

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF MEXICANS OF SAN MARCOS  
AND ITS BEARING UPON THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN CHILDREN

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By

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# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF MEXICANS OF SAN MARCOS AND ITS BEARING UPON THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN CHILDREN

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this work is to ascertain the bearing of the social and economic status of the Mexican families of San Marcos on the general problem of the education of their children.

#### 2. Plan of Procedure

This purpose will be accomplished, it is hoped, by a presentation of facts that will depict the social and economic status of the Mexican families of San Marcos; by showing the bearing of such a status upon the education of the children of these families; and by the presentation of a possible working solution that will tend to better the social and economic status of these people and advance the education of their children.

#### 3. Sources of Data

The facts and other material herein presented were

taken from:

1. Case studies of 200 Mexican families in San Marcos, based on personal conferences and visits to the homes of all of these families.

2. A Report on the Economic Conditions of the South, National Emergency Council.

3. On the Reconstruction of the Social Order, Pope Pius XI.

4. Rights and Wrongs in Industry, Rev. Francis Haas.

5. "Aspects of the Housing Problem," Journal of Home Economics, Catherine Bauer.

6. "Federal Activities in the Housing Field," Congressional Digest.

7. "Low-Rent Housing Plan," Business Week.

8. "Money For the Home," House Beautiful, Stewart McDonald.

#### 4. The Family and Its Place in Society

The family is the primary cell out of which society grows. If it is weakened or diseased, society dies.<sup>1</sup> It is the backbone of a nation, a state, a community. It forms the basis upon which is founded the structure of the governing body of a state. The very existence of a government de-

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1. Haas, Francis, Rights and Wrongs in Industry, p. 24.

pend upon the existence of the family. Therefore, it is the duty of educators to study the community and its various elements. In furthering the welfare of individuals they must have special regard for their social and economic status, largely as members of families. The mass of the poor have no resources of their own and must depend chiefly upon the state for their defense. For this reason wage-earners, since they mostly belong to the poor class, should become the object of careful study by the social leaders.<sup>2</sup> It seems clear that social results in keeping with American democratic ideals cannot be achieved without the assurance of a productive and hopeful social and economic role for the wage-earner who has the responsibility of establishing a family, upon which falls the duty of forming, in part, the bulwark of the state. The worker must create opportunities equal to or even superior to those provided for him. This he can do only when his social and economic status is such that by thrift and prudent management he may increase his possessions and thus be enabled to bear the family burden with greater ease and security. He is thus freed from the hand-to-mouth uncertainty, and will be in a position to endure life's changing fortunes, having the reassuring confidence that when life is ended, some little provision will re-

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2. Pope Pius XI, On the Reconstruction of the Social Order, p. 7.



main for those whom he leaves behind.

It is for this reason that the wage-earner should be paid a salary that is sufficient for the support of himself and of his family, as well as to keep from abusing the tender years of children and the weaknesses of women. Intolerable is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, especially the education of their children. <sup>3</sup>

Child labor is a source of cheap competing labor, and tends to make wages even lower, hours even longer, and generally , to break down labor standards. It is, therefore, not only that it affects the child itself, but that it undermines the security of adult workers, thus reacting seriously on the whole community, and, indeed on the whole state. <sup>4</sup>

Thus we find that the labor of women and children increases the labor supply, thereby effecting a low wage scale which in turn results in low living standards, insufficient food for many, a great amount of illness, and in general , unhealthful and undesirable conditions of life. <sup>5</sup>

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3. Pope Pius XI, On the Reconstruction of the Social Order, p. 20.

4. National Emergency Council, A Report on the Economic Conditions of the South, p. 41.

5. Ibid., p. 44.

Hence from deductions and observations as presented here, one is able to extract one fact - that the social and economic conditions of the family have a tendency to cause divisions within the social order, which in turn cause class conflict. Yet it is well known that the social order is possible only when class conflict has been eliminated; when that disrupting, disuniting force has been abolished so that harmony and community purpose reign within its bounds. As Pope Leo XIII said:

Now this is the primary duty of the state and of all good citizens; to abolish conflict between classes with divergent interests, and thus foster and promote harmony between the various ranks of society. 6

But how is this class conflict to be eliminated? Where must the people and the state look for the fundamentals in the class conflict? The answers will be found in the industries, in the laws or provisions of the communities, and in the education provided. First, the people must look into the industries, their organization, their rules, salaries and general coordination and cooperation with the community. Second, they must look into the provisions made by the government for the social and economic protection of the families, the community and the state. And, third, they must look into the provisions made for the education of those less fortunate classes. Within the scope of these three outstanding

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6. Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical, p. 27.

sources are found the reasons for the resulting low and high levels, social and economic, of the different classes in conflict within the social order.

The elimination will come through the elimination of low standards of wages, a better coordination between communities and industries, a more universal and more practical education of less fortunate classes, and a more sympathetic and understanding insight into the nature and conditions of all people regardless of race, creed, or political and social preferences. One must study the situation carefully and realize the benefit derived by all in general, through the improvement of the conditions of the poorer classes.

In all these problems the family and its conditions of life are vitally involved. The interdependence of families within the social circle, regardless of the social and economic status, makes it imperative to approach as closely as possible a uniform standard of living. Therefore, it is a duty of society to try to improve conditions in its families as a step toward the realization of American conception. This simply means that society must slowly but surely set standards within the reach of everyone; that it must make possible the reaching the standards set; that it must maintain these standards and provide for the common contribution to these standards. With conditions as they are this seems a very big undertaking, but actually it is not impos-

sible of accomplishment.

In the following chapters will be presented a verbal, factual picture of a diseased part of the social order within San Marcos, Texas; San Marcos, the beautiful little city of schools, churches, and blessed with an abundance of natural scenic beauty; the little city that through its central location between two large cities could easily become a leader in the uniformity of the conditions of the inhabitants. The work of this paper is to present a picture of conditions as they are, and to present a theoretical plan for the betterment of these people's social and economic status, but the actual functioning of such a plan will depend upon the willingness of all people in general to do their part in improving conditions.

## CHAPTER II

### ACTUAL CONDITIONS OF MEXICANS IN SAN MARCOS

#### 1. Social

The social and economic status of the majority of the Mexicans in San Marcos is very low. It is so low, indeed, that more than half of the Mexican population within San Marcos is dependent for food and clothing upon the federal government relief agencies and upon work in the WPA and NYA.

According to figures supplied by the relief office in San Marcos, for the month of July, 1940, there were within the city limits alone, sixty-nine families receiving food from the commodity room, while eighty-one families had some member of the group engaged in relief work of some nature. This is a total of 150 families, out of a possible 225, dependent upon some form of relief measure for actual subsistence. Of course, these figures vary from month to month due to an increase or decrease in the number of families assigned to secure relief rations and clothing. The same is true concerning the increase or decrease of the WPA and NYA rolls. This increase or decrease is due, in many cases, to odd jobs that may suddenly become available to the men, to the yearly treks into the cotton and beet fields, and to the dropping of several cases from the rolls of the WPA, the NYA, or the relief commodity lists. At one time the WPA and NYA rolls were reduced sharply because of the number of non-Ameri-

can citizens that were denied relief. At any rate, the rolls of the relief dependents are much larger than they should be. With such a large per cent of Mexicans dependent upon the relief agencies, it is only logical to believe that there is something fundamentally in need of careful study.

