

President's Newsletter



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



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mann Packing Decertification Fails

A drive to decertify the UFW at Mann Packing Company in Salinas ended on September 26 when workers there voted overwhelmingly against the decertification effort with the following results: UFW -181, no union -45, challenged -11.

Mann Packing is the largest broccoli company in the Salinas Valley and employs about 250 workers during the peak season. The UFW won an election at Mann Packing in 1975 and was certified as the workers' bargaining representative in 1976.

The drive to decertify the UFW, which began two weeks before the actual decertification election took place, was started by four mechanics on the ranch who claimed that the majority of the Mann workers were dissatisfied with being represented by the union.

UFW First Vice-President *Dolores Huerta* attacked the drive as being company-inspired and an attempt to prevent contract re-negotiations from taking place. Our union contract with Mann Packing, like many of our other contracts in the vegetable industry, expires at the end of this year and negotiations for new contracts will start within the next few months. It is a very strange coincidence that the company-backed drive to decertify the union as bargaining representative for the workers comes at a time when that drive, if successful, would weaken our bargaining position with the vegetable industry this winter.

Sister *Huerta* also charged that many of the workers were persuaded to sign the decertification petition under false pretences, believing that the petition was for the purpose of electing a new ranch committee to get better union representation on the ranch.

In the seven days between the filing of the decertification petition and the election, the workers at Mann Packing, under the leadership of Ranch Committee Members Brothers *Rigoberto Perez*, president, *Rodolfo Ramirez*, vice-president, and *Sergio Tamayo*, *Aristeo Villalobos*, and *Rojelio Mejia*, campaigned very hard for the union. The workers were assisted by Brother *Frank Ortiz*, director of the UFW Contract Administration Department.

Although this is the first decertifica-

tion election that has taken place in the Salinas Valley, we have had problems with other growers trying the same tactic in their attempts to crush the union and deprive workers of their rights to representation by a union of their own choice. At M. Caratan Inc. in Delano, a decertification election was held on September 1. The balloting results are being withheld pending an ALRB decision on whether or not the Caratan decertification election was legal (see Newsletter, September 25, 1978).

Limoneira Workers Join Pacific Mushroom Strikers

On Tuesday, September 26, workers representing the Limoneira Ranch Community in Oxnard travelled to Pescadero to present the strikers at the Pacific Mushroom Ranch with \$1,126 for their strike fund.

At a rally and mass held there, Brothers *Vidal Alamillo*, Limoneira ranch committee president, and *Jesus Larios*, secretary of the Limoneira ranch committee, presented the strikers with the money. Brother *Alamillo* told the strikers that this money had been in Limoneira's strike fund, but the workers at Limoneira had voted to send the money where it was needed, to help other workers who had gone out on strike for a contract much like the Limoneira workers had this past summer (see Newsletter, August 21, 1978). Brother *Alamillo* encouraged the workers at Pacific Mushroom to stay united until they win a contract, as the workers at Limoneira did.

The workers at Pacific Mushroom are in their fifth week of a strike which began, like the Limoneira strike, when negotiations for a UFW contract came to a halt due to the company's stubborn refusal to bargain in good faith (see Newsletter, September 25, 1978).

We also visited the workers at Pacific Mushroom on Sunday, Oct. 1. We told a rally of about 300 workers and their supporters that we are ready to take part in a boycott of Pacific Mushroom products and the products of the parent company, Campbell Soup Company, if that is what is needed to obtain a fair contract for the farm workers.

Contract Re-negotiated in Livingston

The UFW has re-negotiated a contract with Valley Vineyard Services, a wine grape vineyard in the Livingston

area. The company employs close to 400 farm workers at peak season.

The new contract is retroactive to August 18, 1978. It includes a 6.8% immediate increase in piece rates for the first year and a 6% increase in the two succeeding years. The contract also contains a \$3.80 base wage, one of the highest wages in the valley, as well as the Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan, the Martin Luther King Farm Worker Fund and the Juan de la Cruz Pension Plan.

Members of the negotiating committee who helped negotiate this contract are Brothers *Nicholas Arroyo*, *Rigoberto Castillo*, *Arturo Garcia*, *Angilberto Aguilar*, and *Irineo Castillo*. They were assisted by Brother *Ken Fujimoto*, UFW staff.

The first contract with Valley Vineyard Services was signed for two years in 1976.

NATIONAL FARM WORKER SERVICE CENTER

Federal Grant to Assist Farm Workers Credit Union

The Farm Workers Credit Union, one of the movement's first programs, has been awarded a \$349,115 federal grant to help expand its services.

The U.S. Community Services Agency, headed by Director *Graciela Olivares*, issued the grant to the Credit Union, which is under the National Farm Workers Service Center, Inc., to "enhance and expand" credit union services being provided farm workers in California. The main goal of the CSA grant is to provide the Credit Union with technical assistance and administrative expertise for a two year period.

During that time farm workers will be trained to assume all the administrative functions and field office activities of the program. It is anticipated that the need for federal help will taper off within a 24 month period as the Credit Union's membership and savings increase. As the capital resources increase, the Credit Union will gain the funds that will allow for its maintenance and continued expansion.

