LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

PANEL DISCUSSION ON MIGRANT FARM WORKER POPULATION ACCOUNT

THE WESTIN HOTEL
RENAISSANCE CENTER
KENT ROOM
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48243

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 1985

PRESENT:

Basile J. Uddo
Pepe J. Mendez
Thomas F. Smegal
Leanne Bernstein
Robert A. Valois
W. Clark Durant III
Lorain Miller
Hortencia Benavidez
Claude G. Swafford

1 MR. VALOIS: The next item on the agenda
2 is a panel discussion on the migrant farm worker population.
3 I would ask each of the witnesses going from my left to my
4 right to identify themselves by name and tell me just a
5 little bit about themselves, professional credentials that
6 would qualify you to speak on the subject.
7 DR. O'HARE: My name is Dr. William
8 O'Hare, political studies in Washington, D.C. I have been
9 active for ten years. I spent the first five years of my
10 career doing people population estimates for the State of
11 Michigan.
12 DR. HOLT: My name is Dr. James Holt,
13 I'm consulting agricultural economist. I spent 16 years on
14 the faculty of agricultural economics at Penn State
15 University working on agricultural labor. I've been an
16 agricultural labor consultant to the National Commission on
17 Employment and Unemployment Statistics.
18 MARTIN: I'm Phil Martin, I'm a
19 professor of agricultural economics at the University of
20 California Davis. I've written quite a few articles in
21 books on farm labor and various other labor related things.
22 MR. DAVIS: My name is Hillard Davis,
23 I'm a biostatistician by profession. I've worked with a
24 firm called HPR Management Consulting firm in Washington.

1 We do consulting jobs both for the government and private
2 organizations. I am experienced both in the national and
3 international field in doing things like estimating
4 population, developing health information systems and the
5 like.
6 MR. VALOIS: It sounds like you're all
7 superqualified for this particular task. We look forward to
8 hearing from you.
9 DR. O'HARE: First of all, let me say
10 thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts on this
11 issue and I hope I can be of some help. I'll try to be even
12 briefer than I had planned to be.
13 I think there is wide agreement that
14 using several good data basis and several good estimates and
15 averaging them is probably a superior method to using any
16 single estimates. Having said that, let me talk about the
17 kind of methodology that I've been working with and am most
18 familiar with.
19 I will start with the migrant student
20 record transfer system data base, MSRTS, especially the
21 system run by the Department of Education. It's the
22 centralized record keeping system in Little Rock, Arkansas.
23 MR. MENDEZ: Mr. Chairman, I've got one
24 question. Are they going to make a short presentation?

1 MR. VALOIS: Yes, we're going to hold
2 our questions.
3 MR. MENDEZ: Okay.
4 DR. O'HARE: The MSRTS system works as
5 follows. When a student moves into a school system
6 identified as a migrant student the school system then
7 contacts the central record keeping location in Little Rock,
8 Arkansas and the health and academic records for that
9 student are forwarded to the school.
10 A byproduct of that system is a
11 day-by-day record of where those migrant students were over
12 the course of the year. Based on that data base which
13 incidentally is then evaluated regularly by the inspector
14 general in GAL and receives relatively positive evaluations,
15 currently there is a systemwide audit going on so we'll have
16 some good information for 1985.
17 I would use that student data base first
18 of all to estimate the families with which those students
19 live. All of them have parents and some of them have
20 pre-school age siblings. But in that case -- let me back
21 up. There are some sources of that information, studies,
22 currently some of the states correct data on the families of
23 these students. Finally we may have to go into the field
24 and collect some data ourselves.

