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Fed Urges Reopening of Wage Orders

Reopening of all 14 of the Industrial Welfare Commission's wage orders dealing with the wages and working conditions of women and minors in various industries in California was urged Wednesday by state AFL-CIO leader Thos. L. Pitts.

In a statement submitted to an IWC meeting in the State Building in San Francisco, Pitts, secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, pointed out that just since mid-1961, the cost-of-living has climbed more than 7.5 percent in California's two major metropolitan areas and that this rise would increase the IWC's own minimum budget for a self-supporting working woman to \$3,069.10 or more than \$350 more than is provided by the current \$1.30 minimum wage.

UNDERSTATES NEED

But this adjustment understates the need for a substantial increase in the state's minimum wage because, Pitts' statement said, it "makes no allowance for the U.S. Department of Labor's finding that price rises invariably have a disproportionately heavy impact upon low income groups."

The Bureau of Labor Statis-

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Pitts Hits Corporate Farms' Power At Senate Hearings



FIGHTING FOR A FAIR SHAKE FOR FARM WORKERS—Thos. L. Pitts, Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO (right), and William L. Kircher, AFL-CIO Director of Organization (center), who represented AFL-CIO President George Meany, receive the thanks of U. S. Senator Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), following their testimony in behalf of legislation to aid farm workers in Sacramento on Monday. Senator Williams, author of legislation presently before Congress to bring farm workers under existing minimum wage, collective bargaining and child labor laws, won the commendation of the AFL-CIO National Executive Council last month for his decision to probe farm workers' problems. Senator Williams praised Pitts for focusing public attention on the political and economic power of the State's corporate farms.

Bargaining Rights Held Vital To Ease Plight of Domestic Workers

The "tremendous imbalance" in political and economic power existing between California's huge corporate farms, which employ the bulk of the state's seasonal farm labor force, and its domestic farm workers, who have been excluded "from all meaningful social legislation enacted during the 1930's and since," demonstrates the "long overdue" need for national legislation to improve the farm workers' plight, state AFL-CIO leader Thos. L. Pitts asserted this week.

Testifying before the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor Monday in Sacra-

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Farm Housing 'Shameful'

Conditions at a Tulare County farm labor housing camp were labeled "shameful" by U. S. Senator George Murphy in the course of three days of hearings and on-site inspections of farm labor conditions in Sacramento, Visalia and Delano this week by a U.S. Senate Subcommittee chaired by Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.).

Senator Murphy, who voted against the omnibus Housing Act of 1965 (H.R. 7984) last year which calls for provid-

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Passage of Consumer Bills Would Boost Buying Power

Consideration of legislation that could have the effect of providing most consumers with a nine percent boost in purchasing power got under way this week when the U. S. Senate Commerce Committee met in

closed session Tuesday to take up a bill calling for tighter federal regulation of the labeling and packaging of foods and other household products.

The legislation, popularly

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A Question for Christopher

San Francisco's ex-Mayor George Christopher, now a candidate for the Republican nomination for Governor, told a small throng on a street corner in Delano this week

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Fed Urges Reopening of Wage Orders

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tics, the state AFL-CIO explained, "has established that low income groups experienced a 1.4 percent increase in their living costs for each 1.0 percent rise in the Consumer Price Index.

"This means that the June 1961 through December 1965 Consumer Price Index increase should be 10.5 percent instead of 7.5 percent," Pitts' statement said.

Applying this to the Commission's Minnie Budget would raise the budget to \$3,154.75 or more than \$450 above the \$2,704 provided by the current \$1.30 minimum wage.

ACTION IMMINENT

Pitts' statement called the five-member Commission's attention to the fact that action is imminent on a bill currently before Congress to boost the federal minimum from \$1.25 to \$1.40 this year, to \$1.60 next year and to \$1.75 in 1968.

Pointing out that up until 1950, when the national minimum was raised to 75 cents an hour, California's minimum wage standards had consistently been above the national minimum, the state AFL-CIO said that an increase in the state minimum now to \$2.00 an hour is "essential" to provide just a modest standard of living as well as to "validate the oft-repeated claim that California leads the nation."

