

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

Una Sola Union in Texas

In late December we responded to a request for help from our brothers and sisters in Texas. Farm workers there are anxious to organize a viable union in order to get contracts—the main goal of collective bargaining. Brother *Manuel Chavez* and others are there to help them accomplish their goal.

Our seven day visit to Texas gave us a first hand look at the situation and ideas on how we can give assistance in planning and carrying out a successful organizing campaign. We saw farm workers who make less than \$2.00 an hour and work Sundays and holidays without extra pay. In the expanding Rio Grande Valley there are now 10,000 citrus workers at peak.

Our tour included the towns of McAllen, San Juan and Brownsville, Texas. We also went to Reynosa and Matamoros, Mexico where we met with Mexican labor leaders from the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos (Confederation of Mexican Workers) who are interested in helping our union in Texas.

While in Texas we met with farm workers, officials of the Texas AFL-CIO, churchmen and chicano groups. In one place we leafleted 6,000 workers, many of whom knew about the union and showed us their old UFW cards.

A rally in San Juan, Texas attracted more than 300 enthusiastic farm workers. The workers are eager to begin the fight to get contracts. They feel that *Tony Orendain*, who split from the UFW to form the Texas Farm Workers Union two years ago has not made any progress. They strongly emphasized that their desire is for one strong union—una sola union.

Working with the brothers and sisters in Texas, we decided on a goal for the organizing campaign: to organize all farm workers under the banner of the UFW to secure the benefits of collective bargaining as soon as possible. Brother *Manuel Chavez* will direct the operation which will include educating the workers on the benefits of union membership and collective bargaining, providing services and getting them involved in organizing.

On the whole, we feel the trip to Texas was very productive not only because of the assistance we were able to give, but because we realized once more that the struggle for justice is not only confined to California.

Mechanization Campaign Begins

We are focussing on a campaign to educate farm workers and the public on the impact of mechanization in the fields.

Executive Board Member *Mack Lyons* and his Citizenship Participation Department staff, as well as California boycott staff are setting up a series of conferences in the state to outline the extent of the problem, its causes and possible solutions. Mechanization threatens to displace at least 120,000 farm workers within the next ten years—that's 1/2 to 1/3 of the entire state farm work force.

An example of what we can expect is the electronic-eye tomato sorter which was widely used for the first time this

summer. Each machine reduces the number of workers on a harvester from about 20 to 5—a 66% to 90% displacement.

The state estimates at least 6,600 workers will lose their jobs this year because of the sorter. And the State Assembly Office of Research states in a report that the number of farm workers displaced by the sorter alone will reach 11,300. As a direct result of the unemployment will come an increase in health problems, social disruption and crime. Thus, farm workers are not the only ones who suffer. Society as a whole suffers too.

Not only is the State of California ignoring the problem, but one state agency—the University of California—has been a prime backer of agricultural mechanization. In the past year UC spent \$1.6 million of public money in researching and developing 29 different mechanization projects. Under the guise of the University, the growers have found a research unit, paid for at taxpayer expense.

Due to the crisis situation at hand, we will be conducting two conferences on mechanization the next few weeks. We're asking all ranch committee officers, stewards, UFW staff and supporters to attend one of the following conferences:

February 4, 1978 San Jose, California

February 11, 1978 Los Angeles, California

We will be presenting the problem in detail and discussing possible solutions including legislation. We'll include the exact time and location for both conferences in next week's issue of the newsletter.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Negotiations

The signing of the Schell Ranch and Packing Company and Richard A. Glass Company agreements brings an additional 200 citrus workers in the Coachella Valley under union contract. According to UFW Second Vice President *Eliseo Medina*, more than 2,000 farm workers in the Coachella area are currently enjoying the benefits of UFW contracts.

The results of the November, 1975 election at Schell were UFW, 17; Teamsters, 2; no union, 3; challenged, 6. The Glass election, held January, 1977, resulted in a score of 46 for the UFW; 12 for no union; and 6 challenged ballots. We were certified collective bargaining agent for workers at Schell November 18, 1975 and at Glass April 25, 1977.

Brother *Medina* met first with Schell and later with both companies together to work out an agreement. Details of the Schell and Glass contracts are basically the same. Wages for general labor are increased to \$3.35 per hour this year and are scheduled to go to \$3.55 and \$3.76 per hour in the second and third years of the contract. Wages of tractor drivers and irrigators go up to \$3.75 per hour—a 50¢ per hour increase—and to \$3.95 and \$4.16 per hour in the second and third years. Citrus piece rate workers are guaranteed a minimum base rate to be adjusted according to grove conditions with disagreements to be arbitrated. The rates and system are open for renegotiation in the second and third years of the agreement.

Four paid holidays per year are included in contract benefits. With one year seniority, employees working 1,300 hours during the year will receive two weeks paid vacation. For those not qualifying for the regular vacation plan, contributions will be made to the Naji Daifallah Vacation Plan, with accumulated funds sent to the workers at the end of the year. In addition, all members are entitled to benefits under the Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan, Martin Luther King, Jr. Farm Worker Fund and Juan de la Cruz Pension Fund.

AGRICULTURAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

McAnally Enterprises, Inc.