1 From that basis I would use those
2 figures to calculate what percent of the migrant population
3 may not be tied to those students. In other words in each
4 migrant camp there are so many people who are tied to that
5 student base and so many people who are individual or
6 underage children. Based on the ratio estimate how many
7 people of that source there are.
8 Let me talk briefly about two purposes
9 of these estimates as I see them. One is producing national
10 and nationwide figures on the number of migrant farm workers
11 and that's a pretty clear straightforward exercise.
12 The second is to produce estimates of
13 the distribution of these farm workers on a state-by-state
14 basis. One of the benefits of giving the MRSTS system is
15 that assigns students to several different states if they
16 move between states during the course of the year.
17 Consequently using that base to reflect the other migrants
18 in a stream would give you a better more reasonable estimate
19 of the amounts -- the number of migrants and the length of
20 time that they each are in a state which I think is a more
21 realistic way of assessing the relative legal needs in each
22 of those states.
23 Also, I'd a note -- you're probably
24 already aware of it but I think it bears repeating that the

1 legal needs, providing the legal needs for migrant farm
2 workers is a probably a little different than it is for most
3 of the population because of the movements that they make. A
4 very simple example is if you have 100,000 migrant farm
5 workers in California for the first six months of the year,
6 and those 100,000 moved to Oregon for the second six months
7 of the year you'd need virtually the same amount of
8 resources in California as you had in Oregon in order to
9 meet the needs because the problems of moving attorneys
10 across state lines.
11 Let me quickly run down, and I'll add
12 that I did leave you a copy of the synopsis of this
13 presentaiton. One is based on the MSRTS system which has
14 systematic regular standardized contacts for a large segment
15 of the target population. You need a standard definition,
16 standard identification and data collection procedure across
17 the country, having a central file to avoid duplications.
18 This would use 1985 calendar year data would be the most
19 recent available. I think the estimation methodology is
20 relatively simple and easy to understand and I think that's
21 a big plus in producing figures but explaining how you got
22 those figures to an audience.
23 I think it would involves three steps,
24 first is a step on what data is available now. Secondly,

1 the question of additional data if needed on migrant camps
2 and so on, finally a production of producing the data, the
3 figures on a national basis, state-by-state and along with
4 that a production of inscription, a good description of how
5 you got those figures and methodology. Don't underestimate
6 that last point. It's important to spend some time to
7 describe how you got to where you got. It eliminates a lot
8 of potential argument. Finally, it goes to this last point.
9 Unfortunately in this case unlike any other estimations we
10 don't have any true figures which we could compare estimates
11 of a previous point in time or can we count on their
12 accuracy. There are no true counts of the migrant farm
13 worker population.
14 Consequently, any of the credibility of
15 the figures that come out of this kind of exercise are based
16 on two asepcts. First is the soundness of the methodology
17 and secondly is the credibility of the person or
18 organization doing the research and I think that second
19 point, even though it's not a scientific point, is worth
20 remembering because many of the people said they don't have
21 the time or skill or background to access the methodology
22 or credibility based on the people doing the research.
23 Thank you.
24 DR. HOLT: I'd like to again thank you

1 for the opportunity to be here and commend you for doing an
2 incredible job. I'd like to make a couple of background
3 comments to use up the first couple of minutes of my time
4 and then make a few suggestions.
5 First of all, the term migrant seasonal
6 farm worker which is bandied about quite a bit in
7 legislative circles, I'd like to point out is a legal
8 concept not a statistical one. It's something that
9 statisticians have tried to give meaning to because it has
10 been necessary. I don't think there's anyone in the
11 agricultural sphere that would argue very strongly that
12 there is much similarity in the needs. Certainly the legal
13 service needs or any other characteristics of seasonal,
14 nonmigrant seasonal farm workers.
15 I think farm workers are a small portion
16 of the total farm, hired farm worker population. There are
17 of course right ways and wrong ways of doing it and then
18 there are the second issue differences along the migrant
19 statistics in the various fields and again from a
20 statisticians standpoint, the thing I find complicated in
21 that whole process is many of these definitions have been
22 developed with specific programs objectives in mind rather
23 than with statistical objectives in mind. So that I think
24 there's agreement that a migrant is somebody who leaves home

1 and does agricultural work somewhere else and then returns
2 or at least moves around. But whether you call a person a
3 migrant when they're doing that which is when you can
4 identify them as a migrant or whether you call them a
5 migrant when they're at home as well is of course is a
6 question, whether you consider the person a migrant because
7 they're in migrant status this year or whether you call them
8 a migrant because they've done it, because they've done it
9 over the past five years or ten years or two years.
10 When you talk about the migrant worker
11 him or herself, or whether you extend that definition to
12 include household members, family members, dependents and so
13 forth, again will vastly affect the numbers that you've come
14 up.
15 Much of what I've read, particularly
16 coming out of the legal area that the people refer to these
17 definitions as right or wrong. I'd like to emphasize that
18 they aren't right and wrong, they're just quite different.
19 There are only three controlled
20 scientifically designed surveys of the farm employment and
21 farm worker population. I think that's where I'd like to
22 focus your attention for a moment. The rest of them are
23 either administrative or program statistics that all suffer
24 in one way or another from the advocacy problem.

