

Report From Jerry Sampson – First Sacramento Boycott Operation – December 25, 1965

12/25/1965

To: Mike Miller & Jim Drake

From: Jerry Sampson

The First Sacramento Efforts in the Boycott Operation

The attached leaflet shows the sponsors we put together on paper for the beginning here. Actually we distributed about 7,000 of them outside of about 15 stores on Thurs. evening, with about 20-25 pickets and handout troops. Our forces were principally those recruited by the Sacramento Catholic Council on Human Relations (John Bertrand, Larry Hannan, Meredith Crown—backed up by Father Kenney) and the Building Service Employees two locals—#411 the State employees local, and #22 mostly the janitors group (Bud Aronson and John Berry were the two main activists). The Protestants lent names, talked big, but produced little—one minister, Jim Burnett, Methodist (Campus ministry group) worked one of the picket lines. CORE DID LITTLE, except for one leader, Bob Tyler, but SNCC drained off some of his troops.

Results:

1. The largest liquor dealer in the area—Vic Mandella (S. Land Park Dr. and 35th Ave.) went on radio and t.v. to announce “I am supporting the boycott by withdrawing Schenley products from display and shelves, and will discourage my customers from buying these products.” When asked by one reporter why he was taking this action he said it was because he was only “a little man” and he had plenty of trouble with big firms so he could understand and sympathize with the strikers. He was very effective. He happens to be president of the local liquor dealers association but could not act for them—undoubtedly his position shook other dealers—none of whom like Schenley—but none of them publicly joined him.

2. We had unexpectedly large PR and media impact, which is impossible to measure. All three T.V. channels (3, 10, and 13) carried one or more of the programs they shot, and did this repetitively on Thursday and Friday. Several of the radio stations also carried intermittent news of the picketing and comments by Bertrand and me—some of them lengthy.

It provide impossible yesterday to get any troops for resumption of picketing or leaflet distribution, which I tried to stimulate. The holiday and the weather further cooled them possibilities.

3. I proposed yesterday to the Catholics, the labor forces and the Protestants that we work—as quickly as possible toward a) resumption of picketing next week (perhaps Wednesday or Thursday evening); b) development in the next week or two of a big one day event.

A. A noon rally on the Capital steps for state employees—main sponsor the two Building Service Unions—with Governor or Tieburg, in whatever way is then timely.

B. Pitch for money for YWAA, boycott of Schenley, wires to the Governor etc.

What movement I can get out of the folks here on these proposals remains to be seen. If not these ideas we will have to invent others—or adapt to the specifics in the strike development and the local situation. Fa. Kenny is being helpful but publicly cautious (he thought it better not to go on t.v. for example, although we produced an invitation for him. The Protestants all seem a little frightened (Details on request) but since Reinertson of the Presbyterian laity had indicated a willingness to find a Sacto forum for Cesar I am getting at him through friends.

As in all of these situations the interest is substantial, but dwindles and thins as action develops, so the organizational problems—in the terms we have seen these—are difficult.

The SNCC—Roseville operation—on which I do not have reliable details—made the press, had some Catholic involvement (lawyers in readiness of injunctions were used) and surely kept attention focused on the strike. How it can be used by the local “committee” is not clear. We shall see. You probably know more of this!

Costs

For Jim’s records I attach two paid bills totaling \$220.30 for leaflets and picket signs for the operation here and including \$52. for SNCC Roseville picket signs. On the latter item by kinds in Kenya (Jack and Susi Levine—he is on faculty at L.A. State College) personally returned my \$25. Xmas check to them and asked that it be used for the grape strike and this \$25. will go toward the SNCC signs. The balance I have advanced is therefore \$195.30. Toward this I have firm pledges of \$50. from the labor group, and \$50. from the Catholic Connell. I have soft pledges of \$50. “pledge” from the Unitarians. I am not hurting on these advances before I can collect on/part of them from the pledges. I will give a progress report on these cost matters in a couple of weeks.