

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOVEMENT OF FARMERS TO  
INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT - A CASE STUDY

by

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## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and Problem

There are many possible explanations for the level of income in the agricultural sector of our economy. More-than-abundant labor resources in agriculture, large supplies of commodities in markets with low demand elasticities, inefficient farming methods, adverse weather conditions and combinations of these and numerous other factors are contributory.

The apparent large labor force in agriculture is due (1) to improvements in agricultural technology which allow more output per man hour concurrent with (2) failure of the demand for farm products to expand as rapidly as technology. In addition, rural farm people reproduce at a faster than average rate, and, superficially at least, there appear to be important non-monetary considerations which serve as incentives to remain on farms. Consumer shifts from primary agricultural products such as grains and potatoes to secondary products of agriculture such as frozen and prepared foods may also cause excess labor in the sense that production is in excess of the amount which generates favorable or desired prices and incomes.

Because of friction to the mobility of labor from agriculture and the above named reasons there exists an excess of labor in the agricultural sector of our economy.

Comparative farm and non-farm average income statistics are well known. It is almost a unanimous presumption that farmers

have been at an income disadvantage for many years. Figure 1 shows this difference but does not take into account the non-monetary considerations which may tend to offset the income differential.

Rent advantages, the satisfaction of being self-employed, consumption of home grown foods and the healthy environment of farms are examples of the non-monetary considerations mentioned above.

During the period from 1870 to 1950, the percentage of people employed in agriculture in the United States decreased from approximately 52 per cent to 12 per cent (Castle, 1, p. 2). In Kansas, there was a decline of 66,875 people in the portion of the labor force employed in agriculture (and forestry and fishing) from 1930 to 1950. Agriculture (and forestry and fishing) was by far the largest major industry group during this period. In 1930, the next largest major industry group was transportation, communications and other public utilities which employed 149,273 fewer people than did agriculture. By 1950, the wholesale and retail trade industry was next in importance to agriculture with only 25,778 less people employed (Zickefoose, 17, p. 97). In Kansas, there has been a steady farm to city movement throughout the period of sub-average incomes in agriculture, but apparently not enough to eliminate the excess of labor in agriculture.

This work is both a review of the existing ideas on income differentials and labor mobility and a pilot study attempting to

isolate some of the reasons for these differentials, and to isolate some of the reasons for labor mobility or lack of labor mobility. عزل

### Existing Conditions

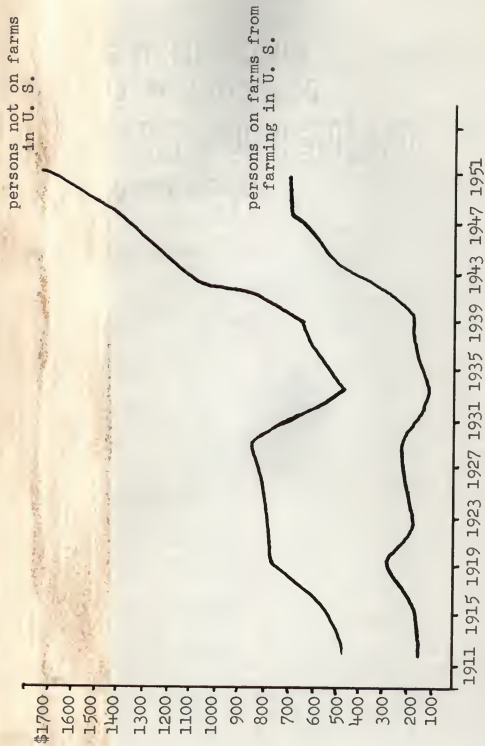
Per capita incomes of persons on farms from farming is far lower than per capita income of non-farm people. Figure 1 shows comparative per capita incomes for the period from 1910 to 1952 in the United States. Table 1 shows that during 1954 and 1955, per capita incomes of farmers from farming and other sources were less than half the per capita income of the non-farm population. Average per capita income per farm (or per farm operator) is only slightly higher than average per capita income of non-farm people.

Table 1. Average per capita income in dollars

|                                       | 1954    | : 1955  |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Farm population from farming          | \$ 653  | \$ 584  |
| Farm population from non-farm sources | 260     | 276     |
| Farm population from all sources      | \$ 913  | \$ 860  |
| Non-farm population                   | 1,837   | 1,922   |
| Total population                      | 1,713   | 1,780   |
| Farm operators total Net Income       | \$2,413 | \$2,192 |

Source: The Farm Income Situation, March 6, 1956, page 4.  
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

The severity implied by the above statistics may be somewhat tempered by factors not measurable in terms of money. In



Three year moving average of yearly figures. Original sources quoted at source. Source: Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 369. Kansas State College. Economic Factors That Affect Wheat in Kansas, Table 1, p. 16.

Figure 1. Yearly per capita farm and non-farm incomes from 1910 to 1952.



addition to this, the extremely low incomes of non-white farmers in the South, when considered in the national average, tend to cause an unusually dismal picture for the nation as a whole. The progressive nature of our income tax further reduces the disparity of per capita incomes shown by the above statistics.

The per capita income situation in Kansas is somewhat different from the national situation. The trend level of per capita incomes in Kansas is only slightly lower than the national average (Wickman, 15, p. 26).

The per capita income of farm population in Kansas is considerably higher than the average per capita income of farm people for the United States (Table 2) while per capita non-farm incomes are slightly below the national level during the period from 1940 through 1950. The term per capita incomes includes off-farm income.

In 1949, 46,464 of the 131,372 farm operators in Kansas reported working off farms; 20,035 worked off farms more than 100 days. In 1954, 52,066 out of 120,291 farm operators worked off farms; 24,831 worked off farms more than 100 days. This shows an 8.4 per cent decline in the number of farms (farms and farm operators are equal in number) and a substantial increase in off farm employment. During this same period, a 12.8 per cent increase in average acreage per farm and a 3.3 per cent increase in total farm acreage accompanied the decline in numbers of farm operators (U. S. Census of Agriculture, 14, pp. 184 and 196).

Table 2. Per capita income of farm and non-farm population, Kansas and United States, 1940-1950

|                            | 1940  | 1941  | 1942    | 1946    | 1947    | 1948    | 1949    | 1950    | Average<br>: per capita<br>: income for<br>: period | Average in-<br>come as per-<br>centage of<br>base year |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|--|
| Per capita farm income     |       |       |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |  |
| Kansas                     | \$182 | \$333 | \$ 638  | \$ 772  | \$1,299 | \$ 997  | \$ 681  | \$ 912  | \$ 767  | 421  |
| United States              | \$162 | \$229 | \$ 358  | \$ 558  | \$ 574  | \$ 682  | \$ 501  | \$ 546  | \$ 485  | 299  |
| Kansas index               | 100   | 183   | 351     | 424     | 714     | 548     | 374     | 501     |   |  |
| United States index        | 100   | 141   | 221     | 344     | 354     | 421     | 309     | 337     |   |  |
| Per capita non-farm income |       |       |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |  |
| Kansas                     | \$545 | \$676 | \$ 979  | \$1,301 | \$1,403 | \$1,453 | \$1,414 | \$1,485 | \$1,257   | 231  |
| United States              | \$699 | \$830 | \$1,020 | \$1,375 | \$1,459 | \$1,549 | \$1,498 | \$1,618 | \$1,323   | 189  |
| Kansas index               | 100   | 124   | 180     | 239     | 257     | 267     | 259     | 272     |   |  |
| United States index        | 100   | 119   | 146     | 197     | 209     | 222     | 214     | 231     |   |  |

Source: Kansas Income Payments, Bureau of Business Research, School of Business, University of Kansas, Table 18, p. 43. Data for 1943, 1944 and 1945 omitted. (Original sources are quoted in Table 18.)



In 1954, 22,669 farms in Kansas reported that "other income" was greater than the value of farm products sold. In 1949, 21,820 farms reported that other income was greater than value of farm products sold (U. S. Census of Agriculture, 14, p. 196).