Such impoverished conditions have driven these people to seek the cheapest means of living and of self maintenance. Chief among the necessities looked for in the cheap market is the house. Since the Mexicans have no assurance of getting sufficient wages to rent good houses, they must rent those that fall within their means. But although the houses are cheap-looking and in poor condition, the rents are high in comparison to the conditions of the houses and the wages of the occupants.

It is only putting it mildly when one says that the housing conditions, on the average, of the Mexicans in San Marcos are bad. One look at these antiquated, rotten, tumbling shacks is enough to realize that some of them are not fit to be used as stables for animals. It was found in the study made of the social and economic conditions of the Mexicans in San Marcos, that the greater part of the rent houses are very old; that they have been allowed to become dilapidated and run down; and that the owners feel that they cannot afford to repair these houses without raising the rents. A great many of these houses have been standing so long that the foundation blocks have sunk or have rotted

away, leaving the house off level or setting flat on the ground. This condition does not allow ventilation to penetrate under the house, and as a result the ground under the house is usually damp and is a source of sickness.

The roofs of the majority of these houses are of shingles, but the rain and the wind have taken their toll of the shingles with the result that holes in the roof are numerous and quite evident. In several cases where the houses have no ceiling, the rays of the sun coming in through the holes in the roof are sufficient to light up the house without the need of doors and windows. In case of rain these holes in the roof are responsible for the leaks that put the household in an uproar trying to move the furniture so that it will not get wet. Some of the owners of these houses have gone to the trouble of nailing corrugated iron sheets over these shingle roofs, but since these are old sheets full of holes made by a previous nailing, the large majority of the holes are in evidence though a few are stopped.

Another fact concerning these houses is that they are practically all single-walled, and in eight out ten cases these walls are either warped and cracked, or the stripping has fallen off. This condition is due to the age of the houses and to the failure to protect them from the ravages of time and weather with a coat of paint. Many of the families have tried to patch up these cracks with pieces of tin

and boards that they are able to pick up. The sides of some of these houses look like the patch-work of quilts. A coat of even the cheapest paint would go a long way in protecting the house, in helping its appearance, and in stopping numberless cracks and crevices in the walls, but the truth is that approximately nine-tenths of the houses occupied by Mexican tenants are in great need of painting, and eight out of these nine-tenths have never been painted.

As mentioned before in connection with the roofing, there are quite a number of houses without a ceiling of any kind. This works a hardship on the inhabitants of the house because of the particles of dust and sand that are able to come through the holes of the roofs and the open spots in the joints. The same can be said of the floors. The cracks and holes in the floors of some of the houses are dangerous, aside from the fact that they are inlets of dust and trash. These holes are often stopped up with pieces of tin that are nailed over them, with the result that they are often the cause of nasty cuts on the feet of barefoot children. Another source of sorrow for these members of the barefoot order are the splintery floors that so typical of these old weatherbeaten houses. The porches of these houses are often missing entirely; in some instances they are about to fall down; the uprights are missing or rotted away; the roof of the porch is full of holes; and the flooring is rotten entirely or in the main places of usage. The steps are rotten or missing and in their places are found boxes or rocks.



These two substitutes for steps have often been the cause of serious accidents.

The doors and windows of many of these homes are just square holes in the walls with poor imitation of doors and windows. In many cases the doors and windows do not even have frames. In some the doors cannot be locked because there are no fasteners except a wooden latch from the inside. Inside doors seem to be an almost<sup>un</sup>heard of thing in the houses rented by the Mexicans. The windows often lack having all the panes, and on a rainy day and in winter, one may see newspapers, pieces of cardboard, and even rags taking the place of missing or broken pieces of window panes. These missing or broken window panes are sources of suffering for the tenants in case of rain or cold. Still another necessity that is missing in a majority of the houses is screens. Few, indeed, are the houses that can boast of adequate screens for doors and windows, and out of these few the majority are not rental houses but privately owned homes. In most cases, those rental houses that do have screens have only old and torn ones.

Added to the defects of these houses, the majority of which are shacks, is the fact that they are usually in congested areas and often in the least desirable locations of the town, where it is hard to get the benefits of paved streets, of modern improvements, proper sanitary facilities, and proper inspection. In San Marcos this is especially true of those houses along Purgatory Creek by the Oil Mill.

The families living in this neighborhood are often isolated when it rains because of the mud that makes passage impossible. These people are unable to have the conveniences enjoyed by other families in other parts of the town. The same is true of the neighborhood close to the river and lying between the International Great Northern and the Missouri Kansas and Texas railroad bridges. Here, as in the Furgatory Creek neighborhood, the families must do without several conveniences.

Of the two hundred families that were studied, it was found that the average size house is of three rooms. It was also found that these three rooms must house an average family of six. A family with a three room house can boast of a kitchen, a bedroom, and a living room, but often, in the case of a large family, the whole house is converted into a dormitory at night. All the cots and beds that are available are used and the rest of the family sleeps on the floor. The aggregate total of persons considered in the study was 857. These 857 persons, including men, women and children, are housed in an aggregate total of 549 rooms, 265 of which are designated as bedrooms. To accommodate 857 persons in 265 bedrooms requires an average of four persons to the bedroom.

There are several families with houses large enough and ample enough to accommodate the family adequately. It is these larger homes that raise the average size of the home of Mexicans to three rooms. A great number of families live

in one and two-room houses or shacks. Knowing that the average Mexican family of San Marcos is six, one may wonder how they can live in these small shacks. Still another astounding fact is that the average rent of these houses is \$4.50 per month, exclusive of utilities. This is a high rent per month in view of the locations, conditions and facilities or conveniences of the houses, and the economic conditions of the families. How often is heard:

We are forced, many times, to go hungry and ragged to pay our rent so that we may not be forced to vacate the house.

Then again is heard:

We know the house is in bad condition but the owner will not fix it up. He says that it costs too much and that we do not pay enough rent. We have often thought of moving but the rents are all about the same, and the conditions of the houses are bad also.

Some of the families live in a one-room house. The size of these one-room houses is approximately 10 x 12 feet and must serve the family as a kitchen, bedroom, living room, dining room, and bathroom. There is room for only one bed which together with the other pieces of furniture crowd the room to capacity, leaving little or no room for the family to move about. It is hard for even one person to live in such crowded conditions, yet this study revealed the fact that there were two families of eight persons, one family of six, three families of five, and one family of four living in one-room houses. Clearly these families cannot manage to live in a one-room house, under such crowded

conditions, and still maintain fairly decent health. In many cases the people living in these shacks are not able to pay or barely able to manage to obtain the weekly rent.

One of these cases is a widow with five children too young to help in any way. She is dependent upon the relief office for her food and the few clothes with which she feeds and clothes her children and herself. Whenever possible, she works wherever she can in order to pay her monthly rent of one dollar, and to get whatever necessities the relief office fails to issue or is unable to issue. It is indeed a pity to see these poor undernourished tots look up with those sad friendly eyes and half timid smiles, so that one is able to read the hunger and the want that are evident there.

