

President's Newsletter

Office of the President
United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO
La Paz, Keene, California 93531



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CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT

OFFICIAL NOTICE To The SECOND BIENNIAL POLITICAL ENDORSEMENT CONFERENCE To Be Held In The CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

TO ALL MEMBERS, GREETINGS:

The National Executive Board authorizes the Second Biennial Political Endorsement Conference of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO to convene in the Center for the Performing Arts, San Jose, California at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, July 30, 1978 (Registration begins at 7:00 a.m.—Conference starts at 9:00 a.m.), and remain in session until business is completed in the early afternoon of the same day.

Too many American workers have discovered that the hard fought victories they won at the bargaining table were lost in the legislative halls. Farm workers have suffered too much to see their gains sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.

For 16 years farm workers have fought valiantly to win collective bargaining rights in California; Now we must fight just as resolutely to protect the gains we have won.

The conference convenes at a momentous stage in the farm workers' movement. On June 5, 1978, we observed the third anniversary of the enactment of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, California's landmark law granting collective bargaining rights to farm workers. Since that law was passed, farm workers in California have made many notable gains: Workers voted in overwhelming numbers for the union in secret ballot elections conducted under the ALRA; Our union has signed contracts with nearly 150 growers and we are negotiating agreements with another 150 companies. With the law, farm worker wages, hours and conditions have improved dramatically, although much work still remains to be done.

The law enabled workers to have a union in many crops and valleys where they had not been actively organizing before. The ALRA has proven itself to be good and workable legislation and tens of thousands of farm workers have already taken advantage of it.

Our success under the law has sparked indignation and resentment among reactionary agribusiness interests, and these rabid, anti-farm worker forces have launched a mighty assault on the law. During the 1977 session of the California Legislature, these reactionary interests introduced more than a dozen bills to cripple the ALRA and deny farm workers their rights to organize. All these bills were defeated through the efforts of the union's Citizenship Participation Department which coordinated the drive to protect farm worker rights with supporters and union members across the state.

The time has come when farm workers must demand that their voices be heard by their elected representatives; that they be truly representative of all the people—not just the rich and powerful.

We need politicians who are not afraid to defend our rights to equality and safety in the workplace.

We need men and women in public service who are committed

to guaranteeing farm workers the same social and economic benefits other American workers won generations ago.

We need legislators who will guarantee that the promises of dignity and freedom contained in the Agricultural Labor Relations Act become living reality and not empty promises.

We need legislation that will preserve and improve the income of farm workers when they are unemployed, when they are injured or disabled on or off the job, and when they are retired.

All our energy, strength and determination—and all the money contributed by union members on Citizenship Participation Day—will be needed to fight this good fight. You must help us to:

- 1) Protect the Agricultural Labor Relations Act from attacks by growers aimed at destroying the union;
- 2) Increase unemployment benefits for farm workers;
- 3) Improve disability insurance benefits for our people;
- 4) Reform workers' compensation laws, improve benefits to injured workers and assure access by farm workers to administration of the laws;
- 5) End critical housing shortages for farm workers and permit workers to build and purchase their own homes;
- 6) Enact equitable and just immigration laws to reunite families in the United States.

Only our union will fight for these reforms; We cannot expect any other group or any other people to do our work for us.

Our endorsement of candidates for public office symbolizes the farm workers' newfound political awareness and power. It also is a commitment from our elected representatives that they will assist and support us in our struggle and be true to the ideals of equality and justice for farm workers that we have dedicated our lives to achieving.

Viva la Causa!

Representation

Each member of a ranch committee, negotiating committee or organizing committee, and any special committees shall be delegates to this conference.

Each entity within each department of the Union shall be entitled to one delegate from each unit.

Names of each of the members of a committee and of each delegate elected from each unit shall be forwarded by the Field Office Director or the Department Head to the Citizenship Participation Department at 1014 Ninth St., Sacramento, CA 95814, no later than July 20, 1978.

In cases where a ranch, negotiating or organizing committee has not elected all five members, or if a member of a committee cannot attend the conference, the other members of the ranch, negotiating or organizing committee have the responsibility to choose a representative for each of the vacant committee positions, to allow full representation of each community.

Credentials

Credentials will be issued to each delegate prior to the conference through the field offices. Each delegate should bring his/her credentials to the conference at registration.

The credentials committee will meet at the conference at the Center for Performing Arts prior to the opening of the conference.

Resolutions

Since this is a Political Endorsement Conference dealing only with the endorsing of candidates, no resolutions will be in order.

Accommodations

The conference will last only one day so there will be no need for accommodations. Immediately following the conference a delicious, free barbecue will be provided along with entertainment.

