

FACTS ABOUT TEXAS FARM WORKERS
(Compiled from material published in the Texas Observer, February 3, 1978)*

INCOME

- Texas Minimum Wage Act stipulates \$1.40 per hour for farm workers.
- Annual per-capita income amounts to \$2,919.00.
- Median family income (family of 6) is \$3,990 per year.
- 78% of farm worker families in Texas have incomes below the federal poverty level.

EMPLOYMENT & THE EMPLOYER

- There is work in the Rio Grande Valley only 5 months each year. (Thousands of Texas farm workers migrate out-of-state in order to make a living.)
- Most farm workers must seek work through a labor contractor.
- The shorthanded hoe, el cortito, is still in widespread use.
- The Texas Workers Compensation Act still excludes farm workers.
- 60% of Texas citrus is held by absentee landlords.
- Weslasco, a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Crown Cola, has annual sales of \$25 million.
- Griffin & Brand, Inc., dominates the vegetable market, with \$34 million in annual sales. It markets under the G & B and Trophy labels and grows, packs, freezes, ships and markets its fresh and frozen vegetables. G & B has a London sales office and operates in 4 other states plus extensive holdings in Mexico.

EDUCATION

- 86% of farm worker children do not complete high school.
- 70% of adult farm workers have less than 4 years of school.

HOUSING

- Most farm workers live in unincorporated rural communities known as colonias, which lack water, sewer and gas lines and paved streets.
- One-third of the Rio Grande Valley colonias have no water at all; water is hauled in from nearby irrigation canals or golf course sprinklers. There are no public sewer systems; after heavy rains many colonias stand in water for days.

HEALTH

- TB mortality rates are 250% higher than national average.
- Strep throat — 300% higher than for wealthier Texans.**
- Hepatitis — 110% higher than for wealthier Texans.**
- Scarlet Fever — 300% " " " " " **

*Data is for Hidalgo County, home base for 77,000 farm workers.

**Data from a study by the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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5/78