

# Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen With Extreme Care

This summer some 300 to 400 Puerto Ricans will be imported for work in Connecticut tobacco fields.

It will be the first time that Puerto Ricans in large numbers have been brought in for seasonal work.

The difference between this project and the importation of British West Indians, which has been going on for several years, is that the latter are subject to immigration laws and can be deported for violating their contracts.

The Puerto Ricans, however, are U. S. citizens. They are not compelled to return to Puerto Rico when they finish their jobs, nor are they subject to deportation if they break the contracts.

Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr., director of the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, said Puerto Ricans are being brought in at the insistence of the U. S. Government who, he said, felt that employment opportunities should be given to off-shore U.S. citizens before foreigners.

Lasbury said the STGAA, in 1947, chose the British West Indian program after conferring with the State Labor Department. The BWI project was picked, he said, because it offered the local

growers a "controlled" work force.

By "controlled," Lasbury said, he meant the workers could be supervised and bound by immigration regulation so that any person causing trouble to the community or creating a problem, could be immediately sent out of the country and barred from re-entry.

It also insured Connecticut, he said, that hundreds of seasonal workers would not remain in the state after the season ended and become a burden on the community.

## Experienced Workers

The Puerto Rican, however, he said, can remain here if he desires and cannot be forced to leave once his work ends.

With this in mind, Lasbury stated, the STGAA has been selecting its Puerto Rican workers with extreme care. Only men with agricultural experience and families are being brought to this state. Lasbury said the workers with families in Puerto Rico will be more likely to return after the season ends than single men with no responsibilities. Each worker is

also required to sign a contract agreeing to return to Puerto Rico when his employment ends.

The workers themselves are expected to be excellent. The workers will come here, he said, with

the object of making as much money working on the farms as they can in the short time they will be here. He said they like a long work week and are quick to learn once they are shown what is expected of them.

Few will be able to speak English. The language of Puerto Rico is Spanish. The employers have been told to demonstrate the duties of the workers with gestures and use sign language to get the meaning across.

The Puerto Ricans come from a land where the climate is always warm, Lasbury said, and it may take a short while for them to adjust to the Connecticut weather, strange food, a foreign language and large cities.

In addition to the Puerto Ricans, some 2,000 British West Indians will again work here this year. If the Puerto Rican workers succeed this summer, a larger number will probably be brought in next year.