

The continued denial of that right is an affront to the farmworkers and to the American principle of equal justice under the law. Its continuance will lead to more strikes by farmworkers who have no other recourse. Its continuance will help to perpetuate the shocking poverty—even degradation—of the men and women, and shamefully the children, who harvest so much of the food and fiber upon which the Nation depends.

This bill will not cure all the ills or all the injustices that afflict farmworkers. But it is a beginning, and I urge you to give it your prompt approval.

MR. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Meany. I have heard you testify a number of times, but I must say that I think this is the most constructive, forceful, and interesting testimony that I have heard in a long time.

It is absolutely amazing that all these years have gone by and the farmworkers still don't have the right to organize under the NLRA.

There are a lot of people, you know, in Congress who think that having very young children harvest crops and travel with their families as migrant workers is good for them because of the sun and fresh air. That was raised 2 years ago when we included the few farmworkers that we did under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

MR. MEANY. Yes.

MR. THOMPSON. I would say that on the basis of the little experience that we have had with farms in New Jersey that your statistics with respect to the number of farms and the percentage of total farm wages paid are conservative. You say that 2.7 percent of the farms pay half of the wages and 6 percent pay 76 percent of all farm wages.

In the dairy industry in New Jersey, according to up-to-date statistics, in 1958 there were 2,506 dairy producers in New Jersey. In 1966 the number was down to 1,451, and I would suspect that since these statistics which were the only ones available to you are so old it is likely that probably fewer than 6 percent of the farms pay 76 percent of all the wages. There has been a large decline in the number of farms and in particular in the number of family farms.

We are aware that the AFL-CIO is doing all that it can to help these workers organize. I wonder if you could just give us a bit of detail about what you have done?

MR. MEANY. Well, in 1959 the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO decided that we had to do something constructive to try to help the farmworkers, and, of course, from our point of view the best way to help them was to organize them.

Now, we realized that if we spread ourselves all over the country with so many areas to cover and so many workers involved there would not be much chance of success so we decided to concentrate on California. We set up all the machinery out there, sent our organizers out and we did interest the workers but the conditions under which they worked, the nature of the work, made it difficult to get permanent members organizations. In the area in California, we would get maybe 20,000 workers to sign up with the union and a few months later they would be gone and we would not see them for another 6 months or so.

About 3 or 4 years after this program started, and this program was quite expensive, I mean from our point of view we put in quite a bit