

There has not for a long time been any real reason in economic or social policy or in administrative fact for exempting agricultural labor from the coverage of the National Labor Relations Act.

Arguments cast in these terms have prevailed, without being persuasive, for two reasons:

One has been the unbalance of political influence as between agricultural employers and agricultural labor.

The second has been that organized labor has not been in a position to undertake, on a sufficiently intensive basis, the unquestionably difficult job of organization which is involved here.

Today, both circumstances have changed.

We have paid a high price as a nation for this shortsightedness and narrowmindedness.

It has meant the consignment of millions of people to poverty while they worked to make the rest of us fat—literally. The average farm-worker's earnings are today some place between \$1,100 and \$1,500 a year—depending on which of several available measures is used.

A thoughtful person, sitting down to a large meal, would turn away from it if he let himself think of the circumstances—at that hour—of some of those who had, in the fullest sense, worked to bring that meal to his table.

I urge the enactment of H.R. 4769 and the other similar bills which are before the subcommittee for consideration.

If it is suggested that the circumstances of agricultural production—its being subject, for example, to the whims of nature—present special difficulties, it is time to answer squarely that the burden of absorbing these risks and costs should not be put on those who work in the fields.

If the mobility of agricultural labor and the constant changing of employers is advanced as a reason for not affording the employees protection, it is time to face honestly the fact that this increases their need for such protection. This mobility factor has not prevented giving collective bargaining rights, as well as many others, to workers in the construction industry. It is the construction industry collective bargaining provisions that H.R. 4769 and identical bills in the House and Senate would apply to agriculture.

If it is argued that there are insuperable administrative difficulties in applying these statutory protections to small units, it must be emphasized that under the National Labor Relations Board's current jurisdictional standards, these provisions would affect only those farms whose interstate shipments amount to more than \$50,000 a year—or about 3 percent of our Nation's farms—1967 report, "The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States," Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, page 33.

There are two basic inequities which we must face—inequality of educational opportunity and inequality of economic representation.

The 89th Congress went a long way toward meeting the first of these inequities—in educational opportunity.

It would be a comparable achievement if the 90th Congress were to make significant advances against the other inequity—of economic representation.

The enactment of H.R. 4769 and the other identical measures would be a proud step in that direction.