



A study of farm labor practices and conditions in Montana during World War II as factors in post war farm labor employment problems  
by Dexter H Moser

A THESIS Submitted to the Graduate Committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Agricultural Economics at Montana State College  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:

During World War II the shortage of farm labor in Montana and the nation as a whole became acute because many men regularly employed in agriculture left the farms to enter the armed services or industry, As the war progressed, this shortage became so serious that concerted action on a national scale became necessary to increase food production, so necessary in war times.

Some of the high points of the wartime farm labor problems and program in Montana are: (1) On the average, each year during the war, about 30,000 farm laborers were placed through the farm labor program in Montana, These workers took the places of from 35,000 to 40,000 Montana farm laborers who had entered the armed services or war industries, (2) Crop and livestock losses in Montana were negligible as a result of the restricted labor supply.

(3) Crops produced in Montana during the years 1943, 1944 and 1945 were valued at \$518,933,000. During this same period livestock production was valued at \$513,754,000. The total value of agricultural production during this critical war period was \$1,032,687,000. It has been shown in this study that, on the average, 30,000 hired workers out of the 35,000 workers needed in the state of Montana to take care of its agricultural production, were placed by the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Comparison of the above figures makes the value of the program to the state at once apparent, (4) Agricultural production in Montana was increased during the war period, despite the fact that the labor supply had decreased. This result emphasizes the point that the output per worker was increased, (5) During World War II domestic and farm labor shifted to more highly skilled industrial work, leaving the stoop labor jobs in agriculture to be filled by imported foreign labor.

(6) Farm worker wages and conditions of work are improved during periods of farm labor shortages, (7) Farm wages were stabilized, to some extent, through county wage board hearings and through the importation of foreign laborers and prisoners of war.

(8) While the cost of wartime farm labor recruitment and placement programs seems excessive, the expenditure was well worth while in comparison with the total value of the crops produced, (9) Job training added considerably to the efficiency of farm labor.

(10) Job placement and information services rendered by the local county agent, through county farm labor offices, played a very important part in the procurement of farm labor. About 68% of the individuals placed in farm jobs were local and transient workers placed through these offices.

(11) Governmental action was necessary in helping to solve the wartime farm labor problems.

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AS FACTORS IN POST WAR FARM LABOR  
EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

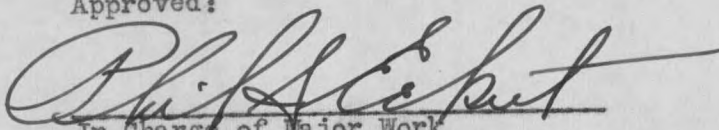
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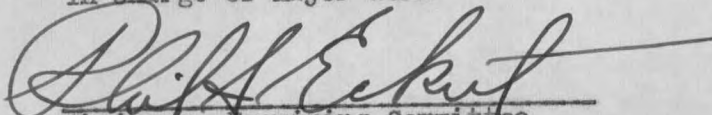
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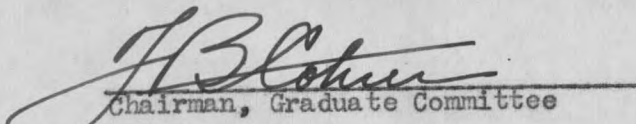
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CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables.....	4
List of Illustrations.....	6
Acknowledgments.....	7
Preface.....	8
Abstract.....	9
PART I: INTRODUCTION.....	10
Purpose of Project.....	10
History of Farm Labor in the United States.....	12
PART II: FARM LABOR IN MONTANA.....	29
History of Farm Labor in Montana.....	29
Farm Labor Placement Procedures Before World War II.....	33
Effect of World War II on the Farm Labor Supply in Montana....	37
PART III: DEVELOPING A FARM LABOR PROGRAM.....	39
The Emergency Farm Labor Program During World War II.....	39
Organization of the Montana Farm Labor Program.....	49
PART IV: THE EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM IN MONTANA.....	53
Accomplishments in Montana.....	53
Agricultural Production in Montana.....	61
Worker Incentives.....	63
Output of Farm Workers During the War Period.....	69
Hired Farm Worker Wage Rates.....	79
Cost of the Farm Labor Program.....	87
Cost Involved in Moving Farm Labor.....	90

