At the last annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the voting delegates of the member State Farm Bureaus adopted the following policy position:

For nearly 200 years our country, with the energies of free men released under the competitive enterprise system, has conducted a war on poverty. This system has produced the highest standard of living known to man and has done more than any other system to provide opportunity for individuals to improve their lot.

Some poverty exists through no fault of the individual, but much exists because some individuals choose not to take advantage of available jobs, education, and other opportunities.

The new federal "war on poverty" programs are not solving the poverty problem. These programs have led to confusion, waste, and duplication of effort and have contributed to inflation and concentration of power in the federal government. We oppose the use of poverty programs to exploit poor people for political purposes.

Many governmental and private agencies—administered on a state and local basis—have been established to improve opportunities for the underprivileged. Programs to help the poor should be carried out through these agencies.

We do not believe that poverty can be properly defined by establishing a national standard of dollar income.

We oppose government sponsored collective farming and grazing projects, including government loans for such projects.

BASIC TRENDS IN AGRICULTURE

Basic statistical data relative to changes in the rural situation are as follows:

| | Number of farms with sales— | | Farm employment (annual average) | | Farm population as of April |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Under $5,000 | Over $5,000 | Farmers and family | Hired labor | |
| 1939 | 4, 927, 000 | 920, 000 | 8, 611, 000 | 2, 727, 000 | 30, 850, 000 |
| 1944 | 4, 308, 000 | 1, 190, 000 | 7, 988, 000 | 2, 231, 000 | 24, 815, 000 |
| 1949 | 4, 011, 000 | 1, 136, 000 | 7, 712, 000 | 2, 252, 000 | 24, 194, 000 |
| 1954 | 3, 475, 000 | 1, 323, 000 | 6, 579, 000 | 2, 060, 000 | 19, 019, 000 |
| 1959 | 2, 576, 000 | 1, 521, 000 | 5, 459, 000 | 1, 925, 000 | 16, 592, 000 |
| 1964 | 2, 030, 000 | 1, 442, 000 | 4, 506, 000 | 1, 604, 000 | 12, 954, 000 |
| 1966 | 1, 769, 000 | 1, 483, 000 | 3, 902, 000 | 1, 357, 000 | 11, 595, 000 |

This reduction in farm employment and farm population also reduces the number of non-farm rural people employed in providing goods and services to farm people.

The out-migration from agriculture has contributed to the economic strength of our nation, since a steadily smaller percentage of the nation's work force has been needed to produce the nation's requirements of food and fiber, and an increasing percentage of the nation's work force has been available to produce other goods and services.

Most of those moving out of agriculture have made the adjustment successfully.

On the other hand, for some of those leaving agriculture the adjustment has involved substantial hardship and tragedy. Much of the poverty in rural areas arises from—

1. The lag between loss of employment in agriculture and the obtaining of full time employment in other occupational endeavor.
2. The fact that some of those "squeezed out" of agriculture do not obtain other full time employment in the same area or elsewhere, but continue on an "odd job" basis in rural areas.

The out-migration from agriculture has been such a strong and persistent trend that it may be expected to continue during the next few years. The extension of minimum wage legislation to some farm workers and some sharecroppers will accelerate the out-migration in a number of areas. In June, 1967, the number of hired farm workers in a 15 State area from Texas to Maryland was 140,000 or nearly 15% less than in June, 1966.

Yet it is also true that we are approaching a milestone in our history: the leveling off of the migration of people from agriculture to other pursuits.

If the farm population were to continue to decline as rapidly in the next 26 years as in the past 26 years, it would be zero by 1992.