PROTECT FAMILY FARMERS

Most of the six million Americans who work in agriculture—as farm operators and hired laborers—need help in their effort to secure a decent livelihood for themselves and their families. On the one hand, the net income of most farmers continues to fall even though agricultural output and productivity are at a record high. On the other, hired workers on the farms—and particularly migratory laborers—continue to be the most exploited group in America.

HELPING FARM OPERATORS

More than a quarter century ago, it became evident that government assistance is essential to help the farmer achieve a fair return for the products produced by his labor. The farm price support programs, enacted since the early 1930's, have helped raise farm income, but they have proven inadequate in several ways.

In the first place, they provide price support for only a limited number of agricultural commodities and aid only a minority of all farmers.

Second, they have the effect of holding prices high for consumers who at the same time must pay a high cost to maintain the program as taxpayers.

Third, billions of dollars worth of food and fiber are sent into storage although more of our abundance should be distributed to those who need it both at home and abroad.

Finally, the existing farm program has not prevented falling farm income. While almost all groups in our population have improved their well-being since the end of World War II, farm income has gone down. Between 1947 and 1958, net income *per farm*, including government payments, fell 7%. It fell 15% in 1959 over 1958. It is expected to fall further in 1960.

At the recent AFL-CIO Convention, we pledged support for stronger measures to aid those who work in agriculture, including a system of price suports based on wherever possible on production payments aimed at the support of the family farm and lower prices to consumers.

We also resolved that we must support a reasonable ceiling on the total amount of aid that any farm enterprise should receive from the Government. The bonanza paid to a handful of giant commercial farms under existing federal program is unjustified and is now being used to discredit all federal aid even for the family sized farms that need it to continue to survive.

In addition, we support programs which will bring more of our abundant agricultural resources to the aid of unemployed and other needy citizens, the expansion of our school lunch program, and more extensive use of our agricultural surpluses in the battle for peace and freedom overseas.

HELPING FARM LABORERS

Furthermore, we are pledged to help end the exploitation of wage-earners in agriculture,—a continuing scandal that is unjustifiable on economic, social and moral grounds.

In the first place, AFL-CIO supports legislation to end the outrageous exclusion of these workers from the protection of the National Labor Relations Act and from unemployment insurance and minimum wage coverage. Bills to provide minimum wages for workers in agriculture were introduced last year by Senator McNamara (S. 1085) and by Congressman Roosevelt (H.R. 4947 and H.R. 4948), but have not yet even been reported out by the respective committees to which they were referred.