

PROGRAMS FARM WORKERS HAVE MADE FOR THEMSELVES

The farm workers' long struggle for justice is most visible through strikes and boycotts. But out of the initial contract victories of 1966 and 1967, the United Farm Workers began to build a series of programs, by and for farm workers. As more contracts are won, these programs will grow in strength and spread geographically. What follows is a brief summary of programs that are in existence at this time:

NATIONAL FARM WORKER SERVICE CENTER, INC. Financed by tax-exempt donations, this entity operates and/or supports various social, educational, and legal service programs for farm workers, including the following:

Farm Workers Credit Union: One of the oldest of all the farm worker programs, the credit union was established in 1962. To date more than \$2 million has been paid out in loans to farm workers at an interest of 1% per month on the unpaid balance.

Service Centers: Five centers in areas where farm workers are organizing but have no contracts as yet (e.g. Washington, New York, Texas, Connecticut). Service centers are located in farm worker communities, to provide farm workers with social, economic and legal services. No charge is made for assistance. The centers are run by farm workers. Style of operation is to go out to (and with) the people, not wait for them to come. Staff functions as advocates in dealing with governmental agencies and conducts "campaigns" to teach people about their rights.

Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village: Long a dream, the complete village opened in Delano March 1, 1975. Individual rooms (joined by shared baths) for 58 retired farm workers, men and women. First consideration is given to the elderly Filipino brothers, the original strikers of 1965, who have no families due to discriminatory immigration and anti-miscegenation laws of the past. The village is named for one of the Filipino strikers, who died of a heart attack on the picket line in 1967. Dining and recreation areas, collective garden, area for animals, work available in the village itself and the other operations at "Forty Acres", where the Delano UFW field office and clinic are located.

MARTIN LUTHER KING FARM WORKERS FUND Created in December 1973, this fund comes from grower contributions of 5¢ per hour per worker under contract. A board of trustees made up of two UFW representatives and two employers will have as permanent chairperson Msgr. George Higgins. This fund will be used to conduct educational and training programs for farm workers, such as those described below, and hopes to provide summer camp for farm worker children and legal services.

Day Care Centers: Two presently in operation: one for children of staff at the administrative headquarters in Keene, CA; another housed in a Delano church, with eventual plans for locating near Agbayani Village so that the retired workers can relate to the children. Day care centers will be developed in every area where farm workers have contracts.

Campesino Centers Nineteen centers located in areas where farm workers (campesinos) have contracts. Operation is similar to NFWSC Service Centers.

La Paz Education Center Renovation of a former county TB sanatorium for purposes of an education center, to be a part of the complex at Keene, CA where the union and other entities maintain administrative offices. Architectural drawings have been completed for a labor-intensive remodeling of the North Unit at La Paz, planned so that farm workers themselves can do the work during the off season. Renovation plans include a fence, fronting, bell tower, patios, video area, two classrooms, language lab, kitchen, and cafeteria. Sixty farm workers at a time will participate in seminars of several weeks to develop skills including consumer education, language training, citizenship preparation (naturalization), cross-cultural learning, non-violence, contract enforcement, philosophy of the farm worker movement, training to work in the Campesino Centers.

Mobile Educational Unit Planned to bring shorter-term training opportunities to farm worker towns, providing evening classes in needed skills.

Juan De La Cruz Farm Worker Pension Plan In August, 1975, the union and the employers now under contract executed a trust agreement creating this pension plan for retired farm workers. Employers under UFW contract contribute 5¢ per hour per worker to this fund, named for a 60-year-old striker slain on the picket line in the summer of 1973

Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan Begun in 1969, the medical plan has paid out \$4.1 million in benefits to farm workers. RFK is financed entirely by the 10¢ per hour per worker that employers pay under contract. The benefits include: payments for visits to a doctor's office, x-rays, surgery, medicine, lab tests, maternity, hospitalization, emergency room, emergency dental, and ambulance service. The death benefit insurance is now included under the RFK plan. The RFK Medical Plan is supervised by trustees representing the growers and the union.

National Farm Workers Health Group The farm workers union organized its own clinics to be able to control both cost and quality of health care, emphasizing preventative care at the request of the workers. The NFWHG, a CA charitable and educational non-profit corporation, now operates five clinics in CA and one in FL, providing general outpatient care ranging from obstetrics and pediatrics to pesticide poisoning and other job-related injuries and disabilities. In 1974, 33,000 patients were seen at the five clinics for a fraction of the cost of a single government clinic. In Delano, even for someone who is not eligible for RFK benefits and has no other insurance, a maximum of fifteen dollars pays for a doctor visit, medicine, lab and x-ray. One-third of the staff are from local farm worker families, trained in the clinics. Professional staff receive subsistence support and join with workers in the non-violent struggle to change living and working conditions, thus improving the overall health of farm workers. The clinics need more doctors, nurses, technicians. Contact the NFWHG, Box 131, Keene, CA 93531.

Huelga School: This afterschool, evening and Saturday program serves school age children of farm workers in the Delano area. The National Farm Worker Ministry sponsors the school. The curriculum focuses on reading, math, creative writing, Mexican history and culture, and the farm workers' union. Plans are being made for a fulltime alternative school for farm worker children.