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AIRMAIL

Mr. James C. Sheppard, Director
Ninth Civilian Defense Region
1355 Market Street
San Francisco, California

Dear Jim.

I am appending herewith a copy of a plan that I prepared for the organization of so-called volunteer farm labor. I submitted this plan this morning to an Interdepartmental Committee that was considering the farm problem as a whole and specifically how we should move to make good the production quotas which have been established for this country. The overall problem is at least a three-fold one; namely, involving the availability of farm machinery, the availability of manpower and the correctness of the production quotas that have been set. This plan of mine is, of course, only one aspect of the manpower problem. That problem has other aspects such as selective service, importation of foreign farm labor, encouragement of the flow into agriculture of labor by the promotion of better wage standards, the utilization of existing manpower more wisely, as, for example, moving manpower from the submarginal farm to the more productive farm, etc.

I am transmitting this plan to you with the idea that you will get the states going on something like this. This plan is not in any sense a straitjacket or a necessary scheme of organization. It does, I believe, cover in brief terms the high points of any organization that should be created by the states to mobilize this type of farm labor. The important thing, as I see it, is that this is a community problem and that organization should be adapted to deal with it on a community basis. My fears are that an effort will be made to deal with it according to a rigid national pattern of some kind or through federal agencies that will fail to see that it is the community as a community which has to handle this angle of the problem.

You will note that I suggest the possibility of creating some kind of insignia for people enrolled in this kind of work. There are things to be said for and against glamorizing an activity of this nature. I will appreciate it very much if you will get the reaction of the state officials to such a proposition and get it to me quickly.

I do not know just what techniques you will use in presenting the case for doing something along this line to your various states. You will know better than I how to reach the appropriate state officials in this connection and tie them in with the operation of the State Council of Defense as a whole. But it is highly important to get the states going and get them going quickly.

Do not assume that this plan is anything other than a suggestion that emanates from me. Such official action as I can take later as the character of the state organizations crystallizes will be taken.

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Mr. James C. Sheppard

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Nor do I intend at the present moment to indulge in any publicity in this connection and I believe that you should follow the same principle. If the states choose to do so, that is their business, but publicity should follow rather than precede the act of organization. Also do not assume that this project will do more than govern a portion of the manpower problem so far as agricultural farm labor is concerned. For the success of this kind of an operation, it is essential, as I indicated before, that the movement should be a true grass roots movement rather than something emanating from Washington. If it can be made to spring from the grass roots, it will survive and appropriate uniformity can be superimposed upon it later.

I shall be interested in your reactions to the plan as well as the reactions of the states to the idea. I will be particularly interested to get your own and the reactions of the states to the suggestion of insignia.

Remember that this is not the land army idea. That idea may yet be suggested and can easily be made supplemental to any effort carried out along this line. This plan is instead an effort to try and organize communities so that they can help themselves as best they can in the light of their own problems.

Sincerely yours,

James M. Landis
Director

Enc.

A PLAN FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SOURCES OF
FARM LABOR

The General Steps to be Taken:

It is recognized that one of the most important sources of seasonal workers during 1943 will be the "volunteer" 1/ workers recruited in the community.

The recruitment and use of these workers is primarily a community problem. It involves, as a first step, an analysis of the community's potential use of this type of labor and, secondly, the mobilization of the resources of the community to meet that need.

To effect these ends the following steps should be taken:

1. A determination of those geographical areas within states that can conveniently be regarded as agricultural communities for this purpose. These may be counties, townships or any other appropriate unit. The determination should be made by state authority, e.g., by the head of the state agricultural department.
2. The appointment by appropriate state authority of persons to head this program in the predetermined number of agricultural communities.
3. An analysis of farm labor needs community by community. This analysis can be done through the farm plans being developed with farmers by AAA committeemen during the latter part of January.
4. The breakdown of these farm labor needs to determine how much of them can be met by this type of labor and thus an estimation of necessary quotas community by community and month by month for this type of labor.
5. The creation of community machinery that will attempt to fill these quotas. It is of prime importance that this machinery should be a community machinery for otherwise the community spirit so essential to the success of this enterprise will not be aroused.

