Movement to aid migrant workers seeks Rice's aid

By HARRY KAPLAN

Threebee Editorial Staff

The Federal government has an opportunity to help the poverty-stricken Rio Grande Valley farm workers in their efforts to achieve decent wages and working conditions. A meeting to discuss projects to aid the agricultural laborers will be held in the Governor's parlor on the Capitol Hall, Tuesday, February 1 at 7 pm.

Long a national scandal, the living conditions of the Valley farm workers came to widespread attention last summer when 6500 people marched the 468 miles from Rio Grande City to Austin in order to present to Governor Connally their demands for a minimum wage of $1.25 per hour.

The workers have long labored to establish a 78 cents per hour with neither minimum wage legislation nor unions to protect them. They struck last summer under the auspices of the National Farm Workers Association (AFL-CIO), which had been instrumental in the signing of labor contracts by growers for farm workers who had been in much the same plight.

Although there has been some talk of a minimum-wage bill coming up in the Legislature in the near future, farm workers have been largely left without recourse for the workers would have been able to continue to work under the barbaric conditions already existing until such pressing matters as city sales tax, liquor by the drink and pari-mutual race betting had been thoroughly worked out and entered into the law books.

It is now quite apparent that the wretched living conditions of two million of its citizens will not be alleviated within the lifetime of any of us, (to say nothing of the workers, whose life expectancy is considerably shorter owing to the lack of medical facilities, and minimum nutrition), unless contracts can be negotiated with the growers.

Topics for the Tuesday meeting will include the boycott of the products of La Casita Farms, Starr County, raising of funds, food, and medical supplies to keep the striking laborers alive until agreements can be reached, and an Easter Caravan to Rio Grande City, which will give the affluent Texan a chance to see for himself the unbelievable and will show the workers that the people of the State is aware of their plight.

The Meeting will be open to all members of the Rice community.