Kansas is currently experiencing the transition from an economy based almost exclusively on agriculture to one in which industry will become more important (Wickman, 15, p. 42). While agriculture has declined in importance (number of people employed and per cent of work force employed), industry other than agriculture had employed 13,345 more people in 1950 than in 1930 and was responsible for the employment of 77 per cent of the work force in 1950 as compared with 67 per cent in 1930 (Zickefoose, 16). This study was carried on in one of about six counties in the state where wages and salaries as a proportion of total income have approximated the national average which is about two-thirds (Wickman, 15, p. 42).

Cash receipts from farm marketings in Kansas (including all crops, livestock and livestock products) and government payments to farmers in 1955 were the smallest in ten years and there has been a steady decline since 1947. Weather conditions are not entirely responsible for this small income condition. Kansas wheat yields in 1954, 1955 and 1956 were 17.5, 15.0 and 15.5 bushels per acre harvested, respectively. The ten year average (1947-1956) was 15.73 bushels per acre harvested. (Farm Facts, 3, p. 78).

## Theoretical Optimum and Definition of Terms

Interest in the allocation of resources arises from the goal of efficiency, a part of the national structure of objectives. Classical economic theory includes conditions of efficiency at various comparative levels. Efficiency here is taken to mean a greater output from given inputs or obtaining optimum returns from resources used.

Optimum efficiency conditions in the economy exist when the greatest possible amount of output results from available resources. Output and input measured in money costs and money incomes are employed when determining efficiency.

Five conditions must be met in order to attain optimum efficiency from the allocation of farm resources on a national scale (Heady, 4, p. 708).

(1) Resources must be allocated within each farm in a manner so that the marginal productivities of the resource services are equal. A unit of labor or capital should not be used for corn if it can produce a greater value product in wheat.

(2) Resources must be distributed among farms so that marginal value productivities are equal.

(3) Resources must be distributed between farming and producing areas to allow attainment of equal value productivity.

(4) The various factors must be allocated among industries to bring about the attainment of these identical conditions.

(5) Resources must be allocated over time such that their discounted value products are equal.

There are three concepts of equilibrium conditions; aggregate, average and marginal. Average data is the most readily available. Figures such as average per capita income, yield per acre and dollars per bushel are in terms of the average whereas optimum equilibrium conditions are given in terms of the margin.

The concept of the margin is used because an average input does not result in a proportional output. To illustrate, if 100 bushels of wheat are produced as a result of 10 man hours of labor, there is an average of 10 bushels of wheat per man hour of labor. However, if an additional man hour of labor is used, and the production function is not linear, the yield will not increase proportionately. If 108 bushels of wheat were the result of 11 man hours of labor, the eight bushels of wheat would be the marginal product resulting from the addition of the eleventh hour of labor.

This study is concerned with maximum efficiency condition (4), above, that the various factors of production must be allocated among industries (industry and agriculture) to bring about the attainment of equal marginal value products. Labor is the factor under consideration and all other conditions are not considered.

There are four ways to reallocate labor resources in order to increase efficiency.

- (1) Within single farms.
- (2) Among farms of the same producing regions.
- (3) Among farms in different producing regions.
- (4) Between agriculture and other industries (Heady, 4, p. 714).

In this case it is not necessary to assume optimum conditions for any of these alternatives, but it is sufficient to say that this study is concerned with the mobility of labor between agriculture and industry. The existence of great average income differentials is not conclusive, but is reasonable evidence that labor is less productive in agriculture than in non-agriculture at the margin (Heady, 4, pp. 726-728).

There are three related concepts of labor mobility.

- (1) Mobility as ability to move
- (2) Mobility as propensity to move
- (3) Mobility as movement (Parnes, 10, p. 13).

This study embraces all three concepts but may be taken to mean mobility as movement unless otherwise stated.

There are three classifications of labor mobility:

- (1) Occupational mobility
- (2) Industrial mobility
- (3) Geographic mobility (Parnes, 10, p. 24)

This study is primarily concerned with occupational mobility although geographic mobility is pertinent to the problem and is treated briefly. Industrial mobility is unimportant to this study because it is only concerned with movement from farm

to industry and not with movements among industries or within an industry.

The value or product per unit resource (productivity) is the measurement of efficiency. For expediency, income is used as the indicator of productivity. It is sufficient for the purposes of this study.

### The General Approach

Since this is a study of farm labor that has migrated to industrial employment, it was decided to analyze the personnel records of a large industrial concern that supposedly had a number of ex-farm employees.

The main advantages of conducting the study from industrial personnel files was that comparative data on a sample large enough to be statistically significant would be readily available. This greatly simplified the enumeration procedure by:

(1) furnishing a list of interviewees who were pre-qualified, and (2) providing reliable data which would be difficult to obtain by interview. It also made possible the use of mail questionnaires in connection with qualified non-farm people's concepts of the problem. Information in the personnel files also made it possible and relatively easy to compare performance and earning power.

The main disadvantage of this approach is that it studies only migrants to industry. There are many migrants in trades

and service concerns in this area who are consequently omitted from this study. The wide range of jobs in this industrial concern is reassuring but the limitations must be recognized. Time and cost considerations caused this study to be limited to non-professional, non-supervisory personnel. Consequently, the ultimate success of the older migrants is not capable of being determined. Opinions of executives and important administrative personnel are used as a basis for a judgment on this question.

The name of the firm where this study was conducted will not be revealed nor will identifying facts and figures be used. This is in accordance with an agreement with company management who were very helpful and co-operative in making this study possible.

Extent of movement, causes of movement, effects of movement, and factors tending to promote or hinder movement are basic problems of this study and form the basic outline of the thesis.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Factors Concerning Labor and Industry

Several studies have been made of labor conditions and other factors of interest to industry in the South. One of the most prominent was prepared for the National Planning Association Committee of the South by McLaughlin and Robock (7). The study was made because of the NPA's interest in developing



industry in the South and is intended to be used as a guide for businesses, individuals, and development groups in the South who wish to attract industry. It is more a study of industrial requirements than of conditions in the South, but Chapter 6, "Southern Labor," is pertinent to this study.

McLaughlin and Robock report that labor is less important than markets and materials as a factor affecting location. They further report that labor attitudes and availability are more important than wage rates. Turnover, absenteeism and training costs are important to industry. In general, they find that Southern labor stands favorably in this aspect.

The types of union leaders in Southern localities are very important to prospecting industries. The machinery industries expect to be organized, but shoe, apparel and textile industries usually move South attempting to stay away from unions.

Robock and Peterson (11) estimate that about a million farm workers could be shifted to more productive non-farm employment (as of 1954). In 1951 the average annual wage for factory workers in the Southeast was 60 per cent higher than the average farm income per worker. Industries in the South and Southeast report that they have from 5 to 20 applicants for every job to be filled. Most of these applicants are from agriculture.

Especially pertinent to this study are the following findings:

1. From a survey conducted in North Carolina, Robock and Peterson (11) found that almost 4,300 residents on the 12,004 small farms studied expressed a desire to obtain full-time, off farm employment within commuting distance. Only 360 of the 4,300 indicated willingness to move to locations outside commuting distances.

2. Southern employees were found to be deficient in skills and management abilities but were very eager and able to learn.

DeVyver (2) noted three things that are of interest to this study.

1. Industry may move to a certain area primarily because of labor supply, transportation facilities or markets. If it moves because of labor supply, wages, turnover, and absenteeism will be of great importance.

2. Weakness of labor unions is an accelerating factor in the development of the South.

3. The lack of labor legislation and the nature of existing legislation are also accelerating factors.

From census data (1935-1940), Johnson (5) estimates that male farm migrants have approximately 90 per cent of the earning capacity of male urban non-migrants.

