# Support Oregon Farmworkers

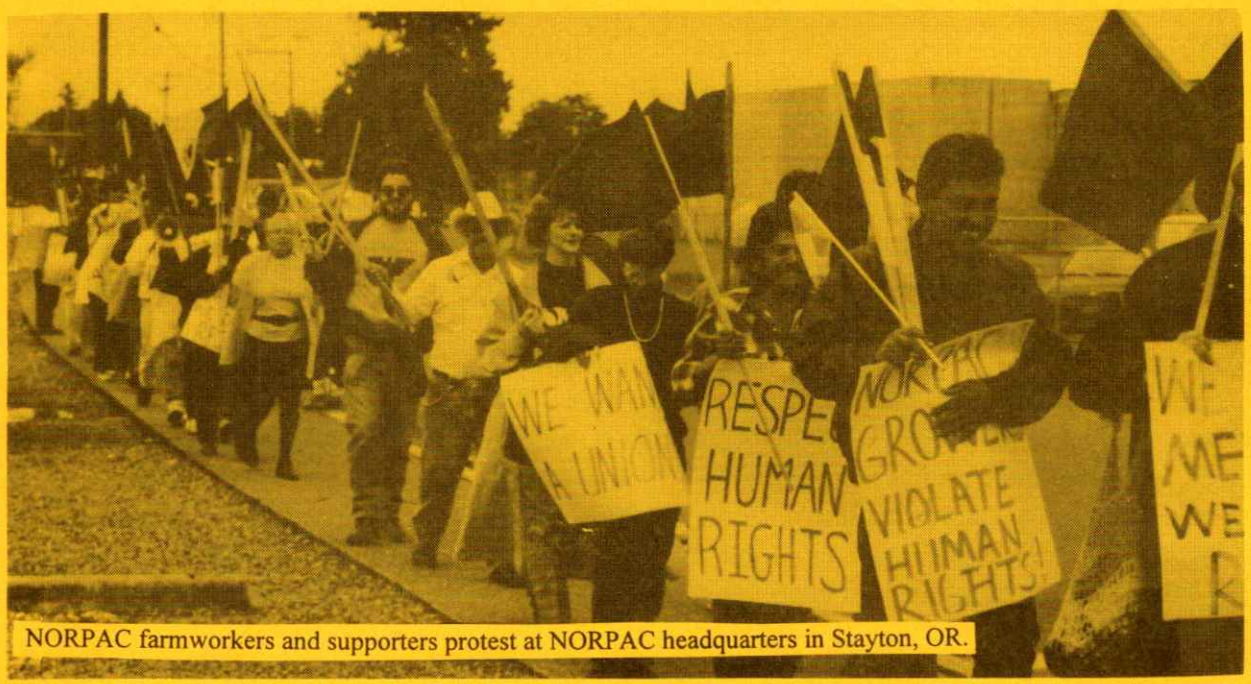
# BOYCOTT

NORPAC's

FLAV·R·PAC

*& Wholesome and Hearty Foods'*

Gardenburger.




NORPAC farmworkers and supporters protest at NORPAC headquarters in Stayton, OR.

Farmworkers are fighting for justice; they need your help. Join the economic picket line of NORPAC until NORPAC growers agree to sign a contract with farmworkers.

**Who is NORPAC and what are they doing to Oregon farmworkers?** NORPAC, maker of "FLAV-R-PAC" frozen fruits and vegetables, is a grower-owned food processor based in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Farmworkers at NORPAC grower farms, under the leadership of PCUN, Oregon's farmworker union, have been organizing for increased wages, the right to breaks and to receive overtime pay, fair treatment, and decent living conditions. NORPAC growers have refused to participate in every attempt to arrive at a negotiated settlement to farmworker complaints. Instead, they have responded by threatening to fire, evict from grower-owned housing, and use physical violence to stop any organizing effort.

**How is Wholesome and Hearty Foods hurting farmworkers?** Wholesome and Hearty Foods (WHF), maker of the Gardenburger, is breaking our national boycott of NORPAC Foods. WHF contracts with NORPAC Food Sales, the "sales arm" of NORPAC Foods (according to NORPAC Foods 1993 annual report) to distribute their products. **WHF is subsidizing NORPAC growers' repressive treatment of farmworkers by continuing their business relationship with NORPAC.**

**What are the FLAV-R-PAC and Gardenburger boycotts supposed to achieve?** By erecting an economic picket line around NORPAC, these boycotts aim to reduce NORPAC grower income to the point that NORPAC growers will have no other choice but to negotiate with farmworkers. Farmworkers at NORPAC farms continue to risk their jobs, housing, and even physical safety by organizing themselves in order to win better living and working conditions. Yet more pressure is needed. Only when NORPAC growers no longer profit in the marketplace from their exploitative practices will they negotiate with farmworkers.

