

"... a challenge to our nation to stop this tragic exploitation ..."

—Most Rev. Robert E. Lucey, S.T.D.
Archbishop of San Antonio



Proceedings of
THE NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
CONFERENCE

on

**"Migratory Labor
and Low
Income Farmers"**

held

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FOREWORD

The following pages represent only the highlights of statements made by the speakers and panel members of the conference. We wish it were possible to reproduce all of the important statements and to bring to life again the lively discussions of the widely representative gathering. The conference participants came from labor, farms, religious groups, citizen organizations and government.

While these proceedings are merely a digest of the conference, they bring together facts and experience on the low income farm problem not easily found elsewhere. We urge careful study of these statements and of the recommendations following each round table discussion. Knowledge of the facts combined with a realistic program of action can change the picture of rural poverty in our nation to one more akin to that of "the good life."

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We are met here to face some of the cruel facts of our American economy. The income of business, professional, labor and other groups has for some years been going up; the income of farmers has been going down. While fewer farmers have been producing more of the substances for the food, clothing, and shelter of our people, they have been receiving proportionately less of the national income and increasingly so. In an ascending economy for all other economic groups, the descending income of the farmers has been the hard lot of farm families who, for generations, have been historically the source of renewal for the robustness of the American way of life and hope. The hard lot of the American farmer is harder still for the tenant farmers, the sharecroppers and the farm laborer. Hardest of all is the lot of the migrant farm families, as they move from season to season, state to state, and crop to crop.

One of the anomalies of our national economy is that while scores of thousands of people are annually leaving American farms, scores of thousands of imported laborers are annually coming across the border. The low farm wages are not acceptable to domestic workers. A labor shortage is then certified as a basis for importing foreign workers. Thus the vicious circle.

Migrant workers and their children are the most rootless, homeless, schoolless, churchless, defenseless, and hopeless people of our country. The local communities, the state and nation, churches, schools, health and social agencies all have a responsibility and opportunity. The best answer is in the people themselves through organization.

Autonomous organization has been tried and vindicated in religion, politics, business, the professions, labor and agriculture. The despised but heroic little congregations of lowly believers, in spite of the power of the Roman Empire, through spiritual faith and organization became the church universal. In the breakup of Feudalism -- under the impact of commercialism, individualism and nationalism -- the land was liberated from the lords, the serfs from the land. The new rising middle class through organization in stock companies, corporations and professional societies became the dynamic force in the making of the modern world.

Tent colony --
for American
migrants!



With the coming of the industrial revolution, factory workers, in their turn considered congenitally "no good" and fit subjects for exploitation, were unorganized and defenseless. Often, against the power of the state, the corporations, the police, and courts, the factory workers were organized. Labor unions became one of the chief motive forces in the movement for universal education, universal suffrage, humanitarian causes and modern democracy. In a world of organized power, the farm laborers and the migrant workers need the leadership of the great labor unions in their autonomous organization for winning a fairer share of the national income and a larger life for themselves and their children. If the labor unions in the days of their power forget these their brethren on the farms now unorganized and defenseless, they will deny their own beginnings and betray their great heritage and hope. In this day of absorption in the rush and press of our industrial civilization and the accompanying drive for power, American labor is boldly meeting the challenge made by unrepresentative corruption. For its own soul's sake American labor unions need to challenge all America with the best of their hope in the struggle to make America a land of equal freedom, dignity and opportunity for the least of these our brethren, whether the exploited people of color, the forgotten millions in the city slums, the beleaguered families on the farms, or the rootless migrants in our midst, who test us most when we remember least.

OPENING REMARKS:

A. Philip Randolph

President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

In these crucial times one must be brave indeed to even plan to conduct any kind of conference if it be not directly related to the physical survival of our country.

But there are other strengths aside from technology, industrialism and science that a country needs. These strengths are spiritual and moral; they stem from the system of values we believe in and live by and are willing to fight for. At the top of this system of values is the concept and belief in the essential worth and value and the sacredness of the dignity of the personality of every human being, whether white or Negro, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, native or foreign.

But in our national community there is a large segment of people known as the migratory workers and farm hands for whose personality there is little respect and practically no reverence. In fact, they are the forgotten laborers; they have been practically forgotten by Government, as shown by little, fragmentary and ineffective protective legislation. They have been almost forgotten by organized labor. Even today, concern about and financial support of agencies such as the National Agricultural Workers Union and the National Sharecroppers Fund and other farm and labor movements are quite obviously inadequate. These movements need positive, long-range financial assistance in considerable proportions in order appreciably and effectively to grapple with the farm labor and migratory worker problem.

A major part of the financial support of these movements in the interest of migratory laborers and low income farmers should come from organized labor which benefits from the elimination of this economic sickness in our body politic.

The migratory workers have been forgotten by the public. No doubt, the reason for this is that the revolution involving industrialization and urbanization has brought about a shift in interest and concern on the part of the public from the rural farm areas of the country to the urban and highly industrialized centers. The migratory and low income farm laborers are the victims of this condition.

Another reason for the plight of the migratory workers is that they have no permanent economic stake for which to fight, or base from which to fight; they are practically a rootless segment of the population. The great mass have no organization and the organization of the few farm laborers is relatively weak; weak in numbers and weak in financial resources.

In addition to this, these workers are usually illiterate or semi-illiterate and are easy marks for deception on the part of designing employers. Moreover, their wages are low and make possible only the most miserable social conditions under which they live.

Hence, this is why we are assembled here in this conference. We are looking for a cure for this social and economic problem of exploitation and oppression.

Rows of lettuce
as far as the
eye can go!



An effective remedy will lie in the following steps:

1. A bona-fide trade union organization of migratory farm laborers, in order that they may be able to fight for decent wage rates and working conditions.
2. Coverage of migratory farm workers by protective social labor legislation.
3. Mobilization of public opinion back of the farm workers' union and other agencies seeking to improve their economic and social lot.

Thus, it is the hope of the National Sharecroppers Fund that the various participants in this conference will become active and dynamic agents in not only helping to inform and mobilize public sentiment back of the farm workers but also to help build up the necessary financial resources which will make an effective fight for the elimination of this deplorable system of exploitation of farm laborers possible.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, D.D.

President, National Council of the Churches of Christ

There are basically two reasons why the general public should be concerned in the problems of migratory labor and low-income farmers. The first is a Christian reason. Even though we are in a time of high prosperity, the facts show that there are many disadvantaged people in our society, one of the chief groups of which is the low-income farmer, whether he is operating his own marginal farm or is being hired by someone else. So long as any persons lack adequate income in our society for the basic essentials of bread, clothing, and housing, there must be a general Christian concern about their plight.

The second is not specifically a Christian or humanitarian reason but rises out of the economic and political and social conditions of our time. Everyone knows that the United States is

becoming more and more urban. There are only half as many people working farms as were a few years ago. If we wish to keep our society free, we must find a way to make it pleasant and profitable for a sufficient number of able people to work their farms and to produce the food and fibers that all of us depend on. Totalitarian countries have found that there is almost no way to force farmers to ship food into great cities if they don't want to or are not adequately paid for doing so. The prosperity of American life in the long run is going to depend on the prosperity of the American farmer.

There are four facets to the problem. The answer is not simple. Churchmen must not suppose that giving religious service will do the trick. Labor organizers must not suppose that organizing farm labor will provide the full answer. Farm leaders must not suppose that government subsidies are a long-run solution. Educationalists, agricultural experts, must not suppose that they alone can make sub-marginal farms profitable. But since most of the low-income farmers are not in an advantageous position, all of us are required to try to work together to help four separate groups of people.

1) The migrant. Sometimes even in this country illegally, he needs help the most. And may I say parenthetically that from the Christian point of view, it won't do to just solve the American farm problem while people are hungry on the other side of the Mexican border.

2) The hired laborer. Much can be done by including him in social security benefits and by helping him bargain collectively.

3) Independent farmers of an inadequate farm. This is perhaps the most complex of all. Some need other kinds of work to piece out a good living. Others need credit to buy more land. All need education and inspiration to know how to work the land best.

But finally I suggest, as I did in my second reason for concern, that all of us must be interested in the profitability of farming on the whole, for the farm must be able to attract capital and scientific methods more and more in this day if we are to avoid economic disaster in the long run.

LUNCHEON SPEAKERS

Hon. Harold D. Cooley

Member of Congress from North Carolina; Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

Rabbi Eugene J. Lipman

Director of Social Action, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Father James L. Vizzard, S. J.

Vice President, National Catholic Rural Life Conference

CONGRESSMAN HAROLD D. COOLEY: When we think of big business we usually think of Wall Street, International Bankers, Standard Oil and Bethlehem Steel, but actually agriculture is the big business of our country. No other business in America is comparable with agriculture neither in the number of persons employed nor in the dollar volume involved. The problems of agriculture are paramount, and the prosperity of the farmer is essential to the welfare and happiness of all of our people. It is good and well for us to be interested in the problems of "Outer Space", but we must be vitally concerned with problems of inner man. All the human and animal life depends upon the products of the good earth and upon the efforts of those who till the soil. So, I emphasize the fact that agriculture is "Big Business".

