

# 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

### Planning for the Future

In last week's Newsletter we acknowledged the importance of management and planning in order to carry out the business of the union successfully.

We realize now just how important it is to plan out the goals of the union and how to attain them. Many developments, such as the establishment of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, have shown us we need planning in order to perform the increasing number of responsibilities and services for our members.

Now more than ever we know we cannot operate without thoughtful planning in all areas of the union. Effective planning, whether for the entire organization or for a single campaign, includes everyone's ideas, not just those of the leadership. One of the best ways to plan collectively is by calling together a group of people to take part in a planning conference.

We had two major planning conferences in October, bringing together the Executive Board, department heads and field office staff to begin planning some of the areas under collective bargaining, especially negotiations. It was one of the most successful meetings to date because with each person's input we were able to set priorities, identify the major problems and come up with solutions.

In the area of negotiations we are planning for the future by training twelve candidates to become first rate negotiators so we can keep up with the ever-increasing number of contracts that need to be negotiated (see Newsletter, February 13, 1978).

Since these first conferences we've had several one-day planning sessions for projects, including one for the President's Newsletter. Executive Board members and staff helped us set priorities on the type of information we should be reporting to you and how often to publish it. Everything was carefully planned before resuming production on the Newsletter.

I feel these planning conferences are the beginning of a new upward phase of the union. In the near future we'll be meeting with the ranch leadership to plan ways in which we can improve the field office system and the ranch committees. Next week we'll share some of our plans for getting the contracts printed and distributed to the membership much more quickly

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

### Negotiations

#### Another Imperial Valley Agreement Signed

Assisted by a strong negotiating committee headed by Brother *Federico Camberos*, Executive Board Member *Marshall Ganz* reached agreement with Growers' Exchange last week. Ratified by workers on February 18, the contract covers 450 year-round workers at operations in the Imperial Valley, Blythe, Huron, Salinas and Oxnard.

One of the outstanding features of the agreement is the revised piece rate system for lettuce wrapping machine workers. Workers are guaranteed an hourly wage for a certain number of boxes after which they are paid by piece rate.

Formerly, the company counted the number of boxes from

good and bad fields together and gave no consideration to time lost while a machine was broken down or workers were being transferred to another location. Consequently, few workers ever qualified for piece rate.

Under the new agreement, only actual time worked is taken into account when averaging number of boxes per hour and all fields are considered separately. Hourly wage is \$3.63 and the piece rate 75.5 1/2¢ per box. In July, the rate will go to \$3.78 per hour and 77.7¢ per box.

Other features of the contract include frost season waiting time after the first hour, four paid holidays plus Citizenship Participation Day, paid vacations and contributions to the RFK, MLK and JDLC funds.

The contract, effective February 22, expires January 1, 1979 to coincide with other vegetable industry contracts. The February 11, 1977 election netted 260 votes for UFW, 64 for "no union" and 9 challenged ballots. We were certified collective bargaining agent March 14, 1977.

## CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT

### Regents Urged to Join UFW Call for Independent Study

The University of California Board of Regents should join our union in calling on Governor *Brown* to name an independent blue ribbon panel to conduct a thorough social impact study on the effects of mechanization on the farm labor work force.



Photo by David M. Koehler

Farm workers and supporters picketing at U.C. Regents' meeting.

More than 200 union supporters and dozens of UFW members from Oxnard and San Ysidro heard us call upon the Regents to support our call for a third party study to evaluate the displacement caused by U.C.-developed machines and make appropriate recommendations. We spoke to a rare public meeting of the Regents' Committee on Educational Policy on February 16 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The farm workers and supporters picketed outside the building before the meeting began.

We thanked the Regents for the opportunity to address the committee (all witnesses were restricted to five minute talks) and congratulated U.C. on the magnificent breakthroughs they have made in developing mechanization technology. But technology should not only benefit the industry, it should also benefit the workers, we said.

The Regents and U.C. have only finished half of the job with the research on the machines. Now it must address itself to the other half of the task: seeing to the needs of the farm workers and others affected by its research.

We were saddened and dismayed, we told the Regents, that U.C. vigorously opposed our union's social impact study legislation (AB 1192) introduced last year by Assemblyman *Art Torres* (D-Los Angeles). It is no secret that there is a deep disagreement between our union and the university on the impact of its mechanization research on the farm workers.

