

Farm Workers in Texas End Two-Month March

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Special to The New York Times

AUSTIN, Tex., Sept. 4 — About 300 Mexican-American farm workers shouting "huelga," the Spanish word for labor strike, trudged into Austin late this afternoon ending a 400-mile march from the Rio Grande Valley to the Texas capital. The march was held to dramatize a demand for a minimum wage of \$1.25 an hour. The two-month march, supported by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, was joined in the last few miles by a vanguard of Negroes from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Atlanta-based civil rights organization that is headed by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Men, women and children were in the group of the Mexican-Americans.

Tomorrow, the marchers and sympathizers will rally at the Capitol to renew their demands for higher pay and better living conditions.

Texas politicians have been invited to be present.

Hundreds of sympathizers arrived in Austin late today, and leaders of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. said that more than 10,000 people would be on hand for the rally at 11 A.M. tomorrow.

Began on July 4

The march, which began July 4, is believed to be the first demonstration in Texas by any sizable segment of the more than 2 million Mexican-Americans living in the state. About 300,000 of them were registered to vote this year for the first time.

Marching in front of the group today as it neared Austin was Eugene Nelson, a 36-year-old California labor leader who organized the march.

"This is a green power movement," said Mr. Nelson, an author who has become a labor organizer. Mr. Nelson said he was referring to money when he said green power.

It was a typically hot Texas summer day as the marchers made the last leg of their journey from a spot 11 miles south of here. The official temperature was 94 degrees, but it was 10 to 15 degrees hotter along the pavement on Interstate Highway 35.

Carrying dozens of red "huelga" flags, which have a black thunderbird in the center, the marchers plodded along. Occasionally, several of them sang a marching song one of their number had written. The singers were accompanied by an accordion.

The last line of the song, translated from Spanish, says: "If there is no satisfaction in Austin, then it is on to Washington."

Along the route from Rio Grande City, where the march began, the marchers have been the center of attention in an area of the state dominated by Mexican-Americans.

Center of Attention

Today, as they went into an area of Texas where there are few Mexican-Americans, they still were the center of attention.

"Viva la marcha," a motorist passing in an old pickup truck yelled at the group as it marched along the highway. "Viva la huelga," replied the marchers.

"This has been a remarkable experience," said the Rev. Henry J. Casso, a Roman Catholic priest from San Antonio who was on the march today. "More than 400 miles and not a single incident."

Mayors and city officials of many of the cities along the circuitous route turned out to greet the marchers along the way, and in several instances pledged their support in political action.

During most of their two months on the highway, the marchers were paced by a gray burro with \$1.25 painted in pink on his side. The burro had the day off today and grazed in a pasture south of here.

Only about 25 marchers have made the entire trip. Three of these were more than 70 years old, and one was 83 years old, a march leader said.

Wage Law Urged

When he organized the march, Mr. Nelson said that the farm workers, most of whom made less than 80 cents an hour, hoped to meet with Gov. John O. Connally to ask him to call a special session of the State Legislature to pass a \$1.25 an hour minimum wage law.

Texas has no minimum wage law and very few of the hundreds of thousands of farm workers in Texas will be covered by the new Federal minimum wage law.

Governor Connally met the

demonstrators last Wednesday at New Braunfels.

The Governor said he sympathized with the workers, but said he would not call the Legislature into session and would not be in Austin to meet them tomorrow.

Mr. Connally urged the demonstration planned for Austin not be held. There could be trouble, he said.

The marchers rejected any suggestion that the demonstration be canceled and asked for police protection. Police Chief Robert A. Miles of Austin said he did not expect any difficulties but he said the city police would be available if needed.

'A Slap in the Face'

March leaders said privately that they believed Governor Connally's statements had helped their cause. "It focused public attention on the demonstration," said the Reverend Casso.

The Rev. Sherrill Smith, a Catholic priest who has been on the march for almost the entire 400 miles, called the Governor's visit "a slap in the face, a pat on the head, the great white father type of thing." The visit created a new determination in

the marchers to win, the Reverend Smith said.

Although the south Texas labor movement was started by Mr. Nelson without any money and without the backing of organized labor, the march has gained wide support from national labor unions.

Henry S. Brown, president of the Texas A.F.L.-C.I.O. Council, walked the last few miles today wearing black dress shoes. He urged the marchers to continue their "good fight."

A number of Protestant ministers also took part in the march. Three Catholic bishops in Texas have endorsed the march. A priest, the Rev. Antonio Gonzalez, and a Baptist minister, the Rev. James L. Novarro, both of Houston, collected food and clothing for the marchers, and walked much of the way with the farm workers.

Representatives of the National Council of Churches also were in the line of march today.

Cesar Chavez of Delano, Calif., who organized California grape pickers last year, joined the marchers for a short time this afternoon before leaving to attend a reception given for him by the Texas Liberal Democratic party.

Mr. Chavez is the general

secretary of an agricultural workers' union that is being formed out of the National Farm Workers Association, which he founded in 1962 when he began organizing California farm laborers.

The South Texas Movement, started by Mr. Nelson has affiliated with his union.

Mr. Chavez and Mr. Nelson have been given an organizing charter by the A.F.L.-C.I.O., a step preliminary to full membership in the union federation.

A dispute between the Mexican-Americans and a group of Negro marchers from east Texas had apparently been settled today.

The Negroes marched from Huntsville, north of Houston, to join the farm workers, but one priest said the Negroes were not welcomed. "This march is an entirely different movement from the civil rights movement," he said.

However, the Negroes joined the Mexican-Americans late this afternoon, and the Rev. Andrew W. Young, secretary treasurer of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, arrived this afternoon to lead a Negro delegation at tomorrow's rally.