Our farmers are in trouble and need friends who understand their problems and help to find solutions for problems which must be solved if our nation is to continue to be prosperous. The House of Agriculture is divided and agriculture is in need of leadership. Farm organizations are fighting among themselves and are failing to provide the leadership that farmers have a right to expect. Farm leaders, because of their rivalry, are apparently unwilling to sit down together in a great effort to compose differences and to agree upon programs which would prove to be beneficial to our people. The Secretary of Agriculture is constantly widening the breach between the producers of different commodities and most unfortunate is the fact that agriculture legislation which is now proposed is being considered in an atmosphere that is charged with partisan politics. For many long years we were successful in our efforts to prevent partisan politics from entering

our deliberations, but now political expediency seems to be the order of the day. Programs which once worked well and successfully have in the last five years deteriorated rapidly and to the point that certain programs have become financially burdensome. Programs which once were profitable have within the last five years resulted in gigantic losses. Farm income has declined at the rate of about a billion dollars a year, farm debts have been increasing at the rate of about a billion dollars a year, and the government has been losing about a billion dollars a year in the operation of the programs. This I believe has resulted not from bad legislation but from bad administration.

Small farmers are being pushed off the farm and land values are declining. Everything the farmer has to buy seems to be increasing in value and everything pertaining to agriculture seems to be on the downroad. We cannot hope to abolish rural poverty, but we should certainly put forth every effort to check and change this downward trend. If our farmers are forced into bankruptcy, all of our people will surely come to grief. City consumers should know the truth about the problems of farmers. When farm purchasing power declines, the impact is felt by every other segment of our economy. Because of the great division in agriculture, and the great rivalries of farm leaders and especially on account of partisan politics, I am not encouraged to believe that any legislation of great importance will be enacted in the next Session of Congress.

RABBI EUGENE J. LIPMAN: Since the end of the second World War, family farmers, sharecroppers, and migrant workers have seen their situations worsen. Too often government, federal, state and local, has been used by the big and greedy in programs which contradict every tenet of democracy, both political and economic.

I know and am proud that American Jewish organizations have become increasingly involved in every crusade for the extension of democratic principles and processes, from civil rights to immigration policy to free speech to foreign affairs -- everything except our #1 economic problem -- the many aspects of our agricultural policy or lack of policy.

Most American Jews have, I suspect, heard of wetbacks. Few, I fear, know anything about the treaty-secured, o-so-respectable imported contract labor system, even that it exists. Under such circumstances, how can we be in a position to help persuade government to study the questionable necessity of this vast program?

Most American Jews have, I am confident, a working knowledge of the minimum wage provisions of current federal statutes. Few, if any, know that careful provisions have been written into this generally constructive legislation to exclude that group of Americans most in need of its protection -- the migrant agricultural worker. Under the circumstances, how can we use our aroused religious, ethical voice to demand necessary legislative changes?

Most American Jews are convinced that the ethics of our faith require that men and women who labor be able to organize, to bargain collectively for their security and well-being in a democratic society. We have been proud of the role played by our religious leaders and organization in the decades-long struggle for laborers' rights. But few American Jews know anything of the struggle which has been waged and is being waged by the National Agricultural Workers Union to secure the most elementary rights for farm workers -- against powerfully-organized, well-financed, ruthless combinations of corporation-owned farms and huge packing and distributing outfits. How can we expect to arouse the necessary indignation and action under the circumstances?

Crusades for justice have increasingly needed the spark and fire of religiously-motivated determination and indignation. This aroused indignation must be backed by knowledge of the facts. It will not be easy to arouse such determination in our American community today. None of you who have worked so hard so long need to be reminded of this fact. Any form of economic injustice is unpleasant to hear about in the midst of our much-trumpeted prosperity.

I can only pledge to this gathering that our group will not sit idly by while this infection festers among us. We shall do our best to spread through our congregations' social action committees information about and concern for the many aspects of the problem which have brought us together this day.

FATHER JAMES L. VIZZARD: The Church is very much interested in the material environment of rural living. It is a question of balance: neither exclusive preoccupation with nor scorn for



"Home" —
temporarily,
at least,
for migrants!

economic considerations and values. It is surely significant that the Church has strongly urged and makes it possible for many priests like myself to subject ourselves to the stern academic discipline of studies in economics and in the other social and technical sciences. We believe that we must help man properly to order his economic and social life as well as his spiritual life.

There are several basic notions which I would like to suggest for consideration to this gathering. The first is the value of the wide-spread ownership of productive property.

Opportunities for direct ownership of productive property are being sharply limited in this country. Increasingly, our economy is being characterized and dominated by large-scale industry and agriculture. There is serious reason to be concerned with the possibility that through the changes in agriculture now taking place "General Farms" will soon be joining General Foods, General Electric, General Motors. I think, then, that one must look with a critical eye on one of the chief changes in the agricultural picture: the trend towards ever-larger average size of farms and ever-fewer number of farms. Inasmuch as it reflects the consolidation of subsistence units into farms of adequate size and secure tenure, it obviously can be favorable. I believe that this development should even be accelerated by helping to provide opportunity and aid, both to those who leave and to those who stay. Such, of course, is the aim of the Rural Development Program. It would seem, in fact, to be time to expand this well-conceived program, to strengthen it with adequate appropriations and personnel.

But inasmuch as the trend represents the enlargement of units already of adequate size and the growth of very large commercial or corporation farming, I believe the time has come to call a halt. I can see no reason, for instance, why government programs should be allowed to operate to the chief advantage of the large-scale farm, and I believe there should be a realistic ceiling on the amount of aid or subsidy that could go to any single farm operation.

I hold that the economic, social and cultural forces now operating to change the face of American agriculture must not be allowed to develop blindly and uncontrolled. The good results that they can bring must be promoted and strengthened; the undesirable results must be prevented. Science and technology, particularly, must be the servant of man, not his master. Man must contribute actively to shaping his own environment and destiny, not merely submit to it.

ROUND TABLE I

Problems of Low Income Farmers

CHAIRMAN: Elizabeth B. Herring
Executive Secretary, National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor

PANEL Hon. Victor L. Anfuso
MEMBERS: *Member of Congress from New York; Member, House Committee on Agriculture*

John A. Baker
Director, Legislative Services, National Farmers Union

Hon. Harold D. Cooley
Member of Congress from North Carolina; Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

Robert W. Lewis
Administrative Assistant to Senator Proxmire

Father James L. Vizzard, S.J.
Vice President, National Catholic Rural Life Conference

ELIZABETH B. HERRING; Chairman: A few years ago California economists began to tell us that corporation farming in that state was not the result of immutable laws of economic development. Rather they pointed out it was in large part the response of business-minded men to the availability of waves of poverty-stricken farm workers, usually foreign-born, whose bargaining power was nil.

Not only in California but in the United States as a whole, the hired farm labor force, especially seasonal workers, are in the main refugees from rural poverty areas in the United States and countries south of us. In view of this, what, one wonders, would happen to the structure of the farm labor force and its standards if a serious attempt were made to abolish rural poverty in the low income farm counties of the United States. Pressure to import low income farm people from other countries would increase of course. Denied that, however, farm labor standards would have to rise to a level comparable with other occupations.

In this workshop we will address our attention to stating what the poverty problem is in low income farm counties. Department of Agriculture studies show that in 1,000 counties, mostly in the South, more than half of the farm families exist beneath the poverty line. The Rural Development Program of the Department while not promoted with real seriousness by the Administration does recognize that multiple approaches are needed. To help families to farm better is part of it, but in addition new industry is needed, natural resources must be conserved and developed, and education and social services must be improved. Wise and imaginative leadership is needed, for existing rural poverty conditions are associated with cultural patterns which have long histories.

CONGRESSMEN VICTOR L. ANFUSO: The small farmers of our country are in a very serious condition. They face competition from the large corporate farms and they are also squeezed by the large distributors of farm products in the cities.

Recent studies conducted by a Subcommittee on Consumers, of which I have the honor to be chairman, and which is a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Agriculture, show that the farmer receives a very small share of the amount paid out for food by the housewife. The great difference between the 25¢ which the housewife may pay for a head of lettuce and the few cents which the farmer receives for his work in tilling the soil, planting the seeds and cultivating and harvesting the lettuce, is not enough to cover his costs. The bulk of the consumer's dollar goes into the many steps taken to get the lettuce from the farmer to the table. Our studies show that many of these steps are inefficient and unnecessary.

Our Subcommittee hearings have also brought forth the fact that thousands of dairy farmers in New York State have been forced to quit farming. Despite the fact that the housewife pays over 25¢ for a quart of milk, the amount of this which goes to the dairy farmer is too small to cover his costs. The rest goes to the middle man who is highly organized and controls the market.

The trend today is away from the farm and this is a very serious situation. The farm families of our country represent an important basis for democracy. It is imperative that they be kept on the farm with a decent standard of living in order for the American people to have a continuous supply of food for their growing population.