The Nature of the Community Machinery Required for Recruitment of Local Farm Labor:

For simplicity of presentation, assume that the agricultural community involved is a county, which has one or two cities of moderate size (2000 to 10,000) included within it.

1/ These workers are not volunteers in that they will be paid the going wage for their services. They are, however, volunteers in the sense that the job, because of patriotism, etc., is their prime inducement to work rather than the pay.

The person appointed under 2 above would bring together the chairman of the county defense council, the chairmen of the local defense councils, the directors of the Extension Service and AAA, the directors of the United State Employment Service, the Superintendents of Schools, and such other persons as may be needed. A presentation of the community's labor needs for this type of labor would be on hand and the issue for this group is the extent to which they can be filled by the community itself.

The sources for this type of labor are youth, women and part-time workers in other fields. The methods of reaching them are through schools and youth-serving agencies, clubs, churches, civic organization, labor unions and by the canvass of homes and general local publicity.

Recruitment of this labor should be in the name of community through the volunteer offices of the defense councils assisted where possible by the local U.S.E.S. agencies.

Community life can be planned ahead so as greatly to increase this potential labor supply. Some advance training can be given in schools. School vacations can be arranged so as to make school labor available at the appropriate periods. Mercantile life can be so arranged to make labor normally employed therein available for peak agricultural periods. Community day nurseries can release an additional amount of womanpower at appropriate periods.

It may be desirable to offer some reward in the form of insignia to these "volunteers". If so, it is highly desirable that this be integrated into the general system of insignia rewards created by the United States Office of Civilian Defense.

Problems of transport are at a minimum in dealing with this type of labor. Where they exist the local transportation officer of the defense council can frequently handle them.

The actual use of these volunteers obviously needs supervision, - a supervision that can best be handled locally through persons familiar with the local conditions.

Where one community is unable to meet quotas, arrangements may be made to tap the labor supply of an adjoining community or adjoining municipality.

The Land Army Plan:

The above plan is different from the Land Army Plan, and this latter plan can be used to supplement it.

The Land Army Plan basically conceives of the enrollment of youths and women for periods of time for use at agricultural points frequently far distant from their homes. It brings into existence problems of transportation, housing, work standards, etc., that the community approach to a minimum.

If necessary, it will be possible to recruit along state or national lines something like a Land Army, but this will require time and administrative control and planning far in excess of the above plan. A Land Army should be regarded as supplementary to the use of community labor.

The Community Approach:

The community approach to this problem as a community response to a war emergency is essential for its success. Leadership must therefore lie in the community and not be taken by some Federal agency. Federal, even state agencies, are there to service that leadership and to make available to communities other necessary types of farm labor which the community itself cannot supply.

If the thesis of community leadership be accepted, the community war agency - the defense council or war council- should promptly assume the responsibility of planning towards the above ends and creating machinery to see to their efficient execution.

Memorandum - - January 7, 1943

To: Stanly W. Donogh
Northwest Sector

From: James C. Sheppard

You are undoubtedly much more familiar with the crisis in agricultural production which we are facing, which in my opinion is a result of considerable bungling plus an acute shortage of manpower. The information at my disposal shows that in every state in our region, we are faced with the possibility that less acreage will be planted this year due to the inability of the farmer to be certain that he will be able to have the facilities with which to harvest such crops as he plants.

I have been pounding Washington with all the force I possess for some two months, insisting that there come out of Washington a unified approach to this problem which in my judgment involves the Office of Defense Transportation, the Department of Agriculture, the War Manpower Commission and the Office of Price Administration. Nothing tangible has resulted from the approaches which I have made. I am attaching to this letter a copy of a letter from Dean Landis to me, dated December 28, and which has attached to it a copy of his letter to Secretary Wickard. The tone of Dean Landis' letter indicates to me, as I think it will to you, that we cannot be at all sanguine about the possibility of any unified approach coming from Washington.

I am trying one thing more. Next week I am having a meeting with the regional heads of the several agencies involved, to see if we cannot work out a unified approach, at least in this region. It is my judgment that if the agriculture producers are bombarded by four or five federal agencies with separate programs, nothing but confusion will result. I will do my level best to see if we can't correct it in this region.

