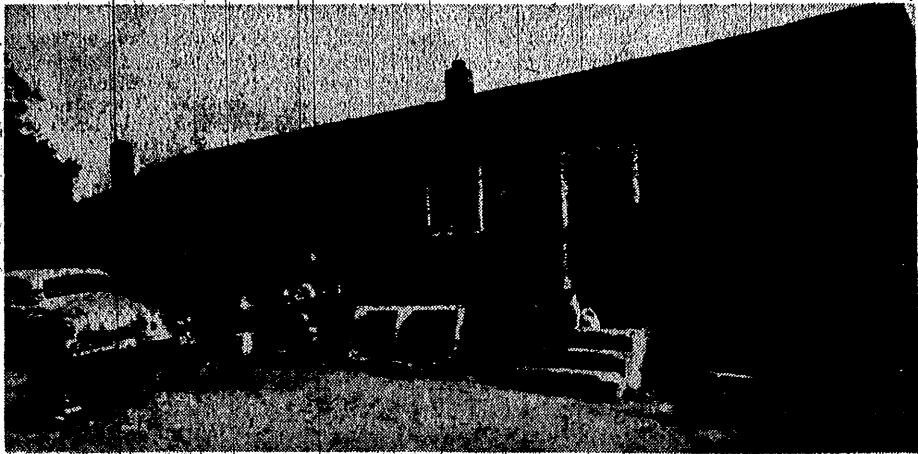


## The Forgotten People

# Farm Camp Slum, Exposed 8 Years Ago, Is Still Hell



This is home to a migrant worker and his family—on Route 33 between Hightstown and Freehold, N. J.—where staff writer Dale Wright found conditions no better now than they were eight years ago when first exposed by staff writer Allan Keller.

Photo by De Marasco.

Reporter Dale Wright, who spent six months off and on living and working with migrant farm laborers on the East Coast, continues his story of America's wanderers whose lives are an endless circle of debt and degradation.

By DALE WRIGHT,  
World-Telegram Staff Writer.

The great dream of many migrant farm workers, born and reared in a shack in the South, is to go North to the land of plenty—to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

On his first trip "on the season," the migrant finds that dream quickly shattered. I too, was a dreamer when I went into the fields in Delaware, New Jersey and eastern Long Island.

I found that, unlike the South, there were, indeed, a few laws aimed at protecting the rights of the itinerant harvester. But the truth is that these laws are so scant and so haphazardly enforced that they have little effect.

### Inspected?

They have had no effect whatever, for example, at one camp where I found the same shocking conditions barred by

another World-Telegram survey eight years ago.

I found a mean-looking labor camp on the Enos Herbert farm near New Sharon, N. J., that a health inspector had visited the day before I did. Six inches of slimy water covered the concrete block community shower room. There was no drainage system.

About 20 persons living at the camp drew their water, for drinking, cooking and bathing, from a handpump in the middle of the camp compound. The water tasted acid and appeared to be contaminated. In every glassful a gritty sediment settled to the bottom.

### Owes Too Much to Die.

In Cedarville, N. J., a little farm town in the southwestern corner of the state, a woman crew leader told me that after spending most of her life as a migrant, "I'm ready to lay down and die."

She said her name was Mable Brown and that she came from Pompano Beach, Fla. "I can't die now, though," she added. "I owe too many people."

An angular, work-worn woman wearing a pair of incongruous jodhpurs, Mrs. Brown said she had brought 17 laborers into Cedarville in a battered Chevy sedan and a

dilapidated bus. Bad weather, she said, had held up the tomato crop and as a result none of her crew had earned any money. She was paying their food bill out of her own pocket.

Mrs. Brown's camp was worse than any I had seen in the Deep South. She repeated an old refrain: "Ain't seen any government people around here in a long time."

The camp consisted of a row of shanties—off the main road in the woods—with no running water, no indoor toilet and no plumbing. There was a filthy community shower and a cramped, one-room kitchen which served the whole camp.

A mangy dog sprawled in the doorway of one shack. A goat and some flea-bitten sheep scratched in the dirt in front of the row of shanties. A few little children played hop-scotch in the dirt with the menagerie.