"The absence of a realistic minimum wage pegged to the high wage levels in California has helped to keep wage levels from rising as rapidly as increases in profits," the statement declared.

PROFITS SOAR

It noted that corporate profits in California rose six percent between 1963 and 1964 and that "a still larger increase is expected for 1965." In contrast average hourly earnings among production workers rose only 2.7 percent from 1963 to 1964 or less than half of the increase in profits.

It also noted that the Califor-

Pamphlet On Extremists' Aims Now Available

A six-page pamphlet, "They're Playing For Keeps," which details the aims of right-wing extremist groups and their political program for the 1966 elections is now available from the California Labor Council on Political Education.

Th pamphlet emphasizes that the grasp for power by these ultraconservative groups — groups that seek to wreck the United Nations, discredit the Supreme Court and block needed social welfare legislation such as improvements in social security and the Medicare program—can be stopped only by an active, alert and informed electorate.

Limited quantities of the pamphlet may be ordered free from California Labor COPE, 995 Market Street, Suite 310, San Francisco 94103. For quantities of 1,000 or more, orders should be sent directly to the AFL-CIO COPE at 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. The publication is COPE Publication No. 163C.

nia minimum wage has always lagged behind the national minimum as a percent of average hourly earnings. In both 1956 and 1961 when new national minimum wage legislation was passed, the ratio of the national minimum wage to average hourly earnings was respectively 51.8 percent and 34.4 percent higher than the corresponding rates in California," it said.

"If Congress passes the new minimum wage legislation as suggested in H.R. 10518, the national level of minimum wage to average hourly earnings will be 57.6 percent higher than the state of California by 1968."

In view of this, the state AFL-CIO declared, "it is imperative that the Industrial Welfare Commission act now to open all 14 orders in order to forestall a repetition of the 1956 and 1961 experiences."

The commission is expected to decide whether to reopen the 14 wage orders at a meeting scheduled March 30.

Passage of Consumer Bills Would Boost Buying Power

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known as truth-in-packaging and truth-in-labeling measures, is sponsored by Senator Philip A. Hart, (D-Michigan).

The need for it was demonstrated by an experiment conducted at Eastern Michigan University. Thirty-three young married women were asked to select the most economical package—the largest quantity for the price—for each of 20 products at a selected supermarket.

NINE PERCENT LOSS

The shoppers made mistakes on an average of nearly half of the purchases. And their mistakes cost them more than nine cents extra on each dollar spent—the equivalent of a nine percent loss in purchasing power.

This is because today, in the absence of adequate regulation, shoppers may be faced with a choice between a 20-ounce package for 35 cents or a competing brand's 24.5 ounces for 40 cents.

Aim of truth-in-packaging and labeling bill is to require intelligible packaging and labeling so the consumer will be able to compare brands on the basis of price and content without being obliged to carry a slide rule and a magnifying glass every time he goes to the market.

In advance of this week's meeting, Senator Hart, anticipated that opponents of the bill would trot out the tired old charge that groups favoring the legislation "were just trouble makers and did not reflect the thinking of the typical American consumer." So he had his office make a survey which showed that 12 organizations representing almost 42 million members are among those that have gone on record in favor of the legislation.

In addition to the AFL-CIO which was at the top of his list, the Senator's list included: The Cooperative League of the United States; The Rural Electric Cooperative Association; The National Council of Senior Citizens; the National Council of Negro Women; the National Farmers' Union; the National Grange; and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.

Senator Hart said his survey

shows, on an overall basis, that the bulk of the bill's supporters are nonprofessional consumers who seek packages which give them sufficient information to make rational buying decisions in the supermarket."

Among other things, the legislation would require the net weight of the contents of packages to be printed plainly on the front panel and would bar such meaningless descriptions as "jumbo half-quart" as a substitute for one pint. It would also ban manufacturers' "cents off" promotion when there is no assurance that the "cents off" are actually passed on to consumers.

Government agencies would be authorized to set standards for reasonable weights or quantities in which products may be packaged and to establish meanings for such descriptive terms as "regular," "large" or "king-sized."

