El Aguila

UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA AFL-CIO

madison support committee newsletter

APRIL, 1977 306 N. Brook St. Madison, Wisc. 53715

UPDATE

The farm workers union has reached the crossroads. In September 1975, as a direct result of your tremendous support for the boycott the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act was passed. For the first time in California history, elections were held so farm workers can vote for the union of their choice.

After five months and over four-hundred elections the UFW had won 70% of these elections. Ten thousand more farm workers are now protected against substandard wages, dangerous working conditions, unsanitary living conditions and child labor because of UFW contracts. This was accomplished against the combined weight of the Teamsters and the big multi-national agri-business corporations.

Then in February 1976 the elections were stopped. The California growers in a desperate effort to destroy the farm labor election law, blocked funds needed to run elections. In response to this grower blackmail the farm workers attempted to pass an initiative, Proposition 14, to prevent crippling amendments to the law. Proposition 14 represented the biggest campaign the UFW has ever attempted. Five hundred volunteers worked full-time on this effort. Over twenty organizers and supporters from the Chicago-Midwest area participated. Proposition 14 would have prevented the growers from tampering with the farm workers voting rights. But the corporate growers spent millions in a sinister campaign which succeeded in scaring voters into believing that Proposition 14 would be a threat to their personal private property. Proposition 14 was lost, but much was gained and La Causa continues!!

Coachella Organizing Drive

Elections have now begun again. So far 7 elections have been held and the UFW has won all of them, but we must win more. Cesar Chavez has set a high goal: 100,000 workers to be covered by contracts within 2 years. To win elections it takes gasoline, food, leaflets and tireless dedicated people. We have people now working 16 hours a day, 7 days a week for strikers pay-$5.00. What we need is the money to put gas in their cars, food in their stomachs, and leaflets in their hands. Our goal here in the Chicago-Midwest area is to raise $20,000 the amount it will take to finance the elections drive in the Coachella Valley. The elections there are being led by Eliseo Medina, past director of the Chicago boycott, and a staff of hard working organizers.

In the Coachella Valley, Tennaco Corporation has much power and influence. The corporation first became involved in agribusiness in 1967. Tennaco is the biggest land owner in the state, owning more land in California and Arizona than the size of Rhode Island. In 1973 Tennaco was a leader in bringing in the Teamsters and their goons ("$65.00 a day grower finks") to beat and intimidate the workers. They tried everything possible to break the strike of the farm workers and the spirit of the whole movement. Tennaco, with their "Sun Giant" advertisements spend large amounts of money trying to give a positive picture of their conglomerate to the public while they have consistently fought unionization of farm labor.

Cesar Chavez began the organizing drive in the Coachella Valley with a 12 mile march from Mecca to Coachella on Sunday, March 27. UFW is organizing as many elections for union representation as possible this month during peak harvest.

The Madison Support Committee, as part of the Chicago-Midwest area, has made their goal to finance the organizing drive at the Sunny Su-Chin Ranch, in the Coachella Valley. Grapes are grown at the ranch and at peak there are 500 workers employed there. The goal of the support committee is to raise $1400 by Farm Worker Week (May 1-8).

Part of the fund raising will include a pledge campaign. It is important aside from special fundraising activities, that the United Farm Workers has a continuous base of support. They ask that supporters who are able to do so, pledge a monthly contribution. If you can, fill out the form below and give it to a member of the support committee or mail it to Chicago.

UNITED FARM WORKERS
AFL-CIO

I pledge to help farm workers win their struggle for justice by sending a monthly contribution of $_____

NAME_____ PHONE_____

ADDRESS_____ ZIP_____

UFW 1300 South Wabash Chicago 60605
939-5120
labor donated

UFW - Teamster Pact

After seven years of conflict between the United Farm Workers of America and the Teamsters Union, an agreement has been reached and was announced March 10, 1977. Since it is the fifth agreement the Teamsters Union has made with the UFW, the farmworkers have justifiable reservations about celebrating this one. Yet, there are reasons to believe that this agreement is a definite victory for the United Farm Workers.

Why does the UFW believe the Teamsters this time? These negotiations were made with the national Teamster officers and received nation-wide publicity. This time it was the Teamsters who made the move to negotiate with the UFW. They were probably motivated by a need to clean up their image in the media and also with their rank-and-file members. Besides, the Teamsters were not getting positive results from their attempt to gain representation of the workers. Since fall of 1976, the UFW has won three elections to every election won by the Teamsters.

