Domestic producers and shippers are subjected to high labor costs, including workman's compensation, social security, and other prevailing benefits for laborers which are costly and frequently nonexistent in foreign countries. These items have a "multiplier" effect upon high wages in the United States while foreign countries compete for the most part free of these obligations and with fractional wage levels as compared to our own. It is unreasonable to impose on the domestic producer fixed and escalating labor costs created mainly by governmental authority without the benefit of some protection against foreign imports. The American producers and laborers are certain to be the victims of such an inconsistent policy.

ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF FLORIDA AGRICULTURE

Florida's agriculture brings in market receipts of more than one billion dollars per year to agriculture producers. If you consider the total agri-business complex, it amounts to more than 4.5 billion dollars annually, which far surpasses tourism, the State's supposedly number one commodity. Thousands of jobs are created by the production, processing, handling and marketing of Florida agricultural products, and this employment figure is multiplied by agri-business firms dealing in services and supplies.

Florida's total agricultural picture includes a citrus crop which provides more than 75 percent of the total United States consumption; winter vegetable supplies which are vital to the Nation's health and economy; important dairy, beef cattle, poultry and egg industries; producers of field crops and nursery products; a large number of producers of tropical fruits and plants; a dynamic sugar cane industry; as well as other important agricultural industries.

Efficient vegetable production in Florida depends upon a more or less continuous operation during the fall, winter and spring seasons with the tropical fruit industry taking up the slack in the summer. Each season or period is an integral and vital factor in the over-all vegetable operation within the State as there is an interdependence of one season upon the other for labor, equipment, marketing specialists and efficient farm operators. If you remove or weaken one season or period in Florida by creating a situation that encourages imports of certain commodities which, in turn, limits our production, it has a direct bearing and influence on the activity and success of the preceding, as well as the succeeding, season, the effects being clearly reflected in employment and levels of earnings.

IMPORTANCE OF TARIFF PROTECTION TO FLORIDA CROPS

Practically all of Florida's agricultural commodities currently have some tariff protection, although the tariff in most cases is not high enough to provide adequate protection. Tariff protection is vital to Florida producers and any further lowering of tariff rates would encourage a greater influx of foreign products which are already undermining the marketing picture at the expense of Florida producers.

If further tariff reductions are forthcoming, they should be contingent upon import quotas or some other type of market-sharing program. To reduce or remove tariffs on fruit and vegetable commodities imported from Mexico and the Caribbean would certainly undermine and possibly destroy Florida's leading industry.

Unlike agricultural producers in many states, Florida producers have relied very little on Federal assistance in the form of price supports. Instead, the various commodity groups have organized within each specialty field and have raised money from their own ranks to actively expand markets and promote the consumption of their products. These groups have spent large sums of money on advertising and promotional material. Continued foreign imports at present levels undoubtedly will disrupt market channels recently created as a result of these promotional activities.

Several commodity groups have used State and Federal marketing agreements or orders as an effective tool in stabilizing the market. In all cases, attempts were made to satisfy the needs of the consumer as well as to assure the producer of a fair price for a quality product. The costs of these programs have been paid entirely by the private groups involved. Continued heavy influx of imports will destroy these successful programs, creating in many cases chaos which could lead to heavy unemployment and abandonment of farming operations by many producers.