One thing I would like to make very clear is that our studies show that the family farmer is not at all responsible for the increased cost of living. Instead, he has been shortchanged because of his lack of bargaining power and because of unwise government policies, to the point where it is very difficult for him to make both ends meet. Also, we must not forget that the farmer is a consumer too and if he cannot buy what is produced in the cities, industry suffers. This downward trend for the nation's farmers could well lead to a depression unless measures are taken to reverse this trend.

JOHN A. BAKER (Submitted by Reuben Johnson): Legislation providing for federally-subsidized importation of low-paid farm workers ought to be repealed. With national agricultural policy consciously and deliberately being used to eliminate up to 200,000 families annually from farming in the United States, it does not make sense to double the number of imported farm workers as we have done since 1953. We ought to continue to establish, develop and improve the kind of credit, vocational education, soil conservation and extension programs which will help the operators of family-type farms improve their incomes and levels of living. A Rural Development Program which gives primary emphasis to moving people off the farm is not the proper approach to problems of low-income farm families.

In 1953 there were 210,000 Mexican farm workers in the United States. By 1956 there were 445,000 such workers, plus 1,000 Japanese farm workers brought in under a program approved that year by Department of State, Justice, and Labor at the request of California fruit growers who with other industrial farmers in that state employed twenty-five percent of the farm workers from Mexico in the United States in 1956.

Subsidized imported farm labor very obviously works against the interests of farm operator families, especially low-income families on farms. Such labor promotes and encourages an emerging pattern of agriculture of the industrial type. Millions of imported man hours take away earnings which otherwise may accrue to farm operator families from work on their own farms and to domestic farm workers. Moreover, since imported farm labor on the whole is available at lower wages than farm operator families and domestic farm workers can live on and maintain even a minimum American standard of living, the basis is laid for an even wider disparity between farm and non-farm income than already exists under the sliding scale.

Living standards of low-income farm families, domestic farm workers, and low-income industrial labor has tended to equalize because of shifts between these groups. Therefore, imported labor on farms tends also to work against better wages and living standards for low income industrial workers.

Agricultural production units operated within reasonable bounds of efficiency by typical full-time farm operator families that furnish most of their own labor are still the most efficient. But the subsidization of imported workers whose services can be had at substantially less than the services of domestic farm workers offsets the natural advantage of the typical family operated farm in efficiency of agricultural production. Without cheap labor, in fact, there would not exist the drift toward the extremely large farms that we have come to know as factories-in-the-field. Following the historic pattern of industrial worker organizations, domestic farm workers have the strength or potential strength, to demand and get a fair wage. As long as competition from subsidized imported labor exists, however, their bargaining power is weak. There is no one more familiar with their weak bargaining power than the land barons whose industrialized farming operations are dependent above all else on cheap labor.

It is in the interest of good international relations, preservation of a pattern of family-type farming, higher income and wages for U.S. farm operator families and domestic farm and industrial workers that we seek the repeal of Public Law 78, more help for low income farm operator families, and more organization and a stronger bargaining position for domestic farm workers.

ROBERT G. LEWIS: Underlying the often-stated general assumption that there is a surplus of people in agriculture, there are two prevailing assumptions with which I do not agree.

The first is that low income is the proper criterion to enforce transfer from farms to industry. This is ineffective and wrong. When farm income in agriculture was very low as in the 1930's, when parity ratio was around 55% or 60%, there was a great increase in the farm population by migration from the city. During World War II years when parity ratio was up over 120%, two million people moved out of agriculture. A transfer under conditions of high income is more constructive and conservative of basic human resources as well as land resources. Depression will move people from farms only through bankruptcy and foreclosure. That way farm people are not equipped either economically or socially to make a satisfactory adjustment to urban industrial life. The better way is through education -- children to college and adults to better jobs.

The second wrong assumption is that people on low income farms should be forced into great metropolitan industrial centers. Where do we use these people? Present unemployment outlooks appear to mean four million unemployed by February. It is questionable if our industrial economy can absorb these people. Even if one-third of the farm population were transferred to the cities, the two-thirds who remain on farms would still not be on a par with the rest of our economy. Farm people are not getting educational opportunity, health care, nor other bounties of our high standard of living.

Insofar as there is a true "surplus" in rural areas, we should take careful stock of all considerations as to where to shift it. We need much more labor right in rural towns to service agricultural people at a parity standard of living. Should we shift factories or people?

If we depopulate rural communities we abandon "capital equipment" such as housing, schools, roads, churches; and "social equipment" in communities, local government, churches, customs, morals, habits, traditions. These items of equipment are what people live with. These are the human costs of mobility that must be counted.

ROUND TABLE II

Foreign Farm Labor Program -- Mexican, Japanese, Philippine and British West Indies

CHAIRMAN: Frank L. Noakes

*Chairman, Joint U. S.-Mexico Trade Union Committee;
Secretary-Treasurer, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way
Employees*

PANEL MEMBERS: H. F. Edwards

*Chief Liaison Officer, British West Indies Central Labour
Organization*

Ernesto Galarza

*Secretary-Treasurer, National Agricultural Workers Union;
Author, "Strangers in Our Fields"*

Lewis Hines

Special Representative, AFL-CIO

Gardner Jackson

Organization Department, AFL-CIO

Don Larin

*Chief, Farm Placement Service, Bureau of Employment
Security, U. S. Department of Labor*

FRANK L. NOAKES, Chairman: Of the many economic questions and problems facing labor today, one of the most vital and most difficult is what more can we do to bring to the attention of Congress and the general public the sorry plight of the domestic migratory farm workers, as well as that of the foreign farm worker brought into our country with or without the benefit of agreement between his respective country and ours.

No relief is forthcoming from the State Department or the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Justice Department. They have ignored not only the pleas of the workers but have disregarded the sound advice of the Labor Department. As a result, there is a growing realiza-

tion on the part of many, in and outside the labor movement, that the importation of foreign farm workers is a well-organized plan to maintain field labor in a state of peonage, and a union breaking movement.

It is admitted that during World War II, when ten million Americans were under arms, there was justification for the importation of from 100,000 to 200,000 Mexican and British West Indies workers, whose services on United States farms and railways were a valuable contribution to the winning of the war. Farm Associations and the "factory-farm" employers soon learned, however, that the foreign workers could be hired to work for less wages than those previously paid domestic farm workers and under conditions not conducive to American standards. Further, exploitation of these workers was a matter of the employer's conscience.

Since the end of the war, the number of Mexican workers contracted and those entering by visa has increased to where we now have one-half million or more workers entering our farm labor market each year. The employment of foreign labor on "factory-type" farms has considerably reduced the ratio between the wages paid farm workers and those of factory labor. For example, this ratio was 48 per cent in 1945, but only 32 per cent in 1955. In addition, thousands of Mexican workers who have crossed our borders on visas, and a great number of these can be truly classed as "legalized wetbacks," are now finding their way into trades and industries in which United States workers are now organized; and the readiness of many to accept lower wages and working conditions poses a real threat to our nation's living standards.

One of the most serious and disturbing aspects of the entire situation is the crisis which family farms are now approaching. Such farms have always been considered to be the backbone of the agricultural economy of the United States; and the failure of our Government to have a policy of assistance to the group, the exploitation of domestic farm labor by the lack of protection, and our Government's promotion of foreign contract labor have accelerated their decline.

Is it any wonder then that the family farmer is having hard going, when he must sell the farm products produced by his labor, and that of his sons, in the same market as the products produced by over 500,000 underpaid foreign workers?

In spite of all this, "factory-type" farmers and their associations are chafing under the inadequate protective labor provisions which govern their employment of these Mexican contract workers and are now pressing for the completion of arrangements to import additional workers from Japan and other areas, under even more inferior contract terms.

For many years the United States section of the Joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee has been gravely concerned over the persistent maneuvers by agricultural employers, particularly on farms in the Southwest, to evade the minimum protective labor provisions for both domestic and foreign farm labor under the Mexican contract labor program. Now, in the Japanese program, they are attempting to carry on exploitation, which better enforcement of the Mexican labor program by the Department of Labor has been making more difficult. This is being accomplished as the result of loopholes in the McCarran Walter Immigration Act and the Refugee Relief Act, which enable them to set up new, inferior programs for the importation of foreign farm workers.

Under these circumstances, the current proposals by these employers for the establishment of these new programs for the importation of agricultural labor from the Far East are clearly intended to flood the farm labor market of the United States with foreign workers willing to work for wages and under conditions impossible for United States citizens to accept.

Fundamentally, we believe that a large part of the so-called labor "shortages" in this country's agricultural areas are artificial in that Americans refuse to accept the inferior wages and working and living conditions imposed on domestic farm workers by employer bodies.

Until American agriculture throws off the feudal pattern which still characterizes its labor relations, the U.S. labor movement will continue to oppose all programs for the importation of foreign labor which do not provide minimum protections for the workers from abroad who come to this country.