The agreement gives the Teamsters jurisdiction over workers covered by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), including cannery workers and those who transport produce from the fields. This five-year pact covers California as well as 12 other Western states. It includes a mechanism for arbitration of pact violations.

The Teamsters/UFW pact is a victory. The Teamsters have been a great obstacle for the Farmworkers in California, and now apparently have backed away. In reality it has always been the growers with whom the UFW must sign contracts. Thus the struggle continues. The economic pressure of the boycott is more important than ever in the face of new types of grower resistance to the United Farm Workers union. The boycott of non-UFW iceberg (head) lettuce, grapes and Gallo wine must remain strong. Until the ink is dry on the contracts, please help those who harvest the food you eat. ¡¡VIVA LA CAUSA!!

Contracts Cover 20,00[illegible]

As of December 1, 1976, the UFW has secured contracts covering 20,000 workers with 53 California growers. Contracts include Paul Masson and Christian Brothers for wine grapes, Coca-Cola for citrus fruits, and Mr. Artichoke for, you guessed it, artichokes. A heavily contested election at Maggio Tostado was won by UFW. Workers there receive a wage of $3,14/hour plus benefits. This is a vast improvement over the miserably low wages paid before the UFW victory.

The 20-year struggle of Manuel, Richard, and Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Gil Padilla reached a turning point when Teamster leader Fitzsimmons conceded all farm labor to the UFW.

Remember, the struggle is not over. UFW election victories do not necessarily guarantee that growers will bargain in good faith. The struggle for better wages, occupational safety, protection from insecticides, and improvements of health care continues.

Contract Blocked By Coachella Valley Ranch

On November 19, 1975, the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), AFL-CIO, won the union election at Coachella Growers, Inc., in the Coachella Valley of California. Coachella Growers is the largest citrus grower in the valley, employing nearly 500 workers during the peak growing season. It is controlled by Desert Valley Citrus, a paper company set up as a tax shield, which in turn is controlled by the Agricultural Division of Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance.

Since the election, the company has refused to negotiate with the union in good faith, and has engaged in a campaign of harassment against its members. Immediately after the election the company discontinued the practice of providing a bus from Coachella to the company groves in Blythe, over a hundred miles through the desert. For years the workers had been using the buses, but now they have been told to "provide their own cars." Many farmworkers do not own their own cars. Those who do are forced to leave Coachella at 4:00 AM to make the trip. Other vindictive acts on the part of the company include a cut in wages paid to the workers, and reducing the work week to 3 days. The reduction of the work week is especially insidious, because most farmworkers cannot support themselves and their families on only 3 days of work per week. The net effect is to force the workers -- UFW members -- to quit.

The company has made the negotiations a farce by dragging its feet during the talks and using every pretext to stall. The result has been that in the 1 ½ years since the election the company has flagrantly refused to seriously negotiate with the union on any key issues.

The union is asking its supporters to build a massive nationwide letter-writing campaign urging Connecticut Mutual Life, and hence Coachella Growers, to sign a decent contract with the farmworkers. CML has spent millions on advertisements to create an image of a prestigious, blue-chip company concerned with peoples' welfare. Yet, in California, they are embroiled, through their investments, in unfair labor practices and the exploitation of farmworkers -- hardly the actions of a company concerned about "peoples' welfare."

On March 14 a group of 9 UFW supporters, including an ex-farmworker, a Catholic priest, and a local union steward visited the Madison branch of CML to voice their concern over the situation in Coachella. Not being able to talk with the manager, who was "out of town" (there must have been a back door), they spoke to the assistant manager. His solicitude, feigned or genuine, might have been in response to the farmworkers' just demands, or might have been a not uncharacteristic "pat you on the head and ask you where it hurts" approach. Through the UFW supporters' visit, they were able to arrange to have a TELEX message sent to the main office expressing the collective anger of the Madison supporters of the farmworkers. They also pledged to continue action on behalf of the UFW until every farmworker has won the right to the protection of a union contract.

Dolores Huerta UFW V.P.

Dolores Huerta was one of the first people called upon by Cesar Chavez to help organize a union for farm workers. Dolores became the UFW's first vice-president, its chief negotiator, lobbyist, boycott strategist and public spokeswoman.

Dolores and numerous other Chicana women who have participated in UFW strikes have created a challenge to male chauvinism among UFW members. According to Dolores, the union has made a conscious effort to involve women. It has given them every chance for leadership, although the men did not always want it that way. Huerta feels that excluding women and keeping them at home is the middle-class way. Poor people's movements have always had whole families on the line.

