

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED FARM WORKERS

PASSED BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA
Los Angeles, Ca. - February 28, 1974

- WHEREAS, The National Council of Churches and its predecessor organizations have for 54 years carried on a ministry to migrant and seasonal farm workers, and
- WHEREAS, In recent years farm workers under the leadership of Cesar Chavez have developed their own union, won collective bargaining contracts and are providing a sense of participation, a measure of political and economic strength and needed medical and social services to farm workers and their families, and
- WHEREAS, The National Council of Churches has in the past supported the non-violent efforts of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) as they work to achieve a measure of dignity and justice for all farm workers in this nation, and
- WHEREAS, There is clear evidence of exploitative paternalism and racism in the efforts of employers to avoid collective bargaining with the UFW, and
- WHEREAS, UFW is currently under attack by powerful employer interests in collaboration with key leaders in the Teamsters Union,

THEREFORE: The Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ

- 1) Reaffirms its support and appreciation for the heroic Christian leadership provided by Cesar Chavez and other leaders of UFW in their tireless and self-sacrificing labors to deliver farm workers from economic bondage.
- 2) Directs the Office of Administration to ensure that all units of the NCCC in their meetings, conferences, retreats, etc. refrain from purchasing head (iceberg) lettuce and table grapes from California and Arizona (unless they carry the UFW Aztec eagle label) until such time as agricultural employers agree to negotiate with the union of the workers' choice.
- 3) Asks the Division of Church and Society to follow up on the 1973 NCCC study entitled "Report of the Governing Board Task Force on the Farm Labor Dispute in California" with a comprehensive ecumenical strategy designed to:
 - a) inform constituent denominations
 - b) implement the Task Force recommendations*
 - c) anticipate and seek to eliminate strategies of violence and intimidation that may be planned by Teamster leadership
 - d) help bring closer the day when the Teamster Union will leave the fields and honor previous jurisdictional agreements reached with the AFL-CIO and the UFW.
- 4) Endorses and promotes the establishment of an annual "Farm Worker Week" and urges constituent denominations to do likewise. "Farm Worker Week" in 1974 will be celebrated after Easter to coincide approximately with the California grape harvest. And in subsequent years will be celebrated immediately before or after Thanksgiving as a way of calling attention to the contribution that farm workers make to our lives and as a way of calling us into practical solidarity with those farm workers who are giving leadership in the struggle for justice.

- 5) Asks that each member denomination work closely with the National Farm Worker Ministry in recruiting and sending persons to be with the United Farm Workers in the strikes and picket line confrontations that will be coming and in support of the farm workers' boycott of grapes, lettuce and Gallo Wines.

Based on Policy Statement: "The Church as Purchaser of Goods and Services," Sept. 12, 1968; and "The Concern of the Churches for Seasonal Farm Workers," Dec. 3, 1966.

*The Task Force therefore recommends that the NCCC continue to support the efforts of the UFW in their struggle to build a strong, self-determining union because:

- (a) We are convinced by our study that their methods of organization and record of activity most nearly represent the will of the workers.
- (b) We are convinced by our study that the UFW affords the greater opportunity for membership control and self-determination.
- (c) We are convinced by our study that the organizational pattern of the UFW provides less opportunity for racial and cultural discrimination.

The Task Force believes that the NCCC can further assist in the resolution of the dispute:

1. By working for an orderly process which allows farm workers to designate their bargaining agent in labor disputes. This process should be provided by national legislation rather than conflicting legislation by various states. Therefore the appropriate units of the NCCC should work for passage of effective and fair legislation which will:
 - a) Allow for self-determination on the part of the workers as they organize and designate their bargaining representatives by fairly conducted elections;
 - b) Allow the farm workers the tools to build a strong union; (One necessary tool at the moment is the boycott, given the combination of the Teamsters-grower power against them. But any such tool is only for the period necessary to enable the farm workers to come to the bargaining table with the necessary equality of power to achieve a just and equitable contract.);
 - c) Explore whether present labor laws should simply be extended to include agricultural workers or whether special legislation should be provided for agricultural workers.
2. Since regularized election processes are not presently available now, the NCCC should lend its prestige and support for the organization of third party supervised elections in such disputes. They are urgently needed now in the Coachella and Salinas Valleys of California.
3. The NCCC should urge church members to be present with the parties of the dispute as often as feasible to minimize the possibilities of violence or threats of violence or threats of violence on either side.
4. It was the conclusion of this task force that there is systematic discrimination against racial minorities in the food industry in California. Groups subject to this kind of discrimination have experienced repeated frustration in trying to find just relief through federal and state administrative agencies. The apparent massive inadequacy of these agencies to provide some measure of relief to those discriminated against is a problem that deserves to be on the agenda of the NCCC and its related organizations for immediate action.