## Studies of Labor Mobility

Palmer (9) gives a digest of the results, together with the interpretation of them, of research on labor mobility carried on in six cities in the United States. This study is concerned with mobility in general rather than mobility of agricultural workers and is designed to develop and test methods for measuring mobility on a national scale and to devise techniques for assessing with which the labor requirements of various production programs can be met.

Some of the major findings of this study are as follows:

1. Mobility (as movement) is not characteristic of all members of the labor force, but is concentrated within certain of its parts.

2. Differences in the incidence of mobility among various groups of workers, and the kinds of job shifts made, follow similar patterns in different cities, regardless of whether a city's mobility is relatively high or low.

3. The incidence of mobility differs at various levels of skill, but even highly stable occupational groups have mobile segments.

4. A labor force adapts more readily to changes in the industrial demand for labor than to changes in occupational structure.

5. Persistent intercity contrasts suggest the existence of area differentials in mobility.

6. Expanding employment in a city attracts workers from other areas, and migrants are relatively flexible in adjusting to labor market changes.

7. Workers who are experienced in certain occupations can transfer their skills to certain others, but there is a limit to the amount of interchange between levels of skills.

8. When employment is at a high level, voluntary job changes outnumber involuntary changes, and tend to reflect improvement in economic position and in the knowledge and skills of workers.

The data obtained from this study are more completely analyzed by Parnes in another bulletin (Parnes, 10).

#### Proposals Arising From Studies of Labor and Labor Mobility

Moore (8) suggested two methods for reducing the under-employment of resources in agriculture. The first method is to enlarge the average acreage of farms and the second is to improve productivity. He also recognizes the excess of labor resources in agriculture at present and the additional excess that will be brought on by increasing average farm acreage. These labor resources are needed in industry.

Moore (8) thinks that vast amounts of manpower on low-income farms will remain unused unless new and energetic steps are taken to draw it into higher productivity. This problem is of vital importance because of future food needs and industrial expansion.

Johnson (6) stresses the importance of labor study and analysis. He presents a proposed organization of the labor

market designed to meet the needs of our economy and is particularly concerned with farm labor. His proposals are briefly outlined below.

The federal government should establish and maintain an employment agency with the following functions:

1. Supply information about jobs in all parts of the United States.
2. Obtain jobs for workers prior to their moving.
3. Finance the transition to higher paying jobs by grants or loans.

#### Similar Studies

An unpublished Ph.D. thesis by Eldon Smith (12) is very similar to this study and has been very helpful. It is primarily a study of farm and non-farm occupational mobility. It is an attempt to answer two pertinent questions:

1. How can social institutions be adjusted to meet the needs of expansion of per capita productivity?
2. How can the problem areas of our economy (such as the low income and poverty-ridden areas of the South) be brought to par with the rest of the nation in regard to productivity and income?

Smith realized the fact that manpower shifts, besides affecting the economy, have great impact on the person directly concerned and that this person is a rational citizen possessing freedom of choice. This suggested that it is necessary to study

not only the economic and social consequences to the migrant of manpower shifts but also the ways people choose between the alternatives of moving or remaining where they are.

Three cultural groups who had already moved to Indianapolis, Indiana were studied:

1. Northern Whites
2. Southern Whites
3. Negroes

It was found that Negroes had the lowest farm income alternatives and available capital assets. They had, on the average, moved the longest distances. Southern Whites were next in this respect and then Northern Whites.

Most of the migrants of all groups were married adults at the time they made the decision to move.

Smith thought it very significant that almost all migrants had kin or close friends in Indianapolis before they decided to move. Most migrants heard of job opportunities from friends or relatives. This suggests the need for better communications concerning job opportunities. Only 5 out of 148 migrants moved to Indianapolis in the face of advice to the contrary.

The close friends of Southern Whites tended to be old friends from the South and they did not adjust as well as Negroes and Northern Whites. They tended to keep their southern identities, whereas Negroes made friends quickly with northern negroes and liked their work. Northern Whites soon lost their identity as migrants.



Smith reported that the cultural differences among Southern Whites, Northern Whites and Negroes resulted in an average starting wage differential.

#### PART I - EXTENT OF MOVEMENT OF FARM OPERATORS TO INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

According to a survey conducted in the personnel department of a large industrial firm in Kansas, 17.5 per cent of the non-professional, non-supervisory male personnel listed farm operation as one of their three most recent employments on their employment application forms. Not all the employees who had recently been farm operators listed farming as a previous employment on their application forms, probably because they did not think the company personnel department considered farming as a previous occupation. Returns from a mail questionnaire sent to people with city addresses who did not list farming as a previous occupation showed that over 20 per cent of these people had farmed sometime in the past, or are now part-time farmers. This small sample indicates that 33 per cent of all employees have been farm operators in the past but it is only safe to conclude that over 17.5 per cent of the non-professional, non-supervisory employees have been farm operators, and since the mail questionnaires were so few, no statistical projections can be made. If the same results were obtained from a sample of reliable size drawn according to accepted procedure, this would mean that approximately one-third of the labor force had been farm operators at some time before coming to work at this plant.

The exact percentage of employees with less direct farm backgrounds, e.g., farm labor or having been raised on a farm was not ascertained, but it was noticed by the investigators that a large percentage of application forms showed farm labor as previous employment. Furthermore, many of the younger employees indicated that they helped on the family farm while going to school.

The above information and other pertinent data are shown in Table 3 along with the statistical significance and projections of this data to the universe.

The method by which the data in Table 3 was gathered is outlined below. A random sample of approximately 2.2 per cent of the total universe (89,050 file numbers, of which about 59,000 contained no employee folders and another 5,000 contained folders of women employees) was drawn by accepted procedures. The sample was drawn from a universe of file numbers rather than of employee folders in order for it to be truly random and so that the sample could be drawn before the trip was made to the company personnel office. The probability of drawing blank numbers or women employee folders was known so the random sample was drawn to give 1.6 per cent of the work force or about 500 qualified folders. (Women employees were excluded from this study.) The actual sample was 485, or 15 short of the expected 500.

All folders in the sample were analyzed for the following data and information:

1. Whether they listed farm operation on their application form as one of their three most previous occupations.

2. Whether they had been employed more or less than five years as of January 1, 1958 (date of survey).

3. Wage rate.

4. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of all persons qualifying as former farm operators and having joined the work force within the past five years were noted for future reference in conducting the interviews.

Table 3 shows that 17.5 per cent of the male work force are farm operators and that 54 per cent (9.4 per cent of work force) of these farmers were employed by this firm within the last five years. About 65 per cent of the total work force had worked for this firm five years or less. This suggests that the migration has been more intense in the last five years, especially in view of the fact that turnover at this firm is relatively low as explained below. The more intensive migration during the last five years is compatible with facts that farm marketings have been declining (as shown under "Existing Conditions" in the introductory pages) and that this particular industry has been expanding during this period.

Personnel Department records for this company show a quit-rate lower than the national average for this type of industry and much lower than the average for other industries in the same community. The unanimous opinion of four management people was that ex-farmers, as a group, are less prone to quit than other

Table 3. Random sample results, projection of data from random sample and statistical significance of sample and projections

|  | Number<br>Sampled | Per cent<br>of<br>Sample | Percentage Range<br>at 95% Confidence<br>Interval | Projection<br>to Total<br>Population | Projected Range<br>at 95% Confidence<br>Interval |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| -5*                                    | 318               | 65.6                     | <del>60</del> 71                                  | 19,891                               | <del>18,194</del> 21,529                         |
| +5**                                   | 167               | 34.4                     | <del>29</del> 40                                  | 10,432                               | <del>8,193</del> 12,129                          |
| Total                                  | 485               | 100.0                    | 100   | 30,323                               | 30,323   |
| Former farm<br>operators               | 85                | 17.5                     | <del>13</del> 22                                  | 5,307                                | <del>3,942</del> 6,671                           |
| Non-farm<br>operators***               | 400               | 82.5                     | <del>78</del> 87                                  | 25,016                               | <del>23,652</del> 26,381                         |
| Total                                  | 485               | 100.0                    | 100   | 30,323                               | 30,323   |
| -5 and former<br>farm operator<br>**** | 46                | 9.4                      | 7 13  | 2,850                                | 2,122 3,942                                      |

\* Employees having worked for this firm less than five years at time sample was taken.