Another pitiful case is that of an old couple living in their humble one-room shack. They are too timid and bashful to ask for relief, yet their plight is sad. The old man has tried to get work, but he is too old to do anything. It takes all of his strength to move about, yet he is willing to spend his last ounce of strength to earn what little he can get. He often goes out to try and secure whatever he can in the way of food. During these excursions, his mate sits worriedly at home praying that her husband might return home safely even if empty-handed. It was bitter to listen to the sad story of this old couple and to see the genuine tears that sprang to their eyes as they told of their condi-

tions.

Still another typical example of the conditions of a one-room house and of its occupants is that of two old men living in such a house. The roof of the shack looks like a cross-word puzzle, with all the tin patching that it has. The walls are warped and cracked with three-fourths of the strips gone leaving cracks the height of the house. These cracks have been partially covered over with tin strips and cardboard. The boxing of the shack is actually setting on the ground with the walls at about a seventy degree angle with reference to the ground. The shack is about to tumble over and these two old men are in danger of being crushed to death unexpectedly. Still, they are unable to move; where could they go? They have no money, no work and no one to look after them. The one door and one window can hardly be called by those words. The window, which does not have a single glass pane, is covered over with pieces of cardboard, tin, or paper. The door is an atrocious thing of tins, cardboard and cloth with no door knobs or latch of any kind. There is no ceiling and the floor is the earth itself. Two wooden cots, an old wood stove, a box for a cupboard, and a small table comprise the furniture. The river nearby furnishes the drinking and bathing facilities.

These are extremely bad cases of housing, but the astounding truth is that the majority of these one and two-room houses are not far from being almost identical in con-

dition. In fact several of the larger houses are in about the same bad conditions, comparatively.

Another astonishing fact is the small minority of home owners. Out of the number of families studied there were only fifty-three home owners, while the rest were tenants or caretakers. This situation of the small number of propertied Mexicans in San Marcos does not coincide with the philosophy of Reverend Francis Haas as expressed in his Rights and Wrongs in Industry. In this pamphlet he says:

The right to own private property has been to man by nature or rather by the Creator Himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose. 7

It is among these property owners of San Marcos that one is able to see the better homes and the better living conditions. The reason or reasons may be that these people take more pride in building up what is their own; it may be that they are able to mortgage their homes to build them up or to repair them; or it may be that the money they would spend for rent is employed in fixing the house or in improving the condition of the family. Whichever the reasons may be, this better condition of propertied Mexicans is strong proof and argument for the necessity of making property a-

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7. Haas, Francis, Rights and Wrongs in Industry, p.13.

vailable to these people for the improvement of their social and economic conditions. Or should general "propertying" of the unpropertied be too idealistic, then decent low-rent housing should be provided for them so that they can strive to live up to the standards of their surroundings.

One thing must be said about the houses and yards of these Mexican families and that is that, in spite of the conditions of the house or of the family, these are kept, on the whole, very clean. There are, of course, some exceptions; but the majority of the cases proved beyond a doubt that these Mexican families are clean and wish to live so. This also goes to show that the state of bad conditions and not the lack of willingness to live better has kept the Mexicans in San Marcos from gaining a higher level of social and economic living.

Such, then, is the picture of the housing conditions of Mexicans in San Marcos, a picture that calls for measures to be taken in devising means for improving the conditions. Impetus for the improving of such conditions should be given authorities through the knowledge of the fact that the effects of bad housing can be measured directly in terms of the general welfare. One can see how it lessens industrial efficiency, encourages inferior citizenship, lowers the standards of family life and deprives the people of reasonable comfort. In crowded conditions such as may be seen in some of these houses, the individuality of the family

life is threatened and there is constituted a definite hazard to the morals of the young. Finally one is able to see the direct relationships between poor housing and poor health, and between poor housing and crime.

Close upon the heels of the housing problem, and for several reasons, should come a discussion of the conveniences which the Mexicans of San Marcos enjoy or fail to enjoy. Most of these conveniences should be furnished by the house although a few must be furnished by the families that rent the houses. These were at one time known as luxuries and taxed as such, but the change of time and situations have caused a change in the attitude toward them. They are no longer regarded as luxuries that people can do without, but as necessities in society's daily life.

As to the reasons for the failure of the majority of the Mexicans of San Marcos to make use of these conveniences, one may name two or three. Chief among these is the lack of the essential conveniences in the houses rented to Mexicans. Such essentials would include running water, bathrooms, sewerage, flues for wood stoves and heaters, and wiring for electric lighting. Another reason for the failure of Mexicans in San Marcos to enjoy several conveniences is the economic situation in general. The amount and unreliability of wages plus the higher prices and often exorbitant prices and terms of purchase render these people unable to pay for the conveniences they need. A third, is the ignorance of several of these families as to the use, purposes and benefits of these



conveniences; there has grown up a resigned indifference towards the possibility or impossibility of acquiring them. As a reason for this resigned passiveness one may say that these people have the inherent racial characteristic of being patient and long suffering. One may still further wonder how these bad conditions have existed so long without their being realized before.

It was found that only sixty-two Mexican homes have electricity. In contrast to this very small number of homes with electricity were the one hundred twenty-three homes lighted by kerosene lamps. Electricity is no longer an expensive luxury; it is an inexpensive necessity made to come within the means of the greatest majority. The reduced rates of electricity make it cheaper, in the long run, than the oil lamps with their wear and tear of chimneys and wicks and the cost of kerosene. Failure of owners of houses to have them properly wired for electricity and the financial inability of the families to have it done have been the reasons for the lack of electricity in many homes. To this may be added the refusal of the electric company to extend its lines to these neighborhoods.

Other interesting facts found were that there are only thirteen shower baths among the Mexicans in San Marcos. Some of these showers are makeshift affairs with a rubber hose connected from the yard hydrant to the little room that serves as a bathroom. Three homes were found that have bathtubs,

and six homes had sewerage. All the rest of the families use the regular washtub for bathing while some who live by the river make use of it for bathing purposes. Except for the six homes that have sewerage, all the homes have backyard houses. Some of these backyard houses are used by two or more families, and in cases where the yards are small, the little houses are congested together causing unpleasant and unsanitary conditions. Concerning drinking water, it was found that twenty-six families get their water from wells, four get theirs from the river, and the rest from hydrants. With the number of possibilities of contamination of wells and the possibilities of pathogenic bacteria in the river, one is able to see that these sources of drinking water are unsanitary. The only sanitary means of getting pure water is by means of the hydrants, but in cases where one hydrant serves three or more families the degree of sanitation is lessened.

Further investigation revealed that there were sixty-eight radios in as many homes. The homes with electricity contained electric radios and the rest have dry cell radios. Out of seventy-two homes with refrigeration only two had coolers while the rest use ice in ice boxes. However, fifty out of these seventy families with ice boxes use ice only when they can afford it, and this happens only once in a while to a great number of families.

As to cooking and heating equipment it was found that

there were five oil heaters, four gas heaters, two coal heaters, and the rest were wood heaters or rather wood supplied the heat but not necessarily from a heater. A great number of homes did not have a heater of any kind. The warmth of the house depends upon the heat given out by the cook stove. In a few cases the heat came from live coals put into a tub or a large pan and placed in the middle of the room. This means of heating has often been the cause of fires, although these families are so careful about fires that the fire rate among the Mexicans is lower than that among the English-speaking portion of the population. As to the cook stoves there were twenty-eight oil stoves, six gas stoves, and one hundred fifty-three wood stoves.

