

President's Newsletter



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



CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT

San Jose Meeting Huge Success

More than 560 delegates from throughout California and over 1000 guests helped make the Union's Second Biennial Political Endorsement conference a huge success. The leading candidates for statewide office appeared before the conference in San Jose to pledge their support to our Union struggle and, in turn, ask for the UFW's help on the November general election drive.

Governor *Brown*, who helped enact the historic Agricultural Labor Relations Act, received the most enthusiastic cheers from the meeting. Speaking initially in Spanish, the governor went on to say that he wants the UFW to grow stronger. "You are my strength," the governor said. "As you are stronger, so am I. As you are weaker, so am I." He concluded by shouting, "Viva Cesar, Viva UFW, Viva la Causa!"



UFW photos by Susan Schumacher

Gov. *Brown* and *Cesar Chavez* meet with reporters following the governor's speech at the San Jose Conference

The governor stated later at a news conference at the Center for the Performing Arts that the Union's endorsement "would have a tremendous impact on my campaign."

"Just as California and the Southwest are emerging as a significant part of the U.S., you are emerging with new political muscle," Gov. *Brown* stated. "Nobody survives without food on their table, and nobody gets food

on their table without the farm worker. As soon as people understand that, they'll understand the power of the UFW."

The governor also said that the Union must take its message to farm workers in states outside California, "and I support you in that endeavor."

He cited his contributions to farm workers since he took office as governor in January, 1975. Gov. *Brown* signed the first legislation in the nation covering farm workers under state unemployment insurance. He abolished the use of the infamous short handled hoe ("el cortito"), and, of course, pushed through the farm labor law.

Preceding the governor as speakers were Lt. Gov. *Mervyn Dymally* and Congresswoman *Yvonne Brathwaite Burke*, candidate for state Attorney General. Both received enthusiastic applause, and, like Gov. *Brown*, were endorsed by the conference.

The political endorsement conference is held every two years at election time so that farm workers can meet to discuss, propose and endorse men and women favorable to the Union.

Early at the conference in our keynote address we told the delegates and visitors that it is through the efforts of the Union's Citizenship Participation Department (CPD) that we are able to hold these functions. CPD is the farm workers most powerful weapon at the present time. It sustains and increases the political consciousness of members and their families and achieves participation in political campaigns and contributions from all the farm workers.

The objectives of CPD are to achieve political, economic, social and cultural development, to consolidate and defend farm workers progress through civic-political action, to fight to find a solution to the problem of mechanization, to maintain the income of farm workers when they are unemployed, ill, disabled, or retired, and, overall, to provide for the general welfare of the people.

CPD Background

When the Union began in 1962, the founders realized the need for the farm workers' involvement in the political process. The UFW constitution states

in Article VI, Sections (k) and (l) that, "The objects of the Union shall be:

"To engage in legislative activity to promote, protect, and advance the physical, economic, and social welfare of the workers; "To promote voter registration, voting, political education and other citizenship activities, involving the Membership and their families and communities, which will secure the election of candidates and the passage of improved legislation in the interest of all labor and the defeat of those laws which are unjust to labor and detrimental to the Membership..."

The first contract containing CPD was signed with Novitiate Winery in July, 1973. CPD was born amidst the strife and turmoil of the 1973 grape strike when the Union was fighting for its life against great odds. The leadership of the Union realized even then that there was a need to continue the struggle on the political front as well as on the strike and boycott. It was that struggle, begun with CPD in 1973, that brought us the law and enabled our Union to grow and prosper.

For almost 100 years, farm workers fought desperately for recognition. Why is California now the only state with a law that protects our rights to collective bargaining? Because the Union, through CPD, fought for it and won it. Why is California the only state in the nation which grants unemployment benefits to farm workers? Because the Union, through CPD, fought for it and won it. Why is California the only state that provides farm workers with disability insurance? Because the Union, through CPD, fought for it and lobbied for it.



UFW photos by Susan Schumacher

Cesar Chavez delivers keynote address at start of Political Endorsement Conference. Mural painted by *Royal Chicano Air Force*.

We also pointed out that farm workers face other serious problems that only the Union, through CPD, can help them with: critical housing shortages, unjust immigration laws that separate families and cause hardship and suffering, and the rapid and

reckless spread of agricultural mechanization. Only our Union will fight for reforms; we cannot expect any other group or any other people to do our work for us!

