

NFWM

NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY
(continuing the National Migrant Ministry)



Related to the National Council of
the Churches of Christ in the USA

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WOMEN IN STRUGGLE



Lettuce Thinners

Perhaps it is the little-known women of the farm workers' movement who have the greatest impact; those who work in the fields; those who sacrifice so much to protect family life; those who serve as leaders on organizing and negotiating committees; those who work full-time for the United Farm Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and the National Farm Worker Ministry; those women who, as consumers, buy selectively and avoid products which are under boycott until justice is expanded for the people who feed us.

Women work; women struggle; women are leaders in our churches and within the farm workers' movement. We do well to remember and honor them.

Mujeres Valientes

Quisas las mujeres mas influyentes son aquellas aun desconocidas del movimiento campesino; las que trabajan en la labor; las que se sacrifican tanto para proteger la vida familiar; las que marchan tiempo completo con la UFW o el FLOC o el NFWM; y las

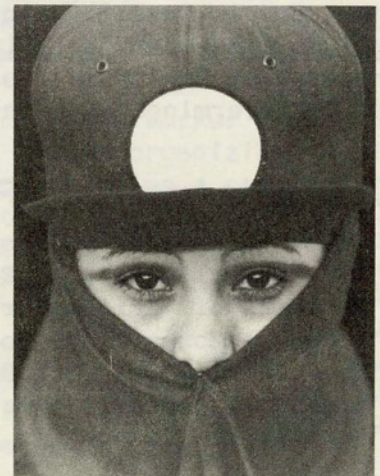
mujeres que, como consumidoras rechazan los productos bajo boicoteo hasta ver la victoria justa para los campesinos que cosechan los alimentos diarios de nuestras mesas.

Hay mujeres que trabajan; hay mujeres que luchan; hay mujeres que son lideres en nuestras iglesias y dentro del movimiento laboral campesino. Es justo y correcto que las recordemos con gratitud y honor. —Olgha Sierra Sandman

Corine Dorsey — A Valiant Woman

Corine Dorsey, fruit picker and union steward in the Coke Minute Maid groves, Avon Park, Florida:

"Before the union came, we were living on a Coke place in Alpine. The ceiling was falling down. There was an outdoor toilet and no water in the house. You had to get up at 4 a.m. and work from sun-up to sundown 7 days a week. I had to take the kids out in the groves and lay them under a tree and handle the ladder like my husband. And the snakes were bad under the trees, so you always had to keep a look out for the kids...When the UFW people came around, passing out leaflets and telling the workers the kinds of things they could accomplish with the union, everybody was so glad...We are happy today. We can work in peace and we're not scared all the time. We're going to make a strong union, even stronger."



Helena, Salinas Lettuce Worker

NFWM SENDS FARM WORKER WOMEN AROUND THE COUNTRY

Farm worker friends and support groups in more than two dozen cities in the U.S. have hosted farm worker women this spring. These women have spoken to church and community groups and have told of their lives and their situations as farm workers. Typical of the women taking part in this special NFWM project is Marta de la Cruz, mother of four and an employee of West Foods, where she is currently on strike. (See p.3, Castle & Cooke) Marta met with support committees throughout Florida and also visited 5 cities in the Midwest. Other women who have been part of this speaker's bureau include: Corine Dorsey, a Minute Maid employee from Florida who traveled up the East Coast to Toronto, Canada; Juana Duran, an employee at Steak Mate in Morgan Hill, CA; Maria Jimenez and Maria Escalante, Bertuccio employees, who have been on strike since July 1981; Maria Elena Ortega, Campesino Center Director in Onarga, Illinois; Dolores Huerta, 1st Vice President of the UFW.



Marta de la Cruz & Family

These (and other) farm worker women were sent around the country in celebration of Farm Worker Week 1982, which focused on "Women in Struggle — Mujeres Valientes". The NFWM selected this theme to draw attention to the significant contribution that women have made to the farm worker movement. Farm worker women need to be heard and the NFWM wishes to see that they are heard. Through this special Travel Project the NFWM is linking the situation of women in the fields to that of women throughout society, as well as bringing greater visibility to farm workers' efforts to organize and to bring self-determination to women, men and children who work in the fields, groves and orchards of America.