Newspapers are either too expensive for these people or else the news does not interest them, for only thirty-one homes received a daily newspaper. A few homes received weekly or monthly magazines or periodicals of some type, mainly denominational or fraternal.

Among these people were found forty-five car owners and eight truck owners. Some of these cars and trucks are not being used because these people are not able to buy the licenses.

Knowledge relative to health conditions can be gathered easily from the well set implications taken from the discussions of other phases of the study. According to the information gathered in this survey, the health of the people is good in the majority of cases. How this can be possibly

true under the conditions in which they live is perhaps answerable in one word, sturdiness. They are bound to be sturdy or they could not stand under the lashings of their conditions. However, this sturdiness is slowly wasted away through undernourishment and exposure with the result that they become easily susceptible to sickness and in their weakened condition the end is inevitable. To this fact is added the belated medical treatment or the failure to get medical aid because of the lack of money. Often doctors have refused to respond because the people said they could not pay the money right away.

As to health conditions in the surroundings of Mexicans, it was found that the lack of sanitary conveniences plus lack of precaution and adequate supervision has created a precarious situation. The bunching of backyard houses, the lack of adequate screens for the houses, the filth of the locations of the majority of these houses make health conditions terrible. In one particular location the proximity of Purgatory Creek, with stagnant water at times, creates a dangerous situation that endangers not only the Mexicans living in this neighborhood but the rest of the town as well. Then, of course, there is the matter of drinking water; the matter of overcrowded conditions, and of general unsanitary conditions.

The diet of the Mexicans of San Marcos, is most commonly made up of beans, potato and coffee. At

times there may be a little bacon, pepper sauce, some syrup, and even some butter. No consideration is given the relative values of various foods or the balancing of meals. They eat what they can get the most of at the cheapest prices. The failure to heed the values of the different foods is due to ignorance of the subject and to the inability, financially, to purchase the foods with the necessary food values.

The consumption of bread among the Mexicans is enormous. Some light bread from the bakery is used, but the greater portion of the bread consumed is made at home in the form of tortillas, biscuits and round bread, all made from wheat flour. They also eat corn tortillas made from boiled corn that is ground and made into dough; and bread made from corn meal.

Beans are prepared in the several different ways that only Mexican people can prepare them, while the potatoes are fried, boiled, or cooked in soup fashion. Bacon is at times added to the boiled beans or cooked separately with hot red or green pepper sauce and tomatoes. Rice is used to supplement the beans, as well as vermicelli and macaroni.

Coffee is the main beverage of the meal, with some tea or milk in a few homes. The coffee is usually made strong and in many instances taken without sugar or milk.

Syrup or molasses is sometimes evident on the table as a dessert. Other articles of food may be in the diet whenever financial circumstances permit it. Among these may be

included meat, some fruit and vegetables, butter, eggs, etc.

With the dependence of a large part of the families of the Mexicans on the commodity lists of the relief office for food, one finds in their homes oatmeal, dried prunes, raisins, tomatoes, butter, a little fruit and canned goods from the cannery. However, some of these articles are not always given nor is the quantity for some of these families sufficient to take care of them. Perhaps if the investigations and supervision of the relief cases were a bit more thorough and impartial, the distribution of commodities would be more uniform and adequate.

With the advancement of the education of Mexican girls, especially in home economics, and the employment of Mexican girls as housemaids in Anglo-American homes, there is developing a consciousness of food values, of food quality, and of food variety and preparation. The consciousness of these things is a great step towards the betterment of these people.

The attitude of the Mexicans of San Marcos towards education and the current social standings is about the same as for the Mexican population in general. They believe an education to be the most important tool of progress that the Creator has given to mankind. They believe an education has the power to lift them out of the situation in which they find themselves. They can see the changes that come over those Mexican boys and girls who have been able to acquire

an education. They admire the ease of action, of speech, and of manners, as well as the broadness of mind, the resourcefulness and the initiativeness that comes with education. They see and realize the fact that education tends to lower and ultimately to remove all barriers of class conflict and racial prejudice. They can readily see all the advantages and benefits of an education, and they sacrifice themselves to give their children educational opportunities. However, when economic conditions impose themselves upon these people there is nothing they can do but to respond to their immediate needs at the expense of the education of their children. It is a gross error to suppose that Mexicans do not care whether they are educated or not; that they are content to live in filth and poverty all of their lives. Such assumptions are based on ignorance of conditions of the Mexicans.

The existent social standings are no more in accordance with the Mexican's ideal than with the one held by society in general. Those Mexicans who have had the opportunity of observing better means and conditions of living, the benefits of education, the benefits of association with persons of higher levels or in better conditions of life, the benefits of better wages, better housing and better health conditions, in San Antonio and other cities, are tired of this social standing. They want opportunities and outlets for their children and for themselves. They wish to prove that they, too, are capable of appreciating the benefits of a

higher social and economic status and of making their contribution thereto; that they are able to step into this role of better conditions and carry it through as well as any one else.

Regardless of how well Mexican people compare with Anglo-Americans in intelligence or in neatness, they find themselves at a disadvantage because of a discriminatory attitude. This attitude is evident in all all places of business in San Marcos, and outright discrimination is carried out in some cafes and confectioneries where Mexicans are refused service. In fact one or two places even resent having a Mexican come in to buy an article to take out. The theatres of San Marcos have had a discriminatory attitude, and in several cases have openly discriminated against Mexican boys and girls. However, the tendency, today, is towards a more tactful discrimination only wherever it is necessary. The bathing resorts and other public places are not open to Mexicans, nor can a lodge building such as the American Legion Hall of San Marcos be used by the Mexicans for dances. The Legion Hall has been refused the Mexican boys of San Marcos with the simple statement that Mexicans cannot use it. That is strange indeed, because some of these boys may be sons of the Mexicans who were soldiers of the United States and gave their lives so that these World War veterans could safely return to this country to build their legion hall. The irony of it all is that Mexicans in



general are judged by the actions of a very small minority. This small minority cannot be expected to aspire and work towards a higher plane of living if they see that the lot of those who have tried to acquire this higher level is the same as theirs; if they see that discrimination and antagonism against these aspiring people is still very much in evidence. They are able to see cases in which partial discrimination is justified, and are willing to make allowances for it, but open discrimination and antagonism in general for no justifiable reason violates their sense of justice and gives impetus to their bitterness toward social conditions.

## 2. Economic

The economic conditions of the Mexicans of San Marcos are so pitifully low, with such great numbers of men, women and children dependent on the WPA and NYA agencies of the federal government's emergency measures; with a large number unemployed or with only odd jobs; and with such a small number of men with steady jobs. It was found through the study made, that the yearly income of each family is so meager as to make it impossible to subsist except under the most extreme circumstances as is the case with these families. The following information was taken from the study made, and the averages given are roughly made but they serve to give an

idea of the approximate yearly incomes of these families:

Approximate average yearly income of WPA workers, providing they work twelve months of the year, is \$450.00.

Approximate average yearly income of NYA workers, provided they work twelve months of the year, is \$272.00.

Approximate average yearly income of those engaged in steady private employment is \$600.00.

Approximate average yearly income of those engaged in odd jobs is unreliable because of the uncertainty of the nature of the job, the time, and the wages.

