

INTRODUCTION

The United States is undergoing a revolution in civil rights. Sometimes subdued, often violent, the movement has touched every institution and economic faction of this nation. Although it has not received the public attention that has been accorded some elements of this change, the plight of the rural poor nevertheless has become a problem of increasing dimensions and concern.

Farm labor is a striking example of imbalance in American society. On one hand, many segments of agriculture have experienced great growth and wealth in this period of rapid technological change. On the other, the lives of many of those whose labor is still required on our farms remain untouched by this prosperity. The benefits of unionization, minimum wage and health protection which are taken for granted by most segments of the economy are still unavailable to most of the rural labor force. Laws requiring adequate housing for farmworkers are largely ineffectual. Although intended to help the rural poor, welfare agencies frequently work to the laborer's disadvantage. The chapters summarized below analyze and evaluate areas of the law relevant to these and other problems of the farmworker.

The Unionization of Farm Labor discusses the exclusion of farmworkers from the National Labor Relations Act, and outlines the various procedures currently being used to organize farm labor without the aid of national legislation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the objectives of organized farm labor in terms of the immense economic problems confronting both laborers and employers.

Farm Labor Contractors and Low Farm Wages surveys state and federal laws regulating persons who act as intermediaries in the recruitment of farm labor. The article discusses the abusive practices of the contractors which forced the enactment of protective legislation. Noting that many of the abuses still exist, the article concludes with several suggestions for reform.

Illegal Entrants: The Wetback Problem in American Farm Labor discusses the problems of job competition and wage depression caused by the influx of illegally entering Mexican farmworkers. The article surveys current efforts to stem the steady "invasion" of the illegal entrants, and concludes that there are no meaningful penalties to discourage such conduct.

Farm Labor Housing in California explores both public and private programs to house the agricultural worker and his family, with an emphasis on the implementation of these plans in California. The chapter suggests improvements which can be made in existing housing programs notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the farmworker's low income. Building code enforcement procedures are discussed in relation to their value in improving housing conditions.

Workmen's Compensation, Minimum Wage, and the Farmworker surveys current state and federal workmen's compensation and minimum wage laws. The article examines the historical reasons why farmworkers have been excluded from the coverage of the acts, and recommends several alternatives for eliminating such exclusion.

Health Insurance for Farmworkers discusses the health needs of agricultural workers, government health plans, and private employer financed health protection.

The Welfare System and the Farm Laborer discusses the welfare problems confronting the farmworker. The chapter concludes that any meaningful reform in welfare must include means for meeting the special problems and needs of the rural poor.

The effects of voter qualification laws are explored in *The Non-voting Farmworker: Disenfranchised by Design?* The article documents the electoral weakness of farm labor, but concludes that the blame for that weakness should not, for the most part, be attributed to state voting statutes.

Legal Assistance in the Rural Setting examines the background and creation of nationally sponsored legal aid and its application to the rural poverty problem. Primary emphasis is placed on an analysis and comparison of several existing approaches to providing legal services to the poor.

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