**What's happened so far in these boycotts?** For the first time in recent history, NORPAC's profits are down. NORPAC growers and others have formed the Council for Agricultural Employers, a state-wide group that includes every major agricultural organization in Oregon. They are working to convince consumers that conditions for farmworkers aren't that bad. Yet, their hypocritical actions of organizing themselves to prevent farmworkers from doing the same are having little effect. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is calling upon all churches and denominations to support the boycott of NORPAC Foods. Over 50 church, labor, environmental, and community organizations, including the United Farmworkers of America AFL-CIO have endorsed our boycotts. Natural food stores and co-ops nationwide are providing customers with information regarding our boycotts and pulling FLAV-R-PAC and Gardenburgers from their shelves in solidarity. Farmworkers at NORPAC farms are increasingly overcoming their fear, speaking out, and continuing to struggle for dignity, due in part to the support they are receiving from the general public.

**What can I do to support Oregon's farmworkers?**

- Tell your friends and family to stop buying FLAV-R-PAC and Gardenburgers.
- Ask your church, union, environmental or community group to endorse our boycott.
- Ask your local natural food store/co-op not to sell FLAV-R-PAC or Gardenburgers.
- Ask your favorite restaurant to change brands if they're using FLAV-R-PAC items or selling Gardenburgers.
- Write to NORPAC and WHF and let us know of your support for our boycott. Please be sure to send us a copy so when can keep you informed as to the latest developments.
- For more information, or a retail information package with Gardenburger and FLAV-R-PAC alternatives, contact PCUN.

**Contact:**
Alan Keudell, Chairman of the Board
NORPAC Foods, Inc.
P.O. Box 458
Stayton, OR 97383
(503) 769-2101

**PCUN**
**300 Young St.**
**Woodburn, OR 97071**
**(503) 982-0243 Fax (503) 982-1031**

**Contact:**
Lyle Hubbard,
Wholesome and Hearty Foods
1411 SW Morrison St., Suite 400
Portland, OR 97205
(503) 205-1500 Fax (503) 232-6485

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GARDENBURGER BOYCOTT IN PRESSURING NORPAC GROWERS

## Do farmworkers support this boycott?

Yes. In April, 1996, PCUN's farmworker membership voted overwhelmingly to support the recently called boycott of Wholesome and Hearty Foods (W&HF). In August, 1996, the membership of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, also voted overwhelmingly to support the boycott of W&HF products. Farmworkers up and down the west coast understand the importance of reducing NORPAC's income from whatever source they are earning it, in order to bring NORPAC growers to the negotiating table.

Religious farmworker supporter are also supporting this boycott. The Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ is actively calling upon its members not to buy W&HF products or **FLAV-R-PAC**. The National Farm Worker Ministry and Oregon Farm Worker Ministries have both endorsed our call to boycott **Gardenburger** and **FLAV-R-PAC**.

Oregon farmworkers are excluded from most labor laws. No mechanism exists to oblige growers to negotiate with farmworkers. Farmworkers do not have the right to paid breaks and overtime pay. Workplace actions and consumer pressure in the form of boycotts are the only means available to farmworkers to redress the numerous problems on NORPAC farms. In order for this boycott to be successful, we must focus on the major sources of income for NORPAC growers; their own brand, **FLAV-R-PAC** and their sales/distribution side, W&HF's **Gardenburger**.

## Why should natural food stores and co-ops support this boycott?

To support farmworkers. Natural food stores and co-ops can play a key role in pressuring NORPAC growers. Many customers do a portion of their shopping at natural food stores/co-ops and go to major chains for the remainder of their purchases. By educating consumers about the **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger** boycott while they are in your store, you can reduce these products' sales in larger chain stores as educated consumers will not purchase the boycotted products wherever they shop. At the same time, it is important for co-ops and natural food stores to set an example for the community by not selling **FLAV-R-PAC** or **Gardenburger** while educating consumers about the boycott.

## How much business does NORPAC do for Wholesome and Hearty Foods?

W&HF and NORPAC refuse to state the exact value of Wholesome and Hearty's business. We do know it represents anywhere between 3 and 17.5 million dollars of sales for Wholesome and Hearty. If PCUN only reduces **FLAV-R-PAC** sales without addressing the sales/distribution

revenue, our campaign to bring NORPAC growers to the negotiating table will not be successful. Indeed, we believe one of NORPAC's current strategies to withstand our boycott is to expand their sales and distribution business.

