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# Industrial Farming

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**T**he United States has experienced (particularly since World War II) the gradual concentration of farm production into fewer and sometimes very large farms. For example, by 1974 the United States as a whole 2.1 percent of the largest farms accounted for 37 percent of all farm sales. In contrast the smallest 50 percent of all farms claimed only 5 percent of all sales. This trend is likely to become even more pronounced in the midst of the economic crisis we face. Depressed prices for major farm commodities, rapidly rising production costs, and mounting debt have all contributed to the skyrocketing farm liquidations in recent months.

Congressional debates over farm policy identify two alternatives: continuation of current price support programs or recourse to the "free" market as advocated by the Farm Bureau Federation. Either option will lead to the demise of many farms: the point of contention, in effect, is the rate at which the farm sector should be transformed.

Price support programs have been shown to benefit disproportionately the largest producers. For example, in 1978 about half of all farm program payments went to ten percent of those farmers participating. These were the largest farmers. On the other hand, 50 percent of the farmers, mostly smaller farmers, received only 10 percent of all farm payments.

At the same time, reference to "free" markets for farm commodities is dubious. Despite increasing concentration the farm sector continues to be atomistic. Farmers must face markets for the purchase of farm inputs and the sale of farm commodities that are subject to oligopolistic pricing. Consequently, farmers are subject to a classic cost-price squeeze and, of course, smaller farmers are less able to take advantage of economies of scale and other price breaks than larger farmers.

In all likelihood the increasing concentration of farm production will continue. Determination of the optimal scale of production has been an ongoing concern on the part of agricultural economists and rural sociologists. While this consideration has been related to such sociological questions as community participation, the foremost concern has been the relationship between scale of operation and economic efficiency. In either case determination of optimal scale of operation is problematic. The principle problem is standardization of relevant criteria across commodities. Different commodities lend themselves to different scales of operation without any fundamental change in the organization of labor

on the farm production unit. Therefore, scale of operation is a limited criterion for assessing the social and political implications of the transformation of the farm sector.

The concentration of farm production is most important when it results in a transformation of the social relations in production. In assessing the consequences of the transformation of farm production in the United States it is useful to distinguish between two ideal types.

Industrial farming is carried out under qualitatively different relations in production than in family farming. Of course, if current trends toward concentration of farm production continue unabated, family farming faces dissolution. Historically, the family farm has been an important form of organization of production in the United States. Within the family farm unit, work is organized and primarily carried out by family members. Family labor is often supplemented by the sharing of labor with neighbors and friends.

Farming within the industrial farm is carried out primarily by wage laborers. The essential characteristic of the industrial farm that distinguishes it from the family farm is the need to recruit a wage work force from outside the farm unit. Labor management in crop production is very difficult. Therefore, the availability of a suitable farm work force is of utmost importance on the industrial farm and the creation of such a work force is likely to have undesirable consequences.

**A** central concern of the industrial farm is the management of the work force. Due to several characteristics of crop production, industrial farmer-managers face considerable uncertainty in recruiting and retaining a suitable work force.

Unlike those industrial commodities that can be produced continuously throughout the year, crop production presents the problem of recruiting a wage work force from year to year on a seasonal basis. Because rural employment opportunities are quite limited, workers may migrate in the off-season to search for additional work. Some are unlikely to return for the next season, and others may return to the farm at the wrong time. Because of the high degree of risk associated with farming, workers must be available at the onset of crucial farm operations. Furthermore if local labor supplies are insufficient, workers from outside the community must be recruited, but success at such efforts is by no means assured.

Retention of an adequate work force throughout the season is complicated by the discontinuity of farm operations in the course of the production cycle. Two related characteristics of crop production contribute to this discontinuity.