H. F. EDWARDS: The B. W. I. Programme of supplying supplemental agricultural labour has been in existence since World War II. The benefits to the West Indies, with a population of 4,000,000 mostly dependent upon agriculture, and with serious unemployment, have been most important financially and in knowledge of the American way of life.

American employers cannot obtain workers unless

- (1) The U.S. Employment Service certifies that because domestic labour is unavailable foreign workers are needed;
- (2) The U.S. Immigration Service approves admission.

An American employers' representative contracts recruits from English-speaking agricultural workers presented by B. W. I. Labour Departments. Before acceptance each man receives a detailed medical examination including blood tests and chest x-rays from Government doctors in accordance with U.S. Public Health standards. A Police record causes rejection.

The B. W. I. Central Labour Organisation representing the West Indian Governments maintains offices in Washington and the principal employment areas to protect the workers and to audit each payroll.

The workers, under their Contract, receive prevailing wage rates as a minimum and live in housing approved by States and the B. W. I. C. L. O. Menus are important as the men must be boarded properly, and transportation between states is only on franchised common carriers.

Group Insurance provides benefits for non-occupational accident or illness and 15% of the gross earnings are transmitted to the workers' Governments for their credit. These savings support dependents and help in rehabilitation after repatriation.

Workers cannot remain in the U.S.A. longer than three years and of 140,000 admitted up to 1953 only 1,200 were unaccounted for by the Immigration Service.

The inspection program is important in supervising enforcement of the workers' contracts. The B. W. I. program has provision for one inspector for every 800 men imported.

All day long,
fields of crops
and people
to pick them!



ERNESTO GALARZA: Nearly a year and a half has passed since the report, "Strangers in Our Fields" was published. It became the target of violent attack by corporation farm interests. But the attempt to discredit "Strangers" failed, and the issues it raised are sharper than ever.

These issues fall into two general groups, resolved in two related questions: What is happening to the braceros? What is happening to the domestic farm workers?

The bracero, 100,000 of them in California in 1957, continued to work under guilt-edged contracts made meaningless by chronic non-compliance and token enforcement. This past summer, braceros in some parts of the state could still be found living in decrepit barns and garages, in spite of the more stringent housing directives of the Department of Labor now in effect.

The food supply services in the bracero camps are still a source of unlawful profit. Overcharges for non-occupational insurance, for which the Mexican National pays, still occur. Transportation costs, charged to the grower are sometimes padded. Bootleg services of various types, and the sale of shoddy goods at exorbitant prices, extend the circle of collateral rackets against which the bracero is defenseless.

The disastrous effects of the Mexican farm labor recruiting program on domestic farm workers become ever more acute. In July and August of this year hundreds of domestic pickers were forcibly idled in the California peach harvest by the preferential hiring of alien contract labor. During the past ten years in many California crops wages have been frozen or have dropped as much as 50 per cent. Housing for migratory domestic workers has all but disappeared, except the most dilapidated.

These are only a few of the traits of a system that has deepened its roots in our agricultural economy during the past 15 years. It has been made possible mainly by the \$35,000,000 federal subsidy representing congressional appropriations since 1942, to corporate farming as a user of braceros.

Today that system is not, in practice, what Public Law 78 and the International Executive Agreement intend it should be. It has been deformed by indefensible administrative policies, downright economic falsehoods, and political surrender to the sworn enemies of trade-unionism.

Braceros are supposed to be used only in those hard, back-breaking chores that domestic laborers reject. But the record abundantly proves that precisely the reverse is true. The bracero has displaced the domestic irrigator, tractor driver, trimmer, sorter, packer, fork-lift operator, trucker, loader, planter, pruner -- even the domestic straw boss. By way of the corporation farm braceros have filtered their way into union-organized industries - packing sheds, food service, clerking, sugar refining, canning, plant breeding, grain milling, and a dozen others.

The economic powers in rural California which have fed on a \$35,000,000 federal subsidy are the county growers associations, specifically, the wealthy leadership of those associations. It is the leaders of these associations who have organized, financed and maneuvered the first round of "right-to-work" county ordinances in California. This is not a coincidence but the culmination of a long process that dates back to 1936, when the Associated Farmers of that state made a public and solemn pledge "to defend the right of the agricultural worker to a job." So for 20 years the corporation farm interests have managed their own unilateral system of "right-to-work," unhampered by public responsibility and untrammelled by private conscience.

During the past 10 years the National Agricultural Workers Union has been assembling, little by little, the facts and the issues these facts define. This has been indispensable in the Union's organizing task, because it has been necessary to locate and describe the massive obstacles that stand in the way of democratic human employment relations in large-scale commercial agriculture.

But these are also the symptoms of a larger threat that hangs darkly over all rural America.

And this is as far as we can go on our own. If the facts are accurate and the conclusions sound, these issues call for an effort far greater in scope than it is possible for the National Agricultural Workers Union alone to sustain.

LEWIS G. HINES: I am happy to have the opportunity to come here today and bring my small contribution to the efforts of the National Sharecroppers Fund in placing before the American people the story of foreign agricultural workers employed in the United States. I want particularly to

deal with the nearly half million Mexicans who will enter this country this year under contract to work in the factory farms in the West and Southwest, particularly California, Texas and Arizona. Up until about a decade ago, not much attention was paid to these workers. They were brought in under the guise of labor shortages and lack of domestic farm workers. The farmers' groups have taken full advantage of these poor agricultural workers who can barely eke out an existence in their homeland.

When organized labor entered the picture some ten years ago, we found nearly all (there were some exceptions) factory farm owners took full advantage of exploiting these people by offering to pay them very little wages and then cheating them out of most of that. Living conditions have been miserable, and if the American people had full knowledge of what has been going on in California and other parts of the Southwest, they would hang their heads in shame.

As an illustration, just a couple of years ago the Governor of Texas was employing a couple hundred of the illegal entrants or "wetbacks" in violation of the law. According to a statement of a former Secretary of Labor the wage earned in the Rio Grande Valley was as low as 20¢ an hour. Organized labor in California, Texas and other parts of the Southwest with help from Washington have carried on a consistent campaign to better wages, housing conditions and living generally for these exploited workers.

This meeting here today is one more step that will bring the light of day into this situation, and I trust that before we leave here this afternoon we will have brought out the true story of the exploitation of our farm workers, including Japanese who are now entering the country at the rate of a thousand a year until a maximum of three thousand is reached.

This conference should help us learn the story of the American farm workers who have been driven off the farm because of the low wage and inhumane policy of the factory farm owners.

GARDNER JACKSON: The problems of imported labor, brought into the country to work on giant farms under temporary contract, are inextricably tied up with the problems of our U.S. farm workers. Everyone knows that our American workers who toil on the nation's farms are the most vulnerable, the most exploited, the least protected of any group in our society. It is hard to believe that these workers and their families -- many of whom have no permanent homes, no unemployment insurance or savings to fall back on when there is no work, none of the amenities of life and very little of the necessities -- are American citizens.

Workers who are poor, who are uneducated, who are unorganized, have little, if any, bargaining power. Such is the condition of our American farm workers. Yet, the corporation farmers would keep the conditions of these people as lowly as they are by continuing and even increasing the steady flow of nationals from other countries who are even poorer, more docile, and have even less bargaining power.

How long will the American labor movement and the American people put up with this disgraceful state of affairs? How can the rest of us continue to accept our high standards of living, how can we continue to eat so plentifully of the wonderful products of our nation's farms when the people who do the actual work of producing these foods receive so little in return?

The facts of these conditions are amply before us. Congressional hearings and governmental surveys have been made in abundance. We can no longer put off making the effort which is needed to bring American farm workers up to the standards which would provide at least a minimum of decent living.

This is a challenge which the labor movement can meet by planning and executing a full-scale realistic drive to organize our farm workers. Such a concentrated, full-scale drive has not yet been attempted.

This is a challenge which government leaders can meet by passing the necessary legislation and providing the proper administration for minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance, low-cost credit, and other programs aimed at helping the farm family to succeed economically.

This is a challenge which American citizens can meet by keeping up an unrelenting pressure aimed at getting these things done.

DON LARIN: In considering the subject of foreign labor in our agricultural labor market I wish to suggest three premises relative to the problem:

No. 1: The conditions of employment of foreign labor in agriculture basically reflect the conditions of the domestic labor market. Foreign workers have not created these conditions. I do not believe we can intelligently consider the problem of either domestic or foreign workers as being disassociated from one another.

No. 2: Potential availability of a large supply of foreign labor, and the actual presence of such labor in the agricultural labor force create new problems in what already is a most complex labor market.

No. 3: Chances are that foreign labor will be a part of the agricultural labor market for an appreciable time in the future. If that is the case, attention ought to center on their use not adversely affecting American workers rather than the elimination of these workers from our labor market. If there are any changes for the better in the agricultural labor market, those benefits would accrue for the most part to foreign workers as well as domestics.

