

## BUILDING THE WINNING BOYCOTT

The Boycott in each city is a four-pronged operation requiring organization of (I) the Community, (II) the Church, (III) the Schools, and (IV) Labor.

### I. Organization of the Community

The City should be divided into workable areas with one Organizer assigned to each area. The Organizer, by means of House Meetings, will locate, educate, "turn on" and activate a large, permanent cadre of Boycott Volunteers who will make up the area's action crew and the area-wide Farm Workers Support Organization.

A House Meeting is simply a few friends someone calls together in the home so that the Organizer can come and "make them an offer they simply can't refuse". There are several steps leading to the House Meeting.

#### A. Finding that "Someone"

Somewhere in every area are people who are ready to be persuaded to hold a House Meeting; and the Organizer's first job is to find them. A Priest, a Minister, or the head of some other broad-based organization can often flush them out. Don't merely get a list of names from such leaders; persuade them to take you around and introduce you personally and help you convince the prospects to let you return later and talk to them at length.

Also, in every Boycott office are lists of people who, at one time or another have picketed, subscribed to El Malcriado, made financial contributions to the Union, etc. These should be phoned and persuaded to let the Organizer come and talk to them. Never try to sell them over the phone on the idea of helping; it's much easier for them to turn you down through Ma Bell than when you're looking them straight in the eye.

A couple of good openers over the phone are: "Have you heard about the new organization we're building in this area?" or "Have you heard about the new strategy we're using this year to stop the grapes?" Of course they haven't, so your next ploy will be: "You haven't! Well, why don't I come over and tell you about it. Only take about twenty minutes. How about this afternoon? Tonight? Well, how about tomorrow, then?"

#### B. The Preliminary Meeting

Once in the house of the potential House Meeting Holder, (the future "host") the Organizer's job is two-fold: selling that person on the idea of holding a House Meeting, and providing enough information so that the person will know what he or she is talking about in convincing friends to come to the house for the meeting. The Organizer can accomplish both objectives by giving a brief, dramatic presentation along the following lines:

"The UFW is now going through one of the most critical periods in its entire history. The Grower-Teamster combine has ripped off all but one of our table-grape contracts; and the Teamsters are now on a \$100,000 a month rampage throughout California in a massive effort to destroy our Union.

To prevent this from happening, to regain those contracts, we've got to get the help of thousands of people like you who will agree to call together a few people in their homes so I can come and tell them of the horrible conditions under which the farm workers lived and worked before the coming of the Union, the long heart-breaking struggle of Caesar Chavez and a few others to build this Union, how they eventually defeated the Growers and won the contracts which made it possible for the farm workers, for the first time in history, to stand up and demand and get their rights in the fields of California.

And finally, of how, in the most nauseating type of intercourse in the whole history of labor, the Teamsters joined forces with the growers, ripped off all but one of our table-grape contracts and slammed the workers back down into the hateful peonage and exploitation of the past.

This is the message that we must bring to tens of thousands of people right in their homes, so that they, in turn, will join with us in convincing millions of others not to buy grapes, lettuce, and Gallo wines. Will you help by having a few friends and neighbors come to your house as soon as possible so I can come and go to work on them?"

### C. Reminders and Rejections

Since there is usually a gap of several days between the Preliminary Meeting and the House Meeting, in order to make sure your "host" is definitely organizing the friends and neighbors to come, the Organizer will want to make reminder phone calls after the Preliminary Meeting. The last call should be made two nights before the proposed House Meeting itself--just to make sure everything is coming along all right and, in particular, to see to it that the host remembered to invite the people to the meeting, as well as to answer any questions the host may have run into in the course of organizing the House Meeting.

Sometimes, you run into the Organizer's "bug-a-boo" - the "House Meeting nobody came to!" This morale-buster usually occurs because in the Organizer's over-confidence or haste to crowd too many things into a limited length of time, or just plain laziness, he/she knowingly omitted one essential step in achieving the objective and fell flat on his/her face. With that empty house staring you in the face, there is only one thing to do: grab your host and get him/her to take you around to call on one or two of the people who were supposed to come and didn't. In this way you salvage at least some of the planned night's work. Then when you take a look at what you did wrong you will see that either you failed to "sell" your host sufficiently or to give him/her enough information to use in selling the people, or you neglected to remind the host often enough to remind the people, or all three. When you can admit that you, rather than someone else, were at fault, you are well on your way to becoming an organizer - especially if you profit by your mistake.