First, there is a disjuncture between production time and labor time. Production time from seed to harvest takes place over a certain time span but labor

time, the time when labor is actually applied to the production of commodities, is less than production time. For example, once corn is planted, cultivation does not follow immediately. Obviously, cultivation is carried out only after the seedling has reached a certain degree of development. Similarly, performance of subsequent operations (for example, chemical applications or harvesting) are separated by periods of time as the crop matures. Furthermore, weather conditions contribute considerable variability to the duration of these gaps.

Secondly, farm operations take place sequentially, not simultaneously. The possibility of simultaneously conducting different stages in the process of producing a single commodity allows for the organization of production on an assembly line basis. However, in crop production only one operation can be performed at a time. Each of the operations of plowing, harrowing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting, cannot be performed until the preceding operation has been completed and the natural processes of crop growth have taken place.

Because of these characteristics of crop production there are periods of inactivity within each production cycle. If workers are not paid during periods of inactivity (as in the off-season), it is likely that they will seek alternative employment. Undoubtedly the discontinuity of crop production contributes to the high turnover of seasonal farm workers.

The difficulties are intensified by specialized crop production that is often associated with industrial farming. In areas where specialized crop production is most pronounced, the disparity between periods of inactivity and peak activity is most pronounced. This situation differs from areas of diversified production often associated with family farming. This farm work is spread more evenly, due to the varying growth patterns of different crops. Furthermore, a variety of farm maintenance chores can be performed between production stages. A more complete division of labor on corporate farms makes the latter option unavailable during periods of inactivity.

Difficulties in managing a wage work force are exacerbated by the high level of risk associated with crop production. For example, uncontrollable natural forces such as inclement weather may delay, reduce, or completely destroy the possibility of completing farm operations at critical points in time. To avoid or reduce the risk of calamity a work force with particular characteristics is required.

Because of the high degree of risk associated with crop production, workers have to remain employed for the duration of the operation and must be readily replaced at the beginning of various farm operations. Accordingly, farmer-managers seek a high degree of control over workers while farm operations are underway. These constraints lead to the creation of a work force that might be described as "semicaptive." On the other hand, industrial farms often have no need for workers during off-periods or off-seasons and are unlikely to make an effort to support workers during these times. Thus, the work force experiences extremes of intense labor followed by periods of enforced idleness.

The options of farmer-managers in securing a disciplined work force are quite limited. For example, because land is a basic factor of production, farm operations are for the most part geographically fixed. Relocating in an area with a work force of adequate size and with desired characteristics is not an option. Thus, when rural labor supplies are inadequate to operate large-scale specialized farms, labor recruitment (and ultimately labor control) is generally beyond the capacity of individual farms. Consequently, industrialized farms tend to turn to the state to secure and retain the required work force. A historical example is useful in illustrating the development of a suitable work force and the consequences of that development.

**I**ndustrial farming in California is well established with a relatively long history and it provides examples of efforts to secure a work force suited to industrial farm production. Commercial fruit and vegetable production became important to California beginning in the 1880s. Several developments contributed to this, the most important of which is the availability of a large work force suited to production requirements.

Generalizations based on the example of California agriculture must be used with care. The peculiarities of the history of farm labor in California are due to the labor intensive nature of fruit and vegetable production. Because most fruits and vegetables are highly perishable the availability of a suitable harvest work force is essential. Failure to promptly harvest the ripe crop would allow both the crop and any profits to spoil in the fields. A further feature of specialized crop production is that it is often spread over entire areas (for example the Salinas Valley "salad bowl" or the "tomato belt" of northern California's central valleys). With this specialization, labor intensive harvest operations call for the employment of an extremely large work force for very short periods of time.

This pattern of employment is similar for the performance of operations other than the harvest, only on a smaller scale (i.e., fewer workers are employed). The ideal farm worker appears at planting, cultivation, and harvest times and disappears for the remainder of the year.

The history of farm labor in California is one of the exploitation of various groups of laborers one after another. The list is long, but the most important groups employed as farm workers were Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese, and Chinese. Each group was exploited as long as they could be retained and as long as the management of that labor pool remained unproblematic.