Every **Gardenburger** purchased from natural food stores and co-ops helps to support NORPAC growers. NORPAC Foods, the grower owned cooperative, receives heavily subsidized rates from its sister company, NORPAC Food Sales, to sell and distribute its product line. Wholesome and Hearty Foods subsidizes that relationship by contracting with NORPAC Food Sales. In fact, the Chief Financial Officer for W&HF, in a presentation to the board of Food Front Co-op in Portland, recognized the close economic relationship between NORPAC Foods and NORPAC Food Sales. At the same time, he defended his company's doing business with NORPAC Foods Sales by saying that that contract is very lucrative. Every dollar W&HF earns from sales go towards the company's profit, regardless of the source. As long as W&HF continues to profitably sell their products, they will have no incentive to cut ties to NORPAC. But when Wholesome and Hearty sales are reduced, they will have no choice but to sever ties to NORPAC Food Sales. Oregon growers understand this relationship. For that reason, the Oregon Farm Bureau, a grower organization, recently called on its membership **to buy Gardenburger** and **FLAV-R-PAC** to oppose our boycott efforts in a recent newsletter.

Our boycott of **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger** continues to grow because consumers understand there is a very direct connection between NORPAC Foods and NORPAC Food Sales. In fact, on March 15, 1996, we offered to suspend our boycott of W&HF in exchange for documentation showing no special economic relationship exists between NORPAC Foods and NORPAC Food Sales. To date, W&HF has failed to provide any such documentation.

## What will the impact be on NORPAC if Wholesome and Hearty Foods sever ties to NORPAC?

The loss of Wholesome and Hearty Foods' account will be a big blow to NORPAC. After losing the W&HF account, will force NORPAC Food Sales to either charge true market rates to their sister company, thus reducing NORPAC grower profits, or to find another company to take Wholesome and Hearty's place. With the example of the W&HF boycott, NORPAC Food Sales ability to find other clients will not be an easy task as few companies will want to risk a boycott of their products for doing business with NORPAC.

During the anti-apartheid campaign with South Africa, boycotts of companies like Shell were called not because of the specific business practices of Shell in apartheid South Africa, but because Shell was economically supporting a racist regime. There is no moral justification for W&HF to continue doing business with NORPAC, whose treatment of Oregon farmworkers has been condemned by over fifty religious, labor, and environmental organizations.

NORPAC growers and their allies understand the impact of the **Gardenburger** and **FLAV-R-PAC** boycott on their bottom line. Farmworker members of PCUN, UFW AFL-CIO, and their supporters also understand this dynamic. Natural food stores and co-ops can provide the support farmworkers need and deserve by ending sales of **Gardenburger** and **FLAV-R-PAC**.

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER • DECEMBER 25, 1996

# Farmworkers picket NORPAC




Demanding the same rights and respect that other workers enjoy, farmworkers and their supporters gathered Tuesday, December 10, in Salem to speak out against repressive labor practices by Willamette Valley growers, picketing outside the NORPAC annual meeting.

The demonstrators braved a cold, heavy rain to call attention to NORPAC's steadfast refusal to negotiate wages and working conditions with their farm workers.

The protest was led by Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), Oregon's union of farmworkers.

NORPAC, a group of 250 growers who own several canneries as well as an international marketing and distribution system, is the largest food processing company west of the Mississippi River.

Among the demonstrators were several members of the Oregon Farm Worker Ministry. Religious supporters have lately played a key role in the Oregon farmworker struggle. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), representing 2,000 churches and 17 denominations throughout Oregon, voted November 13 to endorse PCUN's national consumer boycott of NORPAC products sold under the labels "Flav-R-Pac" (frozen fruits, vegetables and juices) and "Santiam" (canned fruits and vegetables).

Members of two Methodist congregations assisted workers protesting low wages, lack of job security and retaliation for engaging in unionizing activities.

EMO has repeatedly called on NORPAC to respect farmworkers' right to vote on whether they want union representation, a right that workers have in NORPAC canneries. NORPAC has ignored these requests and also refused to agree to a policy of non-retaliation against workers who openly organize on their farms.

In the summer, many workers will begin harvesting fields at 7 a.m., work all day, take a shower and work the swing shift at a NORPAC cannery.