\*\* Employees having worked for this firm more than five years at time sample was taken.

\*\*\* Employees who did not list farm operation as a previous employment.

\*\*\*\* Employees who had been farm operators and who had come to work for this firm within the past five years.

— Indicates that the opposite ends of the range have been added to check accuracy of range.

workers. The applicant-hire ratio for this company was 5.96 to 1 in 1957 and this is lower than the average of previous years because of the expansion of 6,000 in the work force during this year.

In the five year period from 1949 to 1954, there was a decline of over 10,000 in number of Kansas farms and farm operators. The survey shows that over one-fourth of this decline could have been absorbed by this one firm. (Approximately 2,850 ex-farm operators have been employed by this firm in the past five years.) However, some of these ex-farm operators are from other states such as Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. At any rate this firm is a very important source of employment to farmers who wish to change occupations and offers alternative employment to many part-time farmers.

## PART II - CAUSES OF THE MOVEMENT OF FARM OPERATORS TO INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

Low incomes in agriculture, brought on by excess production in some areas, drought and government restrictions are thought to be the main cause of the extensive farm to city movement described earlier.

In order to study the causes, effects and other factors of this movement, 27 former farm operators were interviewed. An enumerator called on 17 people and 10 others were interviewed by telephone. All the interviewees were living in the city at the time of the interview. The original plan was to interview about 25 people personally but time and cost factors did not permit



this so 10 were interviewed by telephone approximately one month later. The telephone interview was necessarily much shorter than the personal interview but was designed to give results on the same general questions that were asked in the personal interview.

Of 27 people interviewed, 22 indicated that income was the biggest factor affecting their decision to move to town. In order to show what types of farmers are affected, the size of farms, age and education of operators, and time elapsed since leaving farms are shown below:

Table 4 - Type of farmers interviewed

|                                 | : Mean | : Median | : Mode |
|---------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| Age                             | 38.4   | 42       | 25-29  |
| Years of Education              | 10.6   | 10       | 12     |
| Size of Farms Owned (in acres)* | 305.5  | 410      | 320    |
| Months Off Farm                 | 31.5   | 42       | 12     |

\*From data for 17 interviewed personally. Information not available for 10 telephone interviews. "Owned" means that the farmer owned at least half of the land he farmed.

Seven out of seventeen owned all or part of the land and eleven out of seventeen owned their machinery. The seven who owned all or part of the land also owned the machinery.

The average size of farms in Kansas was 417.4 acres in 1954. For the agricultural area surrounding the city in which this study was conducted, the average acreage was 318.2 and the average acreages owned by the ex-farmers interviewed was 305.5. The U. S. Department of Agriculture finds that, in the area where



this study was conducted, farms of 305 acres are usually classified in Economic Class III which means that farms of this size in this area usually have sales of farm products of from \$5,000 to \$9,999. When the state as a whole is being considered, farms of 305 acres usually have sales of from \$2,500 to \$4,999 (or are classified in Economic Class IV). Over 47 per cent of all farms in Kansas fall into these two classes and the remainder are grouped into seven other classes according to value of farm products sold (U. S. Census of Agriculture, 14, pp. 184 and 188).

The above information suggests that farms operated by interviewees were only slightly below the average size of farms in that area. At any rate, it cannot be concluded on the basis of average size of farm of the interviewees that the farmers who have migrated were small, subsistence farmers.

The most common explanation given by interviewees for the farm income difficulties was the drought conditions which had prevailed in this area. Another frequent complaint from those with small acreages was that acreage allotments had cut down their earning power. In some instances, the interviewee blamed his plight on a combination of these factors, but insufficient income, whatever it was due to was definitely the main motivating factor which brought about the movement.

Of the other factors affecting the decision to move to town, medical reasons were the most important. Two moved because they were no longer able to do farm work and one moved in order to be near a specialist for a member of his family.

One man indicated that he had no other alternative because he lost his farm when an estate was settled.

Some people may have moved for a combination of reasons; that they could have a better income in industry and that they didn't particularly like farm work. However, little evidence of this was found. Of those who listed income as their primary motive for moving, only one indicated that he also "wanted a change." Only three people said they liked living and working in the city better than living and working on a farm. Three people said it was about the same to them and the rest preferred farm life. Few people left the farm until the income situation became almost untenable to their way of thinking. It is significant that none of the interviewees listed social reasons when asked what was the most important factor affecting their decision to move to town.

One very important cause of the movement was the fact that employment was readily available in this plant. Eleven out of seventeen had jobs assured before moving to the city of their current residence. The company maintains a separate employment office in an easily accessible location.

In summing up the reasons for the movement, it may be said that income considerations are by far the most important factor affecting the decision to move. Medical and other reasons were apparent but not very important. There seemed to be no evidence that small farmers were the ones most affected by income difficulties since the size of farms ranged from 40 acres (a chicken

farm in Arkansas) to 780 acres, the average size being over 300 acres. Almost half of these people owned all or part of the land they farmed and over half owned their farm machinery.

Further research is needed to study the causative factors of this movement. Although income factors are the most important cause, according to this study, they should be classified and subjected to further analysis in order to determine what types of farmers would benefit most by moving to industrial employment. When considered in terms of the whole universe of farm operators, other factors assume importance enough to warrant consideration in future studies. Other causes will undoubtedly come to light in a more extensive study.

It is possible that farmers' concepts of a "sufficient income to maintain a suitable standard of living" differ and that some are willing to stay on the farm longer than others when income is diminishing.

## Interview questions pertaining to Part II

- 1PT\* What was the biggest factor affecting your decision to move to town?  
 A. Income. . . . .22  
 B. Only opportunity for job. . . .1  
 C. Other . . . . .4
- 2P Did you own the land (on your last farm)?  
 Yes. . . . .7  
 No . . . . .10  
 Machinery?  
 Yes. . . . .11  
 No . . . . .6
- 3P How do you like living and working in the city as compared with farm life?  
 Better . . . . .1  
 Same . . . . .5  
 Worse. . . . .11
- 4T Would you rather live in town or on a farm?  
 Town . . . . .2  
 Farm . . . . .8
- 5P Did you have a job assured before you moved to . . . .?  
 Yes. . . . .11  
 No . . . . .6

---

\* PT (after the number) indicates that the question was asked in both the Personal and the Telephone interview.

P indicates that the question was asked only in the Personal interview.

T indicates that the question was asked only in the Telephone interview.

### PART III. EFFECTS OF MOVEMENT ON THE MIGRANT

#### Economic Effects

Several questions in the personal and telephone interviews were designed to determine the economic status of the interviewee before and after the movement to industrial employment. No comparative figures on income, costs of living or debt burden were gathered from interviews, but enough questions were asked (which called for a judgment on the part of the interviewee) to warrant certain conclusions which will be stated later.

Two very similar questions were asked in different parts of the interview. They were designed to check the consistency of the interviewees' answers and in only one instance was there a direct conflict. The results are as follows:

|   | Better | Same | Worse |
|---|--------|------|-------|
| 1. Did you have a better or worse standard of living while you lived on the farm?   | 3      | 7    | 7     |
| 2. Do you feel that you now make a better or worse living than you did on the farm? | 10     | 5    | 2     |

Other questions used in determining economic status are as follows:

1. Are you able to afford more or less luxuries since you left the farm?
2. How does your present home compare with your farm home?
3. Do you have more or less or about the same amount of debts now than when you were on the farm?

4. Do you feel that you are better off financially since you left the farm?

Answers to the above questions indicated a general economic gain on the part of the interviewee after he moved to town. The majority reported that they were able to afford more luxuries and that they had a better home in town. Six people reported having more debts currently than they had while farming. Six others reported that they had about the same amount and the other five reported not having as many debts. This is partly explained by the fact that a number of the interviewees were buying homes in town. Installment buying also represents a major part of these debts. This could well mean that these people are buying household items and luxuries which they had not been able to enjoy on the farm.