Two factors were most important to farm interests in the development of a suitable farm work force. Institutional barriers, whether in the form of bureaucratic administration or institutional racism, served to create a suitable work force for corporate farms. The state played an important part in erecting institutional barriers, primarily through immigration policies.

The effect of these barriers was to create a work force marginal to the overall labor market. Because of their marginal status vis-à-vis the labor market, these farm workers, in various forms, came to resemble a semicaptive work force. The fact that farm workers were often members of a foreign group lacking close social relationships with their employers or the local community made it much easier to leave them unemployed when they were no longer needed on the farm. At the same time their alien status effectively prevented them from seeking employment in urban centers where racial antagonisms ran high. Galarza effectively describes the plight of the alien farm worker.

The world of labor was for them a pool into which they were dumped in large numbers; within which they were impounded by effective barriers of language, custom, and alienation; and from which they escaped only when racial antagonism dried up their jobs or competing industries offered them a way out.<sup>1</sup>

Through the fifties and into the early sixties the work force employed by industrial farms in California was primarily made up of Mexican workers, commonly referred to as *braceros*, and brought to the United States under contract. The institution of the *bracero* program was undoubtedly a response to industrial farm interests. Under the terms of Public Law 78 *braceros* were to be employed exclusively in agriculture.

Public Law 78 also provided the administrative framework within which Mexican workers were employed. This program was administered by the federal government through the Department of Labor, which acted as a coordinating agency through which the various agencies of state government participated in the administration of the program.

The *bracero* program established an administrative framework that was the underpinning of a system of "managed migration," through which workers could be supplied to farms on location at a specified time. Surveys conducted by the California State Department of Employment prior to various farm operations provided for the adjustment of the supply of workers to the needs of the farms. Furthermore, the delivery of workers from Mexico was relatively prompt, and with careful planning farmer/managers could be sure of the availability of the necessary number of workers at the crucial time.

Because *braceros* worked under contract, they were essentially bound to remain in the fields for the duration of ongoing farm operations. Should a *bracero* decide to leave his employer prior to the expiration of the contract, he would lose his legal status and face the possibility of being "blacklisted" and denied the opportunity of being contracted as a *bracero* in the future. Contracts could be broken

<sup>1</sup> Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (Charlotte, N.C.: McNally and Loftin, 1964), p. 226.

only by mutual agreement between the *bracero* and his employer or by either party unilaterally upon complaint and subsequent joint determination by the Mexical Consul and the Secretary of Labor's representative.

The desirability of *bracero* workers from the point of view of farmer/managers is best summed up by the following statement from a U.S. Department of Labor report, "The main advantages of Mexican (*bracero*) labor, from the point of view of employers, is that it is easier to recruit, simpler to control, and noticeably less subject to labor turnover."

In 1964 Congress failed to renew authorization for the contracting of *braceros* and the program came to an end. However, Mexican workers continued to work in California fields and have remained the predominant element in the farm work force since that time. *Braceros* were quickly replaced by undocumented Mexican workers. Many workers merely changed their status.

The flow of undocumented Mexican workers to the United States is the result of state policy oriented to satisfying labor requirements. Industrial farms in California are among the main beneficiaries of this policy. Simply in terms of logistics, the U.S. border could be closed to such migration. However, since 1964 the policies of the U.S. government have done little to discourage undocumented Mexican migration. Efforts to enforce migration laws and halt the flow of undocumented workers have been perfunctory, and insufficient resources have been made available to secure the border.

In addition, the employment of undocumented workers has not involved significant risk to employers. For example, under the terms of the "Texas Proviso" (Public Law 283, 1952) it is a felony to import and harbor undocumented workers, but it is not a felony to employ them.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, efforts to apprehend undocumented workers have been centered along the border and not at the place of employment. Like the *bracero* program, which secured workers specifically for employment in agriculture, current border enforcement policies have been instrumental in satisfying the elements of control over the work force required by industrial farms.