Mechanization has had a tremendous impact on the work force; farm workers live in fear of the machines and view U.C.'s actions as a horrible menace to their livelihood and security.



Photo by David M. Koehler

February 16—Addressing U.C. Regents in Los Angeles

Therefore, we urged the Regents to join the UFW in asking Gov. *Brown* to appoint a third party group—an independent blue ribbon committee—to execute an impartial study on actual impact of mechanization on farm workers of California. If the university is sincere in its belief that mechanization will not have a serious impact on the workers then they should have no objection to urging the governor to appoint an independent panel. We will wait for their reply.

The following is the text of the telegram we sent Gov. *Brown* on February 16: "As evidenced by the testimony presented by the University of California in opposition to our union's social impact study legislation last year, there is a profound disagreement on the effects of mechanization on the California farm labor work force. This is an urgent matter for the farm workers. We urge you to appoint an independent blue ribbon committee to conduct a thorough social impact study on the effects of mechanization, if any, on the farm workers of this state, and bring forth appropriate recommendations."

We led off 30 witnesses—half from the growers and half from the farm worker perspective—who testified before the Regents.

It is going to become a big issue, we said, so long as farm workers feel threatened and there are no assurances that the university is dealing with the other half of the job of mechanization—the human problems faced by the farm workers and others affected by the machines.

### Machines to Create Appalachia in California

Farm mechanization technology developed by University of California scientist will create another Appalachia in rural California, we told the Delano mechanization conference on February 18.

We spoke to over 200 farm worker leaders as the third in a series of four union-sponsored seminars on farm machines began at the Forty Acres. Many more union members participated in an evening session.

We cited the spread of mechanization to the cotton fields of

California and the coal fields of Kentucky and West Virginia where many jobs were lost and most workers live in poverty and on welfare. The machines wipe out your dignity as well as your jobs, we said.

Also participating in the Delano meeting were First Vice President and Delano office director *Dolores Huerta* and Executive Board Member *Mack Lyons* and his staff from the Citizenship Participation Department in Sacramento.

The last conference on mechanization is scheduled for Calexico on February 25.

## ORGANIZING

### Imperial Valley Election Victories

With three victories in less than one week to their credit, UFW Imperial Valley organizers under the direction of Brother *Artie Rodriguez* are preparing for the last elections of the season.

The Mel Finnerman Company has two operations—one in the Imperial Valley and one in Oxnard. Organizer for the Imperial Valley Finnerman election was Brother *Jesus Torres*, president of the ranch committee at Associated Produce, Salinas. The Imperial Valley ballot count was UFW, 93; International United Agricultural Workers, 2; no union, 6; challenges, 20; and void, 4. We had no organizers assigned to the Oxnard operation but still managed to get 24 votes, with the IUAW taking 28, no union, 24 and 10 ballots challenged. Company-wide, we easily won the February 10 election with a total vote of UFW, 117; IUAW, 30; no union, 29; challenges, 30; and four ballots voided.

Brother *Lupe Cordova* of San Luis was the organizer for the election at Holtville Farms on February 13. We won handily with a vote count of 20 for the UFW; no union, 7; and four challenged ballots. The workers at Holtville Farms were already earning wages comparable to ours but voted for the UFW in order to be eligible for the benefits and protection of our union.

The N.A. Pricola election, held February 14, was the responsibility of Organizer *Hector Perez*, president of the Salinas Marketing ranch committee. The vote at Pricola was almost unanimous for us with 27 votes for the UFW and one vote for "no union."

Brother *Rodriguez* credits the victories to the outstanding work done by Organizers *Cordova*, *Perez* and *Torres* and Brother *Mark Sharwood* who handled the propaganda.

## OFFICIAL NOTICES

### New Contracts

Growers Exchange/Imperial Valley, Blythe, Salinas, Oxnard, Huron/lettuce, celery

### Latest Elections

Holtville Farms/Calexico/lettuce, alfalfa/UFW, 20; no union, 7; challenges, 4.

N.A. Pricola/Calexico/lettuce, cabbage, melons/UFW, 27; no union, 1.

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