





PREFACE

This pamphlet is a study guide based on policy positions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. It is the result of more than two years of study and discussion. An original draft was discussed during 1961 by the Department of Migrant Work, the Department of the Church in Town and Country, and the Department of Church and Economic Life, all units of the National Council of Churches.

Re-drafted in the light of comments from these and other informed sources, it was read, discussed and commented upon during the winter of 1962 by no less than fifteen small groups of knowledgeable people in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, New York and Texas. These groups included growers, representatives of farm labor, clergymen, staff and committee members within the Migrant Ministry, agricultural economists, and other informed citizens.

A revised draft, taking account of all comments and suggestions received in this field review process, was again submitted to the Department of Migrant Work, the Department of the Church in Town and Country, and the appropriate staff for additional study and reconciliation in detail with the policy positions of the National Council of Churches.

The final text was approved on March 14, 1963 for publication as a Study Guide by official action of the Executive Board of the then Division of Home Missions, National Council of Churches.

In 1968 the text was reviewed and up-dated by Dr. Shirley E. Greene, the author of the original, in cooperation with the Migrant Ministry staff and is again offered for consideration as a study guide.

The Migrant Ministry
Division of Christian Life and Mission
National Council of Churches
475 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10027

3-15-68

LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN

ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN GROWERS AND SEASONAL WORKERS IN INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE

Two things I ask of thee; deny them not to me before I die: remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.

--Proverbs 30: 7-9 RSV

BACKGROUND

Over the past eighteen years, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. has several times spoken officially on ethical issues in the field of agricultural income policy and in matters relating to the welfare of seasonal wage workers in agriculture. Because the issues have been controversial and because the policy positions have been taken at different times and in different contexts, many interested and concerned persons have recognized the need for a compilation of the positions of the National Council regarding the interrelationship between the income problems of farm owners and operators and the living and working conditions of the seasonal farm workers whom they employ for wages.

This pamphlet contains such a compilation designed as a basis for study of some ethical issues which arise in the relationships between growers and seasonal workers. Nothing in it may be construed as modifying policy or establishing new positions of policy for the National Council. That function is reserved to the General Board and the triennial Assemblies of the Council itself. This paper seeks to identify some of the implications of adopted policy in a manner which may contribute to understanding and stimulate persons of ethical sensitivity to appropriate lines of action.

The sequence of presentation is as follows:

Definition of Terms
Description of the Economic Situation
Compilation of the Positions of the National Council
Summary of Ethical Issues

DEFINITIONS

Four definitions are basic for understanding of the discussion that follows: "industrialized farm," "family-like farm," "grower," and "seasonal farm worker."

Industrialized Farm -- By "industrialized farm" this statement refers to units of agricultural production where technological development and large capital investment have resulted in large holdings in a single ownership, separation of the functions of ownership, management, and

labor, and the compensation of labor on a wage -- time or piece work -- basis.

Such farms constitute a comparatively small percentage of all farms in the United States, but they loom large in the proportion of the nation's farm land which they occupy, the percentage of total agricultural output which they produce, and the share of the seasonal farm labor force which they employ.*

Although the percentage of industrialized farms is very small nationally, in certain regions, states, or areas within states they loom much larger in proportion to total farms. In such areas, their combination of numbers and great size tends to make the industrialized farm the predominant pattern of land tenure and agricultural production.

Industrialized farms stand in contrast to family farms which have generally been the predominant pattern of land-holding and farm operation in American agriculture. Family farms are of varying sizes and types of economic organization, including owner-operated and tenant-operated farms, commercial and subsistence farms. Their common and distinguishing characteristic is that the family makes the basic managerial decisions and supplies most of the labor.

The concept, "industrialized farm," should be clearly distinguished from several other terms which are often used loosely and interchangeably: "Corporate farm" is a farm enterprise which is legally incorporated. Many industrialized farms are, in fact, incorporated; but many are not. A few family farms are also incorporated. "*Mechanized farm*" is not to be confused with industrialized farm. Industrialized farms are invariably mechanized, but so are virtually all efficient family farms. "*Commercial farm*" refers to any farm which produces for sale in the market. This term applies to all industrialized farms, but also to all but the smallest and poorest of "subsistence" family farms.

*Unfortunately the federal Census of Agriculture has no category in its tabulations which precisely fits the definition of "industrialized farm." Nor is there any other exact or reliable source for the number of industrialized farms. The following information must be regarded, therefore, as indicative rather than precise.