#### D. The House Meeting

Assuming Organizer and "host" have done their work well, and the people have responded, the meeting will proceed as follows:

1. Introduction: The host presents the Organizer, who thanks the host for calling the people together. Then the Organizer explains briefly that she/he has made a commitment of so many months or years as an unsalaried volunteer to help the Farm Workers win their struggle. The Organizer then asks those present to introduce themselves, at the same time passing around a tablet to obtain the names, addresses and phone numbers both for future use and to use as an immediate aid in addressing the people by name.

#### 2. Content of Presentation

- a) Open on the same dramatic note described above (under "Preliminary Meeting, Page 1)
- b) Describe the century-long subjugation of the Farm Workers, their sub-human living and working conditions, and their long, fruitless struggle to exact justice from the growers through organization.
- c) Ask for questions
- d) Describe how Caesar came in and, with the help of Dolores, Manuel and a few others, built the organization which launched the historic, 3-year Grape Boycott that defeated the growers and won the contracts
- e) Explain the contracts (Hiring Hall, Pesticide Protection, Medical Plan, Seniority, etc.)
- f) Ask for questions
- g) The lettuce strike.
- h) Tell how the growers, failing to crush the Union in economic combat, tried the political route (in Washington, Oregon and California) and, failing again, in desperation signed 70 sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters; and in the summer of 1973, in collusion with the same cut-throats, seriously injured 200 Farm Worker members, shot 17, murdered two, sent over 4,000 to jail with injunctions obtained in the Court House bargain basement, and are now engaged in that statewide \$100,000-a-month rampage to destroy our Union.

#### 3. The Climax

Now is the time to really ram it into them. "There is only one way out of this bloody mess and that is to convince at least a quarter of the American public not to buy the boycotted products (as we did in 1970) and thus drive down the sales to a point where the growers are hurting so much that they'll have to restore our contracts to us or go bankrupt! The only way this can be done effectively is: -

- a) For each person here to hold a House Meeting. I am just one person and even though I'm putting in 14 hours a day I'll never be able to make even the slightest dent in this huge area by myself. But if each person in this room will lead to me others by holding a House Meeting, and those others will lead me to still more, etc. (like a tupperware party) and the same process

is repeated in fifty homes throughout this area, gradually hundreds of people will begin to understand and become:

- b) Volunteers for the Action Program: By helping us with our picketing, our human bill-boarding, our leaflet distribution, and our delegations, you and others will spread the word not merely to hundreds, but to hundreds of thousands, and thus help us grow from the tiny group we are now to a vast army stretching clear across this entire area.

"You see how it will work? O.K., who's going to volunteer to hold a House Meeting? How about you? O.K.? How about tomorrow night? The next night?

"All right, which one of you will help us this week-end with the picketting and human bill-boarding? etc.

"Now there's one more thing we need, and that's - - -

- c) Money: We all get \$5.00 a week for expenses, so that your money goes to support the strikers, not for fancy salaries like the Teamsters get. We are the only Union that can make that claim. (Let's not forget to make it.) If you have any old, moldy money that you've been meaning to throw away, now is your chance. We'll take anything from 25' to 30 million dollars."

E. Area-wide Farm Workers Support Organization:

Once the Organizer has held from 30 to 50 successful House Meetings in the area to which he/she is assigned and drawn at least 50 to 100 new people into the Action Program, it is time to call them together to form an area-wide group. In the beginning, while the House Meeting drive is still going on, this group will meet monthly; then, when the Drive is completed, it will meet every week. This organization will be composed of people who have been fired up at the House Meetings or in the Action Program. It will provide a channel for their greater participation in the planning of the local Boycott operation, their continuous education in the county, state, national and international program, a heightening of their morale, and the development of loyalty and assistance to the Union.