1 Two of these come out of the Department
2 of Agriculture, one is a quarterly establishment survey on
3 which the Department of Agriculture spends about $3 million
4 a year which would give you an idea of the cost of
5 generating these kinds of statistics. It generates
6 statistics on employment and wage rates, very very limited
7 information on worker characteristics because it is an
8 establishment in our household survey and it produces data
9 for a few states for small regions in two or three or four
10 states.
11 Those regions have some symmetry with
12 regard to the commodity base and the labor supply base that
13 constitutes them so they're not just random selections.
14 There is also a household survey that is conducted by
15 concensus of the population survey enhanced by the FDA,
16 it's done manually in December. The Department of
17 Agriculture spends at the margin for the farm worker portion
18 of that about 600,000 a year. That basically pays to ask
19 questions, to edit and summarize the data from those
20 extra questions and that survey. I can't imagine how
21 expense that kind of thing is that measures the total farm
22 worker population for the household basis and that does that
23 fairly well at the national basis, the national level.
24 It is the only statistical source,

1 national statistical source that generates statistical --
2 incredible number of farm workers. However, it does it only
3 at the national level and in very broad regions.
4 Finally, there is a concensus of
5 agricultural conducted by the Bureau of Census every five
6 years. You can see we're getting further and further out in
7 terms of infrequency with which these surveys are done.
8 That's a multi-million dollar survey of course, and a
9 survey, a general farm characteristics of which regular and
10 seasonal employment which are enumerated that produces very
11 accurate data for a very detailed geographic region down to
12 the county level. But it's done with the amount of greater
13 detail is limited and of course it's done only every five
14 years.
15 All three of these sources of statistics
16 show that the distribution of agricultural employment and/or
17 farm workers quite accurately they're all periodically
18 updated, they're all benefit from simple design scientific
19 examples for statistical controlled survey results. Frankly
20 I think the approach to making an estimate of the population
21 and its geographically distribution leads to a spark there
22 with a measure, a concrete measure of what it's like to --
23 an objective measure of what you're trying to determine and
24 then make what is necessary. The approach that I suggest is

1 that of starting with one of these national direct measures
2 of the agricultural employment, regionalize to minimize the
3 amount of commodity and labor supply difference and it's
4 possible to do that to a greater lesser degree with any one
5 of these three sources.
6 Through spot surveys on a limited basis,
7 to determine the relationship of this objective data base
8 through the distribution of the target population, the cost
9 of doing that depends of course on how accurately you
10 require the data and what degree of geographic detail and
11 demographic detail you want. It's not a chief undertaking
12 when a lot of detail can be done very inexpensively if
13 you're going to settle for and measure which gives you
14 reasonably good geographic distribution of the population.
15 Since ultimately your clients have to show their eligibility
16 when they apply for service. It's really not necessary
17 to be data based to determine precisely who is eligible.
18 It's only necessary that the data base is distributed
19 appropriately.
20 MR. MARTIN: I'm Philip Martin. Let me
21 reinforce what has been said. There is no single reliable
22 source of data from migrant farm workers. Therefore, in
23 trying to develop numbers and distributions instead of using
24 sort of a rightful approach and using one series you have to