DEFINE 'SERVINGS'

It would also authorize definitions of "serving" so that the claim "serves four" would have some more realistic relation to human food needs.

Intensive pressure from special interest groups is already being mounted against the legislation. Although the legislation has been endorsed by President Johnson, strong consumer and labor support will be needed if the legislation is to be moved out of committee rooms and on to the law books.

Trade unionists and other consumers who would like to get more for their money have an opportunity right now to generate the public support needed to win approval for the measure by writing their congressional representatives.

Isn't a nine percent boost in market-place purchasing power worth it?

MDTA Summary Bill

"MDTA: A summary of the Manpower Development and Training Act" may be obtained from the Office of Information of the U.S. Department of Labor at 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Room 1007, San Francisco, California 94102.

Pitts Hits Corporate Farms' Power at U.S. Hearings

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mento, Pitts pointed out that despite foot dragging by the growers and attempts by them "to use their political and economic muscle to force the federal government into continuing the bracero program under a different guise," the state's gross farm income of \$3.7 billion was higher than the previous year when the mass importation of foreign farm labor was permitted.

In addition, he noted, domestic employment increased, farm workers' earnings rose from \$1.33 to \$1.40 an hour, and millions of dollars in purchasing power previously drained off to Mexico by braceros was retained in California to bolster the state's economy and enhance the nation's balance of payments.

To document the imbalance in power between the corporate grower and his labor force, Pitts cited the assets and profits of some of California's "gigantic agribusiness concerns."

The DiGiorgio Corporation, for example, one of the big firms resisting workers' efforts to win just \$1.40 an hour and union recognition in the Delano grape strike, posted an annual sales of \$132 million and a net profit of \$2.5 million, and had assets totalling \$65 million, according to recent data, Pitts said.

OWNS FRUIT EXCHANGE

He pointed out that the DiGiorgio Corporation is a major distributor of fruit and vegetable products, owns the Philadelphia Fruit Exchange, and has a 93 percent interest in Met Food Corporation which supplies New York area retail food stores.

Among other corporate giants cited by Pitts was the Kern County Land Company which, he said, owns 1,806,000 acres of land in California, Arizona and New Mexico — an area larger than the state of Delaware. Its sales for the most recent fiscal year were \$154 million and its net profit was \$18.1 million. The firm's assets exceed \$214 million, he added.

Both of these firms as well as a number of others are listed on both the New York and Pacific Coast Stock Exchanges, he said.

Pitts emphasized that the elimination of the bracero pro-

gram last year "represents only a first step in the overall effort to insure . . . farm workers . . . a position in the national economy similar to workers in other industries."

The state AFL-CIO, he said, "wholeheartedly endorses" recommendations made at the Governor's Conference on Employment and in the final report of the California Farm Labor Panel calling for extension of minimum wage protections to farm workers, a ban on the employment of minors in agriculture, extension of the National Labor Relations Act to farm workers, and coverage for farm workers under the nation's unemployment insurance system.

WIDENING WAGE GAP

To dramatize the growing gap between the wages and fringe benefits of domestic farm workers and workers in virtually all other industries, Pitts called the Subcommittee's attention to the 1910 Yearbook of the U. S. Department of Agriculture which listed the variety of non-monetary benefits enjoyed by hired farm workers 56 years ago.

"The benefits," he said, "included family housing, fuel, laundry services, and a horse and buggy for social purposes—all at the employer's expense."

Added to a farm worker's cash wages, the U.S.D.A. report found that a 1910 farm worker earned:

"Perhaps more than the motorman or streetcar conductor gets, and very likely in most cases a larger amount than he would be likely to earn in any occupation open to him in the city."

In contrast, Pitts, secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, noted that California farm work-

ers last year average only \$1.40 an hour with no fringe benefits, while San Francisco streetcar operators are paid \$3.22 an hour and receive paid holidays, paid vacation, sick leave, health and life insurance benefits, retirement benefits and other fringe benefits on top of year-round employment.