Control over the work force in the production process is bolstered by the coercive function of an over-supply of workers. Estimates of the number of undocumented Mexican workers in the United States range from one to five million.

Given the magnitude of the undocumented workers entering the United States and the limited employment opportunities open to them, it is not surprising that they readily accept short-term employment. An over-supply of workers, even in the face of high employee turnover, assures farmer-managers that workers will be available for employment for the duration of ongoing farm operations.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Labor, *Farm Labor Fact Book* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Samora, *Los Majados: The Wetback Story* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), pp. 54-55.

Should unskilled workers leave their jobs prior to the conclusion of farm operations, replacements are easily found among the ranks of the unemployed. Moreover, workers are willing to remain on the job until the completion of farm operations when faced with the lack of alternative employment.

The reliance upon undocumented Mexican workers for employment on California's corporate farms resembles the less formalized employment of farm workers prior to the establishment of the *bracero* program. Asian immigrants were a major part of California's farm work force in earlier times. Initial development of industrial farming in California was possible because of the availability of these workers for employment in the fields. Asians were marginal to the labor market and available for farm work largely because of the intense racism they experienced in the United States.

Because racism against Asians was prevalent throughout society, direct state intervention in creating a disciplined Asian farm work force was unnecessary. Thus, it is difficult to demonstrate a conscious link between state policies toward Asians and the development of a marginalized work force in the interests of industrial farms. However, Asian immigration to the United States did provide industrial farms with a work force for many years.

While it is difficult to show a clear-cut involvement of the state directly in the creation of a farm work force, there is little doubt that agents of the state were aware of the importance of Asian labor to California's industrial farms. In a report issued in 1910 (and suppressed shortly after its release), the Labor Commission of California stated:

Japanese or some form of labor of similar character, capable of independent subsistence, quick mobilization, submissive of instant dismissal, and entailing no responsibility upon the employer for continuous employment is absolutely necessary in the California orchard, vineyard, and field, if these vast industries are to be perpetuated and developed.<sup>4</sup>

Asians were available for employment in farming to a large extent because of racial barriers barring them from alternative employment or self-employment in agriculture. Racism was often tied to fears that Asians would displace white American workers from their jobs. This fear aroused the wrath of organized labor. Organized labor became one of the most (if not the most) vociferous opponents of equal participation of Asians in the labor market.

Most Asian immigrants had agricultural backgrounds and some, the Japanese in particular, were highly skilled farmers. Some Asians were able to secure land and enter into farming for themselves. The growth of such a movement presented the possibility of a drain on the available wage work force of industrial farms.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944), p. 158.

Efforts to prevent Asians from holding land were made in the California legislature as early as 1907. In 1913 the Alien Land Act was passed, providing that aliens ineligible for citizenship could not hold land. Under the provisions of the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 both the Japanese and the Chinese became ineligible for citizenship. At most, noncitizen Asians could lease land for a period of no more than three years.

The Japanese were successful farmers and the primary target of the Alien Land Act. Once they became independent farmers, Japanese were no longer available as wage laborers and they often hired fellow Japanese away from other farms. Preservation of the industrial farm work force may have been among the motivations for passage of the Alien Land Act.

Whether on the basis of institutionalized racism or a bureaucratically administered farm work force, industrial farming in California has prevailed by riding on the backs of successive groups of workers who enjoyed only marginal access to the labor market.

Farm workers have been marginal not only to the labor market but to participation in rural communities as well. Farm workers often migrate in search of work to maximize their earnings. Obviously migration is related to the nature of farm production. The duration of employment on one farm or in one geographical area is extremely limited given both the seasonality and the discontinuity of farm operations. Furthermore, very low wages have historically been associated with farm labor. Walter Goldschmidt's classic study of community class structure in rural California indicated that farm laborers, regardless of ethnic or racial background, were the predominant element of a "dependent class" within the rural community. This class was largely alienated from active participation in the social and political institutions of the community. Consequently, decision making in the rural community with a polarized class structure was left to elites.<sup>5</sup>

**T**he examples of labor relations in California must be viewed with care. As was pointed out above, industrial farming in California is primarily engaged in labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production. This type of production may exaggerate the discontinuity of employment characteristic of crop production more generally. Labor intensive fruit and vegetable production calls for the employment of an extremely large work force for very short periods of time, particularly in harvest operations. Therefore, the examples provided above should not be taken as blueprints of probable labor-recruitment practices subsequent to a transformation from family farms to industrial farms in other areas. Rather the examples point to critical issues demanding closer examination.

