

Maybe he really did exist in the past. Maybe he still existed as late as 1910 to 1914, when hourly wages for farm labor were 67 percent of the average factory wage, and there were fringe benefits on the farm and none in the factories. But by 1965, the average hourly rate for farmworkers was only 36 percent of the factory rate, and the fringes had all gone over to the other side.

Perhaps that "hired man" wasn't really a myth, but just a species that is now extinct, like the dinosaur.

The same can be said for the picture of the farm operator as a benevolent employer. Over the years, agricultural workers who tried to organize—and there were many attempts—found themselves faced with firings, blacklists, yellow-dog contracts, even arrest on trumped-up charges. And these same tactics are used against them today.

In the eyes of most farmworkers, for good reason, the benevolent farmowner is also extinct.

But farm labor is not extinct. These workers are very much alive, and in the last few years they have proved it. They are so alive that in many parts of the country they have organized, despite their lack of legal protection enjoyed by other workers; and they have made it clear that they are determined to be full-fledged members of American society.

That is right and proper for them—and we in the AFL-CIO are doing all we can to help them. It is right and proper for America, for it is just as un-American to discriminate on grounds of occupation as it is on grounds of race.

But, also, as I suggested earlier, it is right and proper—and economically helpful—to the farmers, themselves, to the family farmers whose welfare is of greatest concern to the Congress and the country.

It is not the family farmer, the small farmer, the traditional symbol of American independence and self-reliance, who exploits the farmworker. He doesn't have any workers to exploit.

Thanks to the tremendous advances in farm machinery, the small farmer and his sons—and, perhaps, with a mutual assistance pact among his neighbors—can sow and tend and reap his own crops.

He is threatened, not by higher wages and better conditions for farm labor, but by the perpetuation of low wages and miserable conditions. For in effect, he is placing his own return, his own standard of living, in competition with the exploited workers hired by the corporation farmers, the factories in the fields.

I cannot improve on the calm, direct words of the National Advisory Commission to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and I quote:

The farm family will not earn favorable returns on its own labor when hired labor is chronically cheap . . . The opportunity for family farms to compete and to earn satisfactory returns for their labor will be enhanced if wages and working conditions for hired farm labor compare favorably with those in industry.

That is also the position of the AFL-CIO.

I have already indicated some of the steps that need to be taken.

There must be a complete and final end to those provisions in Federal and State law which deny to farmworkers the protection and the benefits enjoyed by all other workers.

Measures must be devised to overcome residence and other requirements that prevent farmworkers and their children—migrant work-