Our Opponents In Agribusiness

We must remember that the anti-labor forces in agriculture that oppose our Union are still rich and powerful. Our success under the law has sparked indignation and deep resentment among these agribusiness interests. They have launched a mighty assault on the law. During the 1977 session of the California legislature they introduced more than 12 bills to destroy the law and deny farm workers their rights to organize. CPD stands as the only protection against these agribusiness interests determined to halt our progress and oppose justice.

We told the delegates at the conference that most of our members understand the need for political and legislative action and gladly contribute to CPD. But a few do not understand the seriousness of the threat to our dignity and security, and refuse to contribute. CPD contributions are the law of the Union; this law flows from the Constitution of the Union and has been sanctioned by vote of the Union membership meeting in convention. This law will be upheld; we need to deal with those few workers who do not understand the importance of CPD. We must educate them so they will cooperate and do their part and join with us in this good fight. This we all must do!

We also explained that there are two kinds of contracts that we now deal with. There is the collective bargaining contract that we negotiate with the employer and there is also a social contract that we negotiate with our government. We meet to negotiate a social contract with the public officials who seek to represent us. They want our votes, our help, and our money. We want income maintenance, the right to organize, the right to have jobs over machines, a decent place to live and the rights to live here with our families. And just as we hold the growers true to the collective bargaining contract we negotiate with them, we will hold these politicians true to the social contract we negotiate with them.

The Conference Itself

The conference started at 7 a.m. with the registration of the 560 delegates, all of whom represented different ranch, organizing, and negotiating committees as well as administrative units within the Union. A mariachi played until the opening introduction was given by Executive Board Member and CPD director, Brother *Mack Lyons*. Sister *Ernestina Garcia*, director of the San Jose Confederacion de La Raza, welcomed the farm worker delegates and Brother *Mike Nye* extended to us a hand of solidarity on behalf of the Santa Clara Central Labor Council.

At the conference the delegates endorsed 21 candidates for the U.S. Congress, five candidates for the California Senate and 25 candidates for the California State Assembly. An ironic note in the conference was that Assemblyman *Floyd Mori* (D-Hayward) had asked us for our endorsement after spending a good part of this past legislative session trying to sabotage the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. The delegates did not endorse Assemblyman *Mori*.



UFW photos by Susan Schumacher

Farmworker delegates applaud endorsement of Gov. Jerry Brown.

Other guest speakers who addressed the conference were Brother *Bill Soltero*, Business Manager of the Laborers International Local Union 383 in Phoenix, Arizona and Brother *John Maher*, head of the Delancy Street Foundation in San Francisco.

Brother *Luis Rodriguez*, director of G.I. Forum and *Jess Durasco* from IMAGE, also spoke. Also, Brothers *Steve Burrell* from the J.P. Stevens boycott and *Howard Wallace* from the

Coors boycott spoke and thanked us for our active support in both boycotts and asked that we continue supporting their struggles until the Coors strikers in Colorado and the J.P. Stevens workers in the South receive the justice and dignity that they, too, have been denied for so long.

Also attending the conference were Assemblyman *Richard Alatorre* (D-Los Angeles), *Tom Hayden*, head of the Campaign for Economic Democracy, and actress *Jane Fonda*.

The conference was followed by a barbeque and dance at Leiniger Center in Kelly Park. Very special recognition should go to the CPD staff who put the Conference together, Brothers *Sal Alvarez*, *Mark Epstein*, *Ed Green*, *Mike Linfield* and *Mack Lyons* and Sisters *Holly Green* and *Lois Pryor*, and to all the workers and volunteers who served on committees and as delegates to the conference.

The first Political Endorsement Conference took place in Fresno in 1976.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

Remember Juan and Nagi

On August 16 we will be commemorating the deaths of our brothers *Juan de la Cruz* and *Nagi Daifallah* (see Newsletter, July 24, 1978). All Farm Worker Movement Offices should set aside time to plan and hold a memorial service for our martyred brothers on that date. UFW Support Committees in the cities are encouraged to do the same.

Latest Elections

Jack T. Bailey/Salinas/celery, lettuce/July 24/IAUW-104; UFW-95; challenged-3.

Cel-A-Pak/Salinas/cauliflower/July 28/IAUW-27, No Union-28, UFW-7.

New Contract

Mishikowa Farms, Inc./Woodland/machine tomatoes/July 21.



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