First, involvement of the state in the recruitment of a suitable farm work

<sup>5</sup> Walter Goldschmidt, *As You Sow: Three Studies in the Social Consequences of Agribusiness* (Montclair: Allenheld, Osum & Company, 1978), p. 376.

force was pervasive and, secondly, the development of such a work force was predicated on the marginal status of that work force relative to the overall labor market. Examination of the possible consequences of the development of industrial farms in areas now populated with family farms will focus on these considerations.

Predicting the type of intervention demanded of and provided by the state is not a straightforward and simple matter. The social and political climate at the time as well as specific labor requirements in the production of different commodities will determine the actual form of such actions. However, the fact remains that the successful development of industrial farming will depend on the success of such farms in recruiting a suitable work force. Is the state likely to be responsive to demands for labor policies favorable to the farm sector?

Declining farm numbers have diminished the political significance of the farm vote. The farm population constitutes only 2.7 percent of the populace. However, the farm sector has regained political significance in light of the importance of food exports in United States foreign and trade policy since the early seventies. For example, dependency on foreign oil provoked a crisis when, in 1971, the United States faced its first trade deficit since 1871. Agricultural exports became the primary means of offsetting these trade deficits. Production from one out of every three acres of crop land goes to export.

However, effective development and retention of export markets depends on stable production of farm commodities and their steady flow to market. Appeasement of the farm sector as a whole or critical commodity groups in particular may have become, of necessity, the domestic policy accompaniment to a trade policy that emphasizes agricultural exports.

If agricultural commodities continue to be of central importance after a transformation to industrial farming in the production of critical export crops, the state would be hard pressed to placate farmer-managers demanding state intervention in the recruitment of a suitable farm work force. The mere threat of a disruption of the flow of farm commodities to market would have numerous and varied repercussions.

First of all, such threats could disrupt foreign markets for agricultural commodities, creating domestic economic and political instability. Furthermore, powerful corporations with considerable political influence would have a direct stake in the undisturbed flow of sufficient supplies of critical farm commodities to market. For example, just five corporations control about 85 percent of U.S. grain exports and are also the major grain traders in the world market. The fact that just one grain company, Cargill, Inc., "is the largest single contributor to the United States balance of payments"<sup>6</sup> puts the influence of such corporations

6 Roger Burback and Patricia Flynn, *Agribusiness in the Americas* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), p. 226.

in perspective.<sup>7</sup>

Grain exports have been of central importance to the trade policies of the seventies. For instance, grain exports of wheat, corn, and soybeans in 1980 made up 51 percent of all agricultural exports. (Agricultural exports made up 19 percent of total exports.) Family farms are presently the predominant form of organization of grain production in the United States. However, if the concentration of farm production continues such farms will be of diminishing relative importance in the overall production of grain, and industrial farms will become the main source of grain supplies. Assuming the emergence of industrial grain farms, there are a number of possible labor recruitment problems they could face. My assessment of the probable labor needs of industrial grain farms will assume the continuation of present trends. What are those trends and what are the likely labor requirements of emergent industrial grain farms?