The types of work that these people engage in are varied. For instance, it was found that there are five men employed by the Teachers College as janitors and truck drivers; eleven are employed as clerks and handy men in grocery, dry goods, auto, and drug stores and confectioneries; thirteen are employed as painters, car washers, attendants, and car salesmen; nine are pressers or cleaners in tailor shops; ten are in cafes as cooks, dishwashers, or both; seven are work for the city department as truck drivers, street sweepers, or laborers; two are employed by blacksmith shops; one is a Western Union messenger boy; one is a hotel messenger boy; one is employed by the Oil Mill as truck driver and night watchman; one is a moving picture machine operator and janitor; and one is a bank janitor. From the number left the federal government takes care of eighty-one in some work of the WPA or the NYA, while twenty-one are storekeepers, cafe owners, filling station operators, barbers, or shoe shop

owners. Two were found to be insurance salesmen, while forty-seven were found to be working at odd jobs that they could find. These jobs included yard cleaning, part time work in the street department, cutting cedar, selling wood, digging post holes, and various other little jobs. Last of all it was found that there were forty-six persons unemployed of which eleven were women. Among these people were found brick and stone masons, linoleum layers, carpenters, farmers, seamstresses, cooks, painters, mechanics, musicians, bakers, and reliable handy men.

The working conditions, on the whole, are fair. Only in a few cases are conditions such as to cause unfavorable comment. The only unfavorable comments audible are those concerning hours and incomes. Such statements as the following are common:

I like my work very much. My boss is very nice, but he says that times are hard and that he cannot pay me any more.

Oh, the pay is fair but the hours are too long.

I am forced to do the work of three men and the pay is barely enough to live on.

The lady that I work for wants me to clean her house, cook her dinner and supper, do her washing and ironing, and take care of her baby. And all that she pays me is \$3.00 a week. She says that she can get all the girls she wants at that salary.

The incomes of the WPA employees range from \$18.00 to \$40.30 per month; those of the NYA boys from \$12.10 to \$14.40. The incomes of those engaged in other work beside

WPA or NYA range from \$12.00 to \$75.00 per month. The large number of persons who work at odd jobs have a range of from \$3.00 or \$4.00 to \$12.00 or \$14.00 per month. With wages so low, it is difficult for a family to manage for food, clothes, rent, utilities, medical service, and other necessities. It is impossible with such income to maintain a satisfactory standard of living.

The hours these people work are so indefinite, when one has taken into consideration these people with odd jobs, that it is hard to determine a fairly accurate average number of hours worked daily, weekly, or monthly. However, it is fairly accurate to say that WPA and NYA employees work about 120 hours monthly, and all other persons engaged in steady jobs have hours ranging from eight to fourteen per day with six to seven-day weeks. Many of the women have three to eight hour days with six to seven-day weeks. The hours of the odd-job men may range from a few minutes to ten or more hours a day.

Thus it can be seen in the figures and other information presented in this chapter, that the conditions of Mexicans of San Marcos is worthy of investigation with the unselfish motive of trying to find some sort of plan for the release of these people from that bondage to a low social and economic status. This is not a job for the government alone, but it is a job for the government, the Mexican people, and the rest of the community. All parties concerned will bene-

fit considerably. The government will preserve its life through the acquisition of more loyal and staunch citizens; the Mexican people will benefit in the raising of their social and economic status; and the rest of society will benefit through a greater unification within itself, through a more dependable interdependence.

### CHAPTER III

#### BEARING OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE MEXICANS OF SAN MARCOS ON THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

With such an economic and social status of his people, as indicated above, it is small wonder that the Mexican child finds it so hard to attend school regularly; to start school on the first day; to continue his studies through high school and college if possible; to advance rapidly in his studies; and to be the enthusiastic and ambitious potential citizen that he should be. There are so many reasons for the low status of the education of Mexican children in San Marcos, and they are nearly all traceable to the social and economic conditions of the Mexicans of San Marcos.

For the irregular attendance of the Mexican children in school one can find any number of reasons. It may be due, as is the case with the majority, to a lack of suitable clothing. And by suitable clothing is not meant the regular "dress-up" kind, but just the ordinary work clothes. This lack of clothing works a great handicap, especially in winter. How can these children go to school with thin scanty clothing and shoes without soles, or more often without shoes? How can they be expected to stand the cold blasts of the wind or the slashing of the cold rain on their thin undernourished bodies with only thin worn out garments to

protect them. And those that brave the elements of nature for the love of an education, what chance have they, with their weakened bodies, to combat sickness as a result of exposure. With such facts in mind the parents of these children are not to be blamed for not wishing to gamble the health of these children, nor are the children themselves to be blamed for not wishing to risk their health. These children and the parents of these children realize the value of an education; realize that upon acquiring an education depends their emancipation from a status that keeps them at the bottom of the social ladder; but at the same time they believe the chance of illness or poor health is too great a price to pay for education.

It is a well known fact that the enrollment of Mexican children in school during the first two or three months and during the last few weeks of school is very low. This is due to the lack of local jobs for the heads of Mexican families and the need of following seasonal or periodic jobs. Chief among these seasonal occupations are the cotton hoeing and picking, spinach cutting, and recently beet planting and harvesting.

The first lap of this periodic occupations hunt begins with the cotton hoeing to be found around Corpus Christi, Taft, Robstown, Taylor, etc. This takes in part of the spring and early summer. August and September find the families going out by the truckloads to the cotton fields

in Corpus Christi, Taft, Robstown, Beeville, Taylor, etc. With the termination of the cotton picking around these parts of the state, the families return to San Marcos to prepare for the next lap that will take them west and north-west to late cotton regions. This lap keeps them away from San Marcos till about Christmas and even later. This lap to the west finds the children on their way away from San Marcos towards the cotton fields at the time the schools are being opened. During these excursions the families suffer untold hardships and the pay is very small, but even thus they are able to at least make their living.

Those families that are not on the cotton fields hoeing take their leave of San Marcos and go to Crystal City and surrounding country for the spinach crop. Here again the conditions are very much the same as in the cotton industry.

In the last five or six years great numbers of families have started excursions to the beet fields of Michigan and Minnesota. They are herded like cattle into trucks that transport them to those fields. Many of these people go out to these fields long before they are able to begin work. This is due to the fact that the owners of the fields are willing to advance money to these people to supply themselves with food. They are forced to live in tents, to suffer intense colds and hardships, but even so they are able to eke out a living. Their argument for going is that in spite of the hardships of these excursions, they are able



at least to garner enough food to keep going; a thing they could not do by staying in San Marcos.

One may often wonder why these heads of families will take their families on such excursions, but upon taking cognizance of the situation one discovers the reason. The financial condition of these families is such that the working men are not able to go by themselves while their children are left at home with their mothers in order to attend school. They are not able to maintain their household while away working because of the small pay and the need for economy in order to have something to last throughout the year. In view of this fact the whole family goes out to work with the result that only a small part of the school year is available to the Mexican children. It is within this small part of the year that the Mexican child is able to attend school and tries to achieve what is ordinarily the task of nine months of school:

The brevity of the available school term plus the irregularity of attendance, due to reasons stated above, plus the language handicap and lack of an understanding of conditions cause the sluggishness in school. Probably no one else under the same conditions and the same handicaps could advance any faster. As a matter of fact, the advancement of these children, in spite of the slowness, is indeed very remarkable and meritorious of praise.