1 use a shotgun approach and use several theories. That's
2 point one.
3 Second is that there are three basic
4 kinds of surveys which generate labor data and market data.
5 First there are status surveys. You ask employers how many
6 people did you hire, what are their characteristics?
7 Second, there are household surveys. You ask workers about
8 where they work, what they earn and all that type of thing.
9 Thirdly, you can use intake data or administrative data,
10 data collected by agencies and they sometimes take down some
11 characteristics of the people that they serving.
12 No matter how one looks at these three
13 sources, the most important point I think to realize is that
14 migrant farm workers are concentrated in relatively few
15 states. No matter how one cuts it California, Florida and
16 Texas have anywhere from one-fourth to one-half. And that
17 shows you the range or the shot gun approach. There's no
18 one can say exactly it's 33.45 percent, but roughly between
19 half and a quarter and a half of the farm workers are in
20 those three states.
21 Essentially if you're trying to get a
22 look at the number of migrants and their dependents in each
23 state then I recommend you do is develop an estimation
24 procedure that makes use of several sources of data and

1 specifically what I recommend is a formula that includes
2 establishment data which is relatively hard on several
3 topics, and also household and intake data which has varied
4 degrees of reliability.
5 Basically what I guess what I would
6 recommend is that you start from the premise that migrant
7 farm workers are located where the kinds of crops are grown
8 which tend to use migrant farm workers. So, what can
9 even -- and to give you a shorthand then, basically, fruits,
10 vegetables, horticultural specialties use most of the
11 migrant farm workers. California produces about 40 percent
12 of those commodities, Florida and Texas at about 18 percent.
13 So, roughly, you can start with relatively hard data on the
14 kinds of commodities that tend to use migrant farm workers.
15 You can also include the USDA data which
16 Mr. Reagan mentioned on wages and seasonal workers and that
17 sort of thing and you can come up with a relatively accurate
18 estimate of where the demand for these workers is. In other
19 words, I guess what I would say having served on several
20 toxic waste committees in the State of California is that
21 for 80 or $90,000 I think you can develop a relatively
22 accurate estimate plus or minus 20 percent of the
23 distribution pending the number of migrants, but getting rid
24 of that last 10 or 20 percent uncertainty increases your

1 cost. So, if you want to get to 99.9 percent you can spend
2 a couple million dollars.
3 But getting to that -- reducing the
4 extreme of surgence, plus or minus 10 or 20 percent is not
5 that expensive. Doing it after that gets very very
6 expensive. So, what I guess I would recommend is using
7 establishment data to get demand packets under the
8 presumption that people will not go year after year to areas
9 where there isn't that much demand, then using supply
10 information to try to get numbers of people, numbers of
11 dependents.
12 It seems to me, using that kind of
13 approach, one would have to argue that migrant families, or
14 migrant unemployment is systematically different for parts
15 of the United States. To say that one is going to have any
16 kind of bias sort of estimate. The other point I guess I'd
17 like to make is that even though there are a lot of
18 different fruits and vegetables and other commodities that
19 use migrants in the United States, in argricultural almost
20 everything is concentrated. A handful of commodities, a
21 handful of producers produce most of what's produced. I'll
22 give you an example.
23 California produces over a 150 different
24 fruits and vegetables. Each one has a unique demand for

1 labor, a unique time when they're picked, a unique set of
2 employee characteristics. So that would seem to say at
3 first glance, you'll never be able to estimate the number of
4 migrants.
5 But when you look at these commodities,
6 it turns out three commodities, three of those 150 use 41
7 percent of all the hours of farming in fruits and
8 vegetables. Those three happen to be grapes, citrus and
9 peaches. The top ten commodities use about 70 percent of
10 all the hours. So, I guess what I'm saying is you can look
11 at this at first glance and say this is an impossible job,
12 but if you want to get relatively accurate information, you
13 take the most important commodities and there is pretty good
14 data on the most important commodities and you can get
15 relatively close to what the number and distribution is.
16 I do not recommend another survey of
17 farm workers, primarily because it's too expensive. We
18 spent in California about $150,000 to interview 1300 farm
19 worker households in 1983. What the census of current
20 population survey does is interview about 1500 households
21 nationwide every other year which would imply since
22 California's got 10 percent of the sample about 150
23 households in California. They spent 600,000 doing it, and
24 we're a lot more efficient than they are, but even so,