The NORPAC boycott has been in effect since 1992 and has received the official endorsement of more than 50 local, regional and national organizations, including the United Farm Workers of America, the Portland Observador, the National Synod of the United Church of Christ, Oregon Public Employees' Union and Council #75 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. PCUN is also working to get companies to respect the NORPAC boycott. Currently, Wholesome & Hearty Foods, maker of "Gardenburger" and a company that promotes itself as socially responsible, is being boycotted because of its distribution contract with NORPAC's business group.

An important concern for workers, along with wage and hour issues, is pesticide exposure. "In the strawberries, there's a white powder that when we're picking it gets in my eyes and makes rashes on my hands", said Hermilio Herrera, 32, of Molalla, one of the workers at the protest. Strawberries are one of the crops with the heaviest use of pesticides.

Between the boycott and field organizing pressure, and the experience at Five Oaks Farms, growers are now "thinking the unthinkable." "It's no longer a matter of 'if' unionization will occur in Oregon agriculture", a prominent grower recently told a religious delegation. "It's a matter of 'when'."

OFWM 390 N. Kings Valley Hwy. Tel. (503) 623-5153
Dallas, OR 97338



# Farmworkers' plight focus of advocacy group

By JOHN WENOS
*of the Itemizer Observer*

POLK COUNTY — Following the Biblical mandate "to preach good news to the poor" and "to set at liberty those who are oppressed," Oregon Farm Worker Ministry strives to provide a link between the religious community and those who labor in the state's agricultural industry.

The often-difficult work and low pay that marks the lives of these workers lie at the heart of the ministry, founded in 1985 in Salem.

Ed Brandt of Dallas, who edits the OFWM newsletter "The Advocate," said the organization was a project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon from its founding until it became fully independent in early 1994. OFWM also is a member of the National Farm Worker Ministry, which includes 45 different ministries nationwide.

"We're an ecumenical ministry," Brandt said, noting that members in the group that accompanied him include those from Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. "We provide a link between the workers in the field and the person in the pew, those people dependent upon the farmers putting food on their table."

## EMO SUPPORTS BOYCOTT

Brandt said the group strives to gather support for farm workers and their union, Northwest Treeplanters and Farm Workers United (PCUN). It was especially gratifying, he said, to have the EMO board on Nov. 13 vote to endorse the union's call for a consumer boycott of NorPac. The company is the largest food processor in the Northwest, and includes the brand names Santiam and Flav-R-Pac.

The reasons for the boycott can be traced to the early '90s and a labor dispute at Kraemer Farms of Mt. Angel, the largest NorPac grower, Brandt explained. Workers went on strike in 1991 over issues such as wages, housing, seniority and charges that workers were denied jobs because of their labor-organizing activities. When efforts to resolve the problems by negotiating found no success, Brandt said, the first boycott was prompted in September 1992.

Although a consumer boycott of NorPac is currently a specific aim, OFWM members say their concerns are more far-reaching. "Our ongoing goal is simply to educate people to the plight of the farm workers," said Candace Nichols.

One way OFWM does that, Nichols said, is through Witness for Justice, an annual daylong program in which various officials are introduced to elements of the workers' lives — "tours of labor camps, the Salud Clinic in Woodburn, legal aid, farmworkers' housing and the labor union. ... We feel it's good to expose as many people as we can so they can go back to their faith communities."

## EMPATHY FOR FARMWORKERS

Howard Wildfang of Monmouth said the group also acts as an advocate for farmworkers to understand their rights. He said he came to identify with the workers because he was raised on a farm and was taught, as a farmer, that "my market is somebody's stomach — the consumers" that buy the food he raises.

Wildfang said that most farmers align themselves with the processors in labor disputes, "but they should be aligned with labor." He added that OFWM tries to keep farmers from exploiting the workers "wherever we can help ...."

Stella Espinosa-Eklund of Salem also has a lifelong empathy for farmworkers. "My father was a farmworker, and I'm very aware of some of the injustices," she said. "My father worked hard; he had no rights, but worked long hours for low pay. The only time I remember him taking off work was on Good Friday, when we would go to church from 12 to 3.

"I also worked in the fields until I was 21. My father worked all his life. He started when he was 10 and retired at age 70."

Espinosa-Eklund said that because of her background she supports the farm worker ministry in any way she can, "through the boycott, candlelight vigils, whatever. Most parishioners are so far removed from the farmworkers. Perhaps that (early experience) is why I feel an extreme closeness to farmworkers."

Brandt says the ministry's primary means of contact with the workers is through PCUN. "We stand with them and help them seek collective bargaining," he said.

OFWM depends largely on congregations and religious groups for its support, Brandt explained. "There's no paid staff, it's all volunteers," he said. "Some congregations support us regularly. ... We have about 300 on our mailing list, but we would like to expand."

