

# At the Bottom--The Migrant

By PINGER LEAVEN

Mrs. Ojetter Altman is in the migrant stream. Her husband picks potatoes; he earns 10 cents for every sack he can drag back to the grower. In a few years his job will be done by a machine. His family is burdened with debts. He has borrowed, borrowed and will borrow probably for as long as he lives just to try and catch up.

But he, his wife and their eight children are lucky. They almost own an automobile. They have two rooms in a shed with the fortunate designation of "one of the better migrant camps in the country"; for them, the Altmans pay \$14 a week rent. Elsewhere they pay \$25 a week for much worse.

Richard Frost sits in the kitchening room of the camp. His eyes are yellowed and tired. When asked why he isn't in the fields, he says: "I just couldn't work today. I feel sick; I just feel so sick."

He sits in the least oppressive room of the camp. Dirt tracked in over the years covers the floor. Empty milk bottles, open loaves of bread, all with a rich growth of mold, are scattered among plates and cups and saucers and pans encrusted with the remains of last week's meals; 12 baskets of a nation's fragments. And all the odors of systematic desperation, flushed tidily out of comfortable lives, lie trapped inside these four walls.

A reporter who visits any migrant camp in the 12 counties of the Rochester Diocese can meet people like Mrs. Altman and Mr. Frost. Hundreds of them live in very same desperation and degradation, totally unbelievable to prosperous people within the same parish.

The subjects of these articles are the hopeless and often helpless victims of a farm-system in Schuyler County where a diocesan project called REACH is functioning in the Perkinsville parish of the Sacred Heart. The rural poor, but at this season the migrant workers in particular, are the daily concern of Father Timothy Weider and volunteers who give reach to REACH.

Today, the migrant is at the bottom of a labor-management hierarchy through which it is impossible to rise. He answers to a man known as the "crew-chief" who answers to the farmer or grower, who in turn answers to the processor who puts food on our table.

In February of each year individual farmers up and down the East Coast contract with an agent in the South for a labor force. This agent is the "crew-chief". It is his duty to get people to work on the farms. He may have such people at hand who work for him throughout the year, often he will have to depend on the unemployed masses in the urban centers for the people needed.

If the individual migrants do not have cars, he will, for a fee to be taken from their paychecks when they begin work, provide bus transportation to the work site. Enroute, and on days when there is no work, his wife will cook meals for the migrants at one dollar per meal. Again, a fee to be taken from the next paycheck.

Occasionally no written record is kept of these withdrawals from the migrant's pay, and the tabulation is found solely in the crew-chief's memory.

Everyone has problems: this year in New York State the potato har-



MRS. OJETTER ALTMAN



NATHANIEL SMITH

vest is threatened by anemotose, a white fungus corrupting the tubers. The farmers are losing money from the outset. This year one 'load' of migrants arrived early and had to be housed and fed by the crew-chief for almost a month before they could work. The crew-chief is losing money from the outset.

This year some migrants will exhaust the harvest season and yet be so far in debt to the crew-chiefs that they will not have money for the last meal in New York, much less funds for transportation home.

According to Cleo Saunders, a representative to the migrants in New York from the AFL-CIO, the major problem to be overcome in trying to correct such a situation is the feeling of helplessness that the system has inspired. Both reticence to speak for fear of retaliation from the crew-chiefs and the growers, and the feeling that even if one did speak out the results would be minimal have contributed to the problems' continuance for generations.

It is here that the labor unions hope to prove most useful. By providing an organization which will back the migrants' demands, both a sense of personal power and a structure of political power may be built.

The philosophy which guides Father Weider's Project REACH in Perkinsville follows much the same line. He describes his efforts as "long range, practical, realistic programs helping the poor help themselves find new horizons."

His programs to aid the migrant, the resettler, the marginal farm family in finding alternatives to poverty and the courage to act on those alternatives.

One facet of the migrant priest's project has proven of immense value to the laboring mother. Ordinarily it is necessary for her to bring her very young children into the fields while she works. There the child is subject to any number of diseases and chemicals in the soil as well as inadvertent neglect.

Father Weider established a day-care center in Perkinsville to help ease this situation. The migrant mother brings her child there during the work day to be cared for by a number of volunteer "mothers".