1 interviewing farm worker households is terribly expensive
2 even after we've done our interviews, we can't prove we have
3 interviewed a random sample. I hope we have. But we
4 can't -- nobody can prove that we didn't, but we can't prove
5 that we did.
6 So, I guess what I'm recommending is
7 what you do is essentially combine existing data sources and
8 do something that has not been done before, and that is
9 throw in estimates of demands of these workers under the
10 theory that the workers tend to go where they jobs are, at
11 least they don't tend to go where the jobs aren't year after
12 year. Thank you.
13 MR. DAVIS: I'd just like to thank the
14 legal services for inviting me here to present the
15 methodology that we developed at NCR for counting migrants
16 and seasonal farm workers populations.
17 I'd like to say that we are all further
18 along on this than the other speaks in that we've been
19 working at this for about a year-and-a-half. We have come
20 up with a decision on what type of methodology that would be
21 appropriate for doing this. Let me just tell you what we
22 decided upon.
23 We were looking for a model that would
24 produce estimates of migrants and seasonal farm workers that

1 was sufficiently reliable to use for program planning, needs
2 and fund disbursement. After great consideration -- a
3 major consideration and deciding upon was that the model
4 presented estimates that were accurate, they had no
5 reliability and they were consistent. Also the model -- the
6 procedures for making these estimates was reasonably
7 inexpensive.
8 So what we did was, we considered all of
9 these methods that the other panel members have presented to
10 you. We considered using methods based on data from the
11 following sources, census, sample survey, labor ETA223 data,
12 health clinic data, the migrant student registration form
13 data and also the department of census crop data.
14 We found them all to be either too
15 expensive, too inaccurate, too unreliable or too
16 inconsistent except the one that we decided on which was
17 based on the census crop data. So in order to use this
18 particular model, there are certain assumptions that we
19 made, one was that because what we were interested in was
20 making estimates for areas, both small areas, areas in
21 counties or constituate counties or states. These different
22 areas that we delineated into acreage of crops and that each
23 crop had associated with it four components that potentially
24 utilized human labor.

1 One was crop maintenance process, that
2 being things like fertilizing and so forth and a crop
3 processing process which for many of the crops after they
4 are harvested they are processed as well which certain
5 institutes use migrant and seasonal farm workers labors.
6 Each of these stages of production, you
7 either have human or mechanical labor, they utilize human or
8 mechanical labor and usually this labor is drawn from either
9 family members, permanently hired farm workers, seasonal
10 farm workers or migrant farm workers. This includes all the
11 possibilities of the type of farm workers that are being
12 used in order to produce the various crops.
13 Family members and permanent hired farm
14 workers are two groups of workers that it would not have
15 interest to us. What was of interest to us were the
16 seasonal farm workers and the migrant farm workers.
17 Now we know how each of these groups of
18 workers are used in the production of crops. In
19 mechanically components of the crop production such as
20 planting and maintenance where you use tractors and other
21 types of machinery, you do not use, for the most part,
22 seasonal farm workers or migrant farm workers. You use
23 either family members or permanently hired farm workers.
24 Then to estimate the number of farm

1 workers that are needed, the maximum number of farm workers
2 in a particular area to produce crops, what you have to do
3 is get the number of workers used to plant, plus the number
4 of workers used to maintain the crops plus a number of the
5 workers used to harvest the crops, plus a number of workers
6 used to process the crops.
7 Since we are only interested in the
8 migrant and seasonal farm workers population, all of those
9 components for the most part are negligible except the one
10 where you need the labor, you need the intensive labor which
11 is -- and the harvesting of certain crops.
12 Of course, there are grain crops like
13 wheat, soy beans, et cetera, almost no seasonal farm workers
14 or migrants are used in this particular -- in these
15 particular processes. So, therefore, you can throw out all
16 three of those components for the most part in most areas
17 and just deal with the number of workers that are actually
18 needed to harvest the crops.
19 Now for each crop in a particular area
20 there are four pieces of agricultural information that you
21 need and these informations are for the most part already
22 available. The accuracy of which might be disputed, but you
23 need the number of the crop existing in the area, you need
24 the personal hours -- person hours needed to harvest one