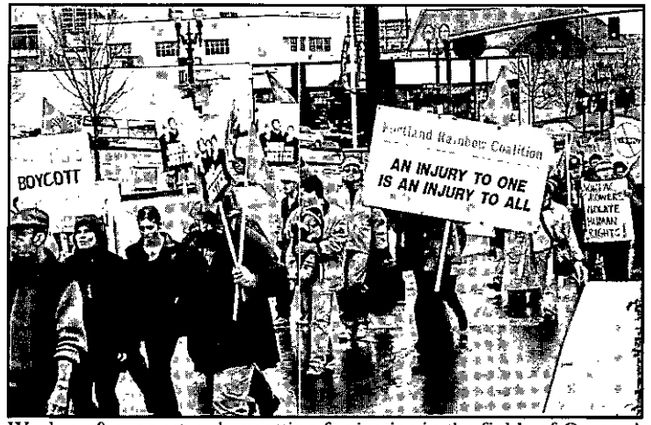
Meanwhile, "the recent action by EMO (endorsing the boycott) is a definite boost," Brandt said enthusiastically. "The (supportive) action by Christians all over the state is significant."

# Join the Movement for Justice in the Fields of Oregon!

*"The growers have dozens of associations in Oregon to promote their well-being and protect their rights--yet they will not respect our right to have even one! We are fighting against the biggest industry in Oregon, and we are fighting to win the first union contracts for farmworkers in the history of this state. But we are determined to go forward, and with the growing support of our **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger** boycott, I believe we will win."*

--Efraín Peña, worker at a NORPAC farm

"As Mexicans and Chicanas/os, we have a responsibility to support our people who are struggling for their basic human rights and respect. As university students, we are in a position to support farmworkers by demanding that our cafeterias honor PCUN's national boycott of both **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger**. This is a struggle for basic human and worker rights, and it is also part of a larger struggle demanding dignity and respect for all immigrants, and all Mexican & Latino people."



Workers & supporters boycotting for justice in the fields of Oregon!

--Angelica Romero, MEChA (Chicana/o student organization) at the Univ. of Oregon.

"Farmworkers in Oregon have demonstrated the courage and commitment to demand the basic union rights and protection that other workers have enjoyed for decades. It is imperative for unions to support PCUN's campaign for collective bargaining agreements, because we want and need a stronger labor movement, and farmworkers who have enjoyed the benefits of unionization in the fields will be strong supporters and active participants in union campaigns in the hotels and factories where many farmworkers later find work. For justice in the fields of Oregon, and to support the rights of working people everywhere, I urge you to join me in supporting both PCUN's field campaigns as well as the consumer boycott of **FLAV-R-PAC** & **Gardenburger**."

--Jim Cook, President, National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 82

"To control the use of pesticides, the farmworkers who apply them need collective bargaining agreements. Union contracts on NORPAC farms--and other farms--will empower farmworkers to protect themselves, protect consumers, and protect the environment. For the rights of farmworkers, and for a safe food supply, we must support PCUN's **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger** boycott."

--Norma Grier, Director, Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides

## Support Oregon Farmworkers!
## BOYCOTT:

FLAV·R·PAC

Gardenburger®

---

**Yes, I want to help Oregon Farmworkers!**

____I pledge to boycott **FLAV-R-PAC** and **Gardenburger**, and I will organize my union, church, local store or co-op, school or college cafeteria, to honor the boycott. (Contact us for ideas and for help!)

____I am donating_____to PCUN's struggle for justice in the fields of Oregon (make out tax-exempt donations to: "Willamette Valley Law Project").

Send me information on:

____"¡Aumento Ya!" (A Raise Now!), PCUN's award-winning video about the workers' strikes

____PCUN/Boycott T-Shirts; bumperstickers; buttons (one PCUN, one boycott)

Contact us for more information and to let us know of your boycott efforts. And inform NORPAC and Wholesome & Hearty Foods of your boycott support!

PCUN, 300 Young St., Woodburn, OR, 97071; 503-982-0243; fax: 503-982-1031

Alan Keudell, NORPAC Board Chair, P.O. Box 458, Stayton, OR, 97383; 503-769-2101; fax: 503-769-1274

Lyle Hubbard, President, Wholesome & Hearty Foods, 975 SE Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR, 97214; 503-238-0109; fax: 503-232-6485

# Farmworkers in Oregon are fighting against the odds to gain their basic rights...


Oregon farmworkers on strike for better wages and respect.