PRIOR U. S. STUDY

Digging into the Senate's own archives, Pitts called the Subcommittee's attention to "an exhaustive study of industrialized California agriculture" made over 20 years ago by a Senate Committee headed by Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. This committee, Pitts reported, whose counsel at that time is currently U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Fowler, noted in its report that:

"... It becomes essential to reappraise the wisdom of the existing public policy that leaves the complete control of employer - employee relationships in a large part of industrialized agriculture in the hands of employers' associations beyond the reach of tempering employee sentiment and protective public regulations. Specifically, there should be a review of the present policy of exempting industrialized agricultural labor from labor legislation such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Social Security Act, the National Labor Relations Act, and various types of state labor laws."

And, the report added: "Collective action by the hired workers in industrialized agriculture, supplemented by social action of governmental agencies, similar to that applied to other industry, must become the order of the day."

Subsequently, Pitts said, Senator LaFollette introduced measures to bring farm workers under the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act and provide them with unemployment insurance. But, he added, "the fate of these bills is well known."

In the course of his hour-long testimony, Pitts also ticked off the facts and figures that account for the "rural slums existing throughout the state's agricultural areas."

For example, in 1950 average

hourly earnings of production workers in California factories were \$1.65 and those of farm workers 88 cents, a gap of 77 cents. But last year, factory workers earned \$3.05 an hour while farm workers earned only \$1.40, indicating the gap had more than doubled to \$1.60 an hour.

"In fact, 'Pitts declared, 'over the past 15 years farm worker earnings in California increased at a slower rate than farm worker earnings in the balance of the United States.

And on a productivity basis, farm worker earnings 'have risen only half as rapidly as farm worker productivity over the past 10 years' despite the President's Council of Economic Advisors' view that wage rates in low wage industries should rise at a faster rate than the overall increase in national productivity.

WORKERS NEGLECTED

"In short," Pitts emphasized, "domestic farm workers have been among the neglected few in a society where the majority of people now live in relative affluence.

"They have been excluded from the social welfare and fringe benefit gains most workers take for granted. Not only are farm workers not covered by the basic labor laws of the United States, but paid vacations, overtime pay, pension plans and health and welfare programs are virtually nonexistent.

Last year's experience demonstrated, Pitts said "that foreign farm workers are not needed to harvest the state's crops and effectively buried the old and cleverly nurtured myth that domestic workers cannot do 'stoop labor'."

The few "insignificant crop losses that occurred," he said, were due to "inadequate and inefficient grower recruitment practices," not to a shortage of domestic workers.

Since the Delano grape strike has dramatized the "total unwillingness of growers to bargain collectively with their work force," it has served to highlight the fact that the national legislation that has been recommended for more than 20 years "is essential in the battle to extend economic democracy to agriculture," he declared.

Farm Housing 'Shameful'

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ing rent supplements to low-income families and improving laws related to public housing, urban renewal and community facilities, urged that the Tulare County housing camp be torn down immediately and replaced by "decent" federally-financed homes.

The "housing" in the camp, known as the Linnell Farm Labor Camp which is operated by the Tulare County Housing Authority near Visalia, consists of 40 one-room shacks with bare cement floors, no running water, a single light bulb for illumination, gas hot-plates for heat, and corrugated steel for roofs.

Renting for \$22 a month, these shacks frequently house a mother, father and one to five or more children.

Governor Edmund G. Brown, who endorsed U.S. Senate bills authored by Sen. Williams calling for a national minimum wage, collective bargaining rights and child labor laws for farm workers in a statement submitted to the Committee Monday, submitted a second statement Tuesday calling for a six-point federal housing program to correct what he called the "shocking lack of adequate housing for farm worker families."

The Governor said the state "is not in a position to underwrite new housing and local housing authorities in farm groups are not in position to do the job."

Asserting that the Linnell Camp is not an isolated situation and that more than 80 percent of California farm worker families live in dwellings which violate standards of health, safety and comfort, the Governor declared that it is up to Congress to clear the rural slum areas.