1 acre of that piece of crop, the beginning and the ending of
2 the harvest season, and the average number of hours worked
3 per day and per week by one worker for harvesting the crops.
4 Then you come up the number of workers that are needed to
5 harvest the one crop would be the acres plus the production
6 levels divided by the daily hours times the harvest season,
7 and what you will get from this, you will get that you will
8 need x-number of people to harvest that particular crop.
9 Now in order to get it for all crops in
10 a particular area, if you just sum up over all the crops
11 that are needed, that need farm labor, if you sum this
12 figure up then you will come up with a figure that will give
13 you the number of workers that are needed to harvest the
14 crop in a particular area.
15 The Department of Agriculture has put
16 out a number of handbooks on the harvest season dates and in
17 this they give the beginning of the harvest season, the end
18 of the harvest season and the most active dates of the
19 harvest season. Also the production level for various
20 crops. This has also been done by the -- a horticultural
21 crop specialist at Michigan State University, and this gives
22 for each crop -- each crop harvested, it gives the man hours
23 required to harvest one acre. It tells you the percentage
24 of that particular crop and it's actually harvested

1 mechanically versus the percentage that is actually
2 harvested by hand labor.
3 So with this input then you can figure
4 out how many people would be needed to harvest a crop in a
5 particular area. Now, you have the total number of farm
6 workers, how do you break this down by migrants and seasonal
7 farm workers or the number of family members and permanently
8 hard farm workers that are needed in doing this.
9 One way you can do it is you can make
10 certain assumptions. First of all you can conclude that
11 certain types of crops only use family members. You can
12 also conclude that these other things that are done done
13 with the crops are not done by seasonal migrant farm
14 workers. Also, there have been estimates by state of the
15 percentage of the workers in the various states that are
16 done by -- that are migrant as opposed to seasonal farm
17 workers. So once you get the figure, if you multiply by the
18 factor then you can break it down between the migrant farm
19 workers and the seasonal farm workers. And for the migrant
20 population there's another factor, would be the unproductive
21 accompanying family members.
22 There have been studies that show that
23 this is in the order of one percent. So what you do is you
24 multiply this particular factor by this and then you can

1 increase your factor, you can increase your migrant
2 population by a certain amount and from that you can get
3 your total migrant population.
4 Let me just give you a couple of -- the
5 advantages of this model. The advantages is that
6 theoretically sound and gets consistent results and is easy
7 to understand and use. It makes use of data that's already
8 available and you can make small area estimates from it and
9 it doesn't depend on immigration status of the migrant
10 population and its sources of errors are predictable.
11 The disadvantages are that the model
12 doesn't produce demographic, although you can get this as a
13 side product of this particular model. Some of the copy
14 might be out of date so you might have to contact your local
15 agricultural department to get more up-to-date figures. In
16 certain instances the environmental conditions might affect
17 the crop production.
18 I think my time is up so I will stop at
19 that point.
20 MR. VALOIS: Members of the board, if
21 you have questions for the panel?
22 MR. MENDEZ: Mr. Chairman, I have
23 questions. Panel members, this is to each one of you. I'm
24 going to ask you a series of questions and I'd like you to

1 give me a brief few word responses.

2 How long is this survey good for?

3 MR. O'HARE: Which survey is that?

4 MR. MENDEZ: The one that you're

5 proposing. What period of time would it be valid?

6 MR. O'HARE: I propose using 1985 data

7 from the NSIDS and it would be valid as long as the

8 distribution remains the same.

9 MR. MENDEZ: How long do you estimate

10 the distribution is going to stay the same?

11 MR. O'HARE: It's going to change

12 year-by-year, it's a matter of becoming less and less

13 accurate.

14 MR. MENDEZ: Would it be valid for five

15 years, do you think?

16 MR. O'HARE: I think so.

17 MR. MENDEZ: Mr. Holt?

18 MR. HOLT: The approach I'm proposing

19 would utilize data depending on which data base you use

20 updated annually. The distributional factors to be used

21 work gradually and would over time of course become outdated

22 and I would estimate we'd probably want five maybe every ten

23 years to revalidate that. The structure of the migrant

24 population does not change radically from year-to-year.