# ...and with your support, they can win and make history!

## Inhuman Conditions

As many as 100,000 Mexican farmworkers work in Oregon during some part of each year, harvesting strawberries, raspberries, cucumbers, hops, Christmas trees, broccoli, squash, and many other crops. They live in crowded labor camps or old farm houses, receive no paid breaks or overtime pay, are exposed to dangerous pesticides--*and are fired, evicted from grower-owned housing, and threatened with physical violence when they dare to speak out.* But despite the obstacles, workers are struggling for justice...and they need your help.

## Workers Decide to Fight

In August of 1991, one hundred workers at Kraemer Farms in Mt. Angel struck for higher wages in the cucumber harvest, under the leadership of PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. (Kraemer Farms is one of the biggest farms in the Willamette Valley, and member of the grower-owned food processing company called NORPAC.) It was the first union organized strike in agriculture in the history of the state. The workers won a pay increase, but many other workplace grievances were left unresolved, *and two dozen of the strike leaders were fired in '92 to discourage organizing.* Since the Kraemer Farms strike, workers from other NORPAC farms have been organizing under PCUN's leadership. But the NORPAC growers refuse to negotiate with PCUN, refuse to allow union elections on their farms--and have even refused to sign a pledge of non-retaliation against workers on their farms who organize or raise complaints! *And while the NORPAC Board of Directors allow their cannery workers to unionize, they refuse to allow their field workers the same opportunity.*

## PCUN Provides Leadership

Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), or Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United, was formed by 80 farmworkers in Salem in 1985 to organize and improve their living and working conditions. By early 1997, PCUN had registered over 4,000 members. In 1995, PCUN's "Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign" resulted in two major strikes and dozens of work stoppages in the strawberry harvest. It was the biggest organizing drive among farmworkers in the history of the Northwest, and the majority of the worker actions occurred on NORPAC farms. Thousands of workers won raises for the first time in more than ten years. In addition to the field organizing campaigns, PCUN runs a Farmworker Service Center, providing support and advocacy in immigration cases, wage claims, workers compensation, and other areas. PCUN is also involved in building low-income farmworker housing, has a Project to Stop Pesticide Poisoning, a Women's Project, and offers ESL and Citizenship classes.

***"The road to social equality for farmworkers is unionization."*** --Cesar Chavez



Unless there is union representation, men, women, and children will toil on without basic rights and protection.

## National Boycott Called

NORPAC is the biggest food processing cooperative west of the Missippippi River, jointly owned by 300 growers. It has almost $300 million in annual sales, selling frozen and canned food primarily under its **FLAV-R-PAC** label (both wholesale & retail) all over the U.S, Canada, Japan, and elsewhere. [Also **Westpac** frozen foods & **Santiam** canned foods, in some areas.] Since farmworkers are not covered by collective bargaining laws, PCUN was finally forced to call for a Nationwide Consumer Boycott of NORPAC in 1992, in an attempt to bring NORPAC growers to the bargaining table. **Basic worker demands include:** better wages, seniority rights, paid breaks, a grievance procedure, job security, and an end to workplace harassment. The response from NORPAC and Oregon agribusiness: to form "The Council for Agricultural Employers" to combat the workers' call for union representation.

## Who Supports the Boycott?

Over 50 local, regional, and national organizations have officially endorsed the NORPAC boycott, including thirteen different Oregon unions. Among the boycott endorsers:

*United Farm Workers of America
*United Church of Christ, National Synod
*Oregon Public Employees Union (SEIU 503)
*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
*National Fellowship of Reconciliation
*AFSCME Council 75 (state/county/city wkrs)
*National Farm Worker Ministry
*Centro Obrero, El Paso
*Oregon Federation of Teachers
*Communication Workers of America, #7901
*Physicians for Social Responsibility, Portland
*National Lawyers Guild, Portland Chapter
*Hotel and Restaurant Workers, Local #9

## Oregon Religious Leaders Call for Boycott Support

*"Despite repeated requests from the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Board of Directors, neither Kraemer Farms nor NORPAC Foods, Inc., has agreed to recognize the rights of farm workers to organize for the purpose of improving the conditions of their employment without fear of reprisal. Nor have they indicated a willingness to discuss the issue. It has become apparent that of the several options that were available,* ***the economic boycott is the only remaining hope at this time."***

--11/13/96; Board of Directors of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, made up of 17 statewide denominations.




PCUN supporters taking the boycott to the public!