It is small wonder that these children who are retarded

or who advance so slowly become disgusted and discouraged. They are too young to realize that it is not their fault, their parents' fault, but that they are the victims of an ignorance of conditions on the part of those people who can do something to remedy the situation. Those children who outgrow their grades and their classmates are ashamed to attend school and are torn between the desire to learn and the idea that they are grown and therefore duty bound to do what they can to help to improve the lot of their families. How often these children, many of them with brilliant minds and great possibilities, have had to leave school even before they had a chance to complete the elementary school.

Today with the opportunities for Mexican children to go on through the whole school system without discriminations to bother him, one finds an increase in the secondary department of the schools. However, this is a very recent ~~turn of events~~. It may be of interest to the reader to learn that at one time not one Mexican child was allowed to enter the city schools of San Marcos. These children had to go out of the city limits into the country schools to acquire the education they wanted. More interesting still is the fact that not one Mexican child had graduated from the San Marcos High School before 1931, and that it was 1934 before a Mexican student from San Marcos acquired a degree from this college.

From the information taken from the survey of Mexican

families in San Marcos, it was found that there were 616 children including males and females. Out of this number there were found to be 211 children in school, eleven were employed in some type of work, while the rest were either too young to be in school or were staying out of school with no specific work to do; their only hope lying in shining shoes at two cents a pair, in running errands, or in getting any chores possible.

The ages of the male and female children in school ranged from six to eighteen years. The average age for male school children was found to be at 11.15 years, while that of the female children in school was found to be at 10.06 years. The average grade for these male children, taken from a range of from grades one to nine, was found to be three, while the average grade for female children, taken from a range of from grades one to ten, was found to be two. The difference in grades of these children is just contrary to situations usually found. In most cases the female children are much younger and more advanced in grade standings than the male children. The reasons that can be advanced for this unusual situation among these children in the survey are, first, that the boys are older, and, second, that they are able to attend school more regularly than the girls. Mexican parents are very particular as to the dress of their girls. They may stand for their boys to go about on the streets with torn or patched up trousers or shirts, but they will

not allow their girls to go out in public with torn or patched clothes. Perhaps this comes from the Mexican's high regard for the femininity, chastity, and self-respect of a woman.

Language handicaps, unfamiliarity with objects, and the timidity of these children have caused the lowering of averages for Mexican children, and the rise of the idea that Mexican children fall below the average of other white children in school. Many teachers working with these children testify to the fact that Mexican children are up to the average of other white children, and not below as has been stated over and over. <sup>8</sup> One of these teachers is Mrs. J.T. Taylor of Harlingen who says:

During sixteen years of experience as a teacher, it has been my privilege to deal with three separate and distinct nationalities; English, French, and Spanish. This has been done interchangeably, giving me a chance to study them by comparison. It has been my observation that there is not a great deal of difference in these children. They have the same desires, impulses, and ambitions. They react to the same stimuli in about the same manner when administered under similar conditions. <sup>9</sup>

Mexican children are, on the whole, talented and hard-working, but they are practical minded and more inclined towards those things whose results may be viewed with the

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8. Personal interviews with teachers of Mexican schools in different sections of the state.

9. Taylor, J.T., "The Americanization of Harlingen's Mexican School Population, Texas Outlook, Vol. 18, pp.37-38.

eye, rather than towards those things that are theoretical and do not mean a thing unless there has been close association. These Mexican children are quick to learn to execute demonstrative activities in the classroom or on the playground. They pay close attention to all details so that they will not be embarrassed through mistakes, for an embarrassed Mexican becomes too self conscious and as a result is unable to accomplish anything.

With the increasing number of Mexican students continuing their education through high school and even through the college, one is able to see that the failure to accomplish this step before was not due to a status of below-average intelligence but to a failure to equalize opportunities. These same Mexican students are among the upper half of the scholastic standings in their schools in competition with other white children. If this is the case, can there be any doubt as to the possibilities of their achievements in school and their subsequent development into good loyal citizens?

## CHAPTER IV

### A PROPOSED PLAN FOR BETTER HOUSING OF THE PROPERTIED AND UNPROPERTIED MEXICANS OF SAN MARCOS

#### 1. Federal Aid in the Establishment of Sanitary Low-Rent Housing Projects

The United States government has been interested for a number of years in the creation of agencies to help the private individual to improve his home or to purchase one. It has also been interested in seeing that the housing situation of the low-income families is up to standard.

Low-rent housing is not just another reform grown out of some emergency in the economic life, but on the contrary, it has arisen out of a deep and fundamental necessity, a long neglected necessity that has become more critical with the passing of each year. Impetus to the rise of low-rent housing projects has been given through observations of the following order:

Shelter is a primary need, and the state of a nation's homes indicate the level of the nation's civilization.

.....  
Out of dank and dismal dwellings only a race of spiritual pygmies can emerge, and conversely, a free, happy, and industrious nation is more likely to spring out of sunlit and wholesome surroundings. 10

It was with such thought in mind, perhaps, that the

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10. Bauer, Catherine, "Aspects of the Housing Problem," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. 31, p. 14.

United States Housing Authority was founded in November, 1937. That this supposition is true can readily be seen in the two principles upon which the USHA is based. First, that the provision of adequate housing for low-income families living under substandard conditions is a definite and permanent national responsibility, and second, that local initiative along with federal financial aid is absolutely essential. <sup>11</sup>

With the establishment of the USHA there was inaugurated a long term housing and slum clearing program in the United States. Low-cost housing is recognized by the federal government as a definite community need, pointing the way, not only to slum elimination, but to a better physical and economical future for the low-income group. Started as an opportunity to use emergency funds, it is continuing as a permanent government function for social rehabilitation. <sup>12</sup>

In the establishment of a low-rent housing project in San Marcos, the local authorities could be greatly aided and guided by the USHA. The ultimate management and ownership would be in the hands of the local authorities, as well as the entire responsibility for initiating the project, selecting the site, designing, constructing, selecting the tenants, and management of the project. The USHA would

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11. Bauer, Catherine, "Aspects of the Housing Problem," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. 31, p. 14.

12. Ibid., p. 14

merely act as banker and agent to see that the purposes of the USHA are carried out. The whole program would be based on a co-operative partnership between the federal government and the community.

The plan itself is simple in structure. A local housing authority, such as those authorized by state legislation, is organized. This body selects the site on which the proposed project will be erected, and the designs and plans for the proposed housing project. These are placed before the USHA for approval together with an application for a loan sufficient to carry out the plans. The site for the construction of such a project must be in a location where the value of the project will not depreciate, and the construction must be such as to last throughout a period of sixty years. This precaution is to safeguard against the raising of rents to keep the project in repair. Another measure for economy and to safeguard against extravagance and the raising of rents for repairs is the provision of a limit of \$1000 per room and \$4000 per dwelling for construction in places less than 500,000. In San Marcos the cost of construction would be even lower.