The Census of Agriculture classified farms by "economic class" based on amount of gross sales. Most industrialized farms fall in Economic Class 1, characterized as having gross sales in excess of \$40,000. A large proportion of the Economic Class 1 farms fall under our definition of "Industrialized farms," although not all. From the 1959 Census of Agriculture, the following data emerges regarding Economic Class 1 farms (in the 48 states of continental U. S.):

In the 1964 census 4.5% of all the farms were industrialized. In 1966 the figure was 5.9%. In 1964 42.3% of total sales of farm products was attributed to Class 1 farms and in 1966 the figure had risen to 49%. The average gross sales of these farms in 1966 was \$109,140.

"Family-Like Farm" -- This is a new term, used, so far as we know, for the first time in this document. It is used here to classify an important group of farms which are intermediate in status between the large-scale "industrialized" and the true "family" farms. "Family-like" farms are relatively limited in acreage, but because of the specialty nature of the crops, they require substantial volumes of hired labor for short periods. In this situation, the owner-operator does, like the family farmer, provide most of the management and most of the labor most of the time. Because of his unusually heavy peak labor requirements, he tends to escape the family farm classification. In contrast to the large-scale industrialized units, on the other hand, his looks like a "small" or "family-sized" farm.

As a substantial user of seasonal labor, the "family-like" farmer is identified in this paper as a "grower" and the subsequent discussion, unless otherwise specified, will include him as a part of the industrialized agricultural pattern.

Grower -- The word "grower" is commonly used, and will be used in this document, to refer to the owners and operators of industrialized farm units, including the so-called "family-like" farms. A grower may be an individual, a partnership or a corporation. The grower may participate actively in the management of the productive operations or may delegate this function to hired managers. In the smaller enterprises, the grower may participate directly in the labor of the farm or ranch, although it is characteristic of industrialized farms that labor requirements, especially at peak seasons, greatly exceed the capacity of the grower and his family to provide. In general, therefore, it is accurate to say that the grower's income is derived primarily from his ownership and capital investment, secondarily from his managerial role, and to a relatively minor extent from his personal participation in the actual production tasks on the farm.

Seasonal Farm Worker -- This phrase refers to persons hired for limited periods to meet the seasonal peak demands of farm production, usually harvesting. They may be hired on a time basis--hourly, daily or weekly--or on a piece work basis. Some seasonal workers, by careful planning, are able to secure nearly full-time employment in agriculture throughout the year. Others may supplement agricultural work with other forms of employment. Many have a very irregular pattern of employment with frequent and often prolonged periods of unemployment.

Some seasonal workers do not migrate but obtain such farm employment as they can in the immediate vicinity of their home-base residence. Many are migratory, moving from area to area in search of farm employment. The term "seasonal farm worker" in this paper, unless otherwise specified, is intended to include both migratory and non-migratory workers.

Seasonal farm workers are to be distinguished from "full-time" wage workers in agriculture. These latter include the full-time "hired hands" employed on family farms, and a substantial number of workers on industrialized farms who are employed on a year-round basis. While many of the problems and issues discussed in this document involve the full-time workers on industrialized farms almost as much as they do seasonal wage workers, the decision has been made to confine this discussion to the situation relating to *seasonal workers*

for two reasons: (a) the National Council's policy statements have focused primarily on the problems of seasonal, and especially migratory, farm workers (although not exclusively so, as a later section of this paper will show); and (b) by limiting the discussion in this manner, it is hoped to avoid confusion as to the bearing of this paper on "hired hands" and skilled full-time wage workers in agriculture.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

Historically, the pattern of use of seasonal farm workers in agriculture has been a shifting one. One of its earliest manifestations, in the wheat harvest of the Great Plains, has been virtually eliminated by mechanization.

Most recently three of the major users of seasonal labor--sugar beets, potatoes and cotton--are undergoing drastic changes due to mechanization, although cotton is still a major user of seasonal labor.

The principal users of seasonal labor in agriculture at present are cotton, vegetable, fruit and nut crops which have very heavy harvest labor requirements and have not yet developed mechanical harvesting devices to any significant extent.

Among the factors accelerating the trend toward industrialization of agriculture in recent years have been the mounting capital requirements for an economic farm unit, the specialization of agricultural production creating concentrated peaks of labor demand on a seasonal basis, and the demands of mass processing and merchandizing--canning, freezing, super-market standardization, etc.--for concentrated volumes of specific commodities readily available to huge processing plants.