### Please Answer the Call!

The boycott is targetting **FLAV-R-PAC** canned and frozen foods (retail & wholesale), and **Gardenburger**, because Wholesome & Hearty Foods is breaking the boycott by using NORPAC as a distributor. Supporters have successfully campaigned for stores in several states, a college campus, a major religious retreat center, and thousands of households in Oregon and nationwide to honor the boycott. As the boycott expands, NORPAC growers are feeling the pinch, but only more boycott pressure will persuade them to negotiate contracts with their field workers!

# Boycott

(Continued from Page 1)

thing unfair about focusing on Norpac.

It's the state's largest food processor, and PCUN's strategy of forcing Norpac growers to the bargaining table is intended to create a domino effect on growers who raise crops for other processors.

"Our feeling is not to say that growers at Agripac farms shouldn't have the same rights," Bicchieri said. "If Agripac or others want to discuss these grievances, we feel it is very important.

"We don't have a hands-off policy on Agripac or anyone else," he said. "Several fields where we helped workers organize work stoppages were not Norpac. Some grow for Norpac and Agripac.

"We don't feel going after Norpac is being unfair. We feel it is being intelligent," Bicchieri added. "We would love to go after everyone in Oregon, but we can't do that.

"We need to focus on wherever workers have mobilized themselves, which so far has been on the big Norpac farms."

Since last fall, when Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon announced its endorsement of PCUN's boycott against Norpac products, the union has organized more pickets.

The purpose of the picketing is to let the public know that Ecumenical Ministries and nearly 50 other unions and organizations support the boycott, Bicchieri said.

Wayne Bryant, executive director of Ecumenical Ministries, said the organization's endorsement of the boycott isn't necessarily an expression of support for PCUN or of the union's decision to focus on Norpac.

"Keep in mind we have no desire to have a boycott itself," Bryant said. "We simply want to balance the needs and rights of growers and those whom the growers employ."

He said the goal of Ecumenical Ministries is to convince farmers to negotiate with a neutral third party, not necessarily PCUN, on such issues as vacation pay, working conditions, living conditions, health insurance and others.

For more than a decade, Ecumenical Ministries has come down on the side of family farmers on other issues, including the distribution of thousands of Farm Aid dollars donated by country singer Willie Nelson to help farmers with financial problems, Bryant said.

During the past year, Ecumenical Ministries has been involved in getting assistance to farmers suffering flood-related losses.

Last week the organization received a $5,000 donation from Willie Nelson to further assist farmers with a variety of problems, including flood damage, legal bills and other family financial problems, Bryant said.

He said he doesn't see any conflict between passing out Farm Aid money while at the same time endorsing the PCUN boycott.

Ultimately, Bryant said the public that demands inexpensive food is responsible for the plight of farmworkers who receive low pay, get no vacation or health insurance benefits and often endure difficult working and living conditions.

"We have no antagonism toward farmers, in particular the small family farmers. We have total understanding and sympathy for the situation they are in," Bryant said.

If farmworker pay, benefits and working and living conditions can't be resolved through collective bargaining, though, Ecumenical Ministries could push for legislation to address those issues in the future, Bryant said.

*'Keep in mind we have no desire to have a boycott itself. We simply want to balance the needs and rights of growers and those whom the growers employ.'*

**Wayne Bryant, Ecumenical Ministries**




SEEING RED — Ramon Ramirez, president of the Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United, a group known as PCUN in Spanish, marches with other protesters on Jan. 19 outside the Northwest Food Processors Association annual convention in Portland. PCUN staged the march to call attention to its boycott against Norpac, Flav-R-Pac and Wholesome and Hearty Foods. The Center for Working Life, the Rainbow Coalition and Jobs with Justice joined PCUN in the march. (Capital Press photo by Beth Buglione)

# Picketing the processors: Group continues boycott

## Norpac president believes focus on cooperative unfair

By ED MERRIMAN
Capital Press Staff Writer

1-24-97

PORTLAND — Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United picketed outside the Northwest Food Processor's Association convention here on Sunday to draw attention to a boycott intended to force Oregon growers to negotiate union contracts with their farmworkers.

"We feel that in general the agriculture industry in Oregon should be unionized," said Leone Bicchieri, an official with the group known by its Spanish acronym PCUN.

Although PCUN's 5-year-old boycott focuses on Norpac Foods based in Stayton, Ore., and its affiliates and growers, Leone said the goal is to force all Oregon growers to negotiate union farmworker contracts.

None of the thousands of farmers who raise crops for Norpac or other processor in Oregon have signed contracts with their farmworkers. That includes those who raise crops for Agripac or Smuckers in Woodburn, Oregon Cherry Growers or Truitt Bros. in Salem, Steinfeld's in Scappoose, Smith Foods in Weston, or Simplot or Lamb Weston in Hermiston.

