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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
Washington

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WALNUT GROWERS CONTRADICT PECAN SHELLERS

Walnut growers believe that neither they nor pecan growers should be exempted from provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

In a telegram today (Wednesday) to Elmer F. Andrews, administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor, the California Walnut Growers Association with headquarters in Los Angeles--claiming to market the product of 8,000 growers and to handle 80 percent of all walnuts grown in the United States--said:

"The competitive situation between pecans and walnuts is getting progressively more serious. Consequently, if any wage or hour concession is given pecan shellers, we must insist on the same consideration. But we are opposed to concessions for either industry."

The telegram, taking issue with the pecan shellers, also stated:

"An Associated Press dispatch reports members of the National Pecan Shellers of America have closed their shelling plants because of reported inability to operate in compliance with the wage and hour law, stating that the average wage in the industry is 10 to 15 cents an hour, and approximately 50,000 workers are affected.

"We seriously doubt if over 5,000 operatives are employed in the pecan shelling industry and, certainly, 10 to 15 cents an hour is not a reasonable living wage anywhere in America.

"Shelled pecans are strictly competitive with shelled walnuts, and continuously up to a few years ago sold in the open market at an average of seven cents a pound above shelled walnuts; but in recent years price cutting, due almost entirely to unreasonably low sweatshop labor costs, has enabled pecan shellers to profitably and continuously quote prices five to seven cents below that of shelled walnuts.

"The prevailing rates for thousands of shellers in the walnut industry averages 39 cents an hour."