

President's Newsletter

Office of the President
United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO
La Paz, Keene, California 93531



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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Pension Plan Meetings Begin

A series of meetings with ranch leadership in California, Arizona and Florida will be conducted over the next two months to get workers' input in the development of a pension plan.

Brother *Kent Winterrowd* and I will be visiting many of you at ranches where we have contracts, certifications or pending certifications. At each meeting we will be presenting you with information about all of the benefits which are available under a pension plan. We'll be asking you to decide which benefits meet the needs of farm workers best and which are most important.

The fund would not be able to offer every available benefit, but by getting input from a large cross section of workers we'll be able to develop a pension plan that will best serve the needs of farm workers.

The meetings, which begin this week in Lamont and Delano, will be held in the evenings or on week ends and will be coordinated by the local field offices. We'll be visiting committees at about 255 ranches covering most of California, some parts of Arizona, and ending in Florida in June.

At the sessions we will explain the options and benefits available in a pension plan, and the ranch leadership will provide input as to which benefits are the most appropriate or essential for farm workers, because the working and living conditions of farm workers are unique to other types of labor.

All of the information gathered from the meetings along with additional facts and figures from our membership records will be given to a statistician, called an actuary, who will make evaluations on the economic feasibility of different plans.

Recommendations will then be made to the Juan de la Cruz Pension Fund Board of Trustees, comprised of five union representatives and five growers. The Trustees will have representatives and five growers. The Trustees will have the final word in approving an appropriate pension plan.

Immigration Problems Discussed at Conference

A special conference focusing on immigration problems of farm workers was held by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Farm Worker Fund, April 1, at the UFW headquarters, La Paz, California. Attending the conference were UFW Secretary-Treasurer *Gilbert Padilla*, Executive Board Member, *Marshall Ganz*, campesino center directors and staff, and several representatives from the U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) including *Arnold Flores*, Special Assistant to the Commissioner.

The purpose of the conference was not only to discuss the major problems farm workers face at the border, but also to provide educational information to the campesino center staff on the complex regulations and legal procedures of the INS. *L.A. Velardi* of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Migration and Refugee Services, one of the top instructors in immigration regulations conducted a training session and answered questions from the staff.

During the conference MLK staff were able to present *Richard Staley*, Chief Border Patrol Agent, and *Orville Charles*, Supervisory Immigration Examiner—Western Region, with examples of common immigration problems from actual case histories from our files. Prior to the con-

ference staff members gathered together documentation of the cases to substantiate claims of repeated difficulties at the border.

Director of Campesino Centers *Mike Mooring* focused discussion on three main problems workers have encountered at the Calexico Port of Entry: 1) the problem U.S. citizens face in gaining admission to the United States even with proof of citizenship, 2) the great difficulty many U.S. citizens encounter in obtaining the U.S. Citizenship Identification Card, and 3) the constant problem of getting micas (green cards) replaced quickly when workers at the border areas lose them. Workers must wait months, sometimes years, for a mica to be replaced while they are stuck on one side of the border.

Following the conference *Velardi* expressed to MLK Director *Anne McGregor* that he was impressed with the level of knowledge and experience of the campesino center staff in the area of immigration. Due to the success of the meeting, another session is being planned for fall with the U.S. State Department which oversees the American Consulate Offices.



Photo by Kathy Ruiz

Brothers *Luis Rojas*, *Alfredo Cervantes*, *Jesus Esparza* and *Francisco Orozoco* of Cooperativa Central in Salinas speak with *Cesar Chavez* and Secretary-Treasurer *Gilbert Padilla*. Cooperativa Central presented the National Farm Worker Health Group with a check for more than \$7,000. The money will provide health services for members.

ORGANIZING

UFW Organizers Arrested in Texas

In two separate incidents several UFW members were arrested while attempting to organize workers in Hidalgo County, Texas. Inciting the arrests was the mayor of McAllen, Texas, *Othal Brand*, one of the largest growers in the Rio Grande Valley.

According to Sister *Rebecca Harrington* of the National Farm Worker Service Center a group of eight organizers went to Griffin and Produce Co. to ask for work in the fields. They were told there wasn't any work. When they tried to leave the premises, *Brand* arrived carrying a pistol and locked the 8 organizers in his compound. He called police officers and filed charges of criminal trespassing against the UFW members. We filed counter-charges against the mayor of false imprisonment and six charges of assault and battery.

Following that incident workers demonstrated in front of a warehouse owned by *Brand* and then marched to his home protesting his exploitation of workers. *Brand* pays the lowest wages in the valley and has been criticized for his exploitation of farm workers by San Juan Mayor *Maldonado*.

The second arrests came while workers were picketing near a field. Agents of the U.S. Wildlife Department arrested seven organizers for trespassing and disturbing the birds with the use of bull horns. According to *Harrington* the arrests were another method of keeping the UFW from talking to the workers about higher wages. The charges have since been dropped.