Agriculture is a high risk industry consisting of 3.7 million competing enterprises. Even in the industrialized sector, it usually consists of a relatively large number of competing units as compared to other types of industry. It is exposed to uncontrollable factors of weather, pest infestation, and other hazards of nature. Especially in the case of the fruit and vegetable crops, the commodity is perishable and the market is unpredictable, highly fluctuating, and almost totally unregulated.

Many of these factors are present in nearly all types of farm production. In the case of industrialized agriculture, the high degree of crop specialization and the increased capital investment tends to increase the risk up to a certain point. The "family-like" farm is especially exposed at this point. The really giant, corporate producers have found ways through vertical integration, well-established credit sources and otherwise, to cope with these risks to a substantial degree.

Growers may do exceedingly well financially in one marketing season only to suffer devastating losses in the next. This psychological uncertainty in face of uncertain weather and an erratic market goes far to explain the reluctance of most growers to accept such ideas as minimum wages, union contracts, improving housing and other potentially costly changes in the patterns of their labor relations.

Most of the grower's costs are fixed, not subject to his control, and generally rising. Confronted with an uncontrolled and unpredictable market, the grower understandably seeks to keep his labor costs at a minimum and to retain maximum flexibility in labor relations. Many growers motivated by Christian conscience, are genuinely distressed by the resulting situation, but see no way out without jeopardizing their own economic survival.

The situation of the conscientious grower is further complicated by the competition of a certain percentage of ruthless and ethically insensitive growers and managers whose overwhelming concern is maximum economic profit. These are of two types. In the case of the extremely large corporate farm units, complete separation of the functions of ownership and management tends to produce aggressive pressures for cost-cutting to insure maximum profit. Among the smaller and "family-like" growers are also to be found some whose undisciplined economic ambitions make them quite ruthless in their dealings with labor.

When we turn from the problem of growers to those of hired labor, the picture becomes even more complex. All the hazards and uncertainties described above are reflected in the experience of the worker. If a crop is lost because of weather or pest, he is out of work. Even if the crop is out there and ready for harvest, rain may keep him idle or morning dew may cut into his daylight working hours. We have already indicated how the fluctuations of market demand and price induce in the growers an almost irresistible tendency to minimize their labor costs (wages, housing and other facilities) in good times and bad times alike. And among the growers' costs are the worker's incomes.

Public Law 78, which permitted legal importation of several hundred thousand Mexican and off-shore farm workers annually, was terminated in January 1965. However, there is continuation of movement across the U.S. Mexican border of "green card" holders (immigrant workers legalized under Immigration and Naturalization laws) and illegal entrants. This creates a heavily competitive labor situation with adverse effects upon wages and working conditions of domestic workers.

In the light of these many negative factors, it is understandable that most seasonal and migratory farm workers are such from economic necessity, not from choice. It is true that, despite the unfavorable economic setting, there are some skilled professional farm workers who are capable of arranging their work pattern in a manner to earn a fairly acceptable annual wage. These constitute, however, a small fraction of the total casual farm labor force.

Far more typical are those who have been displaced from other occupations or unable to find stable employment elsewhere. Many are sharecroppers displaced by technological changes in cotton production. Others are the victims of industrial unemployment, personal catastrophe, physical handicap, or educational disability. All too often they are prevented from more stable and remunerative employment because of racial or ethnic discrimination. Rarely are these people well-equipped to seek and hold regular employment or to manage the meagre and erratic incomes they earn by agricultural labor.

Those who migrate do so at considerable cost both in money and time lost on the road; those who do not, may suffer long stretches of unemployment between jobs. When work is available, economic pressures are such that the temptation is almost irresistible to put the whole family into the fields regardless of the physical condition of the wife, the educational retardation of the children, or the damaging effects upon parental care and family life.

In terms of income, housing, cultural advantages, and social power, there is a wide and obvious distance between most growers and their hired farm labor. Despite that distance, however, the two groups are inevitably and inextricably bound together in a common fabric of economic enterprise. Although their fortunes do not rise and fall together, in any simple and direct ratio, it is nevertheless clear that both are subject in varying degree to the same set of economic forces. Solutions to their common problems involve a comprehensive policy and approach.