The grant proposes to expand Credit Union operations to nine office locations throughout the state within the two year period. Under the grant, Credit Union operations will also be computerized.

Much of the funds will subsidize managerial staff—experts on credit union management—which will be brought in to help train farm workers to operate the program.

Predictably, California Farm Bureau Federation President *Fred Heringer* said his group was "outraged" at news of the grant and attacked the federal government and the union. He said the money is really to be used to

"bail out" the UFW.

The CSA program is the second federal grant to be issued this summer to the National Farm Workers Service Center. In July, the U.S. Department of Labor granted \$804,000 to the NFWSC, chiefly for English language training for migrant and seasonal farm workers and a study grant to pave the way for the first apprenticeship program in the agricultural industry. That grant also drew indignation and bitter fire from the Farm Bureau (see Newsletter, August 21, 1978).

Salinas Office Remodeling

The Salinas Field Office is looking better these days, thanks to the efforts of the National Farm Workers Service Center's construction crew, Brothers *Max Avalos*, *Mario Vargas*, and *Francisco Garcia*.

Under the direction of Brother *Avalos*, the crew has been working day and night for the past month remodeling the field office by painting, building dividers in the large, one-room office to allow for better use of office space and, in general, repairing the field office where it needs fixing.

The crew has been assisted by volunteers from the local area: Brothers *Martin Cantor*, *Juan Manuel Gonzalez*, *Husuhaldo Ruvio* and *Eusefio Perez*. They have also been assisted by UFW Executive Board Member *Richard Chavez*, who has served as an advisor to the whole remodeling effort.

ORGANIZING

Texas Democrats Support Farm Workers' Rights

Sister *Rebecca Flores Harrington*, from the UFW office in San Juan, Texas, reports that the Texas State Democratic Convention, which was held last month in Fort Worth, Texas, strongly supported farm workers' rights.

Sister *Harrington* told us that Attorney General *John Hill*, Democratic candidate for governor of Texas, included a plank in the party platform calling for workers compensation and unemployment benefits for farm workers. Farm workers are presently

excluded from these laws in Texas.

The party platform reads: "We support the legitimate demands of all farm workers, including migrants, for rights equivalent to the other members of the work force. They should be entitled to workers' compensation and unemployment benefits."

Sister *Harrington* expressed satisfaction at the Democratic Party's recognition of farm workers and their needs. "We expect that workers' compensation will be a tough issue to pass in the legislature," she said, "but if the leadership of the (Democratic) Party stands behind the platform, we will be able to see fair and decent legislation for farm workers."

CAMPESINO CENTER

Workers Receive Money for Injuries

Two workers from the Mann Packing Company in Salinas recently won a settlement of \$135,000. Brothers *Rafael Santa Cruz* and *Viviano Medina* were injured in an automobile accident last summer when another car ran headlong into their car near Templeton, Ca. Both Brothers *Cruz* and *Medina* were badly injured in the accident. For their injuries, Brother *Cruz* received \$95,000 and Brother *Medina* received \$40,000.

Sister *Ascención Higuera*, who was working in the Salinas Campesino Center at the time of the accident, assisted the workers in everything from getting a lawyer to handle their case to helping their relatives come into the country from Mexico to care for them. Sister *Higuera* is now the curriculum coordinator at the Fred W. Ross Educational Center in La Paz.

CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT

State Moves to Enforce Pesticide Law

Art Carter, chief of job safety and health enforcement in the state Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) recently reminded all California doctors of their legal responsibility to

report pesticide-related illnesses to county health officials within 24 hours and to county health departments within 7 days, in accordance with a pesticide reporting law which has been in effect since January 1, 1977.

Legislative passage of this law followed widespread accounts of unreported pesticide poisoning of farm workers in 1976. After treating farm workers for pesticide poisoning, some doctors have failed to report the cases. The state didn't find out about the poisonings until about a month later. In some cases, treatment for pesticide poisoning was regarded as first aid and not required to be reported under the law then in effect.

However, under the 1977 pesticide reporting law, which was introduced by Assemblyman *Art Torres* (D-East Los Angeles), and backed by the UFW's Citizenship Participation Department, attending doctors must report a pesticide-related illness to the local health officer by telephone within 24 hours. They must also follow up with a copy of the "Doctor's First Report of Occupational Injury or Illness" within seven days. Failure to do so will result in civil prosecution and a \$250 penalty.

Carter has written to county medical societies and hospitals asking their help in alerting physicians about this law. He hopes by this action to increase the prompt reporting of pesticide-related illnesses. He also hopes his agency will be able to learn the extent of the pesticide poisoning problem, to determine whether current limits on pesticide exposure do protect workers and, most importantly, he wants to take immediate action to protect workers from the dangers of pesticides.

In a letter written to our office in La Paz, *Carter* promised to keep us informed of his department's progress in implementing the law.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

Latest Elections

ACA, Inc./ Salinas/ lettuce/
UFW-47, no union-40, challenged-13/
Sept. 22.

Lewis Gardens/ Vista/ nursery/
UFW-23, no union-0/ Sept. 22.

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