Following the second arrests, Brother *Jose Saldaña*, UFW organizer, sent a telegram to *Brand* stating, "The majority of the farm worker employees of Griffin and Brand of McAllen in Hidalgo and Starr Counties have signed authorization cards naming the UFW as their bargaining agent in contract negotiations. . . In order that the public record be clear as to the workers' wishes to be represented by the UFW, we invite you to participate in a democratic, free and secret election within the next 15 days, under supervision and guidelines established by a mutually acceptable neutral third party and

agreed upon by both parties.”

Brand responded by telling a newspaper reporter he planned to ignore the request for an election. UFW attorney, Brother *Jim Harrington* says there is no mechanism in Texas law to force a union election unless Griffin and Brand Co. sought an injunction to prohibit further organizing activity by the union. If such an injunction were sought, the judge could order a union election at his discretion.

Calexico

A total of 50 elections have been won by the UFW in the Imperial Valley. In the most recent Calexico election, held at Newman Seed, the workers were totally responsible for the victory. The organizing committee, comprised of Brothers *Sergio Arrendondo*, *Manuel Duron*, *Raul Valenzuela* and *Hernan Mendez*, were credited with doing all the pre-election work. The results were: UFW, 38; no union, 17.

As the vegetable harvest winds down the Imperial Valley, workers are beginning to move north to the Salinas Valley. Although most of the organizing activity moves to Salinas, the Calexico area will still remain active with Sisters *Ann Smith* and *Karen Flock* handling negotiations, Brother *Bill Granfield* in charge of contract administration, Sister *Rosie Aguirre* in field office administration, Brother *Victor Gonzalez* as field representative, and Brother *Juan Guicho* in charge of the Campesino Center.

LABOR

Coors Boycott Activity Increases

Nine ranch committee members in the Calexico area have formed a new committee to promote the boycott of Coors Beer. Two meetings have already taken place to organize boycott activities among the workers.

One of the first activities by the committee was mass leafletting of all the farm labor crews in the area. When one particular crew refused to stop drinking Coors Beer, they were revisited by a special commission, who spoke with the crew and handed out leaflets made up just for them.

Last week the committee sent out a letter to all the stores in Calexico, asking them to stop ordering Coors and advising them that a delegation of workers would soon be visiting them. The letter was signed by representatives of 12 ranch committees.

Workers are also planning a special day of leafletting at the border line and putting bumper stickers on the cars there.

Sales Down

National Boycott Coordinator Brother *Dave Sickler* says the boycott has cut Coors share of the California market from 40% in 1976 to 23.9% in 1977, and estimated that the company's sales in Colorado have dropped by 25%. He said the AFL-CIO plans to intensify the boycott efforts in Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Supporters to Celebrate Farm Worker Week

Activities for the fifth annual Farm Worker Week will be kicked off at a Chicago fund raiser featuring UFW President *Cesar Chavez*.

Farm Worker Week, May 1-7, will sponsor nation-wide walk-

a-thons this year as a means of focusing attention on the farm workers' movement and to raise money for the union as well.

The theme of 1978's Farm Worker Week is "There's Still a Long Way to Go" because, says *Olga Sierra Sandman*, President of the National Farm Worker Ministry; "The farm workers movement has made substantial progress in California, but there's still a long way to go before farm workers all over the country have the organized strength to negotiate with their employers and solve their own problems."

Walk-a-thons are scheduled Saturday, May 6, in 8 cities in Florida, including Orlando, Miami, Tampa and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio and St. Louis, Missouri. Supporters agree to walk a certain number of miles and get as many sponsors as possible to pay a fixed amount per mile walked.

In addition, there will be special worship services in churches and synagogues in the U.S. and Canada to give thanks to the men, women and children who feed America and a good part of the world.

RFK MEDICAL PLAN

What does the Kennedy Plan use to determine how many hours I worked?

The Plan Office receives reports from all companies paying into the Plan as to how many hours you've worked. So the Plan must rely on the reports from your employer or employers which we receive on a monthly or weekly basis.

In order to make sure you are receiving credit for all the hours you worked under UFW contract, be sure to include on the pink form all the companies you worked for or that your family worked for under UFW contract for the nine months before the month of medical service. Be sure to also include your family's social security numbers on the pink form if you are going to combine their hours with your hours.

Because the Plan must use the company's reports be sure to save all your check stubs. Check stubs can be used to prove how many hours you and your family worked.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

Latest Elections

Julius Goldman's Egg City/Oxnard/poultry ranch/UFW, 245; Teamsters, 202, challenged ballots, 17, no union, 1. International Decorative/Escondido/Eucalyptus nursery/UFW, 44; no union, 7; void, 1.

New Certifications

Triple E/Tracy/green tomatoes/4-13-78

BOYCOTT COORS BEER

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