The NFWM wishes to thank the various Religious organizations and individuals who have contributed to make this special project a success.

NFWM Board Meets in Bakersfield, CA

On May 10, representatives of NFWM Member Organizations traveled across the country to attend the spring Board meeting. NFWM President Sister Mary Catherine Rabbitt, S.L., presided. The Board visited UFW headquarters, La Paz at Keene, CA and heard reports from members of the Union's National Executive Board. In Bakersfield, the Board met at the First United Methodist Church. Highlights of the meeting included dinner with NFWM and UFW staff at La Paz; visits to Delano, Lamont and Arvin led by David Villarino and Ben Maddock of UFW staff and Fred Ross, Sr. who was director of the Sunset Labor Camp in Arvin in the 1930's and who has provided training and guidance to the farm workers' movement for 40 years. The Board heard reports of farm worker activities throughout the country. Significant among the reports were those of Ventura County citrus striker Hermenegildo Orozco and Karl Lawson from the UFW Field Office in Oxnard. The Board will meet again on December 6-8, 1982 (location to be determined at a later date).



*Jun Atienza & Olga Sierra Sandman
NFWM Board Members at La Paz*

Available from the NFWM *(Please send a contribution, if possible)*

- "Judge Wolpman's Decision Against Bruce Church" (119 pp)
- "We Are Still Fighting For Our Lives" Migration Today, World Council of Churches, 1982
- "20 Years of Vision, Struggle & Achievement" El Malcriado, May 1982
- "Judge Restores Grant to UFW" by Harry Bernstein, L.A. Times, 5/28/82
- "Bruce Church Hit With Bad Faith Ruling" by Eric Brazil, Salinas Californian, 5/18/82
- "Tragedies Close To Home" by Most Rev. John J. Fitzpatrick, The McAllen Monitor, 3/26/82
- "Support the Campbell's Boycott: by Hugh McGuinness, Catholic Agitator, April 1982

FLOC PUSHES CAMPBELL BOYCOTT, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN OHIO

Boycott pressure is building on the Campbell Soup Company which has refused to participate in collective bargaining with the farm workers employed in Ohio's tomato fields. Dozens of religious and labor organizations across the country have endorsed FLOC's efforts. FLOC is supporting a bill in the Ohio legislature, which would provide for collective bargaining in the fields. The bill, introduced by Senator Neil Zimmers is patterned after the California ALRA, and makes special provision for the need for 3-way negotiations involving canneries, farmers and farm workers. Campbells is responding to growing boycott pressure. Although this enormous cannery controls more than 80% of the \$1.2 billion condensed soup market, total sales are beginning to stagnate — even though the company spends approximately \$23 million in ad money each year. Campbells Public Relations Executive Roger Dean Duncan says that FLOC's request for collective bargaining is "nonsense". Duncan oversimplifies the complex issue of 3-way bargaining and seeks to impugn the motives of FLOC's leadership by suggesting that their real interest is "the FLOC treasury".

UFW Continues Boycott of Dole Products

340 UFW members continue their strike of the Castle & Cooke Mushroom facility in Ventura County. The contract expired September 6, 1981. In July, when negotiations began, the company announced that unless the union agreed to the company's proposal by July 15, the company would begin shutting down the plant. At that time the company was offering a 5¢ per hour increase for hourly workers and no increase for pickers (40% of the work force). The company then began shutting down its production facilities and has sent numerous letters to each worker attempting to negotiate directly with each employee. The workers continued on the job beyond the expiration date, but the company then began to make a series of unilateral changes in working conditions. Workers were called to the job and given one hour's work and then sent home. Management, obligated under the contract to pay at least 4 hours' minimum reporting pay, simply announced it was going to ignore that provision. The intent of this maneuver was to get workers not to show up so that the company could suspend workers because of "absenteeism".

