

(1) Telegram from Cruz Reynoso to Cesar Chavez 1970

Western Union Telegram

May 13, 1970

Mr. Cesar Chavez, Director
United Farmworkers Organizing Committee
Garces Highway
Delano, California

Dear Cesar:

Last Friday, May 8, 1970, United Farm Workers Organizing Committee pickets appeared in front of the administrative offices of California Rural Legal Assistance in San Francisco. Our office is an improbable site to UFWOC pickets since we in CRLA have worked tirelessly on behalf of California farm workers and the many other rural poor. In addition I had received no complaint from the Union. I called you immediately. You expressed the gravest concern over a report that one of our employees in the Santa Maria office was negotiating for a group of local farm workers. I agreed that the report was very serious in that such activity on the part of CRLA personnel is explicitly prohibited under the terms of our grant from Office of Economic Opportunity. We have always adhered strictly to the terms of the CEO grant.

I have investigated the matter thoroughly. Please accept my unqualified assurances that no CRLA employee is engaging in, has engaged in, or has intended to engage in any negotiations with any grower or other employer on behalf of farm workers.

The facts are these. A staff member in the Santa Maria CRLA office was seen by three individual farm worker clients on two occasions during the first week of May, 1970. These clients requested general information regarding the rights of workers in the area of piece rate wages and employee benefits.

One of the clients, I understand, is an UFWOC official. As you know, we are even-handed in serving low-income poor, discriminating neither in favor of nor against our clients on the basis of union membership.

Providing general information to individual clients has long been one of the functions of CRLA. A Santa Maria staff member proceeded to do research on the legal questions posed by the individual clients in the present matter. As part of that research, our employee called the UFWOC expert on health and other employee benefits. Apparently it was this legal research which led to the mistaken report that a CRLA employee was entering into negotiations on behalf of farm workers.

As you know, we share with you a deep concern and commitment to the farm worker and the rural poor. I assure you that we are keenly aware of our role as lawyers, and not as organizers. Please call me if you have any question. Meanwhile, I sincerely hope that this misunderstanding is at an end and that the UFWOC pickets will be removed.

We in CRLA are anxious to devote our full attention to serving our clients.

If similar concerns arise in the future I will be anxious to meet with you so we may prevent this type of misunderstanding.

CRUZ REYNOSO
DIRECTOR OF CRLA