Grain production in the United States is highly capital intensive. Technology developments have created the possibility for a relatively small number of farmers to produce tremendous quantities of food.<sup>8</sup> Such developments have included chemicals such as herbicides and sophisticated machinery (large tractors and harvesters in particular) that substantially reduce farm labor requirements. Undoubtedly industrial farms would continue to carry out farm production on this capital-intensive basis, and the demand for wage labor on industrial grain farms would not be extensive. Only a relatively small wage work force would be required to supplement year-round workers at critical points in the production cycle. Because of the limited labor requirements, farm workers would not necessarily be recruited from the ranks of immigrant groups.

The development of industrial grain production presents the possibility of meeting labor requirements through the employment of local labor. In this case there would be no need to call for state intervention in the recruitment of an extra-local work force, avoiding the creation of new forms of social unequal-

<sup>7</sup> Another possibility is for large corporations to gain a stranglehold on the economy by entering directly into farm production. However, this scenario is unlikely. There has been no sustained and substantial penetration of nonfarm capital into farm production as yet. In 1974 only 2 percent of all farms were corporations, and of that 2 percent only 23 percent were publicly held or nonfamily enterprises. Lyle P. Schertz, "Farming in the United States," *Structure Issues of American Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, November 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Paradoxically, new developments of a highly capital intensive nature may have the effect of preserving some family farms while contributing to the ruin of others. A report issued by the Department of Agriculture provides an example: "the recent introduction of the four-wheel-drive tractor disturbed the long-standing mix of farm sizes and numbers in several regions by greatly increasing the acreage one person could efficiently farm. Once purchased the tractor becomes a fixed cost to be spread over as many acres as possible." National Economics Division; Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service, *Status of the Family Farm* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1979), p. 5.

ity. Furthermore, the absence of social integration into local communities associated with migrant labor could be avoided.

In the Midwest, the South, and the southern Plain states (all areas of grain production) mid-sized family farms are disappearing, while the number of very large farms and small farms relying on substantial off-farm income are increasing. The emergent class structure has been described as follows:

Today the whole rural class structure is undergoing dramatic changes. Those who are likely to survive the crisis are . . . a new breed of farmers, a prosperous agrarian bourgeoisie with roots in the traditional family farm. The new capitalist class will become more and more dependent upon wage labor and their farms will increasingly resemble factories in the fields. A different kind of survivor is the growing part-time farmer class which combines wage work . . . with farm work on its own land in an effort to hold off bankruptcy.<sup>9</sup>

Given the nature of grain production these two groups may form a symbiotic relationship in which industrial farms provide limited employment opportunities and small part-time farms provide a source of readily employable workers at critical points in the production cycle.

Part-time farms are becoming an increasingly important element of the farm sector. The most rapid rise in off-farm earnings has occurred since 1970. Sixty percent of all farms derive at least half their incomes from off-farm sources. Of course many of these part-time farmers are "urban refugees" and hobby farmers, but farm families who value farming as a way of life may seek off-farm employment as an alternative to an exodus from farming altogether. Off-farm employment provides the additional cash flow required to offset rising production costs and protect the family's farm assets.

However, for part-time farmers to provide industrial farms with a suitable work force two conditions must be met: first, part-time farms must be increasingly marginal in relation to farm commodity markets; and second, a sufficient number of family members from these farms must be marginal with respect to the overall labor market so as to prevent them from securing non-farm employment.

Smaller farmers are likely to become increasingly marginal within the farm economy because of their "negative privilege with respect to markets."<sup>10</sup> Markets for farm commodities have been transformed with the growth of large regional and national food marketing organizations, especially since World War II. This change has resulted in the disappearance of many smaller firms serving localized markets. A Department of Agriculture report notes this change and its consequences:

<sup>9</sup> Burbach and Flynn, *Agribusiness*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Thanks to Patrick Mooney for this terminology.