1 It's a gradual process.

2 MR. MARTIN: I haven't processed a

3 specific methodology either, but what I would do is the

4 initial distribution, I would use three year averages over a

5 three-year period. I would take the average and start with

6 that and as new data became available I'd update it. So, in

7 my mind that survey would be continuously updated and it

8 would be -- presumably it would be updated with everything

9 available, sometimes every year, sometimes every couple

10 years.

11 MR. DAVIS: I think the methodology I'm

12 proposing the things that impact on it mostly would be the

13 mechanization of various costs and by now most crops have

14 been mechanized and can be mechanized, and also the demand

15 for the particular crop in the marketplace, and here again

16 you take things like apples and some of the tree crops

17 as well as things like the nuts and so forth, what you do

18 use migrant labor, these things since the farmer has a

19 long-term investment, these things would not change. So

20 they do the agricultural census I think once every five

21 years.

22 So, I would say for the most part at

23 least until the next census would be taken.

24 MR. MENDEZ: If we picture you -- any of

1 you do this, would you teach our office staff how to do it
2 and update it so we can bring it in in-office and update it
3 ourselves, in what I assume would be a more economic fashion
4 since we can hire young individuals out of law school, or is
5 that too difficult?
6 MR. VALOIS: Yes.
7 MR. O'HARE: Once it's done, it could be
8 updated easily year after year as the data comes out of the
9 MSRTS system.
10 MR. HOLT: The approach I'm suggesting
11 would be easily updated. I think something could be done
12 in-house at perhaps some modest level.
13 MR. MARTIN: I would do something that
14 I think could be updated by anybody.
15 MR. DAVIS: Of course what we are
16 proposing is, as I mentioned, one of the advantages was that
17 it was easy to use, especially if one has a personal
18 computer. We have actually done programs on our personal
19 computers. Programming this particular model, this would be
20 a matter of inputting the information as it comes in and
21 then running the program on the computer, on a personal
22 computer, it doesn't need a large frame computer.
23 MR. MENDEZ: I assume we can make -- put
24 on all of your studies whatever definition of migrant we

1 wish to give you, whatever definition of seasonal farm
2 worker or normal farm worker and you could use that to start
3 your data base.
4 MR. O'HARE: I think there are certain
5 constraints that by and large adjustments can be made.
6 MR. MENDEZ: Now, I would like to have
7 each one of you comment on the methodology and the
8 invalidities of the others.
9 MR. O'HARE: I wrote down a couple
10 comments that struck me. One comment has to do with the
11 hired farm work force data that comes out of the current
12 population survey taken every other year in December.
13 That's a household survey, therefore it doesn't capture any
14 of the migrants who live in group quarters or don't live in
15 regular housing units. I think that's one of the reasons
16 why a number that's much lower than any other number on
17 migrant farm workers, and I think it's erroneous. It's not
18 a criticism, it's a comment.
19 Phil Martin mentioned the fact that
20 we'll be lucky if we get estimates that are 10, 20
21 percent -- within 10, 20 percent. I think that's probably,
22 as much as you don't want to hear that, I think that's an
23 accurate assessment. It's just a difficult job and we're
24 going to have some error. In the same light, let me point

1 out that the 1980 census of population housing spent a
2 billion dollars in estimating about 5 percent of the black
3 population, so that kind of puts it in the context of how
4 much money we're spending and what kind of accuracy we're
5 likely to get.
6 Thirdly, the question about the
7 agricultural data, one of the things that bothers me a
8 little bit is the study that about half a million farmers I
9 think refused to respond to that census questionnaire even
10 though they faced prosecution for not responding. There
11 were some adjustments made for that, but I'm a little bit
12 uncomfortable as to why those people didn't respond and what
13 that might do to the data.
14 Secondly, I'm not sure that that data
15 included migrants involved in fishing and timber industries,
16 that's an open question.
17 MR. HOLT: First of all, I'll say that I
18 think what Phil and I -- the approach that Phil and I are
19 talking about is basically the same thing. I think we're
20 looking at starting out with somewhat different kinds of
21 data, but basically the same approach.
22 I guess I have to be very frank that I
23 put very little statistical credibility in the migrant
24 education data and I don't know of any statistician that