THE POSITIONS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The relevant policy of the National Council of Churches is to be found in four documents containing official positions adopted between 1951 and 1966.*

A. Concern for the economic welfare of growers

In its first general statement on agricultural policy, adopted in 1958 and entitled "Ethical Goals for Agricultural Policy," the General Board of the National Council of Churches affirmed and commended "to the churches and to the consciences of Christian men and women" seven goals. Although the orientation of this statement was primarily toward the family farm, two of the goals enunciated have definite bearing upon the economic problems typically confronted by growers in industrialized agriculture. These goals are particularly relevant to the situation of the "family-like" farm. They are quoted in full with official commentary:

The encouragement of voluntary association, co-operation, and mutual aid among farm people. Christian tradition has always emphasized mutual aid and cooperation as practical expressions of the command to love God and neighbor. One of the finest things farmers have done has been to associate themselves together in voluntary organizations for mutual aid and cooperation. Such association should be encouraged, with the opportunity it provides for character growth through independent judgment, decision-making, responsibility-bearing and the like. The churches should encourage full membership participation in such organizations of mutual aid and cooperation as a genuine contribution to both Christian and democratic ideals for society.

Fair and reasonably stable levels of income for farm producers. Justice demands that farmers who produce efficiently and abundantly where such production is in the national interest, should not suffer from this fact, but should receive economic rewards comparable with those received by

*See Appendix for list of these documents by title and date.

persons of similar competence in other vocations. Because of their ineffective bargaining position, farmers have rarely enjoyed true parity of income in the open market except during wartime periods of extreme demand. Sustained farm income is essential both as a requirement of justice for farmers and of stability for our total economy. Programs when designed in accordance with sound economic principles and equitably administered, to protect farmers, against sharp fluctuations and downward trends in real income, are a legitimate and necessary function of the federal government.

The underlying concern in these two paragraphs is obviously the economic stability and well-being of agricultural producers.

The following lines of approach are implied as leading toward "fair and reasonably stable levels of income for farm producers." They are:

1. Cooperative organization as a voluntary, self-help device by which growers might institute a self-disciplined control over the volume and quality of their marketings. By this means, they might stabilize their prices at levels which would assure incomes from which both they and their hired workers could live in comfort and decency.
2. Development of responsible programs of government designed to protect farm incomes at "fair and reasonably stable levels."
3. Some combination of cooperative self-help with a program of federal legislation.

B. Concern for the economic welfare of seasonal farm workers

Because of the long history of the Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches and its predecessors, the General Board, at an even earlier date, addressed itself to the "Concern of the Churches for Migratory Farm Laborers."

In a policy statement under that title, the General Board characterized the economic problems of migratory farm laborers and affirmed its support of a series of economic and legislative measures designed to improve their lot.*

Addressing itself again to the problem of wage workers in agriculture in the statement entitled "Ethical Goals for Agricultural Policy" (1958), the General Board declared one of these ethical goals to be "*Opportunity for the full and wholesome development of persons.*" In commentary on that goal, the following paragraph appears:

*This statement is not quoted here because it has been superceded by the Policy Statement on "Concern of the Churches for Seasonal Farm Workers" approved by the General Board, December 3, 1966 and quoted hereafter.

A violation of the Christian concept of justice exists in the fact that wage workers in agriculture are denied most of the legal and economic protections long accorded to wage workers in industry. We believe that, with adaptations required for their practical application to the business of farming (as in the enactments on social security), the principles of workmen's and unemployment compensation, minimum wage laws, and the right to organize and bargaining collectively under the National Labor Relations Act should be extended to wage workers in agriculture.

In December 1960, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, which possesses the ultimate authority of the Council, meeting in San Francisco, re-affirmed in resolution form several of the key principles of earlier statements, this time with special focus on the issue of union organization among hired farm workers. Key sentences are these:

We encourage more vigorous efforts in behalf of federal and state legislation to extend the federal minimum wage, to improve housing facilities, health, education and welfare services, and transportation safeguards for migratory farm workers.

We urge the continuation of current efforts at responsible and democratic labor organization among these workers. We favor extending to them by law the right to collective bargaining and access to the services of the National Labor Relations Board on a par with other wage workers in industry. We call upon employers of Christian conscience to encourage and stand with these workers in their efforts to gain human dignity, self-respect and economic security through the well-tested device of union organization.

The 1966 Policy Statement "*The Concern of the Churches for Seasonal Farm Workers*" described the economic problem of migratory farm laborers in the following terms: "On the basis of long and intimate experience of the Migrant Ministry with the needs, problems, and conditions of seasonal farm workers, the National Council of Churches recognizes and identifies the following major elements in the farm labor problem: Irregularity of employment and low family income; disfranchisement, exemption from social legislation and discrimination; and culture deprivation and isolation.

