

## Update on farm labor issues in Maryland

COLLEGE PARK, MD — There have been no major events in the farm of labor situation since last spring's change in the Maryland law on workmen's compensation, but some items are brewing in both the state and national legislative process.

The Maryland legislature may have to consider workmen's compensation again. As reported in Economic News Notes last June, H.B. 106 as finally passed and signed by the Governor states that

employees subject to provisions of the compensation Act include, "Any person receiving remuneration from a farmer or a dairy farmer for services performed..."

"Where migrant labor is being used by a farmer but being hired by a crew leader, it is being interpreted that the farmer need only have the crew leader covered by compensation regardless of the size of the work force or payroll.

Migrant workers who work with machinery and equipment, however, have to be covered. The intent and interpretation of this phrase may have to be clarified.

In April 1985, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Act) officials announced they would not issue regulations on field sanitation standards. These standards would have required that farmers provide toilet and handwashing facilities and drinking water for field workers within a certain distance of their work.

Then on September 11 of this year, Labor Secretary Brock, under some congressional pressure, announced that the issuance of field sanitation was on "hold" for eighteen months. And

on October 21, the Department of Labor announced its intention to implement OSHA standards by April 1987 unless states chose to develop their own standards by January 1987.

State standards would have to meet certain criteria set by DOL; essentially standards equivalent to the 1984 OSHA standards with evidence of adequate enforcement. If OSHA determines that the farmworker population is not sufficiently protected under state standards, it will promulgate federal regulations within the state.

Thus Maryland or MOSHA have until January 1987 to develop and implement adequate field sanitation regulations to forestall Federal imposition by April of 1987.

Also at the federal level, the Senate passed S-1200, Senator Simpson's Immigration Reform and Control Act. This bill covers such areas as search warrants (required to enter a farm), temporary foreign and seasonal workers and amnesty.

A Commission on Temporary Agricultural Workers Programs will be established a Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program will be authorized and H-2 will be replaced by a new category for temporary foreign workers.

The House is currently considering H.R. 3080, with some differences. When and if a final vote by the House, approval by a conference committee and signature by the President occur, the substance of the Act will be provided in a future article.

## Can environmental planning prevent political chaos?

ITHACA, NY — "Real national security is in the stability and productivity of the environment and in the social and moral strength of the people—not in military armaments."

So said George W. Olson, an associate professor of soil science at the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, in an address at the annual meeting of the Soil Conservation Society of America in St. Louis.

A country's environmental resources, he said, affect the well-being of its citizens, and inadequate or mismanaged resources lead to international hostilities.

The Cornell scientist cited Iranian terrorists as an example of the connection between the environment and political turmoil. Iran's harsh, arid climate and long history of invasion by neighboring countries in competition for what little water exists there have led to mass frustration and anger, he explained. One outcome is terrorism aimed at other nations, especially the privileged.

In Central America, Olson said,

rain forests are rapidly being destroyed to create pastures for beef cattle. The beef is imported for use by the fast food industry in the United States and provides a fast profit to a handful of individuals.

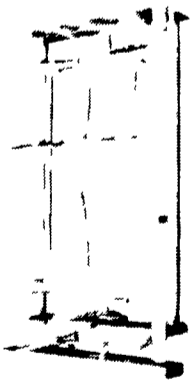
Entire communities of people are uprooted from the rain forests, where they have been established for thousands of years, he said. As a result, they are forced to live either in ghettos or on steep, infertile land where they cannot farm.

"The resulting poverty and political instability are the makings of revolution," he said.

Olson suggested at least 10 percent of every country's budget be devoted to environmental conservation and management. This represents a fraction of the world expenditures for armaments, for which "in excess of \$1 million per minute are being spent worldwide."

"Education, environmental-resource inventorying, and long-range policy planning to conserve resources can prevent much of the political chaos that otherwise lies ahead, the Cornell scientist stressed.

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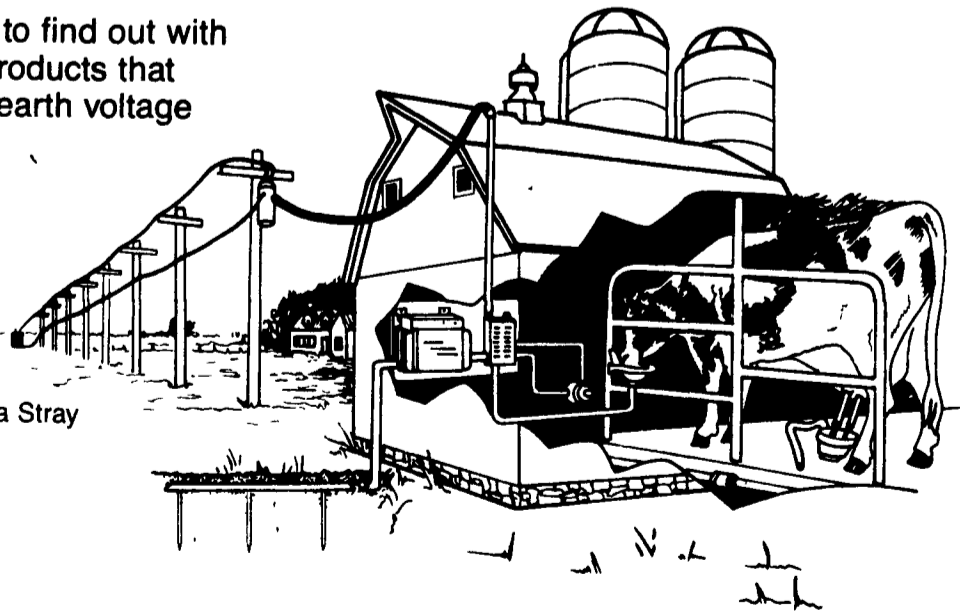
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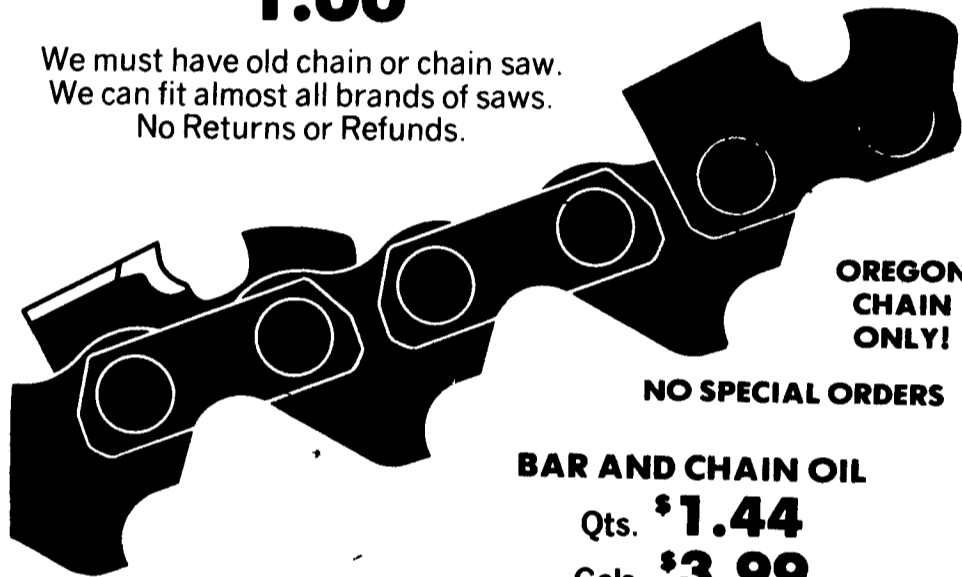
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