1 does put much credibility in it. It's a useful
2 administrative task, but it's a useful source of
3 administrative data, I think it could be used for modifying
4 scientifically based survey statistics, but I don't think it
5 generates a population number, it's credible on its own.
6 With regard to Mr. Davis' approach, I'll
7 simply say that my 20 years in the farm management section
8 of the Department of Agriculture and Economics at Penn State
9 leads me to believe that we're better off starting with data
10 we already have regard to employment rather than trying to
11 create the numbers that he's using as input to his
12 methodology simply do not exist in credible form. There's
13 nothing more kind that I say about it than that. They just
14 don't exist.
15 MR. MARTIN: Let me say, perhaps it
16 would be good, if anybody's bored and wants to read a little
17 sometime, in October, 1983 the first story in
18 (unintelligible) was by me and it was on migrant farm
19 workers and labor intensive agriculture, and even after
20 reading that if you still want to learn more, the University
21 of California has a new book out this year called Migrant
22 Labor and Agriculture. It sort of assesses what the status
23 of statistics and all that sort of thing in this area.
24 Let me just say don't use a target,

1 don't use a sort of a rifle to try to go at this because
2 every single one is flawed, and so therefore I think you
3 have to come up with the surveys.
4 What was developed for migrant help I'd
5 have to tell you that I was part of the expert committee
6 which led to that RFP so that therefore, I'm happy to see
7 that they did a lot of work in essentially what was -- what
8 we were proposing. The problem is that it is not -- it
9 pretends to precision which isn't there, and I think any
10 honest assessment would have to say that you don't -- unless
11 you need -- you'll never get that level of precision two or
12 three decimal points, no matter how hard you try, because
13 when all is said and done, after you get all of these
14 things, then you say we adjust this and we adjust that and
15 you adjust the other thing. So that while I commend
16 Mr. Davis for all the work involved in that, I guess it has
17 to be said that that level precision, searching for that
18 level of precision is an impossible task.
19 MR. DAVIS: First of all, I love the
20 defense. We had never intended to estimate the migrant or
21 the seasonal farm workers population to the last person. We
22 cannot say that they are 375 of migrant farm workers and
23 496, we don't say something like this. But then you have to
24 understand the levels of competence are, put some limits

1 around that particular estimate. The particular method that
2 I've discussed is the --
3 MR. MENDEZ: Just respond to the
4 question I asked.
5 MR. DAVIS: Well, one of the things is
6 that no one has really put forth a particular method. I've
7 heard the student record, migrant student record data
8 systematic I. It has a lot of limitation. Number one, it's
9 not responsive to a month-by-month migration. There is no
10 consistent relationship between registered students and the
11 total migrant population, for instance.
12 I mean, all you have are some numbers.
13 There are many things that you don't know about.
14 MR. VALOIS: I've got to make
15 assumptions how many parents they have, if they have
16 parents, are those parents migrants and so on.
17 MR. DAVIS: Also, migrant harvesting
18 occurs during usually the summer months. So how does this
19 affect, for instance, when the kinds are out of school. So
20 how does this affect these estimates that you are talking
21 about? Are these students being counted and so forth. I
22 would never under any circumstance use that without
23 extensive investigation and to the possible limitations of
24 that particular information.

1 A lot of the other information, ETA
2 information, Labor Department information, we looked into
3 that and this was very inaccurate information.
4 MR. MENDEZ: I just have one more
5 question. This is to the panel again. You say you can
6 divide it down into geographic areas. How broken down in
7 geographic areas when you're talking about, is that
8 statewide or is that the southwest region or the southeast?
9 MR. MARTIN: Let me just respond. I
10 think this holds for everybody is that you can get it as
11 detailed as you want. The more detail you get the more cost
12 and less reliable.
13 MR. O'HARE: Some of the other systems
14 like the current population based survey would only give you
15 data at the regional level at best.
16 MR. VALOIS: I'd like to thank the panel
17 very much for your coming here, for your help. I certainly
18 don't know that you've solved our problem, but you've told
19 us a little something about our problem, I guess, that's
20 really why we asked you to come. I'm sure we'll be in touch
21 with some of you or all of you.
22 Thank you very much.
23
24