1. Content of Meeting: Meetings will be planned by the Organizer with the help of the Planning Committee of the People. They will be structured as follows:
- a) A report by the Organizer concerning the local, state, national and international Boycott.
  - b) Reports by activist leaders on the progress of various Action Programs (with full credit given to those who made substantial contributions)
  - c) Union songs

- d) Films, slides, speakers (a Farm Worker, a labor attorney, Director of the city-wide operation)
- e) Skits and "actos" illustrating effective techniques used in Action Programs
- f) Open discussion to evaluate past actions, and plans for the future.

2. Holding Successful Meetings:

Such meetings, to serve their intended purpose, must be well attended. To guarantee attendance: a) Advertise the meeting by post-card or newsletter and telephone, b) Plan and put on interesting, exciting fast-moving meetings.

3. Unique Character of Support Organization

This organization is unique in that it is not a totally independent entity; the Support group is semi-autonomous in that its actions must always be in accord with Union policy. In a sense, it is the strong right arm of the Organizer who chairs its meetings. It has no by-laws or elected officers since these are the prerogatives of the Union itself. As far as Committee structure is concerned, in addition to the Planning group, the organization may decide to create committees on such things as Fund Raising, telephoning, legislation, entertainment, etc.

4. The Love-Hate Affair with the Phone

By the time the Organizer has formed the Support Organization, she/he will probably come to hate the phone because of the amount of time he/she must spend yacking into it, as much as he loves it because of the quantity of effective work it enables him to do within a relatively short time.

Nearly every Organizer goes through at least two phases of this love-hate relationship. The initial fascination is often so great it becomes actually painful to break the connection. This soon gives way to frustration when, at the end of two hours, there remains a back-log of 50 to 60 calls still to be made. Eventually, the point is reached where the Organizer is able to average 100 calls during a two-hour phoning period. This is the level that must be maintained if the Organizer is to get through his gradually increasing list of activists.

5. The Chart and the Habit

The key is the telephone chart, and habit. List all new contacts down the left side of the page, together with their phone numbers. Along the top of the page list the days of the month. Draw the necessary vertical and horizontal lines. Make it a habit of spending a minimum of two hours on the phone every day. Set aside a definite period for this every morning and between 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. After three fruitless calls on a person, it's time to clear out the deadwood.

6. One More Chance

The worst trip they can lay on an Organizer is to fail to tell him/her whether or not they will help, but simply say "I'll try"--which of course means double, triple NO! A nice easy response to this, with an almost imperceptible bite would be:

"You know, Mrs. Jones, when I first met you, you seemed really interested. But lately for some reason, you just don't show up. I wish you'd tell me definitely "yes" or "no", because I just haven't time to keep phoning you unless you are really interested in helping the Farm Workers!"

This may turn the trick because our supporters usually have a very sensitive guilty bone. Play on it that fatal third time before relegating them, for good and all, to the deadwood pile.

## II. THE CHURCH

### A. Council of Churches

- 1) public endorsement
- 2) speak to meeting
- 3) letter to affiliated churches
- 4) money
- 5) use of office machines
- 6) periodic special mailings about farm workers to local churches, updating them on the latest information

### B. Denomination heads

- 1) public endorsement
- 2) pastoral or special letter to parishes asking that
  - a) the letter be read from the pulpit
  - b) support the boycott of grapes, lettuce, etc.
  - c) invite UFW speaker to your church
  - d) give address of UFW office for further information
- 3) Join inter-faith committee or coordinate one
- 4) Appoint someone to work with you (usually the denomination heads are too busy to give you much time)
- 5) Attend meetings with grocery store chains
- 6) Use office machines
- 7) Run leaflets
- 8) Give money

### C. Local church

- 1) endorsement
- 2) speak at service or coffee hour
- 3) speak to social action committee or any other church group that will listen to you
- 4) put leaflets in bulletin mailing
- 5) put blurbs in bulletin
- 6) have special forum or special service on farm workers
- 7) give food and/or money (examples: St. Malachi Church gives the Cleveland boycott 5 dozen eggs a week and has been doing so since September, 1973. St. Marks UCC gives a monthly pledge of \$25.00)