By October 1981, production was reduced by 25% and over 200 employees had been laid off. At this time the company sent a letter to the workers asking them to withdraw from the union and stop paying dues. The ALRB regional office issued a complaint of bad faith bargaining and other illegal actions against Castle & Cooke. "The company started bargaining in bad faith on a whole series of levels," said ALRB Regional Attorney Judy Weisberg. "We're contending that everything they did was to try to undermine the UFW as the workers' representative." On Nov. 19, 1981, the workers struck; not a single one of the over 300 UFW members has broken the strike and returned to work. Since the strike began the company has made other proposals to the union: the elimination of the hiring hall, ~~the substitution of a company medical plan for the current jointly sponsored medical plan~~, restrictions on grievance procedures, etc.

The strike and boycott continue. The union has had to file about 60 grievances a year at this company — more than with any other company under contract. Meanwhile Henry B. Clark, Castle & Cooke Chairman, writes to UFW supporters about the company's "long and honorable history of progressive dealings with the labor forces engaged in work at its operations..." Mr. Clark may not know what is happening in Ventura County at his West Foods Mushroom subsidiary. It would be helpful to the farm workers on strike at West Foods if you would write Henry B. Clark, Jr., Financial Plaza of the Pacific, P. O. Box 2990, Honolulu, Hawaii 96802 and invite him to visit Ventura County or call Mr. Clark at toll free number (800) 367-7080 and ask him about his labor relations practices in the mushroom plants he controls.

Castle & Cooke labels are: Bumble Bee Tuna and Dole Bananas and Pineapples. In February, 1982, the UFW called for a boycott of these products. As a result of packaging impurities and contamination, Bumble Bee Tuna has been recalled (May-June, 1982). If that is not reason enough, avoid these products for the farm workers in Ventura County.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

ILLINOIS — Welcome to two new members of the Illinois Farm Worker Ministry: the Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet (which encompasses the Service Center in Onarga), and the Association of Chicago Priests (represented on the IFWM by Father Charles Kyle). In celebration of Farm Worker Week 1982 "Women in Struggle — Mujeres Valientes", Illinois farm worker women visited six different locations around the state. Onarga farm workers have been on the road in recent weeks attending the Michigan Farm Worker Ministry Coalition in February and working on the UFW boycott of Dole products in Chicago. The long Midwestern winter was harder than usual for Onarga farm workers, many of whom have been laid off for weeks. A farm worker committee was formed to distribute food and money; and a Task Force from Black Hawk Presbytery has recently visited Onarga and is recommending Presbyterian funding for the Onarga Service Center.

INDIANA — The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has just published: "The Eastern Migrant Stream" by Franklin and Pamela Williams, this 40-page document is available for \$3.50 from Gerald Cunningham, Dept. of Church in Society, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Post Office Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206. NFWM Board member Garnett Day has written a Foreword to the Report and NFWM staff member Joan Preiss served as a consultant.

MICHIGAN — Sixty-seven people attended the Third Annual Farm Worker Conference sponsored by the Michigan Farm Worker Ministry Coalition. NFWM Mission Dept. Dir., Fred Eyster, attended the Conference along with a delegation from the Campesino Center in Onarga, Illinois. Baldemar Velasquez, FLOC president and the FLOC "Teatro" were also there.

Several farm worker advocacy groups, including the Detroit Archdiocese Office of Hispanic Affairs have recently won a law suit against Lapeer Mushroom Farms. The company has been ordered to pay \$28,600 in back wages to 353 workers. The firm had been deducting air transportation from Puerto Rico, tools, housing, food, etc. from over half of the farm workers' paychecks. One person worked 45 hours and had received 95¢; another worked for 43 hours for \$5.33. Unfortunately, the migrant workers were not part of the court proceedings and have left the area. If they can not be located, the company does not have to pay.

