

Congressman O'Hara, of Michigan, and the identical bills submitted by Congressmen Holland, Cohelan, Burton, and Gonzalez.

Let me begin with a broad generality which can be documented in detail. It is this:

The men, women, and children who work for wages on American farms have been excluded from the whole range of social reforms achieved in this country over two generations. For example:

Though they suffer more than any other group from recurring periods of unemployment, they are not eligible for jobless benefits anywhere, except in Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

Though agriculture is among the most hazardous occupations, they are fully covered by workmen's compensation in only five States and Puerto Rico; and in more than half the States, none of them are protected at all.

Though their wages are the lowest of any group in the labor force, until last year they were specifically denied inclusion under the wage-hour law; even now, coverage applies to fewer than 30 percent, and the wage floor when it reaches its maximum will be 30 cents an hour lower than for others.

Though they have no other means to provide against old age, or for their families if they die or become disabled, they are largely outside the scope of the social security system.

If we look closer, the details get worse.

Child labor—outlawed everywhere else—is still common in agriculture.

Free public schools—supposedly available to all American children—are often unavailable to the children of migrant agricultural workers.

Even the basic State and local welfare services are often out of reach, because of arbitrary residence requirements which migrant workers cannot meet.

All of these are abuses that cry out for correction. And there is still another, which we are specifically discussing today: Farmworkers who seek to improve their lot through the accepted pattern of organizing for the purpose of collective bargaining find that they are denied both the protection of law and access to the Federal Government's administrative machinery.

Not only are farmworkers denied the help of all the other laws enacted to benefit workers; they are even denied the effective right to help themselves.

Let me offer my own analysis of how this shocking situation developed—and I think you will agree, Mr. Chairman, that "shocking" is an understatement.

First of all, the Congress, and the country as a whole, have for a long time been sensitive to the importance of the agricultural industry and to the problems of farmers. So has the labor movement. The AFL-CIO has supported every major bill designed to help farmers—even when its opponents argued that farm subsidies were against our interests because they raised prices. We supported these farm bills because we have never looked for bargains at the expense of some other group, or against the national interest.

However, this general solicitude for the farmers—stimulated by the selfishness of many big farm operators—caused the Congress, and