It seems to me to be a mistake to envisage foreign workers in our labor market as either all bad or all good. That their presence has possible adverse effect is apparent, and it is also equally obvious that they have had some good effects. It is ironic but factual that foreign workers have been the instrumentality for improving some domestic conditions in agriculture, as well as delaying improvements that might otherwise have taken place.

In concluding this opening statement, I wish to say one more thing to you. The foreign workers who come to the United States to work in agriculture are in the vast majority a great credit to their homelands. They are good people by the standards by which we judge our fellow men. In differences of opinion on this subject of use of foreign labor, we can have common understanding on that point.

ROUND TABLE III

Problems of U. S. Farm Workers

CHAIRMAN: Clarence Senior
Chief, Migration Division, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

PANEL MEMBERS: Herbert Hill
Labor Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Isador Lubin
Industrial Commissioner, New York State Department of Labor

H. L. Mitchell
President, National Agricultural Workers Union

Frank A. Potter
Executive Secretary, President's Committee on Migratory Labor

A. Philip Randolph
President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

CLARENCE SENIOR, Chairman: This panel is to discuss what are often called "the forgotten workers" in the United States labor force. In spite of the fact that the workers on our farms are decreasing in numbers -- and that particularly true of the migratory workers -- they still make the difference between our having food on our tables at reasonable costs and food scarcities which would give rise to higher costs and other inconveniences.

Usually, the migratory farm worker in particular is forgotten by government. Most of the social legislation of the last quarter of a century does not apply to him. He is neglected, and often abused, by the local community into which he moves for the crop season. Usually, also, he is

even forgotten by the labor movement, which has done so much in our history to raise levels of working and living standards. He has problems in housing, in securing safe and comfortable transportation, in being exploited by crew leaders. He is usually not covered by workmen's compensation and usually does not have the advantages of off-the-job health, accident, and life insurance. There is an almost complete lack of collective bargaining. There is no minimum wage for most agricultural workers. There is no machinery for settling grievances. The worker often is exploited on his meals both in regard to cost and to quality. In other words, the agricultural worker of today is more or less in the position of the industrial worker of a century or a century-and-a-half ago.

There is one outstanding exception to the generalizations I have just made about migratory agricultural workers. These are the workers from Puerto Rico who come to the United States under an agreement formulated by the Department of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and serviced by the Migration Division of that Department. The work agreement, which must be signed by the employer, provides for a minimum wage named in the agreement or the prevailing wage in the area, whichever is higher. It provides for 160 hours of pay every month even though the worker may have been prevented from working that many hours. It requires the farmer to take out a private workmen's compensation policy to cover the worker if the state does not provide workmen's compensation for farm workers. It provides for housing inspection by the agents of the Puerto Rico Department of Labor, sets a limit on the cost of meals, and in other ways tries to improve working and living conditions for the Puerto Rican worker -- and thus, by example, for others in the farm labor force.

HERBERT HILL: The operation of the migratory farm labor system is one of the most serious social problems in the United States today. Into the northeastern states along the Atlantic seaboard are brought many thousands of dispossessed southern Negro farmers and their families to harvest crops and to engage in food processing occupations. Child labor, lack of adequate housing and sanitary facilities and a system of vicious economic exploitation characterizes the condition of these migratory farm workers.

During the past decade a clearly identified group of migratory farm workers made up almost exclusively of Negroes has appeared in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York and adjacent states. Many of these are former sharecroppers or the children of sharecroppers from the deep South. A recent report of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Migrant Labor notes that "approximately 80% of the registered camps in the State are mainly for Negroes."

For many days and nights entire families, including women and children, are transported from the South in open trucks across state boundaries to live in shacks, abandoned barns, tents, and even chicken coops, amidst unbelievable squalor in the "enlightened North". Unscrupulous labor agents deduct various amounts from the meagre earnings of these workers for transportation, housing and for debts incurred in the purchase of food at inflated prices in camp commissaries. The utter lack of medical attention and the flagrant violation of child labor laws together with a hostile attitude on the part of local townspeople and local law enforcement officials have created intolerable conditions for these families.

Forty of the forty-eight states specifically exclude migratory farm workers from the protection of labor and social welfare legislation. These include wages and hours provisions, workmen's compensation benefits and the various state labor relations acts. Each state where migratory farm laborers come to live and work has a basic obligation to meet the needs of its temporary workers and it is indefensible to set these workers apart as second class citizens and to deny them the protection of the social welfare and labor legislation available to others.

Migratory agricultural laborers are productive workers, vitally necessary to the Nation's agricultural economy, and by their labor increase the prosperity and welfare of the many states. Each state so enriched should provide these workers with the same services, facilities and protection under the law as are available to other citizens.

Through joint action by state and federal governments fundamental changes must be made in the recruiting, organization and allocation of the nation's agricultural manpower resources and a rational reorganization of the system of migratory farm labor must take place in the interests of the entire community.

ISADOR LUBIN: Our most serious problem in New York State in the field of migrant farm workers is housing. I regret to have to admit that in many places in New York State it is close to intolerable. The plain fact is that thousands of seasonal workers are brought into the State to harvest crops in areas where there are not adequate housing arrangements to care for them during their brief stay. In addition, the migrant group includes men, women and children, creating serious health and educational problems.

Before we can take steps to improve the situation we need to face the facts as to what the situation is. Because of the vastness of this problem and because it involves workers coming from other states as well as produce which is shipped intra-state, I believe that the federal and state governments should make a joint effort to provide adequate and decent housing for these seasonal farm workers. The situation is beyond the control of most individual farmers for even those with the best intentions cannot afford the improvements which would be necessary to provide proper housing for these workers who are needed for only a short time of the year.

Another important area in which federal help is needed is that of regulating the labor bosses who bring the field hands from the South. Often these crew leaders have little regard for the welfare of those whom they recruit and transport across many states.

Unfortunately, the State Legislature has exempted migrant farm laborers from compulsory coverage under workmen's compensation and other labor and welfare legislation. The federal government must, therefore, take the lead in persuading the states to extend this protection to the farm workers. With added legislation, and with the development of machinery, preferably cooperative, but with state and federal aid, a good beginning can be made in providing our seasonal workers with decent living quarters and in preventing their exploitation by unscrupulous crew leaders and store operators.

H. L. MITCHELL: Nearly 25 years of my life have been spent in trying to help U.S. farm workers organize a union. I was one of the 18 men (7 Negro and 11 white sharecroppers) who founded the Southern Tenant Farmers Union on a cotton plantation in Arkansas in 1934. The organization of which I am president is an outgrowth of that movement.

For about as many years the National Sharecroppers Fund, composed of some of the most outstanding American citizens, have given both moral and financial support to the efforts made by the farm workers of the United States to build an effective trade union of their own.

Organized labor has also given assistance and encouragement to the Union. From time to time, many of the larger national and international unions have given a helping hand to our struggling organization in many of the hard fought battles we have had in these past 25 years. There have been some successes, also many failures. But the record is clear -- farm workers have tried again and again to build a union. They have never stopped, despite the terrific odds always against them.

However, there has never yet been a full scale campaign to organize the nation's largest and most basic industry -- agriculture -- with its 2 million workers and its annual output of over 30 billion dollars. An operator of a very large corporation farm once told one of our organizers, "You fellows are hunting elephants with a pop gun."

For nearly 25 years, men and women of good will have been meeting in conferences like this one to talk about the problems of American farm workers. We have deplored the lack of social legislation, the lack of educational opportunities for the children, and the poor housing available to farm worker families, and many other things as well. We have had two presidential commissions and many congressional investigations into problems of U.S. farm workers. There have been many official as well as unofficial reports pointing up these needs. But to date -- too little has been done.

During the past ten years or more we have had an added problem, and that is the employment of imported foreign labor. We aroused public opinion to the point that the flow of Mexican wetbacks was brought under control. But the Mexican workers continue to come each year -- a half million strong -- as contract laborers. There are also a few thousand from the West Indies employed on U.S. farms, and now the first contingents of Japanese and Filipino workers are arriving. The "tragic exploitation" of which the Archbishop of San Antonio speaks is the real problem of the U.S. farm worker.

In my opinion, this tragic exploitation will continue until there is a large and effective trade union of agricultural workers organized on the larger corporation type farms of the United States.

Today, organized labor is under attack -- there is racketeering in some of our unions. Perhaps some will say that this is no time to raise the question of organizing the workers at the bottom of the economic heap in our society. But it is my hope that this conference we are holding here in New York will serve to help arouse the entire country to the need for an effective union of farm workers. This, I believe, is the only way that the tragic exploitation of native and foreign workers alike will be ended on U.S. farms.

FRANK A. POTTER: Migratory workers perform a highly essential service to American agriculture in that they move into areas with heavy seasonal labor demands and perform the jobs for which local supplies of labor are inadequate. Yet their shifting from place to place deprives them of the usual community contacts, services, and protections. Historically, community institutions, public services, and governmental protections have been formulated to serve and protect people who remain in and become part of one community. It is not easy to adapt some public services to persons and families who move from place to place. Yet since the movement of these people has become a necessary part of our present agricultural economy, an extension of existing public services and benefits to them becomes mandatory. Furthermore, in so far as special services are needed to meet specific situations they should also be extended to them.