Markets for farm commodities were formerly organized to serve the needs of small independent farmers who produced the bulk of output. . . . Country buying stations and assembly point markets have dwindled as both large farmers and buyers have chosen to bypass these traditional markets in favor of more direct-marketing methods.<sup>11</sup>

Of course towns and cities provide a potential locus of employment. However, there are a number of inhibiting factors and drawbacks. Employment opportunities are often located long distances from the farmstead. Family members seeking employment in the city could be faced with (depending on the location of their home) high travel costs and/or the costs of maintaining two households not to mention the inconveniences and emotional strains of being away from home. Lack of specialized training is a potential barrier to securing employment in both urban and rural industries. Furthermore, the commitment to working on the family farm could conflict with certain off-farm jobs (for example, seasonal availability).

None of these barriers is absolute, and for many farm family members they may not be considered barriers at all. However, given the expected limited labor demand on industrial grain farms, only a relatively small number of part-time farm family members would have to be deterred from accepting non-farm employment to assure industrial farms an adequate supply of labor. With nearby farm employment not significantly in conflict with their own farm responsibilities, many farm family members might choose to accept such employment. Industrial farms certainly could not hope to secure a more qualified work force.

The evolving farm structure in grain producing regions may lead to the development of a work force made up of family members from marginal farms. Whether because of the unavailability of non-farm employment or because they need only limited employment, family members from small farms would be available for seasonal employment. Secondly, because of the geographical proximity of the small farms to the industrial farms, workers could be readily recruited at the onset of various farm operations. Workers with personal ties to their employers would probably remain at work until the completion of farm operations out of a sense of responsibility. Finally, because of their familiarity with farming, these workers would possess the skills needed to operate sophisticated machinery.

This scenario is the least *undesirable* outcome of a possible shift to industrial grain farming. The consequences of this arrangement for community participation would not be as oppressive for part-time farmer-workers as it has been for farm workers in California whose social marginality has been based on race and/or citizenship.

Still, the perpetuation and widening of economic inequality accompanies the development of any system of industrial farming. Restricted access to farm commodity and labor markets by parttime farmer-workers is the likely form of

11 National Economics Division, *Status of the Family Farm*, pp. 9-10.

this inequality in industrial grain farming.

The unfolding of this scenario would depend on the development of a very delicate balance. The marginal status of small farms in relation to farm commodity markets would have to be maintained. At the same time marginalization would have to be contained to prevent the disappearance of both small farms and the part-time work force altogether. With the maintenance of such a balance and the absence of abundant alternative non-farm employment for small farm family members there would be no need for a political solution to the recruitment of a farm work force. The creation of a farm work force marginal to the overall labor market would be economic in character.

However, even in the absence of labor recruitment problems, the need to control labor contains the potential for political conflict. Farmer-managers are likely to be against organized labor in their orientation, because the presence of labor unions on the industrial farm would contest management prerogatives in dealing with the uncertainties inherent in crop production.

There is little doubt that industrial farmer-managers would make efforts to discourage any attempt on the part of unions to organize farm workers. Furthermore, it is likely that farmer-managers would in general be opposed to organized labor for fear that labor's influence might spread to the farm sector. Effective opposition to legislation and/or administrative rulings favoring organized labor could be mounted by mobilizing the potential political influence of the agribusiness complex.

Perhaps the most adverse effects of the development of industrial grain farming would occur in the event of the lack of a suitable local work force. In that case industrial grain farms might seek state involvement in the recruitment of an extra-local work force. This involvement would lead to extremely undesirable consequences. If the state acts to support the interests of the agribusiness complex, the state itself would be directly involved in the creation of inequality. Even worse, if the state were actively engaged in mobilizing a farm work force, something close to labor conscription could result, setting a dangerous precedent. Even if labor recruitment were accomplished less coercively, there is still the social inequality engendered by a system of migratory labor and the lack of social integration suffered by farm workers.

**A**gricultural policy alternatives commonly promoted by Congress foster the concentration of farm production, and this trend, when taken to its logical conclusion, will result in industrial farming. The development of industrial farming will depend on the perpetuation of existing social inequality and perhaps even the creation of more pronounced forms of inequality. This much should be clear: the development of industrial farming should be resisted if there is to be movement toward a more egalitarian and democratic society.