The average wage of all former farm operators in the sample who had been working for this firm less than five years as of January 1, 1958 was \$2.08 per hour or about \$83.00 per week. When the wage information obtained in the sample was checked with the actual company average, it was found to be reasonably close although slightly low. This represents a yearly net income of about \$4,300 per year before taxes. This is more than \$2,000 above the national average total net income figure shown in Table 1 for farm operators.

The results of this report indicate that the former farm operators who migrated to the city and works at this particular firm is definitely in a better position financially. Since social effects are thought to be very important to migrants,



several questions on the interviews for ex-farmers and the questionnaire mailed to non-farm employees were designed to determine the social status of migrants and their families.

### Social Effects

According to the results of this study, farmers who move to the city are at no apparent social disadvantage, either in their neighborhood or on the job. One hundred per cent of the interviewees said that, in general, they liked the people they worked with. Nine out of seventeen said that their farm neighbors had been more friendly than their city neighbors were at the time of the interview. Seven considered city neighbors to be about as friendly as farm neighbors and only one considered city neighbors to be more friendly than farm neighbors. Most of the interviewees said that their close friends were mostly people who grew up on the farm. The preference for farm neighbors is to be expected in view of the fact that their farm neighbors had, in most cases, known them longer and were fewer in number.

The general consensus of opinion among management personnel at the firm where these people work is that men with farm backgrounds make the better workers on the average, but are not so good in skilled or supervisory work.

A comparison of Performance Analysis scores and wage rates is shown in Table 5. It was found that farmers and ex-farmers had better Performance Analysis scores (merit ratings) but that their average wage was slightly lower.

Table 5. Comparison of performance analysis and wage rates of farm and non-farm employees\*

|                    | Performance Score<br>Analysis - Total | Performance Score<br>Analysis - Average | Average<br>Wage Rate |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Ex-farm Employees  | 2,897                                 | 80.5                                    | \$2.08 per hour      |
| Non-farm Employees | 2,748                                 | 76.3                                    | \$2.13 per hour      |

\*Performance analysis scores are from 36 employees in each group, both of which were -5 (had worked 5 years or less for this firm). Wage rates are from 46 employees in each group which are also -5.

NOTE: X<sup>2</sup> method showed significant difference in total performance analysis scores.

The former farm operators, when asked about educational opportunities, indicated that grade and high schools were as good or better than the schools in their rural districts. Only one person thought that the school in his rural district had offered better educational opportunities than most city schools. It would seem from this study that educational opportunities are not a barrier to the movement.

Eight out of ten people interviewed by telephone said that they preferred living on a farm to living in the city. In the personal interview, only seven out of seventeen said they were not glad they moved to town but, in answer to another question, eleven out of seventeen said they preferred farm life to city life and only five indicated no preference.

The families of ex-farmers (wives and children old enough to express an opinion) were equally divided on their preferences: eight preferred city life, eight preferred farm life and one had no preference.

A distinct majority of the ex-farmers interviewed said that they would like to operate a farm again if the opportunity arose. Only three said they would not care to farm again and two of these moved to town because they were physically unable to perform farm work.

#### Results of Mail Questionnaire

Questions answered by non-farm employees of the same firm (who were selected at random from a sub-universe) who had been

working there less than five years showed little or no bias against ex-farm people. This questionnaire (appendix 3) was mailed on Saturday, February 15, 1958 to 43 non-farm employees. Two weeks later, on March 1, a follow-up letter was sent. The final date for returns was March 15. By this time, a 74 per cent reply had been received. Over half of the persons replying were farmers, ex-farmers or had farm backgrounds. This was not expected because they had not listed farming as a previous occupation on their company application forms. Therefore 17 of the 32 mail questionnaires were disqualified for the purpose of determining non-farm people's opinions of ex-farm operators.

Seven out of 15 thought that migrant farmers did threaten the security of city workers but six were of the opinion that they had no effect on the security of city workers and two thought that migrants helped the security of city workers. All 15 thought that the average worker with a farm background fitted into city life about as well or slightly better than other workers. (Eleven said about the same, four said slightly better.) Fourteen of the fifteen said that ex-farmers are accepted by city neighbors the "same as anyone else," one said that they received better than average acceptance and none marked the alternative which said they received worse than average acceptance.

Apparently city workers consider people with farm backgrounds to be about the same type workers as men without farm backgrounds. Four replied that men with farm backgrounds were

better workers and the other eleven said they were about the same. None said men with farm backgrounds were poorer workers than men without farm backgrounds.

There are definite indications from the results of this study that there is some dissatisfaction with city life among ex-farmers and that there are some predilections for the farm. However, these are not of great magnitude and are not aggravated by city dwellers who seem to receive them well. The economic advantages gained appear to overcome the social disadvantages which are probably not of an abiding nature. If the results of this study are borne out by more extensive studies, it will be found that migrant farmers do not suffer any consequential social disadvantages by moving to urban areas and that they definitely improve their economic position if they are able to obtain a job which pays as well as the one they have with this company.

## Interview Questions Pertaining to Part III

- 1P Did you have a better or worse standard of living while you lived on the farm?
- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Better . . . . . | 3 |
| Same . . . . .   | 7 |
| Worse. . . . .   | 7 |
- 2P Do you feel that you now make a better or worse living than you did while on the farm?
- |                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Better . . . . . | 10 |
| Same . . . . .   | 5  |
| Worse. . . . .   | 2  |
- 3P Are you able to afford more or less luxuries since you left the farm?
- |                |    |
|----------------|----|
| More . . . . . | 10 |
| Same . . . . . | 7  |
- 4P How does your present home compare with your farm home?
- |                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Better . . . . . | 11 |
| Same . . . . .   | 4  |
| Worse. . . . .   | 2  |
- 5P Do you have more or less or about the same amount of debts now than when you were on the farm?
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| More . . . . . | 6 |
| Less . . . . . | 5 |
| Same . . . . . | 6 |
- 6P How do you like the people you work with?
- |             |    |
|-------------|----|
| + . . . . . | 17 |
| 0 . . . . . | 0  |
| - . . . . . | 0  |
- 7P Are your neighbors more or less friendly than they were on the farm?
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| More . . . . . | 1 |
| Less . . . . . | 9 |
| ? . . . . .    | 7 |
- 8P Are your close friends now mostly people who grew up on the farm?
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 10 |
| No . . . . . | 4  |
| ? . . . . .  | 3  |
- 9P How are educational opportunities in the city as compared with your rural district?
- |                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Better . . . . . | 10 |
| Same . . . . .   | 6  |
| Worse. . . . .   | 1  |



- 10T Would you rather live in town or on a farm?  
 Town . . . . . 2  
 Farm . . . . . 8
- 11P Are you glad you moved to town?  
 Yes . . . . . 10  
 No . . . . . 7
- 12P How do you like living and working in the city as compared with farm life?  
 Better . . . . . 1  
 Same . . . . . 5  
 Worse . . . . . 11
- 13P How does your family like city life as compared with farm life?  
 Better . . . . . 8  
 Same . . . . . 1  
 Worse . . . . . 8
- 14P Would you like to operate a farm again if the opportunity arose?  
 Yes . . . . . 13  
 No . . . . . 3  
 ? . . . . . 1
- 15T Do you feel that you are better off financially since you left the farm?  
 Yes . . . . . 4  
 No . . . . . 3  
 ? . . . . . 3
- 15M\* How do part-time farmers and ex-farmers affect city workers?  
 Threaten the security and wages of city workers . . . . . 7  
 Have no effect on the security and wages of city dwellers . . . . . 6  
 Help the security and wages of city workers . . . . . 2
- 16M From your experience, how does the average worker with a farm background fit into city life?  
 Much better than other workers . . . . . -0  
 Slightly better than other workers . . . . . -4  
 About the same as other workers . . . . . -11  
 Slightly worse than other workers . . . . . -0  
 Much worse than other workers . . . . . -0

\*M indicates that the question was asked in the Mail questionnaire.

