

2 Poverty Aides Seized at Jersey Migrants' Camp

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BRIDGETON, N. J., Aug 7—

Two antipoverty officials, a lawyer and a caseworker, were arrested today on trespass charges after they refused an order to leave a migrant farm-workers camp that they were trying to inspect.

The incident followed what antipoverty officials termed a summer of threats and intimidations by farmers to keep them from assisting the thousands of black and Puerto Rican migratory farm workers who pick New Jersey's vegetable crop.

This reporter, who had accompanied the two officials, also was arrested by the state police on a trespass charge after being assaulted by a farmer who said that "even President Nixon" would not be allowed to see the conditions in the migrant camp he maintained near here.

The farmer, Morris Tedesco, lunged at the reporter, striking a camera against his face.

"I'll smash you for this, I'm going to get you for this," Mr. Tedesco said. "This is my property. You can't come in here looking around."

The two antipoverty officials arrested with the reporter were Peter K. Shack, a Camden County Legal Services, Inc., attorney, and Frank Tejeras, a caseworker. All three were taken to the Upper Deerfield Municipal Hall and later released on their own recognizance pending a hearing Monday.

Joseph Paresi, who owns fields of tomatoes nearby, warned several visitors that the farmers would resort to violence as, he said, the black civil rights movement had. He said that at least 95 per cent of the other farmers here in Cumberland County and in nearby Salem and Gloucester Counties agreed with him.

Predicts More Violence

"This violence is going to snowball," he said. He also said that he sometimes felt that either Hitler or Stalin would have known how to deal with the migratory farm workers in the camp he maintains about 200 yards from his home.

Max Rothman, the head of the Camden County Legal Services, a Federally funded antipoverty organization that is providing free legal services to migrant farm workers here, said today that his staff attorneys were being repeatedly threatened and intimidated by farmers who refused to allow anyone into the camps on their farms.

Big no-trespassing signs have been sprouting in the South Jersey farming region. A number of Federal and state antipoverty, health and education officials have told of being run out of camps by gun-wielding farmers.

Mr. Rothman said he was threatened by a farmer carrying a heavy crow bar when he attempted to visit a black migrant camp just south of here.

The State Department of Community Affairs in Trenton is seeking legislation to guarantee antipoverty officials and other qualified persons seeking to assist migrant laborers easy access to their camps. In a brief filed with the department, Mr. Rothman charged that the farmers were using the state's trespassing law to prevent themselves from being ordered to make costly improvements.

Today's arrests, according to the antipoverty lawyers, set the stage for state and federal court test of the constitutionality of the trespass law.

The lawyers contend that it violates a constitutional right of migrants to have easy access to the outside world.

Reports of Beatings

"The farm workers themselves are the real victims of the law," said Mr. Rothman. "They are not only deprived of their basic, human dignity and the fundamental right to have visitors of their choice, but they are also deprived of the full benefit of Federal programs aimed at helping them uplift themselves from the squalor and deprivation of the camps in which they live."

Other Federal officials said that the farmers were also using the trespass law against the workers themselves by isolating one camp from another so that any wage or living im-



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Frank Tejeras, left, and Peter K. Shack are arrested by state policeman in Deerfield, N. J.

provements were kept secret and by using the camp isolation as a "chilling" weapon to maintain tight control.

Mr. Rothman's office has handled numerous reports of farm workers' being driven away without pay and beaten for acts of defiance.

Four years ago, farmers here drove Federal VISTA volunteer workers from the camps, accusing the volunteers of stirring up Negroes and helping a drive that summer to organize them into a labor union.

The initial controversy and subsequent reports of squalor and unlawful working conditions led to a package of reform legislation in 1967 that was intended to improve camp conditions and guarantee migrants a \$1.50 minimum wage.

But the squalor remains in many of the camps here.

Although State law requires farmers to provide flush toilets in their camps, the only sanitary facility for the 30 or so Puerto Rican migrants at the Tedesco camp was a privy that was crawling with flies.

Seven men slept in one room in which the screens were torn.

There were no sheets or mattress covers, as required by law.

Mr. Shack, a former Peace Corps volunteer, was at the camp to investigate a report from Ramon Cruz, a 19-year-old migrant who said he suffered a cut on his hand while working in the field last month and, unable to work since then, had received no wages.

Mr. Tejeras went to the camp to pick up Toño Rivera, a 36-year-old migrant whose face was recently slashed and who had to be returned to the hospital to have the stitches removed.

Mr. Shack and Mr. Tejeras were arrested after Mr. Tedesco refused to let them into the camp and after both men had asked to remain there until the two migrants—who were not there—returned.

\$17.70 a Week for Two

At another camp, Mrs. Florenzia Lorenzo, a 36-year-old mother with 10 children, showed the pay stubs for herself and her husband. The slips showed that the Lorenzos made \$17.70—with 95 cents deducted

for Social Security — for a week's work.

The 12 Lorenzos slept in one small room, with bed space for eight of them. Their clothes were kept in an abandoned refrigerator.

On days when there was no food, Mrs. Lorenzo said, she went into the fields and took vegetables which she boiled for her children.

For three days this week, she said, the camp had no running water.

A. J. Rosena, the acting chief of the State Migrant Labor Bureau, which is responsible for making sure that living and working conditions for the state's 20,000 seasonal migrants are lawfully maintained, contended that conditions in the 1,200 camps "were great" this summer.

Mr. Rosena said the farmers were probably concerned that the present trespass controversy would lead to further attempts to unionize the farm workers. He said he shared many of the farmers' misgivings over farm worker unionization efforts.