Available data indicate that migratory agricultural workers have low annual earnings. This is attributable largely to intermittent employment during the crop season and lack of non-farm employment opportunity in the off-season and to the expenses incident to movement. The conditions under which many migrants earn their living are often unsatisfactory. Providing adequate housing is often a problem; racial and other forms of discrimination are not uncommon; cultural barriers to community living are often present; employer-employee relations are sometimes casual or practically non-existent and the terms and conditions of employment are often inadequate or not clearly understood. Only a limited number of migratory workers are covered by Old Age and Survivors Insurance. Migratory agricultural workers are generally not covered by minimum wage, unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation or other labor legislation. Child labor laws seldom provide protection outside of school hours. The migrant worker and his family often do not have access to community, health, educational and welfare services because they are not accepted in the community or because they do not meet residence requirements.

* * * * *

Recommendations of Round Table I--Problems of Low Income Farmers

Chester A. Graham, Reporter

Member, Wisconsin Farmers Union

With technological advances bringing about a greater productivity than ever before from our nation's farms, the farm family nevertheless is losing out to industrialized agriculture and faces a crisis. A program for the farm economy must take into account the human values involved in family farming versus corporate farming. The following propositions point to some of the problems and their solutions:

1. A sound farm economy will strengthen and undergird a sound over-all economy for all the American people. It is essential not only to provide an uninterrupted and abundant food supply but, through farm purchasing power, to maintain a prosperous industrial economy.

2. The present trend to squeeze out a large percentage of farm families from agriculture must be opposed and reversed, not only for the sake of the farm families involved but for the benefit of the whole country. Thus programs to meet the problems of low income farmers must be an integral part of an adequate over-all program for agriculture and industry.

3. Small farmers need a federal program of price stabilization which will stabilize farm income on a par with non-farm income.

4. Major emphasis must be given to problems of marketing and distribution in agricultural research and education in contrast to traditional concentration on agricultural production. Marketing quota programs should be geared to strengthening family farm operations.

5. The Rural Development Program should be made dynamic and effective in helping to solve the economic problems of low income farm families. When industrial employment is needed to supplement farm income, industry should be moved to rural areas, not rural people to overcrowded urban areas.

6. Low income farmers need greater access to more fertile land as a solution to some of their problems. This requires greater credit at interest rates comparable to those paid by industry.

7. Economic cooperation among farmers (cooperatives) is needed now more than ever because of apparent failure of federal agricultural administration to cope with the problems of low income farmers.

8. Conservation programs should be geared toward safeguarding the nation's natural resources while strengthening family farm operations and not working hardships on tenant farm operators or consumers. Undue advantage should not be given the large operators in these programs.

* * * * *

Recommendations of Round Table II—Foreign Farm Labor Program

Harry Fleischman, Reporter

Director, National Labor Service

The importation of large numbers of nationals from other countries for temporary labor on American farms is inter-related with the problems of U.S. farm workers. Consideration of lines of action to meet these problems involves both groups of workers.

1. U.S. agricultural labor, particularly on the factory farms, must be included in minimum wage legislation to prevent the continued exploitation of American farm workers and to encourage an adequate supply of domestic farm labor thus discouraging reliance on programs to import cheap temporary labor.

2. The Secretary of Labor should appoint a tripartite committee, consisting of representatives of the public, employers, and organized labor to investigate such phases of the Mexican contract labor program as:

- a) the operation of the non-occupational insurance system now in effect.
- b) the administration of the commissary services in all camps.
- c) the method and manner of preparation of wage findings by state employment agencies when these findings are used as a basis of determinations issued by the Secretary of Labor.
- d) the trend of wages in agricultural areas which have used Mexican nationals since the beginning of the program.
- e) deficiencies of the present compliance service and how these may be corrected.

3. It was further urged that the proposed investigation include all programs for importing agricultural contract labor into the United States in order to determine:

- a) the availability of native American workers for such employment.
- b) the wages and working conditions required to attract a supply of native labor.
- c) the need for importing contract labor.
- d) the abuses arising from the annual importation of more than half a million contract laborers from foreign countries.
- e) the effect of such a labor supply, not only on American labor standards, but also on the competitive positions of large scale corporation farming in comparison to family farm operation in this country.

4. Further study should be given to the following propositions for:

- a) A realistic permanent immigration policy with full American citizenship rights, instead of continuation of the alien farm labor program.
- b) Legislation for a commission to have authority equivalent to the National Labor Relations Board in regard to all farm workers, foreign and domestic.

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Recommendations of Round Table III—Problems of U. S. Farm Workers

Leon B. Schachter, Reporter

Vice-President, Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen

United States farm workers, and particularly the migrants, are so far below the standards taken for granted by other American workers, that they seem to be living in another land or in an era long since past. Following are the important areas in which farm workers need help:

A. Federal legislation

- 1. Minimum wage laws.
- 2. Unemployment insurance.
- 3. Workmen's compensation.
- 4. Sickness and disability benefits.
- 5. Old age assistance.

B. Special legislation for migrants

- 6. Guaranteed minimum hours of work per month or week.
- 7. Maintenance of accurate payroll records.
- 8. Payment with earning statement to workers on weekly basis.
- 9. Licensing and bonding of crew leaders who, along with the farmer-employer, should be held legally responsible for seeing that the laws and other contractual arrangements are complied with.

C. State and federal agency cooperation

- 10. Uniform standards for adequate housing for migrants, to be financed by long-term, low-cost federal or state loans.
- 11. Coordinated educational programs for migrant children which will minimize the loss occasioned by constant transfers.
- 12. Adequately staffed day care centers as a prerequisite for all migrant camps.
- 13. Rigid inspection and enforcement of health and sanitary facilities for migrant camps.
- 14. Regulation of transportation of migrants by Interstate Commerce Commission.

D. Labor action

15. Intensified efforts by AFL-CIO to organize farm workers either by encouraging their acceptance into membership of existing appropriate unions, or by assisting them in forming their own effective, responsible union. The present National Agricultural Workers Union cannot do this job without help because of lack of funds and personnel.

E. Citizen action

16. Further study should be given to a proposal for a Little Walsh-Healy Act for farmers who receive federal subsidy -- denying them such subsidy unless they pay minimum wages and provide specified housing and working conditions for farm workers.

* * * * *

Following the presentation of the Round Table reports and recommendations, the following proposal was presented to the conference assembly and approved by acclamation:

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND SHOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN FORMING A NATION-WIDE ADVISORY BOARD OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS TO BRING THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS OF THIS CONFERENCE BEFORE THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.



Outdoor cooking,
the only kind available,
at a temporary
outdoor homestead
for farm workers!

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NSP040 LONG GOVT WASH DC 13 1115AM
FRANK P GRAHAM, CHAIRMAN NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
112 EAST 19 ST

DEAR FRANK: I AM DELIGHTED TO LEARN OF YOUR CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE CONFERENCE ON MIGRATORY LABOR AND LOW INCOME FARMERS. IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THE CALLING OF THIS CONFERENCE WILL MARK A NEW ATTITUDE AND A NEW APPROACH TO ONE OF THE MOST DISTRESSING HUMAN WELFARE PROBLEMS REMAINING IN MODERN AMERICA. MANY OF US IN CONGRESS ARE EAGER AND ANXIOUS TO IMPROVE THE WORKING MOORS, PAY, AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN. I HAVE MYSELF SPONSORED LEGISLATION IN THIS FIELD. WHAT IS NEEDED IS AN ALL OUT ASSAULT ON THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN MIGRANT AGRICULTURAL WORK AND AN APPRECIATION FOR THE NEED FOR UNITED EFFORTS TOWARD THEIR SOLUTION BY THOSE GROUPS IN OUR SOCIETY THAT BEAR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF AMERICA. I FEEL CERTAIN THAT UNDER YOUR ENLIGHTENED AND HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP, THIS CONFERENCE WILL DO MUCH TO DEVELOP THAT APPRECIATION, REGARDLESS.

WAVE MORSE

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

DE 4321
DE 4321 PD-DETROIT MICH 12 30PM
DR FRANK GRAHAM, CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND 112 EAST 19 ST NYK

YOUR CONFERENCE AGAIN BRINGS TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THE SHOCKING PLIGHT OF THE TWO MILLION MIGRATORY FARM WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES. IT IS A DISTRESSING FACT OF OUR MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY THAT THE CRIES OF THE NEED AND THE HELPLESS FOR JUSTICE ARE ALL TOO OFTEN SUBMERGED IN THE RAVE OF COMPLACENCY WHICH ACCOMPANIES ANY MEASURE OF PROSPERITY.

