

Letter to Migrant Ministry Action Mailing List by Chris Hartmire

January 25, 1966

TO: Migrant Ministry Action Mailing List

SUBJECT: Delano strike and other matters

Enclosures: Letter calling for aid to strikers

This is the first official mailing to our "action mailing list". Some of you have paid for the privilege to be on it; other might want to by contributing \$1.00 per month to the California Migrant Ministry. I hope. There will be regular mailings, but I don't promise anything.

There is no way for me to over-emphasize the importance of the Delano strike. Farm workers throughout the southwest look hopefully to Delano for a sign of victory. The future of every local farm worker organization is tied to the struggle in Delano. Money and food are urgently needed. The first rush of enthusiastic support must now be replaced by dependable, long-range support. Read the enclosure and act!!

It is widely stated that there is no strike in Delano, e.g., Allan Grant and Joe Brosmer keep saying that only 70 workers (they have used this exact figure for two months now – since November 21st) have been brought in from the outside. That is not true. They also state that the picket line is composed primarily of non-workers. That is also a lie. Following are a few up-to-date facts that establish the existence of a strike. Migrant Ministry staff people have been present since September 20th. I have been purposely conservative in using figures:

- 1) 600-800 Filipino workers under AWOC's leadership. Went on strike September 8th. The Mexican Consul traveled to Delano to publicly urge them to return to work. The Delano Record carried a story urging them to return to work.
- 2) Approximately 1,100 Mexican-American farm workers under NFWA's leadership met September 16th in Delano and voted to join in the grape strike.
- 3) The State Department of Employment has certified 28 bonafide labor disputes in the grape strike. To so certify some workers must be interviewed and their names checked against grower payroll records.
- 4) AWOC organizer Larry Itliong has been a resident of Delano for six years. Cesar Chavez spent part of his life as a migrant in Delano. For the past 3½ years he has lived and organized in and around Delano.

- 5) The City Manager of Delano, in mid-December, asked the City Council to call in the State Conciliation Service to mediate the strike. The City Council refused on the basis that they should not take sides (i.e. workers want mediation and growers do not).
- 6) When Walter Reuther came to Delano a large crowd of striking workers turned out to a public meeting. Newspaper reports stated 600 workers were present. A visiting churchman made a spot count and estimated 950 persons present – the great majority were local workers on strike. The Mayor of Delano was present. He publicly thanked the workers for carrying on a non-violent strike.
- 7) Depending on the weather and the time of day the pickets in Delano number from approximately 20 to 150 or more. The average number is around 80. At this point there are very few non-workers (0-5) on the picket lines. In the early stages of the strike there were more non-workers, but non-workers have not at any point dominated the strike. The NFWA also has had or now has workers picketing in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Roseville, and El Paso.
- 8) The manager of the Chamisal recruitment office (private) in El Paso was accused of recruiting 2,000 workers for Delano. He publicly admitted recruiting 200. The truth probably lies in between.
- 9) DiGiorgio has advertised in El Fronterizo, a newspaper in Juarez, Mexico, for grape workers for their California operations, including Delano.
- 10) Picketing does bring results. As an example, I was in Delano January 17th. While there, a crew of 30 pruners left the fields and joined the strike. The Friday before (14th), two crews left the fields. The workers estimate that during the current pruning season an average of ten strikebreakers join the strike every day.
- 11) Interviews with strikebreakers who left the fields recently indicate they were recruited from Santa Maria, Los Angeles, Texas and Mexico. Signed public statements by these workers are on file. None of them were told that there was a strike. This is against the law.

No one has ever claimed that all farm workers in Delano are on strike. In addition to local strikebreakers, large numbers of scabs have been brought in from the outside. The fact that many farm workers are willing to cross picket lines says nothing about the existence of a strike. Rather it highlights the poverty and insecurity of the people and underlines the importance of supporting grass roots organizations that can reach farm workers and bring

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unity and dignity and strength where there is fear and weakness. A movement is underway in Delano. Your support is urgently needed.

For those of you who want more information, write us for one or more of the following:

1. National Church Leaders' Statement
2. Some Comments on the Church's involvement in the Delano Strike by Wayne C. Hartmire, Jr..
3. Farm Worker-Minister Proposal now approved by the California Church Council
4. Statement by original team of visiting California Churchmen
5. Statement by Kern County Farm Bureau
6. Original Statement by the Delano Ministerial Association

The Northern California Council of Churches (83 McAllister St., San Francisco) has two document available; both were prepared by the Council's Commission on Church and Economic Life: a. The Growers Viewpoint; and, b. The Delano Situation.

Final item: Denominational meetings this winter and spring will probably be a testing ground for the church's involvement in the farm workers' struggle. The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin meets the week of January 31st. A resolution against the Migrant Ministry will be presented and has an excellent chance of passing.

Your brother,

Wayne C. Hartmire, Jr.

WCH/sm
Enc.