Having approved the selection of the site and the plans plus any other details, the USHA then extends the financial assistance that is its responsibility. This financial assistance is in two forms, loans and subsidies. The loan is made



to the local housing authority at a low interest rate and up to ninety per cent of the development cost of the project, and the balance of the development cost is raised by the local housing authority. The subsidies come annually and are provided to insure low rents within the income of low-income families who need housing. Local authorities can contribute to lower rents by making annual contributions to equal one-fifth of the contribution of the USHA. This local contribution can be in the form of partial or complete tax exemption of the project. These contributions of the USHA and local housing authority will bring the rents down to an estimated \$2.00 to \$5.00 per month.<sup>13</sup> These rents are within the means of the great group of low-income families, who are paying higher rents and do not get even the most essential of facilities. A comparison of the rents being paid now by the Mexicans and the rents which are charged for these modern housing projects will show that even the families with the lowest incomes can adequately afford to live within such a proposed project.

Once the proposed project is completed and the houses are ready for occupancy, the selection of tenants is undertaken. This must be done impartially, without discrimination, and with the sole purpose of housing those in need of

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13. Bauer, Catherine, "Aspects of the Housing Problem," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. 31, p. 14.

adequate housing. To accomplish this the selectors must have information concerning conditions of the families, which should be acquired by someone who knows and understands the Mexican people, and who has their best interests at heart. With the selection of the tenants the new project goes into service, and the first great step in the raising of the social and economic status of Mexicans of San Marcos is underway.

2. Federal Aid in the Redemption of Mortgaged Homes, in the Clearance of Taxes, and in the Repair of Homes

Having presented the proposed provisions for low-rent housing to take care of the unpropertied Mexicans, one's attention is next drawn to the few propertied who need to have their homes rebuilt or repaired, and in several cases saved from mortgages that are about to be foreclosed or loss through the non-payment of taxes.

In the repair and building of homes, and in the arrangement of mortgages to give the the homeowner a longer period of time for paying back money lent on his property, the FHA has done a creditable amount of work. The Federal Housing Administration, though not giving government financial aid directly, has, nevertheless, found a workable system through which individuals may acquire the loans needed from some private corporation. These corporations are no longer in doubt as to the possibility of loss in the case of an indi-

vidual's failure to pay, because the FHA insures the loans made by these corporations 100 per cent.

The loans are made for periods of from fifteen to thirty-three years with interest not to exceed six per cent. Within the rate of interest is included the per cent charge for transaction and incidental expenditures. The payments are monthly with the amount of each based on the amount borrowed, the period of time allowed on the loan, and the income and ability to pay of the individual. Loans are made up to \$2000.00, and the specific amount lent depends on the income of the individual. In the payments are included the interest rate, the principle, and sometimes the taxes.

In the redemption of mortgaged homes or back tax burden a Mexican family may apply to the FHA for a loan to cover the amount of the short term mortgage or the back taxes. After the ownership of the home has been established and the work and income of the applicant has been investigated, the FHA allows the applicant to get together with his lender or lenders who hold his mortgage to rewrite a contract to comply with the housing administrations regulations. This contract puts all mortgages into one lump sum, leaving only one mortgage against the house. The amount of the mortgage arranged is the amount of loan that the individual may secure from some private corporation with no other signature needed but his own and the insurance of the FHA. With the proceeds of the loan the individual pays his short

term mortgage, and from there on proceeds to pay the monthly payments of his new long term mortgage. <sup>14</sup> His worries of foreclosure are eliminated, because he knows that his mortgage is spread over a period of time that will allow him ample opportunity to pay, and because the payments are arranged so that they do not work a burden upon him.

In many cases back taxes have piled up, which, together with the short term mortgages, cause great distress and uneasiness. These back taxes are included in the amount of money lent an individual, because unless back taxes are cleared up there cannot be a clear title to a home. The arrangement for loans to pay these taxes can easily be made in the same way as for the mortgages. The terms and agreements of payment are the same as those for mortgages.

In building a new home or repairing one, the owner or builder submits detailed plans to the FHA for approval of building standards and appraisal. The FHA appraisers set the value of the house and lot, and the owner goes to the bank or any other eligible money lender to arrange the loan for the amount needed to complete repairs or to build the new house. The FHA insures the money lender against loss up to eighty per cent of the value of the property. These loans are made possible to people for various periods of time up

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14. McDonald, Stewart, "Money For the Home," House Beautiful, Vol. 77, August, 1935, p. 73-.

to twenty years at an interest rate of five per cent plus one half of one per cent service charge which goes to the lender and one per cent which goes to the FHA insurance fund.

Thus, it is seen that the federal government is ready and willing to shoulder its responsibility toward those who need help. Its plans and provisions are in the best interests of these people, that they may be able to enjoy the conveniences of a good home. The responsibility of the people will be to bring to the attention of the government the necessity of good housing. It will be their responsibility to show their initiative in this matter. Upon it will depend the amount and scope of work to be done in the two headings discussed in this chapter, Federal aid in the establishment of low-rent housing, and in the redemption of mortgaged homes, clearance of delinquent taxes, and the building or repairing of homes.

## CHAPTER V

### POSSIBLE CHANNELS FOR MEXICAN SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL SELF-BETTERMENT

As stated before, the raising of the social and economic status of the Mexicans in San Marcos is a three-way responsibility. First, it is the responsibility of the government; second, it is the responsibility of the Mexican people; and third, it is the responsibility of society in general. However, the main load of responsibility in raising the status rests with the Mexicans themselves. It is up to them to show the government and the rest of society, by word and action, that they are conscious of the situation; that they are ready and willing to co-operate in any steps or measures taken towards bettering their situation; and that they are capable of maintaining a higher level of living if it is made possible for them.

This word and action phrase used in the above paragraph simply means that Mexicans must speak up and demand their rights as citizens of the state and as members of a society in general; that they must take steps in all directions that will bring the situation to a climax and ultimate solution. They must have unity and organization among themselves. They must look to some leader who has their best interests at heart and who can intelligently and tactfully lead them in the road that means freedom from the

oppressive situation that confronts them at this critical period of time. This is a task that cannot be accomplished within a short time, but on the contrary must be done slowly, patiently, and over a period of time. The foundation for such a tremendous undertaking as the raising of the status of a people must be well planned and well established. Once established, provisions must be made for its continuity and possible strengthening. In the past, as history will prove, the raising of such conditions has been accomplished through revolution and internal discord. Today, in this modern world of advanced ideas and procedures, one can accomplish countless measures of improvement and reform with co-operation and close association in place of discord and conflict.

But with the situation so hopelessly bad and almost without remedy, how can reform be accomplished? The answer is education; education, not only in the sense that one thinks of as training given by schools, colleges, etc., but education in everyday life and situations; education of the people as a whole, and not only of the children. The Mexicans must be educated in their duties to society, to the government, and to one another. They must be educated in their rights as citizens; the benefits of co-operation, self-betterment, participation in the functions of society, and the education of their children to meet the situations that confront them as they grow. They must be educated so

that they may lose their sense of inferiority , their resigned passiveness that is dragging them even deeper into the hopelessness of their conditions. Finally, they must be educated so that they may realize that class conflict and racial prejudice is only caused through misunderstanding and that once this is eliminated there is no obstacle in the way of harmonious intercourse within the different elements of society.

Further education will come with demonstrative instruction, by different city officials and employees, in the various sanitary measures, precautions, procedures, health, in the benefits of cleanliness, and in the preparation of foods with emphasis on food values. This education can easily be given by a city health officer or nurse. This is a civic duty that pays great dividends in the long run, but which has been disregarded in San Marcos.