Norpac president Rick Jacobson said he thinks its unfair for PCUN to focus its boycott on Norpac and the 250 growers who raise crops for the cooperative.

For one thing, Jacobson said farmers who raise crops for Norpac and other processors throughout Oregon and most other states are exempt from state and federal laws that protect collective bargaining rights for non-agricultural workers.

Those collective bargaining rights aren't extended to farmworkers because of the perishable nature of agricultural commodities and to avoid giving unions the power to shut down harvests and risk losing an entire year's crop, Jacobson said.

"But Bicchieri said he doesn't see any-

(See BOYCOTT on Page 2)

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

OBSERVANDO

• NOVEMBER 6, 1996

# Williamette Valley labor strife continues

PAGE B4

BY SEAN CRUZ, EDITOR

The fields of Oregon farms lie only minutes away from Portland kitchens, but for farm workers the distance is vast. The isolation which they endure as a result of poverty and the nature of their work and—for many—the great distances which separate them from their families, are magnified by the impassivity of the communities that they serve.

**Farmworkers toil in isolation**

The quality of life in Portland is heavily dependent upon the rich harvests that skilled farm workers bring into the state's economy. Yet city dwellers know little about the farm workers' ongoing struggle to improve their working and living conditions to levels that we tend to take for granted.

News of the farmworkers' strikes—or of the issues that underlie them—are rarely reported in city media, and consumers tend to focus on the prices they see in supermarkets without considering the economic and social structure that causes food to appear as we see it.

People are far more often consumers than they are citizens, after all.

**City attitudes are crucial**

Perhaps battles over issues that we take for granted and meager pennies per pound are topics too mundane to occupy the minds of harried city dwellers. There is also probably a general assumption that the workers are foreigners, and probably undocumented as well, and mostly Mexican, and therefore not worth thinking too deeply about.

This indifference, then, stems from elitism, ignorance and racism, a condition which too many workers experience directly from their employers.

**Farm workers struggle**

Most Oregonians are unaware of the struggle to obtain basic rights for farm workers and their families that has continued for more than ten years in Oregon. As recently as 1990, Oregon state law made picketing near harvest sites illegal, and growers continue their organized opposition to the right for farmworkers to organize themselves. Most growers refuse to negotiate with farmworkers on a collective basis.

**Film documents strikes**

Portland film maker Tom Chamberlain documented the 1995 series of work stoppages among the strawberry fields of the Williamette Valley in his film "Aumento Ya! (A Raise Now!)", which debuted recently at the Northwest Film Center. The documentary, which won the 1966 Oregon Arts Commission Media Arts Fellowship, depicts the workers' attempts to gain a raise of 2 to 3 cents per pound after enduring stagnant wages for more than ten years.

**Issues are far from mundane**

Among the issues which farmworkers hope to resolve through negotiation are: an end to retaliation for speaking up or attempting to unionize, such as blacklisting or eviction; an end to unfair labor practices such as charging workers $3.00 per day for rides to the workplace whether they need them or not; after ten years of hard work at less than the minimum wage, a small raise; two paid 15-minute rest periods per day; separate toilets for men and women; clean drinking water, instead of irrigation water; improved housing, much of which consists of plastic tarps nailed over a wooden frame; an end to intimidation tactics on the part of growers, which includes employing gun-wielding enforcers.

**The right to negotiate**

Fundamental to achieving any of these goals is winning the right to organize and negotiate collectively, because individually farmworkers cannot hope to win concessions from either independent farmers or agribusiness.

Agribusiness interests, however, refuse to recognize PCUN, the farmworkers union, and continue to deny the farm workers any opportunities to negotiate on any issue.

**National boycott in support**

PCUN has called for a nationwide boycott of certain products for the purpose of forcing reluctant growers to the bargaining table. The targeted companies are: NORPAC, a food processing giant with 1995 revenues of $287 million (labels include Flav-R-Pac and Santiam's); Steinfeld's Products, a NORPAC customer with estimated annual revenues of $31 million; Kraemer Farms, a NORPAC co-op member and Steinfeld's supplier with 2,000-acres under cultivation; and, Wholesome & Hearty Foods, makers of GardenBurger products and a customer of NORPAC.

**Portland Observador supports La Causa**

The Portland Observador endorses the efforts of our Oregon farmworkers to join together and win the right to negotiate for better living and working conditions. We urge agriculture businesses to recognize the farmworkers union and the humanity of the people who work the crops. To this end, we urge our readers to support the boycott and to write to these companies in support of the workers' right to negotiate together.