NORTH CAROLINA — Joan Preiss of the NFWM Mission Dept. has been working closely with UFW staff in North Carolina on the Bruce Church lettuce boycott. Dozens of letters have been sent by NC farm worker supporters to local and regional food store chains asking that they discontinue the sale of Bruce Church lettuce (Red Coach, Lucky, Friendly, Green Valley). Food Town Chairman Ralph W. Ketner has hit what must be a new low in his response to such appeals. Ralph Ketner is informing the employer of each person who has written to him.

FLORIDA — In recent months, supporters throughout the state have raised well over \$11,000 for the farm workers. Everyone helped, with the Fort Lauderdale Support Committee leading the way.

CALIFORNIA — The NFWM celebrates the life of Blanche Schmidt of Oakland, CA who died on June 2, 1982 at the age of 90. At her Memorial Service, the Rev. Ben Fraticelli, once her pastor in Dos Palos and a former director of the Florida Christian Migrant Ministry said, "She was a formidable fighter of discrimination against women and the underprivileged." Serving as the first woman school superintendent in California, Blanche got the first school nurse in the San Joaquin Valley because of her concern for Black and Hispanic children in the cotton camps who were deprived of medical attention. She was president of the No.Calif.Christian Women's Fellowship for a number of years and a dedicated member of Church Women United. For many years she served on the Board of the California Migrant Ministry and was active on the No.Calif. Working Group of the NFWM until just a few months before she died. We thank God for this faithful sister in the struggle for justice. —Fred Eyster

UFW NEWS & EVENTS

Farm workers are vindicated in their use of government funds. As soon as it took office, the Reagan Administration, in concert with the Farm Bureau, accused the UFW of mispending federal funds (NFWM Newsletter, 3/82). Hearings on this affair have now been concluded and an administrative law judge has exonerated the farm workers. Judge Miles Brown said in his Decision (5/21/82): "Political expedience is not grounds for terminating a grant...CSA (the federal agency) has not demonstrated that (the grantees) do not have an adequate accounting system...Government protestations to the contrary, it appears that its decision to initiate the instant termination proceedings was motivated, at least in part, by the involvement of the Farm Bureau in CSA's grant processes...CSA's complicity with the Farm Bureau in preventing the disbursement of funds of the grant to the grantees was reprehensible."

UFW has signed a new contract with Limoneria in Ventura County. The agreement, ending a strike which began March 9, 1982, was announced May 10, 1982. Wages will increase 9% per year under the 3-year contract, which will also provide for increases in the medical plan.

Other citrus strikes continue in Ventura County. Workers struck in March asking for a one year contract. But the grower associations are holding out for three years. The major issue is "stability of the bargaining unit." When contracts with these associations were signed in 1978, the agreements covered 2400 workers; however individual growers have left the association and have returned to labor contractors, and the number of UFW members working under contract has shrunk to 1300. The ALRB has been considering the problem of the disappearing unit since June of 1981 and has made no final determination.

Farm workers hold Convention and March in Texas. 400 Delegates from 50 "colonia" committees and organizing committees convened in San Juan, TX on February 28, 1982, to debate and pass resolutions and to protest the low wages paid to farm workers in Texas. A survey conducted on the Convention floor revealed that only 35% of Texas farm workers receive even the federal minimum wage (\$3.35 per hour). Citrus pickers average \$2.45 per hour; vegetable workers, \$2.95 per hour. The workers passed resolutions calling for legislation to prohibit the pulling of weeds by hand, and the enforcement of sanitation laws as well as stronger controls with regard to pesticide applications (13 lbs. of chemicals per person are sprayed in the Rio Grande Valley each year). The Convention was addressed by Brownsville Bishop Fitzpatrick who told his audience, "The Church recognizes your rights as laborers."

POSITION OPEN — JOURNEYMAN CARPENTER

Experience with both rough and finish work. Will supervise construction projects at UFW headquarters and elsewhere.

Compensation: Based on need.

Contact Richard Chavez, UFW, Box 62, Keene, CA 93531; phone (805)822-5571 or the NFWM.

