

## CMM Newsletter: Union Building is More Hard Work. 1971

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### Union Building Is More Hard Work

The work involved in building a national union for farm workers is beyond description. Consider the bare statistics: 40,000 members; 30,000 of them in the last 10 months; if the lettuce growers sign contracts that will mean 20,000 more; approximately 200 ranches under contract with the possibility of 200 more this year. Every ranch has to elect a 5-man ranch committee. Every crew must select a steward. The committee and the stewards have to be trained to know everything about the contracts & to know how to enforce them. The new members must also learn about the union & the contract & the credit union & the Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan, etc. Many of the members were strikebreakers; some were even active opponents of the union before the victories. Every member has to be on file by alphabet & SS number; every member has to have a plastic membership card that shows his quarterly dues payment (dues are paid directly by the workers; they are not collected by the company). Hiring halls have to be established in every major farm worker area (14 new ones in the past 12 months). A decent seniority system has to be agreed to & implemented. Membership records must be kept & services provided by the area offices. Farm workers must be trained to staff these offices and to work with the ranch committees & the shop stewards. Clinics & huelga schools and co-ops need to be developed in each new area. At the same time the boycott is carried on in every major city of the country. Organizers have been sent to new areas in Wash. State, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colo. & Florida. And it is all being done: 16-hrs. per day, 7 days per week, every week of the year. There are enormous problems! Some growers fight the changes. Labor contractors try to disrupt the hiring halls. Farm workers who in the past could complain only about the growers & the labor contractors can now complain about the union. But despite the problems the revolution in agricultural labor is being implemented. It will take years & the struggle must spread to every state. But the United Farm Workers intend to stay with it one day at a time for as long as it takes!

### Lettuce Boycott

On March 26, 1971, the Teamsters & the United Farm Workers signed a 3-year jurisdictional agreement that ended the Teamster-UFWOC dispute in lettuce. UFWOC's right to organize field workers is protected. Future jurisdictional disputes, should they occur, will be handled in 3 steps: (a) direct negotiation between the 2 unions (5-days); (b) mediation by Catholic Bishops Committee (15 days); (c) binding arbitration by an impartial arbitrator jointly appointed by George Meany, Pres. Of the AFL-CIO & Frank Fitzsimmons, Genl. Vice Pres. Of the Teamsters. Meany & Fitzsimmons countersigned the 3 years agreement. As a result of the agreement the lettuce boycott was suspended.

During the boycott moratorium the Teamsters have made their position clear to the lettuce growers and the growers have decided to begin conversation with the farm workers' union. Serious talks between UFWOC & the growers have taken place. At stake are nearly 200 lettuce and vegetable contracts that would cover approximately 20,000 workers. As long as there is progress in the talks the moratorium on the lettuce boycott will continue.