

Mr. THOMPSON. The subcommittee will be in order.

Our schedule this morning called for Secretary of Labor Wirtz to testify. He has been unavoidably detained at a meeting at the White House and he is going to make an effort to be here.

We shall proceed first with the Honorable George Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO.

The Chair has a brief opening statement.

Mr. Meany's testimony will open the hearings on H.R. 4769. The purpose of this bill is to grant to agricultural laborers the right to organize and bargain collectively under the National Labor Relations Act.

A history of how agricultural labor was excluded from coverage under the Wagner bill is a book in itself. I think it is important, however, that we look at H.R. 4769 in the light of the legislative history of the National Labor Relations Act.

As originally conceived and written, the act would have applied to agricultural labor. When wide opposition to the bill as a whole arose, the bill managers deleted its applicability to agriculture to minimize the controversy. In defending their action on the floor of the House, they argued that the exclusion was necessary for the survival of the bill but promised that once the bill was passed, Congress would return "to take care of the farmworkers." That promise was never kept.

Today, after 32 years of waiting, the farm labor movement has taken matters into its own hands. Since September 1965, the farmworkers, by striking, picketing, and boycotting, have attempted to gain for themselves what the Congress denied them in 1935: the right to organize and bargain collectively through a certified union. Their efforts have met with some success recently, but the price has been high—for the growers, for the laborers, and for the public.

The legislation proposed by Mr. O'Hara, of Michigan, that we are considering would extend to the farm industry the stabilizing mechanisms of the National Labor Relations Act. It would allow labor relations in agriculture to be handled in the manner which has proven successful in other industries by permitting employees to organize and to bargain through their elected representatives. It would eliminate the present need to resort to strikes and work stoppages merely to get to the bargaining table. In short, in my judgment, it would replace chaos with law.

Mr. Meany, you are indeed welcome. We are delighted, as always, to have you here this morning. I wish you would feel free to proceed as you wish.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE MEANY, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. MEANY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As you know, I am here representing the AFL-CIO. I am appearing as a spokesman for more than 13½ million workers whose right to organize and bargain collectively is protected by law—and who want these same conditions extended to the country's agricultural workers.

I would like to emphasize the strong interest of labor and of the public in the bills you are considering—H.R. 4769, introduced by