Farmers are painfully trying to crawl out of the cheap food trap created by existing government supply-management programs. It would be a tragedy if their current interest in bargaining were to lead them into a similar government price-management trap. Government supervised marketing is not the way to get better income for farmers.

There is, however, a proper role for government in improving the marketing of farm products. Legislation currently before Congress would prohibit unfair trade practices designed to discourage farmer participation in voluntary marketing programs. Congress can play its proper role in this matter by guaranteeing farmers the right to voluntarily join a marketing association without fear of reprisal.

Chairman PROXMIRE. Thank you, Mr. Shuman.

Our last witness is Mr. Gordon Shafer, chief negotiator, National Farmers Organization.

Mr. Shafer.

STATEMENT OF GORDON SHAFER, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR, NATIONAL FARMERS ORGANIZATION

Mr. SHAFER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the organization, the National Farmers Organization, which I represent here today for inviting us to participate in this discussion.

As a preface to my remarks, I would like to remind this committee that agriculture is still the Nation's biggest single industry. Farming employs about 5.2 million workers, more than the combined employment in transportation, public utilties, the steel industry, and the automobile industry.

Agriculture's assets total some $273 billion or an amount of money equal to about two-thirds of the value of the current assets of all corporations in the United States or about three-fifths of the market value of all corporation stocks on the New York Stock Exchange.

The value of agriculture's assets represents about $36,000 for each farm employee. Agriculture, of course, with this much invested is a good customer. The farmer spends over $33 billion a year for goods and services to produce crops and livestock; spends another $12 billion a year for the same things that city people buy—food, clothing, drugs, furniture, and other products.

Each year the farmers' purchases include over $4.6 billion in farm tractors, other motor vehicles, machinery, and equipment.

About $1.4 billion was spent in 1963 in the primary metals industry for equipment in new plant—it has increased somewhat since then.

About $3.4 billion is spent for fuel, lubricants, maintenance of machinery, motor vehicles. Farming uses more petroleum than any other single industry; uses about 320 million pounds of rubber; 28 to 30 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity or, in other words, more than the cities of Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Houston, and Washington, D.C., combined.

We use about 5 million tons of steel in the form of farm machinery, cars, trucks, fencing, and so forth.

In addition to this, farmers are the suppliers of the world's food supply. The United States is the largest exporter of agricultural products. We have already heard some testimony here today, something about the extent of our exports, but in 1966 we exported nearly