.

3. That improved provisions be made for pretrial release, legal assistance, and public defender programs.

4. That State guidelines be established with mandatory requirements of accountability for the use of physical force by law enforcement officials.

5. That information pertinent to law enforcement and safety be printed in Spanish.

6. That human relations training programs be implemented with corresponding internal efforts to deal with attitudes in relationship to behavior for top level police to rank-and-file officers.

7. That height restrictions for Spanish surnamed applicants who are seeking law enforcement employment be reduced.

8. That use of Safe Streets Act Funds be investigated and that funds be used for police-community relations rather than dead-end control oriented programs.

9. That an experimental pilot project be implemented, perhaps in Des Moines, of the use of small, portable cassette-tape recorders for patrol officers on duty. Whenever a situation arises for arrest or use of force, the citizen can be made aware that the total occasion is being recorded. This could safeguard the patrol officer in the performance of his duty against the unfounded accusation of "brutality" - verbal or physical. It would also provide a reasonable, though not fool-proof, record of treatment of a citizen in the process of arrest and transport to police headquarters. The matter of accountability could be facilitated.