17M How are ex-farmers who move to town accepted by their city neighbors?

Better than average acceptance. . . . .-1  
 Same as anyone else . . . . .14  
 Worse than average acceptance . . . . . 0

18M Are men with farm backgrounds better, poorer or about the same type workers as men without farm backgrounds?

Better. . . . . 4  
 Poorer. . . . . 0  
 Same. . . . .11

#### PART IV - FACTORS TENDING TO PROMOTE OR HINDER MOVEMENT OF FARM OPERATORS TO INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

The size, location and hiring practices of this firm are the most important factors which tend to promote the farm-city movement. Since the firm is relatively large, news of when the firm is hiring travels quickly by word of mouth. Knowledge of the existence of the firm and types of labor required by the firm is also widespread, mainly because of the relatively large size. Fourteen of the seventeen migrants interviewed indicated that they heard about the job opportunity from a friend or relative before they made their application. The only other source of job information was the State Employment Office, where the other three heard about the job opportunity. People who had moved as far as 500 miles to accept employment at this firm heard of the job opportunity from friends or relatives. None of the people interviewed moved to the city without job information and eleven out of seventeen had jobs assured before they moved.

Although the results obtained by interview showed conclusively that most of the people interviewed got their job information by word of mouth and that job information was fairly accessible to persons desiring this information, further study should be made to discover other sources of job information, the importance of these sources and to determine what new sources are needed.

This company maintains an employment office in the downtown district of a large city in Kansas. This makes it convenient for people who wish to apply for employment.

Little can be said of the location of this firm because of the agreement made when the study was conducted. It is centrally located in a farming region and can draw upon the labor force of at least four states.

As noted in Part III, the management of this firm believe that ex-farmers and men with farm backgrounds are better than average workers. This may well be a factor which tends to promote the farm to city movement.

The factors named above, along with the current income situation in agriculture which was set out under "Existing Conditions," are most important in promoting the movement from farm to city as found by this study. Word of mouth is by far the most important conveyor of information which suggests that although this firm has a reasonably good applicant-hire ratio the firm and society in general would be benefited by some organized method for relaying information about job opportunities which are available at large firms such as the one where this study was made.

In the personal interview, over 90 per cent said that their present job was easier than farm work, but over 80 per cent said their present job was less pleasant. Another indication of the general unwillingness of farmers to give up their vocation and move to town was that only two out of seventeen said they would

have left the farm earlier if they had been offered a grant of money to pay their moving expenses. Apparently, they only moved when their concept of an inadequate income had been reached, (or for medical reasons and reasons other than income) and could not have been induced to move sooner by financial aids such as payment of moving expenses.

As pointed out in the Review of Literature, Robock and Peterson (11), p. 189, found that farmers who are still living on the farm hesitate to accept employment outside commuting distance of their farm home. Question 30 of the Personal Interview reads as follows: "If a non-farm job like yours had been available to you only in a city 500 or more miles away, would you have moved to it?" Ten answered "Yes," six answered "No" and one did not reply. In fact, at least two of the interviewees had moved 500 or more miles to accept their present employment, but people who were living on farms at the time were not interviewed so there is no way of telling what degree of willingness to move from the farm is to be found among farmers in this area.

Thirteen of the seventeen said that they would not have moved earlier even if job information and opportunities had been available.

The above information suggests that farm operators cling tenaciously to their vocations, but once they decide to change, they will go to great lengths to find other employment. Thirteen out of seventeen indicated that they did not consider the

possibility of losing their jobs through depression or plant closing (or layoff) before they moved.

In this study, employment opportunities were not an important factor in hindering the movement, but this does not preclude the possibility of their being very important to the farm group as a whole. The importance of employment opportunities may also vary with time as national or regional employment conditions change. Most of the people interviewed did not search very long for an industrial job, "2 or 3 days" being the most common answer to the query "How long did you search for an industrial job?"

It is unlikely that social pressure from within the farm group is an important hindrance to the farm-city movement. Thirteen out of seventeen said that their former farm neighbors approved their decision to move, two said they did not and two did not know.

In order to discover any effects unions might have on the farm-city movement, several questions were asked in both interviews and the mail questionnaire in an effort to determine the interviewee's opinion of unions, and interviews were conducted with company and union officials on this subject.

There is no union shop at the plant where the survey was conducted. Over half of the employees are in the bargaining unit (are eligible for membership in unions recognized by this company) and less than half of all employees in the bargaining unit are union members, according to the Personnel Director. It



was found in the survey that the percentage of ex-farm operators belonging to unions was about the same as or slightly more than the percentage of all employees belonging to unions.

Ten of the seventeen interviewed personally thought that unions were responsible for the high wage level at this particular plant. About 65 per cent of the union members who were interviewed or who answered the mail questionnaire said that they attended union meetings seldom. About 30 per cent said they never attended and only one man attended often. When asked if they thought the average union member at this plant had an adequate voice in union affairs, seven answered yes, eight answered no and two declined to answer because they had not been working there very long.

Interviewees were asked how the union had helped or hindered them. None had been hindered by the union but several thought that the union would have helped them if they had been in need of help.

Factors tending to hinder the movement from farm to city which may be attributed to the union are vague and largely psychological. Although some workers object to the union in general or have certain dislikes concerning unions, they are not required to join at this plant. Dues are reasonable and may be paid in installments. The author is convinced that no pressure of any consequence is exerted by unions on farmers who wish to work in this plant. Since the plant studied is not a union shop, there is little room for pressure being brought to bear on farmers seeking employment.

There is no apparent way in which unions help the movement from farms to this plant. In an interview with a union official it was found that the union does consider farm labor to be a threat to its security because of its effects on the labor market. However, there are instances where union business agents actually help this transition. If a farmer indicates a willingness to join the union, the union business agent may recommend him to an employer if there are no union members available. This is mostly true in the construction industry. According to an official of the educational committee of the AFL-CIO, union policy favors aid to farmers and in general sympathizes with their problem. This could be merely a matter of political expediency, however, because little has been done about it by organized labor.

Very few union representatives were interviewed and little has been done to unearth actual union policy. The above observations drawn from interviews with union officials are not substantial enough to warrant sound conclusions.

## Interview Questions Pertaining to Part IV

- 1P How did you find your present job?
- |   |    |
|---|----|
| A. Hear about opportunity from friend or relative . . . . . | 14 |
| B. See ad in paper . . . . .                                | 0  |
| C. Personnel or company contact. . . . .                    | 0  |
| D. U. S. Employment Service. . . . .                        | 3  |
| E. Moved to city without job information . . . . .          | 0  |
| F. Other . . . . .  | 1  |
- 2PT Do you feel that your work is harder, easier, more pleasant, less pleasant than your work on the farm?
- |                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Harder . . . . .       | 0  |
| Easier . . . . .       | 25 |
| More pleasant. . . . . | 3  |
| Less pleasant. . . . . | 22 |
- NOTE: Some people were undecided about this question and declined to answer.
- 3P Would you have left the farm earlier had you been offered a grant of money to pay your moving expenses?
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 2  |
| No . . . . . | 15 |
- 4P If a non-farm job like yours had been available to you only in a city 500 or more miles away, would you have moved to it from the farm? (If no, why not?)
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 10 |
| No . . . . . | 6  |
| ? . . . . .  | 1  |
- 5P If job opportunities and job information had been available to you, would you have left the farm earlier? (If no, why not?)
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 3  |
| No . . . . . | 13 |
| ? . . . . .  | 1  |
- 6PT Do you belong to a labor union at . . . . .?
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 9  |
| No . . . . . | 18 |
- 7P Do you think the union is responsible for the high wage level at . . . . .?
- |              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Yes. . . . . | 10 |
| No . . . . . | 3  |
| ? . . . . .  | 4  |

