

CONVENTION CALL TO THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

To Be Held In The
SELLAND ARENA
OF THE FRESNO CONVENTION CENTER
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

UNITED FARM WORKERS NATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO

To All Members:
Greetings:

The First Constitutional Convention of the United Farm Workers National Union, AFL-CIO, will be convened in the Selland Arena of the Fresno Convention Center, Fresno, California, at 8:00 Friday morning, September 21, 1973, and will remain in session until 2:00 Sunday afternoon, September 23, 1973.

This Convention comes at a time of increasing struggle for our Union accompanied by increasing strength. It is a time when growers and their allies in Government and business are making a concerted and vicious effort to destroy our Union. But farm workers, arising from generations of suffering and exploitation, are more determined than ever before to have their Union.

As free and sovereign men and women, we have resolved to end the injustices that oppress us. Today we seek our basic God-given rights as human beings, prepared to give up everything, even our lives, in our struggle for social justice. We seek the right to collective bargaining to improve our living and working conditions.

As we look back, we see the long hard road we have travelled since April 1962, when we planted the seeds of our Union in Delano. There the grape workers, the largest farm labor force in the State, employed by the largest agricultural industry, were being exploited the most. Hungry for justice, the workers joined together, and on September 30, 1962, formed the National Farm Workers Association. On that day, at our first Convention in Fresno, California, we adopted a Constitution, made a firm commitment to organize our union, passed Resolutions affirming our belief that the strike was the best weapon to organize our Union and that the boycott was a valid, moral and legal instrument to bring pressure on our oppressors. We also founded our newspaper, El Malcriado, and adopted our emblem, the Aztec eagle.

For three years, the National Farm Workers Association continued to build a solid membership base and to organize farm workers. In the meantime, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, largely Filipino American, which had been organizing farm workers since 1959, struck the grape growers on September 8, 1965. The National Farm Workers Association joined in on the strike September 16, 1965, resulting in the Great Grape Strike and Boycott.

Through combined strength and the use of our boycotts, we were able to bring most of the wine grape industry under contract between 1966 and 1968. In 1970, the table grape growers capitulated and signed agreements with us. In that same year, the vegetable workers of the Salinas Valley joined in the largest strike in U.S. agricultural history, resulting in contracts with two of the largest lettuce growers. Repressive court orders, since declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme

Court, halted the strike and today the lettuce boycott continues to bring pressure on the rest of the vegetable growers to negotiate with us.

Looking to the future we see that our work has just begun as most of the Nation's 3,000,000 farm workers remain unorganized and exploited. In this land of plenty, too many farm workers still live in a system of starvation wages, stoop labor, labor contractors, forced migration, sickness, illiteracy, filthy labor camps and sub-human living conditions. Too many farm worker children still go to bed hungry night after night.

The vast majority of farm workers remain abandoned to their own fate -- without representation, without power -- subject to the mercy and caprice of greedy, short-sighted growers. Through our strong will, our Union must continue to change these conditions. They are all obstacles which have been placed in our path by those who oppose our liberation -- by those who have gotten wealthier at our expense -- by those who have used empty promises and lies to fool us.

Now that we have begun to create real change, our adversaries have burdened us with even greater obstacles. As our Union grows stronger, the growers' callousness and greed grow greater. Those who oppose us the most vigorously and viciously are not the few small family farmers who still exist, but the large corporate farms which are part of the agribusiness complex. They are subsidiaries of big business with absentee land-owners who run their operations from Montgomery Street, Madison Avenue and Wall Street.

The invasion of agriculture by giant business conglomerates has meant speed-ups in work and the threat that mechanical harvesting will eliminate our jobs. It has also meant landowners with more money, more power and more influence in the efforts to destroy our Union.

The Government too has become a partner in exploitation of farm workers and in resisting our efforts to organize. On the federal level, the Government has sought court orders against our boycott weapon which is so essential to organizing. The Pentagon has used its purchasing power to reduce the effectiveness of our boycotts. The Justice Department has squashed investigations by Grand Juries to expose and indict growers who engage in illegal practices to destroy us. The Immigration Department allows the growers to use illegal aliens to break our strikes.

Vicious legislation designed to destroy us, too, is a weapon of our adversaries. On the federal level and on the state level, from California to New York, legislation that would prohibit our boycotts and strikes, is being promoted. This legislation would make it impossible for farm workers to organize at a time when it is so obvious that what we need is legislation that would make farm worker justice come more easily and speedily.

Violation of our Civil Rights is yet another injustice we encounter. Infringement on the rights of poor farm workers by the police and courts is nothing new, but it has never been so great as now that we try to unite. Everywhere we begin organizing and striking, we are met with a barrage of unconstitutional court orders, severe limitations on our right to picket, mass arrests, beatings and jailings.

Growers exploit for their own profits the growing traffic of illegal aliens. These aliens are used not only to depress labor conditions, but also to break our strikes.