McAnally Enterprises, Inc., a large egg producer with several operations, hired a uniformed guard and constructed a gate across the entrance to the ranch when the UFW began to organize employees at their Lakeview Ranch. The company contended that organizers might spread chicken disease. Since an epidemic of Newcastle's disease a few years ago, it is an industry-wide practice to refuse to allow non-employees to enter chicken houses. However, the company did not limit access to just the chicken houses but included parking lots, lunchroom and employee homes located on the property. Several organizers were arrested and some workers were fired.

The ALRB ruled McAnally had denied workers the opportunity to select or reject a bargaining agent. The company was ordered to immediately offer Sister *Azucena Hernandez* and Brothers *Manuel Vargas* and *Concepcion Diaz* reinstatement to their former or equivalent jobs without loss of seniority and to make them whole for any losses suffered as the result of their termination.

Further, Sister *Azucena Hernandez* and Brother *Manuel Vargas* must be offered occupancy of their former or equivalent home on company property and made whole for any losses suffered by reason of eviction, including legal costs.

The UFW may take access without the usual filing of intent or showing of interest. The limit of four 30-day access periods shall not apply and there is to be no limit to number of organizers during regular access hours. The union is to have two hours of company time for organizing purposes and to be allowed reasonable space on company bulletin boards. The usual Notice to Employees is to be posted, mailed and read to workers.

Settlements

Misakian Vineyards (Delano)

The company has agreed to rehire five workers fired in 1975 and to a settlement of \$5,600 to the workers in payment of back wages.

Delano 1977 Settlements

UFW First Vice President *Dolores Huerta* reports that unfair labor practice settlements in the Delano area amounted to \$51,228.83 for the year 1977. The settlements involved 170 farm workers and 16 companies.

CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT

They Never Stop

A proposed initiative petition which would prohibit access, secondary boycotts and pre-petition lists has just been approved for circulation by the Secretary of State.

The measure, titled "Agricultural Labor Relations Initiative Statute," would amend the Agricultural Labor Relations Act to provide that exercise of workers' rights shall not infringe upon the private property rights of any citizen.

If certified for the ballot and enacted into law by the voters, the initiative would: 1) Prohibit access except on a case-by-case basis. Since the peak employment season when election campaigns can be waged are usually very short and it would take many months to get a ruling from the ALRB on access using a case-by-case method, this amendment would effectively deny the union the right to take its case to the workers. 2) The measure prohibits secondary boycotts: "Publicity, which includes picketing, by labor organizations which has the effect of requesting the public to cease patronizing an employer other than an employer with whom the labor organization has a primary dispute shall be prohibited." 3) It also prohibits pre-petition lists. The ALRB could not make employee lists available to a third party until an election is called.

The proposed initiative would also restrict access to areas of the ranch designated by the grower where union organizers could speak with workers. This concept has been rejected by the ALRB because it puts the spotlight on workers who are

sympathetic to the union and targets workers for special attention by their employer.

The initiative was proposed by *Stephen Pietrolungo*, owner of Green Thumb Nurseries, and *James A. Hessler, Jr.*, a Green Thumb employee. Both are from Canoga Park, California. (Green Thumb Nurseries was one of the companies which agreed to honor our Hemet Wholesale boycott.) The measure is being backed by the California Nurserymen's Association.

According to news accounts, student support groups have been set up at Cal State Northridge, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, UCLA and UC Davis to circulate the petition. A minimum of 312,404 signatures are required by May 18, 1978 to qualify the initiative for the November ballot.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

PERSONNEL

Notice to All Staff

Effective immediately all personnel inquiries and information are to be directed to Father *Ken Irrgang*, Assistant to the President on Personnel Matters.

New Staff	Office	Department
Lupe Cordova	Calexico	Organizing
Anita Romero	La Paz	Cent. Admin.
Carlos Vejar	La Paz	Cent. Admin.

SOCIAL ACTION/NONVIOLENCE

King and Nonviolence

In honor of the birthday, January 15, 1929, of *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* we are publishing the following excerpt from an article we wrote for an upcoming issue of Maryknoll Magazine. (Maryknoll is the official magazine of the Maryknoll Fathers, a Catholic missionary order headquartered in New York State.)

"*Dr. King's* entire life was an example of the power that non-violence brings to bear in the real world. It is an example that inspired much of the philosophy and strategy of the farm workers' movement.

"Our conviction is that human life is a very special possession given by God to man and that no one has the right to take it for any reason or for any cause, however just it may be.

"We are also convinced that nonviolence is more powerful than violence. If, for every violent act against us, we respond with nonviolence, we attract people's support. We can gather the support of millions who would rather see a nonviolent solution to problems. We are convinced that when people are faced with a direct appeal from the poor struggling non-violently against great odds, they will react positively. People everywhere still yearn for justice.

"We advocate militant nonviolence as our means of achieving justice for our people, but we are not blind to the feelings of frustration, impatience and anger which seethe inside every farm worker. The burdens of generations of poverty and powerlessness lie heavy in the fields of America.

"It is precisely to overcome these frustrations that we have involved masses of people in their own struggle throughout the movement. Thus demonstrations and marches, strikes and boycotts are not only weapons against the growers, but our way of avoiding the senseless violence that brings no honor to any class or community."

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