Most of the children arrive at the center sick and malnourished. All are anemic. Sister Regina Marie, a registered nurse on special assignment to the project from St. James Hospital remarked that a lack of development of all the children. "Fred-

die is a year old. He hasn't the strength to stand up. We've been trying to make him walk." This reporter picked the child up and he fell asleep in his arms right away. "He looks six-months old," Sister said.

Father Weider spoke of a life saved at the center. "One child was brought in who was dying from dehydration. When the body fluids are below a certain level the electrostatic balance is lost and the person dies. Doctors told us the child had less than 24 hours to live. We saved his life," he said. At the center all children receive food, clothing and medical attention.

Father Weider recognizes the problem requires much more of Project REACH. To face it, the migrant priest has established a clinic which provides a mobile health-education unit, educational programs for adults and teens, a self-help housing program, and organizational programs. More is on the way.

(Next week: The Grower and the Processor: Looking at the migrant from the top.)

## Diocesans Attend Trial in Maryland

By PATRICK FARREN (Special to the Courier-Journal)

Baltimore, Md. — The trial of the Catonsville Nine may not be the Church's greatest moment in the peace movement, but it was the moment that significant segments of both local and national clergy and laity aligned themselves directly with it.

The nine anti-war demonstrators accused of burning draft board files last spring with homemade napalm, went on trial in Federal Court as more than 1,500 chanting people linked arms and marched through the streets of Baltimore in support of the defendants.

In addition to the three hundred-strong contingent from Cornell University, spectators and participants from the Rochester Diocese numbered about a dozen.

The Catonsville Nine incident took place on May 17, 1968, when nine Roman Catholics invaded Local Board 33 in Catonsville, Md., and seized 600 individual Selective Service files.

They took the files to a parking lot outside and burned them with napalm, which they had made from a recipe from the Special Forces Handbook of the United States Government.

Mother Mary Bride, Mother General of the Sisters of Mercy, in Washington over the weekend for meetings of the Mission Secretariate, was among those at the opening of the trial on Monday. She said, "I don't expect everyone in my community to understand, but I know all will respect my making a responsible decision to come."

Dr. George McVey, who served as liaison between the nine and their lawyers and representatives of the media said: "Both the government and the Church are insensitive and largely irrelevant to the needs of the people. We hope our participation will contribute to the enlightenment of other individuals. By our participation, we are witnesses to the necessity of change within the Church."

Sister Dorothy Keefe, director of the Rochester Headstart program spent three days at the trial and said: "Those of us here cannot speak for our communities; but we have hidden behind the institution for too long and must face these issues as individuals. This putting of oneself on the line will serve as a ray of hope for others in the Rochester religious communities."

Phillip R. Gagin, S.J. and Thomas Sable, S.J., 1963 graduates of Aquinas and McQuaid respectively, were among the group of Jesuit seminarians from Weston College in Massachusetts. They cited the influence of Father Daniel Berrigan as a determining factor in their attendance, as it seemed to be for many of the participants.

Father David Connor, assistant Catholic chaplain at Cornell University attended with the delegation from the Ithaca campus. He said, "In this and in other important issues, the clergy is having to be led by the people. But we've got to be willing to be both in and of what's happening with the people wherever great moral questions are being raised."

Professor Robert McLaughlin, who teaches Philosophy at Saint John Fisher College, said he came from "a desire to become educated on the peace issue."

Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, was also there and said that Catholics must

### Catholic Interracial Council

## 'Block-Busting' Draws Fire

"Block-busting" tactics of some real estate salesmen when Negro minorities seek more adequate housing were indicted in Rochester Sunday night at the first in a series of meetings sponsored by the Catholic Interracial Council.

More than 100 persons, including several priests and nuns, attended the "dialogue-seminar," titled "Confrontation: Black and White," in St. John the Evangelist's School hall, Humboldt Street.

Six more sessions are scheduled in the same hall on successive Sundays from Oct. 13 through Nov. 17.

Purpose of the meetings is described as "developing a greater sensitivity to the issues and attempting to find better answers to the perplexing problems of promoting understanding and cooperation between black and white people in our society."

Last Sunday's meeting, based on difficulties in bringing about integrated housing, featured a film, "No Hiding Place," and a talk by H. W. (Bud) Bush, representing the 19th Ward Community Association.

Films and speakers, followed by small group "dialogues," will be the format for remaining meetings. Persons taking the course will be expected to read and discuss two books — a digest "Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders" and "Black Power."