- 8P Do you attend union meetings
- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Often . . . . . | 0 |
| Seldom. . . . . | 4 |
| Never . . . . . | 2 |
- 9M Do you belong to a union?
- |               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Yes . . . . . | 4  |
| No . . . . .  | 11 |
- 10M Do you attend union meetings
- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Often . . . . . | 1 |
| Seldom. . . . . | 3 |
| Never . . . . . | 1 |
- 11P Do you think the average union member at . . . . . has an adequate voice in union affairs?
- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Yes . . . . . | 7 |
| No. . . . .   | 8 |
| ? . . . . .   | 2 |
- 12P Before you moved, did you consider the possibility of losing your job through depression or plant closing (or layoff)?
- |               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Yes . . . . . | 3  |
| No. . . . .   | 13 |
| ? . . . . .   | 1  |
- 13P Did your former farm neighbors and friends approve your decision to move?
- |               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Yes . . . . . | 13 |
| No. . . . .   | 2  |
| ? . . . . .   | 2  |

## SUMMARY

Approximately 17.5 per cent of the non-supervisory, non-professional employees of the company where this study was conducted listed farm operation as one of their three most recent employments on the company job application form. Over half of these former operators of farms have been employed by this firm for five years or less. Since a mail questionnaire sent to employees who did not list farming as a previous employment showed that a substantial number of these workers had also been farm operators, it is apparent that a larger percentage of the work force have backgrounds as farmers. In addition, it was noticed that many people who did not qualify as former farm operators had lived on farms.

Interviews conducted personally and by telephone with migrant farmers showed that over 80 per cent left the farm for income reasons. No evidence was found to support the contention that the farmers who migrated were small, subsistence farmers. Many of them owned their own land and machinery and the size of their farms was only slightly below the area and state averages.

Medical reasons were next in importance as a cause of the movement. None of the interviewees moved purely for social reasons and only one person indicated that he "wanted a change" from farming.

Consistent with the finding that income considerations were by far the most important cause of the movement was the

finding that a large majority of the migrant farmers interviewed considered themselves to be in a better position financially since they became employed in industry. It is known, however, that the wage and salary scale for this firm is high compared with the average of that area. Thus expansion of the study to other firms or industries may alter the income pattern.

In order to study the social aspects of the farm to city migration, questions were asked of both migrant farmers and non-farm people. A preference for farm work and farm life was detected among the ex-farmers. The workers who had never been farmers seemed to receive the migrant farmer well, both on the job and in neighborhood relations.

A union official admitted that migrant and part-time farmers were considered by unions to be a threat to union security and almost half of the non-farmers interviewed considered ex-farmers to be a threat to the security of city workers. Manifestations of the attitudes of non-farmers to migrant farmers caused by the fact that non-farmers consider migrants to be a threat to their security are not known. No cases of prejudice or ostracism were noted or reported.

Word of mouth is the most important media by which job information from this firm is transmitted to prospective workers. The size of firm and hiring practices are important factors in spreading word of job opportunities.

Another factor which is thought to promote the movement is the favorable opinion of company management toward full-time



workers of farm origin and part-time farmers. Management considers a farm background to be a valuable characteristic of workers in their employ. Studies of performance analysis scores and wage rates revealed that former farmers had, at the time the study was conducted, a higher average performance analysis score (merit rating) but a lower average wage rate than workers without farm backgrounds.

The most significant hindrance to the movement was the fact that farmers prefer to remain on the farm. Although most of the migrants interviewed stated that they considered their industrial job to be easier they also considered it to be less pleasant. A preference for farming was shown by a great majority of the interviewees and it was found that in general, they did not move to town until, for various reasons, they could no longer farm.

It was found that there is no significant pressure from within the farm group which would keep individual group members from moving to town.

Although unions recognize the threat to their security posed by migrating farmers, they do not present any barriers to the movement. The plant studied is not a union shop so the farmer who is employed there is not compelled to join the union. If he desires union membership, the initiation fees are reasonable and may be paid in installments. The survey revealed that the percentage of farmers belonging to a union in the plant was as great as or greater than the percentage of all employees of

this firm belonging to a union. Some farmers did have certain objections to unions but these could not be regarded as hindrances except as a psychological factor which might make the farmer more hesitant to accept employment in a plant where unions are active. Of all the ex-farmers belonging to the union, none were very active in union affairs because they seldom or never attended union meetings.

No way in which unions aid the farm to industry movement was noted in this preliminary study.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, income considerations were definitely the most important factors causing the migration from farms to industry. Data on the age, education and size of farms of former farm operators interviewed gave no valuable information on the types of farmers affected by adverse income situations so further research is needed in this area. The causes of these income difficulties, types of farmers affected and geographical or agricultural areas most seriously affected should be studied if valuable aid is to be given to the farmers who need it. In addition to further study of income factors, other reasons should be identified and given further consideration.

This study showed that by far the majority of migrants interviewed were, according to their own judgment, in a better financial position since moving. Some indications of social disadvantages were found. Further study is needed to enlarge

upon the information gathered about the relative social and economic standings of farmers before and after the move. It is also suggested that study be conducted to determine what emphasis farmers place on social standing as compared with economic or financial standing.

From this study it seems that the main factors which hinder the migration of farmers to industry are encountered before the move is made and that they mainly consist of strong preferences for farm life and work and, in some cases, dislikes for city life and industrial work. Although not considered in this study, the availability of industrial jobs to farmers is crucial. As noted, most migrants studied had jobs before moving. Research in job availability conducted in state employment agencies and in other firms should be fruitful.

It was found that word of mouth was the most effective means of transmitting job information in the situations studied. Other students of the farm problem have assumed that methods of transmitting job information better than the existing methods are needed. Research on the adequacy of worker to worker transmittal of job information, especially in situations where long distances are involved, would be valuable. Also, the extent of use by migrants of established information agencies, and the possibilities for making use of agencies such as the Agricultural Extension Service should be studied.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I - PERSONAL INTERVIEW

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
Department of Economics and Sociology  
Project 385

- # \_\_\_\_\_ . Date \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 Years off farm \_\_\_\_\_ . Years of school \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 Age \_\_\_\_\_ . Hourly pay rate \_\_\_\_\_ .
1. How large was your last farm? (pasture and cultivated) \_\_\_\_\_ .
  2. Did you own the land? \_\_\_\_\_ . Machinery? \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 Did you operate the farm? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ . No \_\_\_\_\_ .
  3. Do you have any direct farming interests now? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  4. Are you able to afford more or less luxuries since you left the farm? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  5. How did you find your present job? \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 A. Hear about opportunity from friend or relative.  
 B. See ad in paper.  
 C. Personnel or company contact.  
 D. U. S. Employment Service.  
 E. Moved to city without job information.
  6. How does your present home compare with your farm home?  
Better Worse Same.
  7. Do you belong to a union at . . . .? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ . No \_\_\_\_\_ .
  8. Do you have more or less or about the same amount of debts now than when you were on the farm? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  9. Would you like to operate a farm again if the opportunity arose? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  10. Do you think the union is responsible for the high wage level at . . . .? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ . No \_\_\_\_\_ .
  11. Are your neighbors more or less friendly than they were on the farm? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  12. How long did you search for an industrial job? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  13. Did you object to joining the union at . . . .? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ .
  14. Are you glad you moved to town? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ . No \_\_\_\_\_ .
  15. (a) How has the union helped you at . . . .? \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 (b) How has the union hindered you at . . . .? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  16. Do you feel that your work is harder, easier, more pleasant or less pleasant than your work on the farm? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  17. What was the biggest factor affecting your decision to move to town? \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 A. Income  
 B. Only opportunity for job  
 C. Social  
 D. Other