Unmentioned in the Governor's statement was the fact that if the farm workers received wages comparable to those of workers in other industries they could buy their own housing. At present the annual earnings of California

AMA Apologies For Using Phony Tape To Discredit Unions in 1963

The American Medical Association last week issued a public apology for falsely portraying a labor leader as a tough-talking bully trying to coerce union members into making political contributions.

In addition, the AMA has reportedly paid \$25,000 in an out-of-court settlement of a \$400,000 libel suit filed by Paul Normile, Director of District 16 of the United Steelworkers. The case is believed to be the first involving a charge of libel by phonograph record.

The AMA used the record to attempt to discredit unions during the heat of the Congressional political battle in 1963 over legislation to provide medical care for the aged which the AMA opposed.

Copies of the recording were also used against labor-supported candidates in the 1964 elections.

Attorneys said the AMA will also print the retraction in its publications.

Here is the text of the AMA statement:

"In March 1963, the American Medical Association was sent a tape recording of what purported to be a political fund-raising speech made in Pennsylvania by a Pittsburgh labor leader, Mr. Paul Normile, Director of District 16, United Steelworkers of America.

"Believing in good faith that the tape recording was

authentic, the AMA reproduced it and the American Medical Political Action Committee produced and distributed a booklet, entitled 'The Voice of COPE,' containing the text of the speech and a phonograph record made from the tape as evidence of the tactics which they believed labor used in support of its objectives.

"Mr. Normile thereafter filed a lawsuit alleging that he never made the speech in question. Distribution of the tapes and records was immediately voluntarily discontinued pending full investigation of his contention. As a result of its exhaustive investigation, the AMA is now satisfied that Mr. Normile did not make the speech in question. In fairness to him the statement that he did so is retracted. Furthermore all copies of the tape recording and the AMPAC booklet and record in the possession of AMA or AMPAC have been destroyed. To prevent further playing of the recording, it is urged that any person having a copy of either the tape or the record take similar action. The AMA sincerely regrets the error."

Contrary to the coarse image of a labor leader depicted by the recording, Normile has been described as a mild, soft-spoken man who rarely even uses slang.

farm workers are more than 60 percent below the earnings of workers in most other industries.

The Governor's farm housing statement called for substantial enlargement of the farmer's Home Administration which now has only a \$3 million fund to finance projects in all 50 states.

The FHA funds are used to finance low-interest loans to farm workers and farm organizations for housing projects. Murphy said he would support increased appropriations for the FHA.

In the statement submitted to the committee in Sacramento Monday, the Governor disclosed

that a new study by the State Department of Employment found that the state's economy benefited by \$300 million in 1965 due to the ending of the bracero program.

"Wages of domestic workers for the first three quarters of 1965 totaled \$110.8 million more than for the first three quarters of 1964 . . . Applying the economic multiplier effect to the \$110.8 million in increased wages would produce more than \$300 million in economic activity," he explained.

In Visalia on Tuesday, Senator Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) responded to a witness who claimed that no one could provide a system to provide

A Question for Christopher

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that:

"Farm workers should be under a national minimum wage law, and if on the eve of the harvest a strike is brewing, the National Labor Relations Board could step in and prevent a crop loss."

He failed to explain, however, how the NLRB could "step in" so long as farm workers are denied access to NLRB machinery through their exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act.

Does this mean Christopher favors collective bargaining rights for farm workers?

Minimum Pay Bill Wins OK of House Group

Amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act boosting the minimum wage to \$1.40 next February 1 and to \$1.60 in February 1967 won approval of a subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee by an 8 to 1 vote Wednesday.

As presently drafted the bill would extend coverage to farm workers but their minimum would start at \$1 and rise in two 15 cent annual boosts to a top of \$1.30.

Others among the 6.5 million workers to be brought under FLSA coverage would also start at \$1 as of February 1, 1967 with automatic annual 15 cent boosts until they reached \$1.60 in 1971.

Although the bill has yet to be approved by the full Education and Labor Committee, no significant changes are expected to be made in it. It is expected to be brought to the floor of the House sometime in April.

collective bargaining for farm workers saying:

"If we can put a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s, it seems we should be able to work out such a simple problem for farm workers after 30 years of talking about it."