

Then it goes on:

Thus, for example, an increase of 20 percent in the wage bill could be more readily absorbed in agriculture than in these low-wage manufacturing industries.

And so the argument that in giving workers a living wage agriculture is going to have a tremendous impact upon increasing the costs of food does not have economics as a base for its contention.

But again, it is one of those propaganda items.

Now the agriculture industry is not poverty stricken, and the large growers are not standing in line waiting to see Mr. Shriver to qualify for a contribution under the poverty program. They are doing quite well, and I would like to refer you to the report, the article which was published in the Los Angeles Times, by a person that we consider to be quite an authority in this field because he has done a lot of research work and a lot of writing, Mr. Harry Bernstein, of the Los Angeles Times.

He wrote recently these words, and I quote from the Los Angeles Times:

The gross income for California agriculture went up from \$3.7 billion in 1964 to \$3.75 billion in 1965. An expert predicted toward the end of last year that the 1966 gross would finally hit about \$3.8 billion, an all-time record which would have been well over one billion ahead of the nation's second largest farm state, Iowa.

In fact, 1966 gross turned out to be even more. It was \$4.08 billion, and this year's gross should be about the same. The combined net income for California growers in 1964 was \$1 billion compared to \$862 million in 1965. It rose to \$936 million last year.

As the gross continues to soar to record heights, the net income for farm is also rising since the number of farms continues to drop, as it has over the past decade. The net income which is the amount the growers realize after deducting costs of production, taxes and all other operating costs, was actually up 14 percent in 1966 over the 1960-1964 period.

These growers are not poverty stricken. They do not need to be bailed out by the continued exploitation of agricultural workers.

If you look at the facts that bear upon the increase in the cost of food, as I said, the biggest single factor was the behavior of Mother Nature.

Right now in Florida—and I made a meeting in Florida the other day—it has the worst drought in 25 years. Well that will have an impact upon agriculture's production in Florida, and that impact will be much more marked and serious than anything the agricultural workers can possibly do.

But if you look at the period 10 years preceding 1960, you will find that the cost of money went up 175 percent. The cost of fertilizer went up between 70 and 90 percent. All of these factors were much more significant in their impact upon the cost of food in the marketplace than was the behavior of agricultural workers.

And so it seems to me that we need to keep these things in mind when we listen to this propaganda of the people who have a vested interest in the status quo.

Now I believe, Mr. Chairman, that given the protection of the law, given the right of self-organization and access to the collective-bargaining process, that agricultural workers can and will be organized.