I think that we have to take the position that the mechanism of the defense council is available for the utilization of the unified program. I think also that we have to regard each state almost as a separate entity as well as different localities within the state, because of the separability of the program and also because of the different planting and harvesting seasons within our region.

January 7, 1943

In 1942, in my judgment, most of the state defense councils, with the exception of the state of Utah, did not do anything tangible concerning this problem. In the state of Arizona an excellent beginning was made by one of the county defense councils with good results in the Salt River Valley. California presents a terrific problem. I have submitted to the sector directors in California, a report of conditions existing in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys. There are literally thousands of acres of cotton in the San Joaquin Valley which have not been picked because of a lack of pickers.

I realize, as you do, the size of this problem. I realize also how miserable the planning in Washington has been by the separate agencies who are supposed to do something about these problems, but I also feel that those of us who are in the field can do something to solve the problem if we set our minds to it.

Therefore, may I urge that you immediately get the state councils representatives in your respective territories and insist that they do something about this problem. I think we will have to do this job right now. It would be my suggestion that you have a meeting with the Governor, the Director of the State Defense Council and the representatives of the several state agencies who should be doing something about this. You will probably find a host of excuses given you as to why it is impossible to do anything. I think you will have to bat down these proffered excuses and insist that something be done about it and I hope we will be able to have a discussion concerning this problem during our meeting on the 18th.

James C. Sheppard
Director
Ninth Civilian Defense Region

OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE

NINTH CIVILIAN DEFENSE REGION

NORTHWEST SECTOR

WHITE-HENRY-STUART BLDG.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

January 29, 1943

Mr. Jerrold Owen, Coordinator
Oregon State Defense Council
Oregon State Library Building
Salem, Oregon

Subject: VOLUNTEER FARM LABOR

Dear Mr. Owen:

From the enclosed copies of communications received by us through Mr. Sheppard, you will note that he and Dean Landis are both concerned on the matter of farm labor for the coming season. We have from this office investigated what has been done by the agencies in this state and feel confident that definite worthwhile plans are being instigated by agencies concerned and that our part should be one of cooperation with the existing program rather than one of instituting an original program of our own. We are informing Mr. Sheppard to that effect but are at the same time informing him that we are obtaining information relative to the States of Oregon. Our thought, of course, is to ask you to supply us to the best of your ability with this information. Dick may have said something to you about it today.

Will you kindly inform me as to what your attitude is and if you wish to, take whatever time is necessary in obtaining the information feel free to do so, but please advise.

You will note that we have not included the letter from Dean Landis under date of December 28 or his letter to Wickard referred to in Mr. Sheppard's comments of January 7. These were long letters and of no particular importance to you now.

Yours very truly,



Ivan Travis
Administrative Assistant
Northwest Sector, O.C.D.

Enc.

Agriculture

February 3rd, 1943

Mr. Ivan Travis, Administrative Assistant
Northwest Sector Office of Civilian Defense
White-Henry-Stuart Building
Seattle, Washington

Subject: VOLUNTEER FARM LABOR

Dear Mr. Travis:

At your suggestion we have made a thorough investigation into the plans being made to care for farm labor in Oregon during the coming season. We find that the "Governor's Advisory Committee on Agriculture to the United States Employment Service" is composed of all agencies concerned in this problem, such as the United States Employment Service, the USDA War Board, State Agriculture Department, State Committee on Youth Activities, Extension Service of Oregon State College, and other agencies.

Through the coordinated efforts of these agencies Oregon handled its farm labor problem very well last year and, as a matter of fact, set up a national record for the harvesting of crops.

With farm labor designated as essential by the War Manpower Commission it really should be a much easier task to recruit farm labor this year than was the case last year. And it is our considered opinion that any new organization created either with the idea of handling this problem or stimulating recruitment of farm labor would be a duplication of service without any material benefits.

In the plan that was used last year by the Governor's Advisory Committee (and which is included in its plan for the coming year) particular attention is paid to communities responsible in furnishing temporary farm help when needed.

It may be that the plan projected by Dean Landis will be of great value in some of the large population centers but I believe that the problem can be handled in Oregon with the organization already set up.

Very truly yours,

OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL

By
James D. Olson,
Assistant State Coordinator

JDO:bbb