### No Lettuce for Him.

One of Mrs. Brown's "help," a stooped, gnarled man in his late 60s, stopped rolling a cigaret and spoke up:

"We was chopping lettuce on the Sorantino Brothers farm a few weeks back, just keepin' busy till the tomatoes got ripe.

"The bossman said he was paying \$1 an hour. When it

came time for the money, the man didn't give us but 85 cents an hour. He didn't say why; he just told us to move on in the pay line. I guess he forgot that we were supposed to get the dollar."

Near Woodstown, N. J., a Negro farm laborer on the Jill Brothers truck farm said the crew he worked for was paid 10 cents for each basket (five-eighths of a bushel) of tomatoes picked. Less than two miles away, at a Puerto Rican labor camp, Ruben Garcia, a husky, tattooed 29-year-old worker, told me he was paid 15 cents for the same size basket of tomatoes being harvested in the same fields for the same grower.

It was clear that there was a double set of standards on the Jill Brothers farm and on many others I found.

### White Worker Bars.

One of the rarities I saw in the migrant labor camps along the Atlantic Seaboard cropped up in Hightstown, N. J., a prosperous little village between Freehold and Trenton. It was a white migrant farm worker.

I found him perched forlornly by the side of a railroad track. He was broke and hungry. A scrawny little man, he said between dips from a

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## Exposure Didn't Help Farm Slum

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can of snuff that his name was Glenn Hubert. "Don't forget, it's spelled with two n's."

He said he was 46 years old, that he came from Madison, Wis., and that he had been "on the road for seven or eight years."

I hadn't seen a white migrant since months earlier in Belle Glade, Fla., when I talked with a group of them

as they shaped up for work in the bean fields.

Mr. Hubert said he suffered as a white man working with migrants. He got the least to eat at his labor camp commissary and he was the first to feel the brunt of the crew leader's anger.

### Beaten for Slowness.

"I don't pick very fast," he complained, "and the bossman (his crew leader) don't stand for no slacking." He said he had been beaten with fists and clubs and pointed to a gash on his cheek.

At another stop in New Jersey—near Manalapan—a young mother of three told in painful detail how it feels to get trapped at the end of the migrant trail.

Mrs. Inell Jennings, 27,

shooed flies away from an infant asleep in a cot and declared:

"That child ain't got a chance. His daddy and me want to give him the best but we can't do no better than this." She lived with her family in a two-room tarpaper and tin shanty in "Bielson's Quarters," a row of about 20 dilapidated dwellings without indoor plumbing or sanitary facilities. The rent was from \$10 to \$15 weekly.

The only time the landlord visits his private housing project is on Saturday morning, to collect the rent.

### Reported 8 Years Ago.

The tragedy of this family's plight is that World-Telegram

reporter Allan Keller had found and reported in shocking detail the same kind of conditions at the same camp eight years ago.

Mrs. Jennings said she had been "forced to make her home at the 'quarters' six years ago, after coming there from Tallahassee, Fla., and getting stranded with a farm labor crew.

Shuffling down the dirt road which leads off the highway to Bielson's Quarters I found Thomas Miller. He said he was 51 and that he came from Charleston, S. C. At that moment, he said, he was looking for a state trooper.

"I've been working with Daisy Durham's outfit," he

said, "and now I'm gonna get her arrested." Mr. Miller said that Mrs. Durham, from Plant City, Fla., his crew leader, had charged him and six other laborers—both men and women—\$10 weekly rent for a one-room shack at the quarters when the place had been condemned.

"That shack is damned,"

## Sweater Hazard

Associated Press.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Oct. 18. — The Arkansas Supreme Court has ruled that Mrs. Delena Hanna, a cannery employee, is entitled to workmen's compensation because she pulled a shoulder muscle while putting on a sweater.

the worker said, "and Biel-son's not supposed to rent it." He explained that his crew leader charged rent for it anyway and pocketed the money.

Mr. Miller's story of cheating and gouging was familiar. I was to hear it many more times in New Jersey and New York—more times than even in Florida.

## TOMORROW:

And on Long Island, too: "We're getting cheated . . . nothing we can do about it."