

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### THE IDAHO FARM WORKERS' SERVICES, INCORPORATED

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In response to repeated suggestions of W. L. Robison, Idaho State Commissioner of Labor and Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Migrant Labor, an informal organization of Idaho citizens interested in community action programs concerning migrant problems began to meet monthly during the summer of 1964.

Convened and led by Sarah H. Goodwin and William C. Johnson, this group was the forerunner of the Idaho Farm Workers' Services, Incorporated. Congressional passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 placed this community action group in a position to respond to the opportunity offered for migrants in that anti-poverty legislation. Programs to help the migrants to solve their own economic problems, so that they no longer would need assistance, were called for. Such programs needed local sponsorship and direction in Idaho communities where migrants worked and lived. An agency to bring OEO funds into interested communities had to be provided. So early in 1965, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise joined the Southern Idaho Migrant Ministry in sponsoring a nonprofit corporation to undertake such OEO projects through local committees. Both the Catholic Diocese, with a migrant ministry program going back to 1949, and the Migrant Ministry had extensive prior experience in working with migrants. Thus they were qualified to provide an agency which could meet the OEO test of prior experience with migrant social work. The resulting Idaho Farm Workers' Services was incorporated February 4, 1965. An annual meeting, held in Caldwell, February 28, adopted bylaws for the corporation and elected C. Ben Reavis (Social Security Administrator for Idaho) as president. Father N. E. Walsh, in charge of migrant projects for the Catholic Diocese, became secretary.

Right from the beginning, the Farm Workers' Services resolved that "the Spanish-speaking people participate in the planning and management of projects of this organization as much as possible." Furthermore, the Corporation was set up to operate through responsible local committees which would develop and manage their own local projects. The corporation was designed to provide the services of a program developer to interested local communities. Financial and auditing services also would come from the corporation. Aside from helping to coordinate the programs of different communities, the Idaho Farm Workers' Services was established only as an agency to make OEO resources

available to community action projects.

Several programs were planned for development with OEO funds to be applied for through the Idaho Farm Workers' Services, Inc.

Only two of them--a College of Idaho summer school component and a Caldwell Labor Camp kindergarten and day-care center--actually got into operation the first year. Delays in securing OEO action forced the Caldwell committee to start them on their own resources prior to belated OEO approval, June 25. Finally, the unexpended balance (\$6,425) of the Caldwell program was made available, November 30, for development of a statewide program of local community projects for 1966. Mrs. Muriel Valley was employed December 1 as director of this program development. Many communities in Idaho now are preparing plans for worthwhile migrant projects, and Mrs. Valley is helping prepare their applications for OEO funds. A coordinated, statewide program in 1966 "should assist migrants and seasonal agricultural workers and their families to deal with their own problems of economic self-improvement and poverty so that they need no further assistance or service."

**(This information has not been edited.)**

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