8) get minister and other people in the church to picket

D. Church committees

- 1) arrange forums or special farm workers services
- 2) arrange for speaking to church groups and get their endorsement
- 3) have fund raisers at the church, such as bake sales, bingo, fiesta, etc.
- 4) put blurb in bulletin
- 5) put inserts in bulletin or leaflet the church
- 6) get pickets out

III. SCHOOLS

A. Ask to speak to the Social Studies, political science, current affairs, religion classes, or at an all-school assembly

B. Get the lettuce and grapes out of the school cafeteria

C. Form a school committee

D. School Committees

- 1) leaflet the school and/or set up information table
- 2) have fund raisers, bake sale, dance, car wash, sell buttons
- 3) have food drive
- 4) put article in school paper
- 5) arrange to speak to classes
- 6) get students out to picket

E. Fund Raising

- 1) Fasts in schools where most of the students eat in the school cafeteria can be very profitable. Get the school to agree to reimburse you the cost of a meal for every student who does not eat at the cafeteria. At Oberlin College we have done it twice. First time about 600 students fasted on dinner and we got \$1,000.00. The second time 1,069 students fasted at lunch and we got \$633.94. (Cost of dinner is greater than cost of lunch.)
- 2) Walkathon and/or Fast-a-thon:  
Get students to walk a certain distance, and have them find sponsors who will pay so much per mile for every mile they walk. Organize a church youth group or other group to fast for a day or a weekend and they can get sponsors to pledge so much money for each hour fasted.

IV. UNIONS

First visit the District Director and the Central Labor Council President.

A. From the Central Labor Council you can ask

- 1) to speak to the delegates' meeting
  - a) to get endorsement
  - b) to ask for money (floor collection, monthly pledge)

- 2) that a letter be sent out to the affiliates, requesting help for the farm workers
  - 3) for articles and/or blurbs on the boycott in their publications on a regular basis
  - 4) to use office machines
  - 5) them to run leaflets for us
  - 6) appoint a boycott committee
- B. From the District Council of the Union you can ask
- 1) to speak at District Meeting (composed of all the locals of that particular union)
    - a) get endorsement
    - b) ask for money (floor collection, monthly pledge)
  - 2) for a letter to the locals asking for help
  - 3) for regular publicity in their paper
  - 4) for use of their office machines
  - 5) help in running leaflets
  - 6) that a boycott committee be appointed
- C. From Local Unions ask
- 1) to speak at membership meeting
    - a) to get endorsement
    - b) ask for money (floor collection, union donation, gate collection)
  - 2) publicity in paper
  - 3) to leaflet the plant through the stewards
  - 4) to post boycott material in plants
- D. Union Committee
- 1) Have them get you in the union meeting to speak
  - 2) get the endorsement for the boycott
  - 3) arrange a gate collection (and help with it) or set up a monthly donation
  - 4) make sure that the paper is giving us publicity
  - 5) get pickets
  - 6) arrange inside leafletting of plant
- E. Fund raising
1. Gate collections
    - a) Get permission from union
    - b) pick a day when the workers are likely to have money (the day after pay day)
    - c) Leaflet the plant announcing the collection the day before, making sure the UFW and the Union's name are on the leaflet
    - d) get union officers to help with the collection on every shift
    - d) if the Union is strong, they can take up the collection in the plant through the stewards (usually resulting in more money)
    - f) count \$ at the Union hall and immediately report total
    - g) send a nice letter with a receipt thanking the local
    - h) keep a file of the unions and dates of collections and amount collected for future reference
    - i) schedule one good gate collection each month



2. Monthly pledges by Unions

It is better to get \$25.00 a month for a year than \$300.00 all at once. This way you have a steady income, the Union is committed for a long time, and they remember the Boycott every month when they mail out the check.

IV. The Area-Wide Alliance

As the support groups in the Churches, the Schools, and Labor Unions are formed, representatives of these should become part of the area-wide Farm Workers Support Organization. This will create an alliance between the people at the grassroots level and those who represent the various institutions in the community - the beginning of a real power-base in that community.