

Answers to Questions Raised by UCC Constituency  
on the Farm Worker Issue

1. Why is the UCC siding with one union as over against another?

The Board for Homeland Ministries has long participated in a ministry to farm workers. When farm workers decided to build their own union, the BHM respected that decision and made the decision to stand with farm workers in this process. The BHM is one of the founders of the National Farm Worker Ministry which works closely with the United Farm Workers Union.

The Teamsters signed agreements with lettuce growers in 1970 and with grape growers in 1973. Workers were not consulted about those agreements. Workers walked off their jobs in protest. In December 1972, the California Supreme Court found that the lettuce agreements were in fact between Teamster officials and growers and did not have consent of the workers. Elections and polls all point to an overwhelming preference among the workers for the UFW. It is BHM policy that the Board will support the right of farm workers to build their own union. The BHM supports UFW because UFW has the support of the workers.

2. The Film - "Viva la Causa"

The film "Viva la Causa", produced and directed by Robert Newman for the Board for Homeland Ministries, is a film about the United Farm Workers. It cost approximately \$20,000 to make, exclusive of the salary and expenses of the director who spends two thirds of his time doing other work for the Board. All but a tiny fraction of the cost was raised by individual persons in different cities around the country. At most, ten percent of the cost came from CCWM money.

3. Why does the UFW oppose secret ballot elections to determine union representation?

The UFW does not oppose secret ballot elections. On the contrary, they have pushed for such elections and have been refused by both growers and the teamsters. UFW has opposed such elections when growers have brought in scab workers and then called for elections after a strike and boycott are underway. Over fifty elections have been held, and the UFW has won all but one by overwhelming margins.

4. Why does the church support an illegal secondary boycott?

A secondary boycott is not illegal for farm workers who are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act. Because strikes have been constantly disrupted or broken by illegal court injunctions which take two years to get thrown out of court, the boycott is the only non-violent weapon left to farm workers.

5. The strike and boycott is hurting the small farmer. Why doesn't the church show equal concern for him?

Over ninety percent of all farm labor in the United States is employed by large agribusiness interests. All of the present labor disputes are with such corporate interests. While it is inevitable that some small growers are indirectly affected, all of the evidence shows that the small growers are hurt much more by the financial squeeze of the big agribusiness interests than by the union of farm workers.

The Board for Homeland Ministries has long had ministries to town and country churches, many of which have dealt with the small farmer and his plight. This year, the BHM will be putting out a publication on this concern.

6. If the UFW gets its demands, won't this add to rising food prices?

Take lettuce, for example. The total cost of the payroll in the lettuce industry comes to less than 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per head of lettuce. The labor cost in the food industry which would be affected by UFW contracts is minute. Even so, the moral question arises as to whether we have the right to exploit human beings because it is cheaper to do so.

7. Why does Cesar Chavez want the support of the churches?

- a. Church support helps keep the farm workers independent from big labor organizations. The integrity and self-sufficiency of his union are very important to Mr. Chavez.
- b. The presence of the church helps the union to maintain its non-violent posture and strategy, without which, Mr. Chavez knows he cannot win.
- c. The church is needed to help muster support within the established community for the cause of the farm workers.

8. The growers have charged that the UFW has committed acts of violence and that when they had contracts the hiring halls were poorly administered. Is this true?

There are isolated acts of violence and discipline breaks down. There have been more than ten thousand workers on strike this summer. They are angry, and emotions run high. But the union has a definite policy of non-violence. Hours and hours of time are spent working on the discipline. Those who break it are expelled from the union. Because the union is new, administration of the hiring halls has been a problem. But the growers have a responsibility to help make it work. Farm workers will never consent to a return to the old exploitive labor contractor system.

9. What is the nature of present UCC support of UFW?

The Board for Homeland Ministries grants approximately \$40,000 per year to the National Farm Worker Ministry and is represented on its Board of Directors. Staff is assigned to work closely with the movement and helps to recruit people and find resources to support farm workers.

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