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	Page
PART V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	92
APPENDIX.....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	103

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List of Tables

		Page
Table I	-- Investment Requirements for Farms and Ranches in the Northern Plains.....	20
Table II	-- Agricultural Employment in the United States 1909-1945.....	25
Table III	-- Number of Agricultural Workers in Montana 1939-1943.....	29
Table IV	-- Total Number of Agricultural workers in Montana by Seasons, 1939-1943.....	30
Table V	-- Total Number of Family Agricultural Workers in Montana by Seasons, 1939-1943.....	30
Table VI	-- Total Number of Hired Agricultural Workers in Montana by Seasons, 1939-1943.....	31
Table VII	-- Number and Type of Beet Laborers For Thinning and First Hoeing by Factory Districts for Montana 1939.....	32
Table VIII	-- Number and Type of Beet Laborers for Second Hoeing and Topping by Factory Districts for Montana, 1939.....	32
Table IX	-- Estimated Number of Individual Workers Placed By The Emergency Farm Labor Program in Montana 1943,, 1944, 1945.....	56
Table X	-- Estimated Number of Individual Workers Placed on Farms in Montana By Seasons Through The Emergency Farm Labor Program.....	57
Table XI	-- Number of Workers Placed in Montana Beet Fields, 1943-1945.....	58
Table XII	-- Trends in the Use of Imported Farm Labor.....	59
Table XIII	-- Estimated Percent of Work Accomplishment In Montana Of The Three Classes Of Labor By Crops During 1945.....	61
Table XIV	-- Production of Crops In Montana, 1943,1944,1945.....	62

		Page
Table XV	-- Livestock Number In Montana, 1943,1944,1945.....	62
Table XVI	-- Index Numbers of Man-Hour Requirements and Gross Farm Production, United States 1939-1944..	70
Table XVII	-- Comparison of the Number of Beet Workers and Beet Acreages in Montana, 1939-1945.....	72
Table XVIII	-- Comparison of Output of Beet Workers In Montana 1939 and 1945.....	72
Table XIX	-- Output of Sugar Beet Workers During Harvest Season In Montana, 1944.....	73
Table XX	-- Output of Prisoners Of War By Camps During Sugar Beet Harvest Season In Montana, 1944.....	74
Table XXI	-- Output of Prisoners Of War By Camps During Sugar Beet Harvest Season In Montana, 1945.....	77
Table XXII	-- Average Daily Work Output and Average Daily Earnings of Mexican Nationals in Sugar Beet Thinning, Montana 1945.....	78
Table XXIII	-- Composite Farm Wage Rates, United States and Geographic Divisions 1910-1939 Period and 1943.....	81
Table XXIV	-- Wages As Set By The Secretary of Agriculture For Sugar Beet Workers for 1945, As Per The Sugar Act.....	83
Table XXV	-- Production And Earnings Of Mexicans In Montana During Beet Thinning, 1945.....	84
Table XXVI	-- Data On Earnings of Mexican Nationals For Beet Harvest, 1945.....	85
Table XXVII	-- Congressional Appropriations For Securing Farm Labor.....	87
Table XXVIII	-- Prisoner Of War Camps Expenditures, 1944-1945.....	89

List of Illustrations

		Page
Figure I	-- Number of Persons on Farms, United States Jan.1, 1914.....	24
Figure II	-- Number of Farm Workers in the United States and Rate of Decrease 1915-1945.....	26
Figure III	-- Diagram of the Montana Emergency Farm Labor Program.....	50

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During World War II a marked increase in farm production took place, despite a substantial decrease in the number of farm workers available. Like so many tasks that loomed on the American industrial war front, it was thought, "it couldn't be done" - but it was done. The fact that the impossible was accomplished is a tribute to American farmers and farm workers, and to those public officials who were responsible for recruiting, routing and placing workers in the gaps where they were needed most.





























































































































































































