AND TO WORK BACKSLIDING HOWARD R. WILSON HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF A JOINT OPPRESSION BY RUTHLESS EMPLOYERS AND A CALLOUS GOVERNMENT. HIS CIVIL RIGHTS ARE SYSTEMATICALLY DENIED. HE IS EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED FROM ORGANIZING A STRONG UNION

IN ADDITION TO BEING DENIED THE PROTECTIVE MANTLE OF FEDERAL LAW, THE MIGRATORY WORKER LABORS UNDER STATE LAWS WHICH PERMIT, AND IN SOME CASES EVEN ENCOURAGE, ALL THE IDEALS OF

ON BEHALF OF THE MILLION AND A HALF MEN AND WOMEN WHO MAKE UP THE FAMILY OF THE SAN, I WANT TO PLEDGE OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND COOPERATION TO YOU IN YOUR NOBLE WORK.

WALTER P. REUTHER PRESIDENT INTERNATIONAL UNION UAW

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

EM013 IL PD-NEW YORK NY 12
DR FRANK P GRAHAM, NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
HOTEL MCALPIN 600 MADISON AND 34TH ST. NYK
I WANT TO SEND MY GREETINGS TO THE DELEGATES OF THE NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND CONFERENCE. YOUR SUBJECT OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO LOW INCOME FARMERS AND MIGRATORY LABOR IS A MOST IMPORTANT ONE AT THIS TIME. AND YOU HAVE MY VERY BEST WISHES FOR THE SUCCESS OF YOUR CONFERENCE. I REGRET A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDWEST PREVENTS MY BEING WITH YOU TODAY.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NSP040 LONG GOVT WASH DC 13 1115AM
DR FRANK GRAHAM, CHAIRMAN NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
HOTEL MCALPIN 600 MADISON AND 34TH ST. NYK
I WANT TO SEND MY GREETINGS AND SINCERE BEST WISHES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE CONFERENCE WHICH YOU ARE HOLDING TODAY TO CONSIDER PROBLEM OF MIGRATORY FARM LABOR AND LOW INCOME FARM FAMILIES. I FERVENTLY HOPE THAT YOUR CONFERENCE WILL RECOGNIZE THAT THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN WELL VENTILATED OVER THE YEARS AND THAT THE NEED NOW IS FOR A PRACTICAL PLAN OF ACTION. I AM ESPECIALLY HOPEFUL THAT THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WILL FOLLOW UP ON ITS ALREADY RECOGNIZED RESPONSIBILITIES AND APPLY THE RESOURCES AT ITS COMMAND

ORGANIZATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY. I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO POINT TO NEW PATTERNS SUITABLE TO CHANGING AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY.
SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

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ST 04770 LONG IL PD-PAL ALBANY NY 12
THE HONORABLE FRANK P GRAHAM, CHAIRMAN NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
FUND CONFERENCE HOTEL MCALPIN NYK
Cordial greetings to you and to all of those attending the CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND IN NEW YORK CITY.
TO THOSE AT YOUR CONFERENCE WHO COME FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, I SPEAK FOR MYSELF AND THE PEOPLE OF OUR STATE IN SAYING:
WELCOME TO NEW YORK. WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU WITH US.

BOTH RURAL AND URBAN ARE FIGHTING AGAINST POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF

LABOR
TO ALL AT YOUR CONFERENCE, I SEND BEST WISHES.
AVERELL HARRISMAN

TEXTS OF TELEGRAMS RECEIVED AT THE CONFERENCE

FROM ELEANOR ROOSEVELT:

I want to send my greetings to the delegates of the National Sharecroppers Fund Conference. Your subject of our responsibilities to low income farmers and migratory labor is a most important one at this time, and you have my very best wishes for the success of your conference. I regret a speaking engagement in the midwest prevents my being with you today.

Eleanor Roosevelt

FROM AVERELL HARRIMAN:

Cordial greetings to you and to all of those attending the conference of the National Sharecroppers Fund in New York City.

To those at your conference who come from other parts of the country, I speak for myself and the people of our state in saying:

Welcome to New York. We are happy to have you with us.

As you know, my administration is keenly interested in doing everything possible to advance the welfare of migratory labor and low-income farmers. We are moving ahead in our programs for assuring better housing for migratory workers, and for providing better care and educational opportunities for their children.

In my 1956 message to the Legislature, I recommended a concerted attack on the whole problem of poverty, both rural and urban. We are making promising headway in our fight against the many causes of poverty-discrimination because of creed, color, or age; limited education; inadequate job skills; physical and mental handicaps.

I know your conference will be an instructive and inspiring occasion, and that it will make vital contributions to the problem of meeting our responsibilities to low-income farmers and migratory labor.

To all at your conference, I send best wishes.

Averell Harriman

FROM SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY:

I wish to extend my greetings and sincere best wishes for the success of the conference which you are holding today to consider problem of migratory farm labor and low-income farm families. I fervently hope that your conferees recognize that the problem has been well ventilated over the years and that the need now is for a practical plan of action. I am especially hopeful that the trade union movement will follow up on its already recognized responsibilities and apply the resources at its command in seeking to establish reasonable wage and working standards for agricultural workers. Similarly we in public life can benefit from your thinking in fulfilling our responsibilities in this area. Without sacrificing the sound values inherent in the traditional organization of the agricultural community, I am confident that you will be able to point to new patterns suitable to changing agricultural technology.

Senator John F. Kennedy

FROM SENATOR WAYNE MORSE:

Dear Frank: I am delighted to learn of your chairmanship of the conference on migratory labor and low income farmers. It is to be hoped that the calling of this conference will mark a new attitude and a new approach to one of the most distressing human welfare problems remaining in modern America. Many of us in Congress are eager and anxious to improve the working hours, pay, and living conditions of migrant workers and their children. I have myself sponsored legislation in this field. What is needed is an all out assault on the problems involved in migrant agricultural work and an appreciation for the need for united efforts toward their solution by those groups in our society that bear the economic and social conscience of America. I feel certain that under your enlightened and humanitarian leadership, this conference will do much to develop that appreciation. Regards.

Wayne Morse

FROM WALTER P. REUTHER:

Your conference again brings to the attention of the American people the shocking plight of the two million migratory farm workers in the United States.

It is a distressing fact of our modern industrial society that the cries of the weak and the helpless for justice are all too often submerged in the wave of complacency which accompanies any measure of prosperity. While millions of workers and their families have been able to make progress through strong unions in the past decades, the migratory worker has been denied his fair share of the fruits of his labor and of our expanding economy.

He and his family, condemned to live in squalor and to work backbreaking hours at scandalous wages, have been the victims of a joint oppression by ruthless employers and a callous government.

His civil rights are systematically denied. He is effectively prevented from organizing a strong union for his and his fellow workers' protection. His children are not given even the fundamentals of a decent education. He is, moreover, excluded from the provisions of the minimum wage and other protective federal laws, although he is compelled to work in many states of the union in order to eke out an existence for himself and his family.

In addition to being denied the protective mantle of federal law, the migratory worker labors under state laws which permit, and in some cases even encourage his exploitation by merciless farm operators.

He and his family are indeed the forgotten people of this country.

The National Sharecropper's Fund is virtually the only organization which has worked tirelessly to end this tragic and disgraceful condition. It has done so in part under the inspired leadership of one of the great humanitarians of our generation, Dr. Frank Graham. The fund is worthy of the wholehearted support of all men and all organizations devoted to the ideals of democracy and human dignity.

On behalf of the million and a half men and women who make up the family of the UAW, I want to pledge our continued support and cooperation to you in your noble work.

Walter P. Reuther
President International Union, UAW

United States Senate

November 12, 1957

The Honorable Frank P. Graham
Chairman, The National Share Croppers Fund
112 - East 19th Street
New York 3, New York

Dear Senator Graham:

My congratulations to you on your chairmanship of the Conference on Migrant Labor and Low Income Farmers sponsored by the National Share Croppers Fund. As President of the University of North Carolina and as a member of the United States Senate from that State, you displayed real comprehension of the basic problem of political and economic freedom. I am confident your leadership of the conference will be productive of much needed understanding that exploitation of migratory workers is a violation of the cherished American ideal of economic independence.

As the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO announced at Chicago on August 12th of this year, the time has surely come for a fundamental change in the approach to the farm labor problem.

An essential element in any change would be action to put an end to the payment of Federal subsidies to all corporate or, indeed, individual farms which deny adequate wage and living standards to migratory workers.

These workers coming into the United States as they do from other countries, and also, with domestic workers, move from state to state, are within the jurisdiction of the United States Congress.

The family sized farm is rapidly disappearing before the advance of corporate farming. With it will go the very foundation of economic freedom in agriculture.

All groups working for humanitarian objectives must understand and constantly remind the fact that people are the creatures of God and are entitled to both

political and economic liberty, but that all organizations, governmental, corporate or otherwise, which affect commerce among the states and with foreign nations, are the creations of man. They must use and practice full social responsibility if free government is to survive.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph C. O'Donohue

CHANCERY OFFICE
800 DUTCH AVENUE
SAN ANTONIO 6, TEXAS



November 10, 1957

Doctor Frank P. Graham, Chairman
National Sharecroppers Fund, Inc.
112 East 19th Street
New York 3, New York

Dear Doctor Graham:

The November conference of the National Sharecroppers Fund is being held at a time when our agricultural economy is burdened with problems that cry out for a solution.