The General Board indicates its support of measures intended to foster the following lines of attack in cooperation with local congregations, local and state councils, denominations and their judicatories and the Church Women United in planning and implementation of ministries with workers and their families pertinent to their needs and conditions:

1. Personal ministries - seasonal farm workers must have access to ministries of the Christian faith such as worship, Christian education, pastoral care and opportunities for service.

2. Community development - farm workers need opportunities to identify their own community, develop their own leadership, define their own problems and work toward solutions in their own way. In light of this, the Church should interpret the basic injustice in farm labor and provide encouragement and assistance to the workers.
3. Grower concerns - the Migrant Ministry and the churches have an obligation to seek understanding of the growers' problems which will provide for an adequate standard for all farm workers and a fair return to the growers.
4. Ministry of Social Acceptance - churches should be open to the inclusion of migratory or settling farm workers in full fellowship, and should seek with sensitivity and imagination to overcome their understandable hesitation to enter into the fellowship of the churches.
5. Ministry of legislative action - lists ten areas in which farm workers suffer discrimination in legislation either on the national or state level or both and urge local congregations, denominations, and the councils of churches, acting within the framework of their respective doctrines and policies, to press vigorously for the enactment and implementation of legislation on state and national levels in the following areas:

Inclusion under the provision of the National Labor Relations Act and accessibility to the services of the National Labor Relations Board; federal minimum wage coverage for all farm workers; unemployment compensation; effective farm placement procedure; adequate farm labor housing code (enforced); elimination of detrimental child labor and that which interferes with school attendance; adequate funds from federal and state sources for education of migrant children, day care services, health services, housing and sanitation facilities and other welfare services needed to overcome the special disabilities suffered by seasonal farm workers; an adequate transportation code; relaxing of residency laws so that farm workers can receive public assistance and vital public services; and expansion of vocational training and placement services.

In conclusion the statement summarizes the goals to be sought in these words, "More important for purpose of this statement than legislative or programmatic details is a reaffirmation of the great overriding goals which must guide and motivate our action programs in behalf of seasonal farm workers. All specific efforts must be measured by their contribution to such goals as the following:

1. In the nation's all-out war on poverty, the farm labor front is a major one. Poverty in America will not be overcome until these people, who are currently among the lowest income groups in the land, are enabled to lift themselves above the poverty line.
2. All discrimination and exploitation which relegate farm workers

to second class citizenship must be eliminated. This calls for education and encouragement to use their franchise in their own and in the public interest.

3. Social acceptance must be extended to these workers, and such should not be withheld because of race, ethnic background, or educational level.

Above all, the goals sought and the methods used must support the just claims of farm workers for a dignity of their own with full voice in the decision-making processes which affect their destiny."

SUMMARY OF ETHICAL ISSUES

When the relevant portions of the four basic policy statements of the National Council of Churches on agricultural policy and seasonal farm labor are thus brought together, what issues of ethical concern and responsibility emerge?

For the guidance of thought and the stimulation of conscience among men of good will, both within and outside the churches, this study guide identifies the following four areas of concern and responsibility. This listing does not pretend to be exhaustive or final. Individuals and groups using this document may find others of equal or even greater import.

1. TO WHAT EXTENT IS INCOME PROTECTION FOR GROWERS AT FAIR LEVELS BASIC TO SOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF BOTH GROWERS AND SEASONAL LABOR IN INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE?

Comment: Employers have a responsibility to deal justly with their employees under all circumstances. If economic conditions in the industry make such dealing unduly burdensome to the employer, a basic obligation falls upon employers to strive diligently to re-adjust the economic basis of enterprise.

The ability of growers to provide adequate wages and equitable living and working conditions for their employees depends ultimately upon the economic health of their productive enterprise. To the extent that they may be caught in an intolerable "cost-price" squeeze due to economic forces over which they have no individual control, justice demands that orderly solutions be sought for the sake of both growers and farm workers.

Questions for study and discussion:

- a. What are the respective obligations for solution of the economic problems of industrialized agriculture resting upon:

- individual growers?
- growers organizations?
- hired workers?
- consumers?
- citizens in their role as voters?
- government, federal or state?

- b. To what extent do the grower's economic self-interest and his responsibility toward his workers run parallel at the point of farm income protection?
 - c. In the National Council statements what ethical judgment may be found upon a frequently expressed grower position which, on the one hand, says, "We can't afford to do more for our seasonal workers" while, on the other hand, refuses to consider participation in programs to stabilize markets and protect grower income at fair and reasonable levels?
2. WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE AVAILABLE TO GROWERS DESIROUS OF IMPROVING THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THEIR INDUSTRY?

