

## Report of NFWM: Programs Farmworkers Have Made For Themselves 1975

The farmworkers' long struggle for justice is most visible through strikes and boycotts. But out the initial contract victories of 1966 and 1967, the United Farm Workers began to build a series of programs, by and for farmworkers. As more contracts are won, these programs will grow in strength and spread geographically. What follows is a brief summary of programs that are in existence at this time:

National Farm Worker Service Center, Inc.: Financed by tax-exempt donations, this entity operates and/or supports various social, educational, and legal service programs for farmworkers, including the following:

Farm Workers Credit Union: One of the oldest of all the farmworker programs, the credit union was established in 1962. To date more than \$2 million has been paid out in loans to farmworkers at an interest of 1% per month on the unpaid balance.

Campesino Centers: Eleven centers in California and one in Arizona, located in farm worker communities, to provide campesinos (farmworkers) with social, economic and legal services. No charge is made for assistance. The centers are run by farm workers. Style of operation is to go out to (and with) the people, not wait for them to come. Staff functions as advocates in dealing with governmental agencies and conducts "campaigns" to teach people about their rights.

Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village: Long a dream, the completed village opened in Delano March 1, 1975. Individual rooms (joined by shared baths) for 58 retired farmworkers, men and women. First consideration given to the elderly Filipino brothers, the original strikers of 1965, who have no families due to discriminatory immigration and anti-miscegenation laws of the past. The village is named for one of the Filipino strikers, who died of a heart attack on the picket line in 1967. Dining and recreation areas, collective garden, area for animals, work available in the village itself and the other operations at "Forty Acres", where the Delano UFW field office and clinic are located.

Day Care Centers: Two presently in operation: one for children of staff at the administrative headquarters in Keene; another housed in a Delano church, with eventual plans for a building near Agbayani Village so the retired workers can relate to the children.

Martin Luther King Farm Workers Fund: Created in December 1973, this fund comes from grower contributions of 5¢ per hour pr worker under contract. A board of trustees made up of two UFW representatives and two employers will have as permanent chairperson Msgr. George Higgins. This fund will be used to conduct educational and training programs for farmworkers, such as those described below, and hopes to provide summer camp for farmworker children and legal services.

La Paz Education Center: Renovation of a former country TB sanitarium for purposes of an education center, to be a part of the complex at Keene, Ca., where the union and other entities maintain administrative offices. Architectural drawings have been completed for a labor-intensive remodeling of the North Unit at La Paz, planned so that farmworkers themselves can do the work during the off-season. Renovation plans include a fence, fronting, bell tower, patios, video area, two classrooms, language lab, kitchen, and cafeteria. Sixty farmworkers at a time will participate in seminars of several weeks to develop skills including consumer education, language training, citizenship preparation (naturalization), cross-cultural learning, non-violence, contract enforcement, philosophy of the farmworker movement, training to work in the Campesino Centers.

Mobile Educational Unit, planned to bring shorter-term training opportunities to farmworker towns, providing evening classes in needed skills.

Juan De La Cruz Farm Worker Pension Plan: In August 1975 the union and the employers now under contract executed a trust agreement creating this pension plan for retired farmworkers. Employers under UFW contract contribute 5¢ per hour per worker to this fund, named for a 60-year-old striker slain on the picket line in the summer of 1973.

Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan: Begun in 1969, the medical plan has paid out \$4.1 million in benefits to farmworkers. RFK is financed entirely by the 10¢ per hour per worker that employers pay under contract. The benefits include: payments for visits to a doctor's office, x-rays, surgery, medicine, lab tests, maternity, hospitalization, emergency room, emergency dental, and ambulance service. The death benefit insurance is now included under the RFK Plan.

National Farm Workers Health Group: The farmworkers union organized its own clinics to be able to control both cost and quality of health care, emphasizing preventative care at the request of the workers. The NFWHG, a Calif. charitable and educational non-profit corporation, now operates four clinics in California and one in Florida, providing general outpatient care ranging from obstetrics and pediatrics to pesticide poisoning and other job-related injuries and disabilities. In 1974, 33,000 patients were seen at the five clinics for a fraction of the cost of a single government clinic. In Delano, even for someone who is not eligible for RFK benefits and has no other insurance, a maximum of fifteen dollars pays for a doctor visit, medicine, lab and x-ray. One-third of the staff are from local farmworker families, trained in the clinics. Professional staff receive subsistence support and join with workers in the non-violent struggle to change living and working conditions, thus improving the overall health of farmworkers. The clinics need more doctors, nurses, technicians. Contact the NFWHG, Box 131, Keene, Ca. 93531.

United Farm Workers Insurance Program: Begun in January 1975, the program currently insures the cars of volunteers working full-time for the union. As it proves workable, the program will be opened up to insure farmworkers' cars.

Huelga School: This after-school, evening and Saturday program serves school age children of farmworkers in the Delano area. The Huelga (strike) School is sponsored by the National Farm Worker Ministry. The curriculum focuses on reading, math, creative writing, Mexican history and culture, and the farmworkers' union. A children's performing dance troupe and teatro group have been formed. Recently added is an adult literacy program. Address: 105 Asti, Delano, 93215.

National Farm Worker Ministry  
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