SPECIAL CPD RESOLUTION PASSED

The National Executive Board of the Union passed the following resolution on June 26, 1978:

WHEREAS, the Third Constitutional Convention of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO voted (Resolution no. 45) that contributions to the Citizenship Participation Day Fund shall be mandatory, and

WHEREAS, the Citizenship Participation Day Fund has proven its usefulness to farm workers by bringing about an increase in unemployment compensation and by maintaining and protecting the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, and

WHEREAS, some farm workers who are members of the United Farm Workers and who enjoy the benefits of employment under union contract are refusing to contribute to the Citizenship Participation Day Fund as provided in the Constitution and in accordance with the expressed mandate of the Convention, and

WHEREAS, some Ranch Committees and the officers of some Ranch Committees are failing to meet their obligations by refusing to collect contributions to the Citizenship Participation Day Fund,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Executive Board authorize and instruct the President to take all steps necessary to bring about compliance with the Convention's expressed desire that contributions to the Citizenship Participation Day Fund be mandatory, and that such steps may include but are not limited to taking action on behalf of Ranch Committees and the officers of Ranch Committees who are failing to meet their responsibilities.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Judge Helm's Verdict: Guilty of Criminal Contempt

On June 23, Judge *Bill Helm* convicted *Helen* and I of criminal contempt of court for violating his order banning all picketing by UFW members at two Yuma, Arizona area melon ranches.

The convictions in Judge *Helm's* Yuma County superior court came only ten days after we were arrested for violating the injunction (see Newsletter, June 19, 1978).

Farm workers filled the small courtroom and spilled into the courthouse hallway for the trial, which lasted less than two hours. The county attorney was prepared to present lengthy evidence that *Helen* and I had deliberately violated the order, including tapes of radio and television interviews where I related our intentions to disobey the injunction.

But our UFW attorney, *Jim Rutkowski*, stipulated to the evidence and admitted, on our behalf, that we had acted knowingly and deliberately when we violated Judge *Helm's* picketing ban.

Brother *Rutkowski* presented an eloquent 15 minute closing statement summarizing our objectives in breaking the court's order:

"Mr. and Mrs. *Chavez* knew of the order," Brother *Rutkowski* said. "They deliberately did not comply with it. Just as this court deliberately intended that farm workers not be able to picket or communicate with workers in the (struck) fields, these defendants went out and defied the order."

"The real issue is whether farm workers in Yuma County have an opportunity to organize. Two months ago the federal court in Phoenix ruled that the Arizona state farm labor law was unconstitutional (see Newsletter, May 1, 1978). Where does that leave the farm worker? It leaves them with only one remedy: economic action against their employers. That is all the farm workers in Yuma County have now, the right to picket and strike. The court's order took away that right and left the workers without any remedy. It reached the point where persons of conscience who were concerned about the rights of farm workers could not stand by and do nothing. Freedom in this country is in greatest danger when good people stand by and do nothing when the rights of any person are attacked.

"*Cesar and Helen Chavez* could not stand by and do nothing when the fundamental rights of all farm workers were threatened. If this order were let stand, any court in Arizona would issue a similar order."

But Brother *Rutkowski's* arguments fell on deaf ears. The county attorney said that "the farmers also have rights." He stated that the state's position was that the court had the power to do what it did.

Judge *Helm* concluded that "the facts show that the defendants did violate the order and are guilty of criminal contempt." He added, "The only thing this court does not understand is what are those bad conditions for farm workers Mr. *Chavez* is crusading against."

Judge *Helm* sentenced *Helen* and I to six months probation on condition we would not again bread the injunction. We will appeal the judgement.

After the trial ended, we told the United Press International that, "We're going to continue organizing in Yuma County and continue pressing our right to build a union here. We're going to press for the right to bargain with growers. It's a long battle and it's just beginning."

RFK MEDICAL PLAN

How long do I have to file a claim?

You have 12 months—one year—from the date of service to submit your claim to the Kennedy Plan. If you went to your doctor for an examination on January 15, 1977 and you were eligible for the Plan's Doctor Visit Benefit, you must submit a Completed Application to the Plan Office in La Paz, Keene, California, by January 15, 1978. A claim received in February 1978 for a visit to a doctor will not be paid even if you have the necessary hours and send the proper forms.

If you are registered in the Mexicali Project or one of the other Projects, the claim must be sent to that Project's office. Otherwise, any medical or death benefits will not be paid unless received in the Plan's La Paz office within 12 months of the date of medical service or death covered by the plan. How to file a Complete Application will be explained in future issues of this Newsletter.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

Local CPD Endorsements

The CPD Department will be setting up screening committees from along the Ranch Committees to screen the candidates that are seeking endorsement in their area.

Information regarding any requests for the UFW endorsement should be forwarded to the Citizenship Participation Department as soon as possible, with information about the candidate and a recommendation from the local field office.

Photo Credit

Credit for the photograph of the Mexicali Project Concilio which appeared in the Newsletter of June 5, goes to Ranch Committee President of Joe Maggio steadies, *Richard King*.

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