A 6-day March across the Valley (from Brownsville to San Juan) was concluded on March 21. Cesar Chavez, who walked the entire distance, told the crowd of 2,000 who gathered in San Juan at the conclusion of the March that the union will be demanding that Valley growers comply with the federal minimum wage of \$3.35 an hour, plus back wages with interest owed laborers.

UFW holds Arizona Convention on March 7, 1982. Over 200 Arizona farm worker delegates attended the one day event, which was chaired by Cesar Chavez. Eleven organizing committees were chartered by the union and 24 resolutions were passed, including a commitment to one strong national union for farm workers, and a condemnation of Arizona's repressive grower backed farm labor law, which outlaws strike and boycott activity and permits the employer to determine if the workers should vote for union representation. The Arizona Convention was organized by Sister Pat Drydyk.

UFW members win \$115,500 in back wages. Ben Maddock of UFW Delano Field Office has won this amount for workers who were victimized by bad faith bargaining on the part of Montebello Rose Company, where the workers voted for UFW representation in 1975.

Bruce Church Guilty of Bad Faith: Ordered To Pay Back Wages

"An organ for the representation of the worker against management, or at least to management, is needed — by the workers, but also by society. Management, no matter how selected or constituted, is, and has to be, a power. Any power needs restraint or control — or else it becomes tyranny. To believe that labor union weakness means management strength is sheer self-delusion. It does not mean management strength; it means management frustration." —Peter F. Drucker, Management

After more than 3 years of investigations and hearings, an ALRB Hearing Officer has sustained charges by the UFW that Bruce Church, Inc. (BCI) has refused to bargain in good faith with UFW. In his 119-page Decision, Administrative Judge James Wolpman concluded that the giant lettuce producer has tried to "subvert" the collective bargaining process by working "to relegate the UFW to a secondary role inconsistent with its right to act" as the workers' representative. "Etched deep in the BCI-UFW negotiations is one undeniable pattern: unrelenting opposition to each and every UFW proposal aimed at satisfying union institutional needs." The judge recommends that the 5-member ALRB order the company to bargain in good faith and pay back wages to some 1500 strikers and former strikers, who lost wages and benefits as a result of the company's violation of the state farm labor law.

Major points taken from the Decision:

In training session for company supervisors in 1978, BCI Vice President and Manager of Operations, Mike Payne "began talking about BCI's policy toward unions and workers and used a diagram to illustrate his point. According to (then, Ass't. Supervisor Charles) Harrington, Payne drew 3 circles on the blackboard, labeling one 'labor' and another 'management'. He then drew a line between labor and management to emphasize the importance of building a good relationship with employees. Next he wrote 'union' in the third circle and drew a line from the employees to the union, saying 'Now this is what we don't want.'"

BCI believed "that the UFW could not be trusted to act legally or responsibly in carrying out its functions as exclusive representative (of the workers)."

"Matters, of course, would be different were there firm base in fact for these beliefs... But the UFW had no record of abusing good standing or visitation, or paid rep, or safety clause; or MLK (a worker education fund). There had been problems with the hiring hall, but the UFW was willing to change and alter its terms to placate BCI's fears. When such a belief becomes — as it was here — pervasive, touching almost every major issue in bargaining, it is once again possible to infer opposition, not just to the specific contract terms, but the union itself," Judge Wolpman concluded.

WHAT NEXT? BOYCOTT TO CONTINUE!

- (1) The full 5-member ALRB must adopt or modify Judge Wolpman's Decision. No hearing date has been set: no one knows when the Board will take up this case or issue its Decision. BCI has indicated that the company will appeal any unfavorable ruling to the courts.
- (2) BCI intends to continue its resistance to a union for its field employees. But BCI also objects to the idea of obeying the farm labor law. Company Executive Mike Payne has referred to the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) as "a kangaroo court". (The Packer, 5/22/82)
- (3) The boycott of Bruce Church will continue. Bruce Church iceberg head lettuce labels are: Red Coach, Friendly, Lucky, Green Valley. Please urge your friends and your grocer to avoid these labels: the products of an intransigent, backward, and lawless management.