

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF LABOR
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TO THE SECRETARY OF LABOR

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Dear Mr. Mitchell:

I wonder how many people watched "HARVEST OF SHAME" on "CBS reports" over television last night, as narrated by Ed Murrow. This showed the plight of the migratory workers who harvest the nation's crops.

My heart is very heavy this morning. I think it is a picture that should be shown again and again, to awaken all people. If only all TV channels could show it at one time so that everyone would have to see it in their homes as they are comfortably cozy and perhaps well-fed. In fact it should be shown in schools, churches, labor halls, etc. etc.

Have talked with several people who did not see the program last night. Doubt if many know there are migratory workers or give them much thought as they see them labor in our fields. We perhaps notice them but do not realize the conditions under which they live or how poorly they are paid.

In the November 24th edition of the Los Angeles Examiner, there appeared this article on surplus food:

"Many Southern California Protestant churches will join with others throughout the country today in making special offerings to the 1961 Share Our Surplus program at Thanksgiving Day worship rites.

The project distributes food to needy people abroad out of national surpluses under the SOS program, sponsored by Church World Service, a central department of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America.

Approximately \$1,000,000 is needed for the 1961 schedule, Dr. R. Norris Wilson, New York, executive director of CWS, said.

The SOS Program, now in its seventh year, has provided nearly 2,000,000,000 pounds of U. S. Government surplus food to people in 25 nations abroad."

We have a serious problem here in America where our poorly paid laborers need help and decent places in which they can live. These people cannot even become educated. These laborers are not paying a debt to society. Criminals are treated better than this.

If we have such surplus of food it should be used here and money which would be spent to ship it to other places could be used for food, clothing, housing and education of our people right here in our country. Does not charity begin at home?

I feel so moved about this situation that I am writing this letter to the President of the United States, Secretary of Labor, James P. Mitchell, President-Elect John Kennedy, Dr. R. Norris Wilson, Executive Director of Church World Service, and Ed Murrow.

I guess the reason this has disturbed me so much is because we as children were taught to never waste food since there were many starving people in the world. (My parents came from Denmark).

Now, laborers who are helping to put food on our tables are in dire circumstances, as revealed in the report of "HARVEST OF SHAME".

I am only one person and do not have it in my power to do anything about the plight of these workers, but I feel it a sense of duty to be concerned. I know Secretary of Labor, James P. Mitchell feels their needs, as evidenced by what he said during the program shown last night.

Where can they turn for help? Personally, I could not eat another meal without expressing myself. I hope that many people are interested enough that they, too, will be writing.

Sincerely,

Mrs. C. C. Pelt
700 E. Carson
Long Beach,
California

Mitchell Papers

Box 132

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