They also will be expected, accord-

ing to Paul W. Brayer, CIC president, "hopefully to become involved in some meaningful and direct action, to help bring about the substantial change in our 'white racist' society which will be necessary before the problem of interracial injustice will be solved."

Monsignor Charles V. Boyle, pastor of St. John's welcomed the group and expressed confidence that current difficulties "will be solved if we apply the teachings of the Gospel — although there is an urgency that admits of no lethargy."

Brayer announced that meetings will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. and will adjourn at 9:30. The schedule:

Oct. 13—Goals of the Black Revolu-

tion—what are they? Speaker, Mrs. Alma Green.

Oct. 20—Employment and Under-employment of Black Americans — what should we do about it? Raymond Hensler.

Oct. 27—An Analysis of the Kerner Commission Report, by Black Americans; Father Paul Brennan.

Nov. 3—Education—equal or unequal; Pat San Filippo.

Nov. 10—Confrontation: Black and White—where can we go from here? James Dobson.

Nov. 17—What Can I Do?—answers to your commitment dilemma; Monsignor Boyle.

## St. Mary's Hospital Outlines New Policy

St. Mary's Hospital, engaged in a study of how it will best utilize its facilities to meet future health needs of the Rochester Community, has voted to build closer ties with area colleges and universities.

Contradicting a local report that St. Mary's plans to close its doors in order to concentrate on training practical nurses, the board of directors of St. Mary's Hospital voted in favor of a policy that will make the hospital's clinical teaching facilities available to a broader segment of the nursing education community in Rochester, as a means of aiding the rapidly expanding nurse education effort, and also to bring a greater number of nurses to St. Mary's Hospital for clinical experience.

According to a statement issued: "The hospital will accomplish this in two ways: by initiating further efforts immediately to establish closer ties with Rochester area universities, colleges and junior colleges; and, by establishing a plan to phase out St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing in 1971."

"This means that, with the Freshman class which has just begun studies at the school, St. Mary's has accepted its last class. This class will have the distinction in 1971 of closing the school in its 80th year as an important source of nurses in Rochester and beyond."

"St. Mary's Hospital will seek to build a correspondingly significant role as a source of clinical teaching for the collegiate schools within the region."

"By making its teaching facilities available on a much broader basis to the Rochester area, the hospital will expand its impact on nurse education by bringing it into contact with more student nurses than is now possible without a corresponding expenditure of government, taxpayer, or private funds."

The decisions announced this week were made after consultation with representatives of the Rochester Alumnae Association.



Marchers for Peace walked in front of Sacred Heart Cathedral last Sunday morning with placards suggesting to Mass-goers that peace-efforts should concern all Catholics.

## Catholic Pickets Urge End to Vietnam War

Nearly 50 Catholics of the Rochester Diocese carried peace banners in a quiet demonstration at the front entrance of Sacred Heart Cathedral last Sunday morning. Six Sisters of Mercy and two Jesuit Scholastics also took part in the line of march affirming their concern over the Vietnam war.

They did so to make "a sign of fidelity to the moral teachings of Jesus, Our Pope and our bishop, who, in conscience spoke out on July 30, 1967," according to a statement which they circulated.

The statement also cited the encyclicals "Pacem in Terris" and "Populorum Progressio" which they said should be proclaimed "with as much vigor" as "Humanae Vitae."

Mr. George Hezel, S.J., one of the marchers said: "We do this because of our own silence in the past as far as the war is concerned." Mrs. Philip Pizzo, also marching, said: "We march at the cathedral because we wish to contact all the Church, Laymen and Clergy, and ask them to

help end the war."

While most of the Sacred Heart parishioners who saw the marchers and banners as they came to the Cathedral Masses smiled cordially at the demonstrators or stopped to inquire about the reasons for pacifism, there were occasional evidences of resentment. One young sister in the line of march was called a "Russian Nun."

Father John S. Hayes, the rector of Sacred Heart said that he was "much-impressed by the orderliness of the demonstration." Father Hayes personally greeted many of the marchers individually. His sermon on Sunday was on the topic of conscience.

Dr. George McVey of Antlers Drive in Brighton, was principal organizer of the demonstration. The signs which carried quotations from the writings and speeches of both Pope Paul and Bishop Sheen on the horrors of war were hand lettered by Mr. Jack Podsiadlo, S.J., an art instructor at McQuaid Jesuit High School.

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