

From the Office of
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
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Increasing farm mechanization has brought with it increasing farm hazards -- both economic and physical, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey declared yesterday (Saturday, October 10) in speaking before farmers gathered at Delevan, Minnesota for the Minnesota State Corn Picking Contest.

"Mechanization has done wonders for farm production, cutting man-hours of farm labor almost beyond belief," Senator Humphrey said. "But our tremendous strides forward in modern farming methods have brought with them an urgent need for greater cash operating income, and for greater attention to rural safety.

"Farming should not have to be the dangerous occupation it now is. We need more emphasis upon farm safety. We need it for humanitarian reasons, but we need it also for economic reasons. Today when a skilled farmer is providing food and fiber for so many persons besides himself, the economy cannot afford lost time and lost manpower due to preventable accidents. We need to make a really major effort to build into farm machinery more effective safeguards against accidents."

High equipment investment costs and heavy operating expenses, Senator Humphrey said, also emphasizes the need to "build into our farm economy more effective safeguards against collapse of farm prices."

Mechanical corn pickers have "revolutionized" corn production, Senator Humphrey said.

"Thirty years ago, there were only 10,000 mechanical corn pickers in the entire United States. Today, there are more than 600 thousand on our farms. It is largely due to these machines that we have made such rapid strides in corn production," he declared.

Some idea of the enormous task that would confront farmers of harvesting the greatly increased yields with hand labor was given by Senator Humphrey in comparing labor requirements.

"Old timers tell me it used to be considered a pretty good day's work to pick 80 bushels of corn by hand. A hundred bushels was something to boast about.

"If we take eight bushels an hour as the average rate of hand picking, this year's tremendous Minnesota corn crop would require 100,000 men working 10 hours a day for 32 days -- 32,000,000 man-hours of labor -- to complete the harvest."

But instead of picking $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres a day by hand, Senator Humphrey said, one man with a two-row mechanical picker can now harvest 16 to 20 acres a day under ideal conditions.

Agriculture needs a dependable price level to take full advantage of new equipment and new methods, and to adequately do its jobs for the national economy, Senator Humphrey said.

"A half century ago a farmer could operate for a long time at a loss if he had to. He could liquidate some capital investment to cover expenses for several years. That's not possible for very many farmers today. Expenses are too high -- and too rigid. Falling price levels can quickly wreck a farmer today because of his fixed expenses for equipment, fertilizer, gasoline, insurance and the like.

"We must be just as modern and progressive in thinking about farm legislation as we are in thinking about farm production equipment, always keeping up with current needs and current conditions," Senator Humphrey added.



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