Today, the most vicious partner with agribusiness in the campaign to destroy us is the Teamsters' Union. In what religious leaders have termed "the darkest and most shameful day of labor history" and what labor leaders have condemned as "disgraceful union busting", the Teamsters have signed "sweetheart contracts" with lettuce and grape growers. Farm workers know that the Teamsters have never shown any real concern for our problems, and we will never accept that Union which has worn a path to the growers' back door to sign agreements behind our backs.

All of these burdens beset us as we meet for this Convention, but they will not deter us. The greater the opposition to our struggle for self-determination, the greater our determination to win becomes.

The American Labor Movement gives us the courage to move forward. With its generous financial and moral support, labor has taught us the meaning of solidarity. The AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers, and the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union have all been unrelenting with their support. They have all made it clear that we will not be alone in our difficult years ahead.

Churches of all faiths have stood with us against the injustices suffered by farm workers and have made the commitment to fight side-by-side with us against human exploitation.

The American public with its massive support of our boycott has shown that it has a great social conscience and that it will continue to support our cause.

At this Convention we shall renew our commitment to organize the rural poor and, when necessary, we shall strike, boycott,

demonstrate and engage in political campaigns. We want to be treated with the respect we deserve as working men and women. We want our rights as free and sovereign men and women to be recognized. We want to be free of the paternalism of the growers. We want to be free of the labor contractor.

We want to be free of charity at the price of our dignity. We want to be equal with all the working men and women of this Nation. We want a just wage, better working conditions, a decent future for our our children. We are going to continue struggling until we win. We shall overcome! Si se puede!

REPRESENTATION

Each Ranch membership, Organizing Committee, Administrative body and Special Committees shall be entitled to the number of delegates indicated in the following scale:

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1 - 50 members | = 1 delegate | 701 - 1,000 members | = 6 delegates |
| 51 - 100 members | = 2 delegates | 100 - 1,500 members | = 7 delegates |
| 101 - 300 members | = 3 delegates | 1,501 - 2,100 members | = 8 delegates |
| 301 - 500 members | = 4 delegates | 2,101 - 2,800 members | = 9 delegates |
| 501 - 700 members | = 5 delegates | Over - 2,800 members | = 10 delegates |

"Administrative Body" includes primary boycott operations, La Paz, the 40 Acres, and each Field Office.

Only members in good standing with the Union may participate in delegate elections. In the case of members working under contract, they shall be deemed members in good standing if they are no more than 60 days behind in payment of their dues.

No person shall be recognized as a delegate who is not a member in good standing of the membership, committee or body he is elected to represent.

For the purpose of selecting delegates, and for roll call votes, the number of members of each Ranch has been determined by the number of workers at the Ranch during 1972.

The number of members of each Organizing Committee shall be determined by the number of workers actively involved in organizing themselves.

The number of members of each Administrative Body shall be determined by the number of union members serving as full-time volunteers for the Union at least six months prior to the opening date of the convention.

Delegates to the Convention shall be elected by secret ballot by members of the Ranch membership, Organizing Committee, Administrative body or Special Committee at least 14 days prior to the Convention (by September 7, 1973). The membership, committee or body shall nominate at least twice the number of candidates as the number of delegates to which it is entitled. Of the nominees not elected delegates, the one with the most votes shall be the first Alternate, the one with the second most votes will be the second Alternate, etc.

The names of the delegates shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the Union immediately after their selection to be received no later than September 10, 1973.

CREDENTIALS

Credential blanks in duplicate are forwarded to all committees which must be attested as required on the blanks. The original credential should be forwarded to the Office of the Secretary of the Union, La Paz, Keene, California 93531 as soon as delegates are elected. However, this must not be later than Monday, September 10, 1973. The duplicate credential shall be retained by the delegate-elect for presentation to the Credentials Committee, Fresno Convention Center Arena, Fresno, California.

The Credentials Committee shall meet at the Convention Center prior to the opening of the Convention. The Convention will not be constituted for business until after the Credentials Committee shall have examined and reported on credentials of all delegates present at the scheduled time on the opening date of the Convention.

RESOLUTIONS

Any member can submit resolutions prior to the Convention by mailing them to the Secretary of the Union, La Paz, Keene, Ca. 93531 10 days or more before the Convention. They must be signed by 25 members in good standing of the Union.

During the Convention, resolutions by delegates must be submitted to the Committee on Resolutions. They require signatures of 25 delegates.

HOUSING

Convention headquarters for the United Farm Workers National Union, AFL-CIO will be at the Selland Arena, Fresno Convention Center, Fresno, Ca.

Accommodations for delegates will be made by the Union. Information will be forthcoming on this.

If there should be any pertinent information regarding the Convention or arrangements for the convenience of the delegates, it will be communicated in a later circular or through El Malcriado.



Cesar E. Chavez
Cesar E. Chavez, Director

Dolores Huerta
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