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 Perce, president, Rodolfo Ramirez, vice-president, and Sergio Tamayo, Aristeo Villalobos, and Royelio 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 decertification 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 last month, 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 Juar de la Cruz Pension Plan.

Members of the negotiating committee who helped negotiate this contract are Brothers Nicholas Aroyo, Rigoberto Castillo, Arturo Garcia, Angelito Aguirre, 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.
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 García.

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, Husuahldo Ruvio and Eusebio 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."

CAMPEÑO CENTER
Workers Receive Money for Injuries
Two workers from the Mann Packing Company in Salinas recently won a settlement of $335,000. 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, Cal. 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 number of reports 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-23, no union-0/ Sept. 22.
Lewis Gardens/ Vista/ nursery/ UFW-23, no union-0/ Sept. 22.