Comment: Growers, like other businessmen and entrepreneurs, are properly prone to examine economic and political proposals for all their possible effects and implications. The National Council's statements as cited above seem to hold out to the grower the alternatives of (a) a cooperative, self-help approach to their income problem; (b) an approach through federal legislation; or (c) some combination of these. Growers and other concerned citizens will want to consider, in respect to these or any other alternatives, such questions as the following:

Questions for study and discussion:

- a. In the complex and inter-locking economy of our time, can the individual grower hope to survive economically apart from some form of organized market bargaining power? If such individualistic survival were possible, what ethical arguments could be advanced either for or against it?
- b. How do the alternatives (cooperative self-help vs. government program) measure up by the test of such highly regarded goals and values as:

Freedom of opportunity for both grower and worker?
Justice to grower, worker, consumer?
Efficiency in production and distribution?
Adequacy and stability of income for both grower and worker?

What other values should be identified as criteria for judging alternative approaches?

- c. What is the Christian ethical basis of the view that growers have an inescapable responsibility to seek solutions to their economic problems which will be both just and equitable to workers as well as to themselves?

3. WHAT ETHICAL DEMANDS CONFRONT GROWERS AND WORKERS?

Comment: Both grower and seasonal farm worker are entitled to an equitable and dependable income in return for diligent and efficient work. Being bound together in a common economic enterprise, each has certain obligations toward the other. As has been repeatedly demonstrated in other lines of basic production, the fairest and most orderly way of defining mutual obligations and respective rights between employers and employees is

through the instrumentality of collective bargaining in good faith between responsible organizations of labor and management.*

In agriculture as in other industries, violent opposition to labor organization tends to breed violence and irresponsibility in the labor movement. Christian ethics is opposed to the attitudes and methods of violence on either side.

Questions for study and discussion:

- a. What are the ethical obligations of seasonal farm workers:

Toward each other in respect to organization and collective bargaining?
Toward employers in respect to honest and diligent work, fulfillment of contracts, and respect for property?
Toward the consuming public?

- b. What are the ethical obligations of growers:

Toward workers in respect to encouraging responsible organization, bargaining in good faith, fulfillment of contracts?

- c. What mutual ethical obligations rest on growers and workers for striving toward that goal defined by the National Council of Churches** as "Opportunity for the full and wholesome development of persons"?

4. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF HUMANE SOCIAL LEGISLATION FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS?

Comment: Among the legislative protections clearly advocated for seasonal farm workers in National Council policy statements are these: minimum wage coverage, unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, full social security coverage, abolition of child labor abuses, minimum standards of housing, sanitation and transportation safety, availability of health and welfare services, and inclusion under the collective bargaining rights of the National Labor Relations Act. Some of these protections, if extended to seasonal farm workers, would involve additional costs to growers; others would represent a more generalized charge upon the whole community, state, or nation.

Questions for study and discussion:

- a. May the Christian demand for justice and protection of the weak be denied

*For the position of the National Council of Churches on collective bargaining see Basic Principles Relating to Collective Bargaining--a statement adopted by the General Board, February 17, 1958.

**See: Ethical Goals for Agricultural Policy, 1958 Statement of the General Board.

by growers on the grounds of "economic hardship"?

- b. Under what circumstances may the conscientious grower find that protective legislation for the worker also represents a protection of his own economic position against the unscrupulous grower?
- c. What obligation rests on consumers and citizens to support humane social legislation for farm workers? Do consumers and citizens have a parallel obligation in respect to the economic problems of growers? What is it?

APPENDIX:

The official pronouncements of the National Council of Churches to which reference is made in the text of this document are listed below. They may be secured on request from The Migrant Ministry, Room 552, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10027. Single copies without charge. Rates will be quoted for quantities.

THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCHES FOR MIGRATORY FARM LABORERS
(Adopted by the General Board - September 19, 1951)

THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCHES FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS
(Adopted by the General Board - December 3, 1966)

ETHICAL GOALS FOR AGRICULTURAL POLICY
(Adopted by the General Board - June 4, 1958)

RESOLUTION REGARDING AGRICULTURAL MIGRATORY WORKERS
(Adopted by the General Assembly - December 8, 1960)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

MIGRANT LEGISLATION PACKET, National Council of Churches
(dealing specifically with amendment to National Labor
Relations Act)

FARM LABOR ORGANIZING, 1905-1967
(A brief history).....\$.50

Order from: National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor
112 East 19th Street
New York, New York 10003