The sponsoring of and the participation in the functions of such organizations as the League of United Latin American Citizens will tend to bring about helpful instruction in the steps for self-betterment. The purpose and aims of this organization are the achievement of a situation such as is desired by the Mexicans of San Marcos. It has had remarkable success in the improvement of conditions of Mexicans in a great many towns and cities throughout the southwest and can easily do the same for Mexicans of San Marcos. Under such organizations as the LULACS, the Mexicans can



organize in order to acquaint themselves with possibilities for improvement. However, this unity and organization will not be based on the idea of defense against opposing forces, but upon the idea of being able to accomplish more for the common whole when there is harmonious organization.

There should be another form of organization among the Mexican people of San Marcos. This organization, however, will be implied only and will not be one to function with parliamentary procedures. It will be more of a common understanding among the Mexicans that those business places or employers showing discriminating tendencies or antagonistic viewpoints are to be avoided until a change for the best interest of the Mexicans is brought about. In some cases this may work a hardship on some people, but they must realize that hardships and suffering are a part of a program dedicated to the improvement of conditions. One must suffer to appreciate the merits of worthwhile undertakings.

Perhaps, even a political organization of all Mexican voters in San Marcos would be a very excellent instrument in bringing about certain changes and reforms. However this tool or weapon can become very dangerous if used for coercive purposes. This should never be its aim for it would cause an increase in the antagonistic feeling now existent. Then again, any reforms or changes accomplished through coercion are susceptible to change or disregard at any and all opportunities possible. Nor should this organization

be like the one existing now in San Marcos. This voting club in San Marcos, known as "The Heralds of Texas," does not work for the common good, but is mostly concerned with individual benefits, nor is it representative of both sexes of the Mexican people of San Marcos.

An organization such as the one herein suggested would be composed of men and women of voting age. It would include every potential voter in the city. The purpose would be to secure all possible benefit for the welfare of Mexican people in San Marcos. This organization would be under a fearless and dynamic leader with the welfare and happiness of his people in mind.

One could go on indefinitely proposing possible means for Mexican social and economical self-betterment, but none would work satisfactorily unless they were based on education or organization or both. Anyone can see that uneducated and unorganized people cannot survive; that they will eventually fall back into a savage and uncivilized state. Therefore it is the duty of the Mexican people, for their own sake, to choose between following the road to self-betterment, through education and safe and sound organization, or the road to complete destitution.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study an attempt has been made to present an impartial and unprejudiced picture of the social and economic status of the Mexicans in San Marcos, and to show what bearing their status has on the all important social unit, the family, and on the advancement or retardation in school of Mexican children. Emphasis has been placed on the family and its place in society, with respect to the duties and obligations of the government toward the family; of the family toward the government; and of all families within the social circle toward each other.

The family constitutes a foundation upon which rests the government and the whole social order. In order to preserve intact the social order, the foundation must be maintained strong and solid throughout. No part must be allowed to weaken or to fall, for that will cause the foundation to fail. It is therefore, a sacred duty, for the sake of the American philosophy of life, to care for and preserve the foundation of the social order.

The conditions of the Mexicans in San Marcos as presented here are divided into two main headings, social and economic. Under social conditions were treated such phases as the homes, diet, conveniences, health conditions, and the general attitudes towards education and the social

structure, while under the economic conditions were treated the types of work, working conditions, incomes and hours.

The survey made among the Mexican families revealed almost incredibly inferior conditions of living. It was found that the dwellings lack the most elementary sanitary facilities and conveniences; that many are literally unsafe; and that the rents are too high for the conditions of the houses and the financial conditions of the families. The average rent was found to be \$4.50 for an average three-room house. There is a total of 549 rooms among the families surveyed with 265 of these being bedrooms. To each one of these bedrooms there is an average of four persons.

The diet of the Mexicans was found to be composed of only the barest of foods necessary for the sustenance of life. It was found that emphasis is placed on quantity rather than quality and the value of foods.

The conveniences enjoyed by the Mexicans are few, if any. The survey revealed that less than twenty families have bathtubs or shower baths, and less than ten have sewerage. Over twenty-five families use well water or the river for drinking and bathing. Only sixty-two homes are electrically lighted, and fifty per cent or better of those families with ice boxes use ice only when they are able to buy it. Thirty-one homes receive a daily newspaper, and sixty-eight have radios.

Health among these Mexicans is subjected to great

dangers because of the conditions of the homes, the lack of sanitary facilities, the congestion of backyard houses, the proximity of Purgatory Creek, and the lack of screens for the homes.

The attitudes towards education and the social structure are generally about the same throughout. Education is regarded as an opportunity for betterment and progress. The social structure is regarded by some with a little resentment and by some with indifference born out of a sort of feeling of defeat.

In the economic division it was found that eighty-one families had some member of their group on the rolls of one of the emergency relief work divisions. Out of the number engaged in private steady employment one finds janitors, truck drivers, cooks, painters, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc.

The working conditions are fair with only a few exceptions. The unfavorable comments are made because of the low wages and long hours. The incomes of the Mexican people range from \$3.00 to about \$75.00 per month. The hours range from a few minutes a day in some cases to even fourteen hours per day with six and seven-day weeks.

As a result of these conditions of living it was found that education of the children is affected in the following ways:

First, the number of children actually in school compared to the number that should be in school is small indeed.

Second, the number of days enrolled in school is small due to a late start to and an early withdrawal from school. This in turn is due to the fact that the families follow seasonal occupations. A third revealed fact is that these children are actually two to three years older than the average English-speaking child in the same grade.

A plan was proposed whereby the town with aid of the federal government could construct low-rent housing projects to take care of the unpropertied Mexican who lives in dilapidated shacks. A second plan was proposed through which individual home owners with mortgaged homes, delinquent taxes, and homes in need of repair or rebuilding could secure loans from private corporations with the federal government insuring the loans. These plans were based on the United States Housing Authority and the Federal Housing Administration.

Further measures and means for the raising of the status of the Mexicans in San Marcos were introduced as possible sources of improvement. These were found to be based on education and organization, neither of which is possible without the other.

From the facts, figures, and other information which was gathered, compiled, and then presented in this study, one is able to arrive at three very definite conclusions; first, that the bearing of this low status on the education of San Marcos Mexican children is that the education of

these children is sacrificed; second, that the social and economic status of Mexicans in San Marcos is very low and unworthy of such a people; and third, that these conditions are susceptible to remedy if only co-operation can be effected and discrimination and antagonism can be done away with.

These conclusions are, of course, subject to change at anytime, but in view of the information on hand they are fundamentally correct. So it is with this conviction in mind that they are presented, and they will continue to be thus presented until conditions have changed among the people who have formed the subject of this study.

This study is but a meager portion of a larger undertaking that is possible in San Marcos. It has not been possible to make a really detailed and prolonged study of the situation, but the fundamentals have been touched. At any rate a step, even though small, has been taken towards the presentation of facts concerning the conditions that exist within San Marcos. It is sincerely hoped that a more detailed study may soon be made with the object of bettering the situation. The complete redemption of conditions will not come with surveys, but out of these surveys will come the information that will serve as impetus to the government, the Mexican people, and the rest of the social order to better the status for the safety of all concerned.

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