18. How do you like living and working in the city as compared with farm life? Better Same Worse.
19. How do you like the people you work with? + 0
20. Did you have a better or worse standard of living while you lived on the farm?
21. Did you ever belong to a labor union before coming to this job? Yes           . No           .
22. Do you feel that you now make a better or worse living than you did on the farm?
23. Did you have a job assured before you moved to           ? Yes           . No           .
24. How are educational opportunities in the city as compared with your rural district? Better Same Worse.
25. Do you think it is fair and democratic that a person be required to join a union in order to work at an organized plant? Yes           . No           .
26. Did you go through a training period on your present job? Yes           . No           .
27. Are your close friends now mostly people who grew up on the farm? Yes           . No           .
28. Would you have left the farm earlier had you been offered a grant of money to pay your moving expenses? Yes           . No           .
29. How does your family like city life as compared with farm life? Better Same Worse.
30. If a non-farm job like yours had been available to you only in a city 500 or more miles away, would you have moved to it from the farm? Yes           . No           . If no, why not?
31. Would you leave            to work on an equally secure job in Kansas City for a:
  - (1) 5% wage increase? Yes           . No           .
  - (2) 10% wage increase? Yes           . No           .
  - (3) 25% wage increase? Yes           . No           .
  - (4) 50% wage increase? Yes           . No           .(Note: if (1) is yes, (2), (3) and (4) drop out). If "no", above, why not?
32. Did your former farm neighbors and friends approve your decision to move? Yes           . No           .

33. If job opportunities and job information had been available to you, would you have left the farm earlier? Yes \_\_\_\_\_.  
No. \_\_\_\_\_. If no, why not?
34. Before you moved, did you consider the possibility of losing your job through depression or plant closing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_.  
No \_\_\_\_\_.
35. Do you know anyone now farming who would like to have a job in industry?  
Name \_\_\_\_\_.  
Address \_\_\_\_\_.
- Would he be willing to move? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.
36. Has the change in your work and residence altered the way you would vote on:  
(1) farm price supports? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.  
(2) union regulation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.
37. Do you think the average Union member at \_\_\_\_\_ has an adequate voice in Union affairs? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.
38. Do you attend Union meetings Often Seldom Never. \_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX II - TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
Department of Economics and Sociology  
Project 385

Age \_\_\_\_\_ . Education \_\_\_\_\_ years.  
# \_\_\_\_\_ . Farm operator: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ .

1. Do you feel that you are better off financially since you left the farm? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Do you belong to a labor union at . . . .? Yes \_\_\_\_\_.  
No \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Would you rather live in town or on a farm? \_\_\_\_\_.  
Does your family share this opinion? \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Do you feel that your work is harder, easier, more pleasant,  
less pleasant than farm work? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Do you think it is fair and democratic that a person be required to join a labor union in order to work at an organized plant? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Why did you leave the farm?
7. Do you think you have a better or worse standard of living since you left the farm? \_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX III - MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
Department of Economics and Sociology

1. From your experience, how does the average worker with a farm background fit into city life?
  - ( ) Much better than other workers.
  - ( ) Slightly better than other workers.
  - ( ) About the same as other workers.
  - ( ) Slightly worse than other workers.
  - ( ) Much worse than other workers.
2. How do part-time farmers and ex-farmers affect city workers?
  - ( ) Threaten the security and wages of city workers.
  - ( ) Have no effect on the security and wages of city dwellers.
  - ( ) Help the security and wages of city workers.
3. Do you belong to a union? ( ) Yes ( ) No
4. If so, do you attend union meetings ( ) Often ( ) Seldom  
( ) Never.
5. Are men with farm backgrounds ( ) better ( ) poorer or  
( ) about the same type workers as men without farm back-  
grounds?
6. Do you think it is fair and democratic that a person be  
required to join a labor union in order to work at an  
organized plant? ( ) Yes ( ) No
7. If you had the opportunity, would you vote ( ) for or  
( ) against continuing farm price support programs?
8. Would you leave your present residence and job to work in  
an equally secure job in Kansas City for:
  1. a 5% wage increase ( ) Yes ( ) No
  - a 10% wage increase ( ) Yes ( ) No
  - a 25% wage increase ( ) Yes ( ) No
  - a 50% wage increase ( ) Yes ( ) No

(Please indicate the smallest wage increase which would  
cause you to move.) Briefly give reason. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



9. Do you have any direct farming interest now? ☐ Yes  
☐ No. Have you ever had any direct farming interests?  
☐ Yes ☐ No. (Please indicate what farming interests  
you have or had.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

10. How are ex-farmers who move to town accepted by their city  
neighbors?  
☐ Better than average acceptance.  
☐ Same as anyone else.  
☐ Worse than average acceptance.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOVEMENT OF FARMERS  
TO INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT -- A CASE STUDY

by

GERALD PHILLIP OWENS

B. S., Phillips University, 1957

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Economics and Sociology

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1958

There exists a low level of income in the agricultural sector of our economy. An over-abundant labor force in agriculture is one of the factors contributing to this low level of income and is the problem with which this thesis is concerned. The purpose of this thesis is to review the existing ideas on income differentials and labor mobility and to serve as a pilot study attempting to isolate some of the reasons for these differentials, e.g., to what extent the movement from farm to industry has helped the low income situation in agriculture and why it has not been more extensive.

This study consists of a review of available literature to determine what has been done in the field of the labor mobility of farm operators and to gather data and information to be used in comparison with the findings of the research for this thesis.

Research for this project was conducted at a large manufacturing firm in Kansas. The percentage of the total non-supervisory, non-professional work force was determined by a random sampling of the personnel files. Names and addresses of two groups of employees were noted: (1) former farm operators who had been employed by this firm for five years or less, and (2) people whose job application blanks showed no farm background who had also been employed by this firm for five years or less. Further research was conducted in the personnel files to obtain a comparison of merit ratings of the two groups; those who had formerly been farm operators and

those who had not. Care was taken to include people of the same tenure of employment with this firm in both groups.

The second phase of the research consisted of interviewing twenty-seven people in the first group (seventeen personally and ten by telephone) and of sending mail questionnaires to forty-three people in the second group. The questions asked to the first group were designed to provide information on the following subjects:

1. Causes of the farm to city movement.
2. Effects on migrant of the farm to city movement.
3. Factors tending to promote or hinder the farm to city movement.

The questions asked to the second group on the mail questionnaire were designed in the main, to determine the opinions of city workers and city dwellers toward farmers who have moved to town and become employed in industry.

Other phases of the study consisted of separate interviews with company management and labor union officials to determine their opinions of ex-farmers.

In the first phase of the study it was found that 17.5 per cent of the non-supervisory, non-professional work force of this firm had been farm operators before accepting industrial employment, and that former farm operators who had been employed by this firm for five years or less made up 9.4 per cent of the work force.

In the second phase of the study, it was found that income considerations were by far the most important cause of the movement of farmers to industrial employment. Medical reasons were found to be a cause and it was found that social reasons were of no significance as a causative factor.

The study revealed that farmers usually considered themselves to be in a better financial position but that they generally appeared to suffer slightly from a social standpoint. Although their city neighbors seemed to receive them well, former farm operators who moved to the city were at a social disadvantage because they were unhappy to various degrees.

The most significant factor which promoted this movement, other than the need for more income, was the size and hiring practices of the firm where the former farmers were employed. Word of mouth was the most important means of transmitting job information. Word of mouth appeared to be an adequate method for the firm in view of the fact that they had a reasonable applicant-hire ratio. The favorable attitude of management of this firm toward ex-farmers is also thought to be a factor which tends to promote the movement.

Dislikes for city life and industrial employment, together with strong preferences for farming were found to be the main hindrances to the movement. Union barriers or social obstacles were relatively insignificant.

The random sample taken in the first part of the research was large enough to give results which were statistically

significant. However, the interviews with employees, management, and labor leaders and the mail questionnaires were neither random nor of sufficient numbers to give information of statistical significance.

This is a pilot study designed to disclose areas in which more intensive research is needed.