The Reclamation Act which appropriates much needed water to family-size farms may within a few years be nibbled to death by surplus landowners. The flight of low-income farmers to cities creates immense problems. Large ownership of the land by powerful corporations and wealthy individuals is unhealthy for our nation.

It is a commonplace to say that corporations do not have children. They harvest foods and fibers by the employment of farm hands who often own nothing but the clothes on their backs. Bad weather, a poor crop or a glutted labor market may be devastating to these unfortunate agricultural workers. Their employment is seasonal and temporary. It is required of them that they be here today and gone tomorrow.

Farm labor should be organized so that order and justice might be brought to present conditions of chaos. It may well be that our labor force is now adequate to meet all the needs of American agriculture, or at least most of them, if the workers could be so organized that they would be where they are needed when their services are required. Without intelligent organization the present confusion and exploitation will continue. American industry eliminated many of its injustices and cruelties years ago but certain segments of agriculture still stand in that twilight zone between civilization and savagery.

Last year powerful interests imported approximately 500,000 agricultural workers from the Republic of Mexico. They were as docile as they were destitute. They served to flood the labor market and depress wages. Theoretically

they could not be hired if American citizens were able and willing to bring in the crops. But unless wages are fair an American breadwinner cannot rear his family in decent and frugal comfort. This may create a labor shortage and permit the importation of alien workers.

Some of our Spanish-speaking citizens go to northern states seeking employment and some get around the difficulty of low wages by letting their wives and children work here in Texas. Little children pick cotton very well. Their fingers are small--so is their education. The tragedies of migrant labor are a national disgrace. Citizens of Mexico who come here under the International Contract have some protection; our own people have almost none.

Agricultural workers need organization and helpful social legislation. They also need friends. Let those of us who are sympathetic to them not lose courage. The employers are well organized and have great power but many of them are fair. Public opinion will be on our side when conditions in American agriculture are generally known. This conference is one more step in that direction.

Very sincerely yours,

Robert E. Lucy
Most Rev. Robert E. Lucy, S.T.D.
Archbishop of San Antonio

James E. Murray, U. S. S.

Parley Urges Government 'End Migrant Exploitation'

NEW YORK—Plea to the federal and state government and to the organized labor movement to help stop the exploitation of migrant farm workers and end "intolerable" conditions under which they exist have been made here by labor, civic, church and political leaders.

The appeals were voiced during a day-long conference on migratory labor and low income farmers sponsored by the National Sharecroppers Fund.

The conference had been headed by the most Rev. Robert E. Lacey, archbishop of New Orleans, as a "challenge to our nation to stop this tragic exploitation."

Among the topics brought out at the day-long panel discussions held



A. PHILIP RANDOLPH
... Former income tax collector

among domestic farm workers in this country, an increasing number of imported migrant workers have been in evidence during the last few years.

A charge that migrant farm workers in New York and other states are being exploited by labor contractors, denied protection under the workers' compensation law and other labor legislation, and otherwise subjected to inhuman treatment was made by A. Philip Randolph, president of the National Sharecroppers Fund. He asserted that human beings could not be expected to live and work under conditions that exist in many farms in upstate New York.

The housing problem, one of the most serious factors in farm workers' cannot be resolved by farmers alone, he declared.

"Even many small farmers who would want to correct this situation cannot afford to," he said. "We must develop some kind of machinery, cooperative probably, but with state and federal aid, to meet this problem."

Lacey maintained that the legislature in New York, as well as in other states, is dominated by a farm lobby. Because of this, migrant farm workers are not protected by labor and income laws.

He said: "We must surround this kind of workers, the

leader of the National Agricultural Workers Union, said he had collected 200 signed affidavits from domestic farm workers who had been refused jobs where foreign migrant workers were working. Galarza said he had filed some of these affidavits with the United States Department of Labor, but had not received any reply to date.

A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and vice chairman of the National Sharecroppers Fund, called farm workers "victims of industrialization and urbanization."

He held there are 1.6 million farms in the nation on which total family income is under \$2,500 a year.

Chairman of the conference was Frank P. Graham, National Sharecroppers Fund chairman.



ERNESTO GALARZA
Dominican, refused jobs



LABOR'S DAILY, Wednesday, November 27, 1957—9



FARM WORKERS, sharecroppers and the low-income farmers are "the forgotten men" of America, AFL-CIO Vice-President A. Philip Randolph says in the national conference on migratory labor and low income farmers in New York. Seated are the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, president of the National Council of Churches, left, and Chairman Frank P. Graham of the National Sharecroppers Fund, right, who sponsored the conference. (APL-420 News)

The Popgun

By Murray Kempton

The National Sharecroppers Fund held a conference of city boys at the Sheraton-McAlpin yesterday to take up again the every question of those two million Americans of various ages who make their living following the crops.

There is no place so lazier in American rhetoric for so thousands of Black. The National Sharecroppers Fund had a message from Robert Gray, one of President Eisenhower's cabinet members, conveying the President's regrets at being unable to attend—yet and all those for whom you work here his best wishes.

Frank D. Butler, executive secretary of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, was there as the highest representative of the national power. He said: "The conditions under which many migrants earn their living are often unsatisfactory."

Harold D. Cooney (D-N.C.), chairman of the Agricultural Committee of the House of Representatives, was the main speaker at the accompanying luncheon. They were messages from the National Council of Churches, and from Walter P. Reuther, chairman of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, which has responsibility for representing this, the largest and most depressed segment of American wage-earners.

We see, thank Heaven, no totalitarian society. There is no central agency responsible for the welfare of our people. That responsibility is shared by the Congress, the President, the labor laws, and the courts of our other people's duty.

Walter Reuther sent a telegram saying that government has done enough. Sen. Murray and Kennedy expressed the hope the labor movement would follow itself in "these subversive union organizations." The message, from every segment of our society, was "There cannot be any I did it."

It might seem to a detached observer that any organization which in the recent letter has asked its problem when it exists support of the chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, a Chairman Cooney relayed the joke about the White House the lunch of the well-known address. He reported that, by of Congressional action, government was engaged in 134 activities for the farmer. Agriculture is, he said, not a business; he hoped labor would stand up for the farmer.

He was glad to report that farm laborers were no longer slaves. They had, of course, never slept in ditches in North Carolina. The thousands of legislation which Congress has piled up since 1900 does not, of course, include child labor laws, wage laws, or guaranteed work hours, or unemployment insurance for farm laborers.

But Chairman Cooney afterwards, he did not think there is any place on the agenda of his committee. The voice of the government speaks for the up. When Richard Nixon goes to the White House to present the views of there is, of course, no suggestion that he might present of those Southerners who happen to be Negroes. In the when Harold Cooney speaks for the farmer, there is a that he might speak for the farmer who wanders without property, school or vote.

Some heartening messages from distant parts of our country pointed at which various segments of the labor movement have been working.

Union Assails Coast Imports Of Farm Labor

Despite wide unemployment among domestic farm workers in California, fruit and vegetable growers are importing Mexican and Japanese laborers, a union official charges.

"They claim they cannot find enough," the official said.



Farm workers, sharecroppers and the low-income farmers are "the forgotten men" of America, AFL-CIO Vice-President A. Philip Randolph says in the national conference on migratory labor and low income farmers in New York. Seated are the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, president of the National Council of Churches, left, and Chairman Frank P. Graham of the National Sharecroppers Fund, right, who sponsored the conference. (APL-420 News)

Confab On Migratory Workers Meeting This Week

The National Sharecroppers Fund is sponsoring a day-long conference on migratory labor and low income farmers in New York.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton-McAlpin Hotel.

The conference will be held on Friday, November 15, 1957.

The conference will be held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The conference will be held in the ballroom of the hotel.

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Senate Calls Migrant Situation 'Disgraceful'

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14 (AP)—The Senate today called the situation of migrant farm workers "disgraceful."

The Senate passed a resolution condemning the conditions under which migrant farm workers live and work.

The resolution was passed by a vote of 78 to 19.

The resolution was introduced by Sen. Charles McNary (D-Ind.).

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LABOR NEWS

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AFL-CIO Spokesmen In Migrant Labor Conference

LESBY ALLEY NEWSPAPER

New York — The first non-governmental national conference on "migratory labor and low income farmers" is being held in New York City today. The conference is being held at the Sheraton-McAlpin Hotel.

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Lubin Blasts 'Intolerable' Farm Migrant Conditions

By TED POSTON and MALCOLM LOGAN

State industrial contractors today blasted farm workers' conditions, saying that migrant workers were exploited.

The contractors said that the conditions under which migrant workers live and work are "intolerable."

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Conference On Migrant Labor Nov. 13

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 12 (AP)—The first non-governmental national conference on "migratory labor and low income farmers" is being held in Washington, D.C., today.

The conference is being held at the Sheraton-McAlpin Hotel.

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