Since the union has always been run by the farm workers themselves, it has had to teach its members the professional skills it needed. Dolores Huerta, chief negotiator and contract writer, taught herself.

Dolores believes that "women are particularly good negotiators, because we have a lot of patience and no big ego trips to overcome." She has seen it unnerve growers to negotiate with her. Huerta feels that women are "also more likely to bring in ethical questions, like how our children live." As a worker, mother, and wife, she is not about to sell out.

Speaking of her development as an organizer, Dolores says: "I've been afraid of everything until I did it. I started out every time not knowing what I was to do and I was scared to death. When Cesar first sent me to New York on the boycott it was the first time we had done anything like that. There were no ground rules. I thought, 'eleven million people, and I have to persuade them to stop buying grapes.'



Well, I didn't do it alone. When you need people, they come to you. You find a way...it gets easier all the time."

For Dolores, mother of ten children, the conflict between family and commitment has not been easily resolved. Over the years, though, she has seen the good fruits of her work with the UFW, and her children have joined her in the struggle. She has been reinforced in her commitment to the movement and continues in her strong leadership role in the UFW.

happy birthday Cesar!



Cesar Chavez, founder of the UFW, celebrated his 50th birthday, Mar. 30, 1977.

Wis. Migratory Labor

Many people think that migrant farm labor is confined to California and western states. Actually, migrant laborers work in all fifty states and much of Canada. There is no accurate count of migrants in Wisconsin, but a reasonable estimate would run from 8,000 to 10,000 workers and dependents in 1976. More than 90% are Mexican-Americans from the south-west, with most listing Texas as their home state.

Only one-third of the workers interviewed in 1975 had completed 8 years of school. Many migrants come to our state in family groups, which usually means that children leave home before the end of the school year, and return after school has started. It is not unheard of for a child to attend 3 or 4 schools or school programs in one year.

National statistics say the migrant life expectancy is 49 years. In a group of 327 children examined at the Migrant Health Clinics in Wisconsin in 1975, ages 2 to 16, 49% had health problems. Of 531 children seen at the dental clinic, 90% needed care. The migrant life style, low income, and lack of health insurance for most, denies them the opportunity for adequate health services.

In 1975, farm workers in Wisconsin earned average wages of $450 per month in employment that lasted for most from 3 to 10 weeks. This contrasts with average earnings of $960 per month for non-farm production workers in Wisconsin.

(The major agencies serving migrant persons are the United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc., (UMOS), and La Clinica de Los Campesinos, Inc., the health project. Other services are available through county Social Services and public health offices...though much remains to be done to make these agencies responsive to the special needs of farm workers.)

Migrant Labor Bill

The Wisconsin State Assembly faces legislation that pertains to the conditions of migrant farm workers. Assembly Bill 404 has gotten out of committee and is coming up for a floor vote sometime this session. This is a summary of the most important elements in the legislation as proposed:

1. Creates a "Council on Migrant Labor" within the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations to advise all state agencies on issues affecting migrants.
2. Regulates activities of itinerant labor contractors to protect workers by requiring contractor registration, written work agreements, etc.
3. All migrant workers must receive from their employer or labor contractor a written work agreement in their own language, in a form approved by DIHLR.
4. Guarantees cannery workers a minimum of 20 hours of work every week, or 64 hours of work every 2 weeks; guarantees agricultural workers 45 hours of work every two weeks. Also guarantees wages and conditions of employment equal to local employees similarly employed.
5. Labor camps will continue to be certified as under present law.
6. Free access to migrant camps is guaranteed.
7. Wage statements showing all deductions must be provided.
8. "Except in emergencies, an agricultural worker may not be required to work more than 6 days per week or 60 hours in one week or more than 12 hours in one day unless the worker agrees to work longer."
   (NOTE: Agricultural workers are still exempted from federal and state laws that require overtime pay.)

SOURCE: "Analysis, MIGRANT LABOR BILL, A.B. 404" (prepared by Governor's Committee on Migratory Labor)

La MEChA

La MEChA-- the campus organization for UW Chicano students -- has announced their plans for Chicano Week. There will be an exceptional exhibit of 100 original photos from the Mexican Revolution April 25 through the 30th at the Wisconsin Center, Langdon and Frances. These historic photos are from a collection of Augustine Casasola, and should not be missed.

During the week, Benny Ramos' conjunto de baile (dance group) will be featured for a dance. The exact date of this event will be announced soon.

Then, the big event! Dolores Huerta, UFW Vice-president and chief contract negotiator, will be speaking at the Stock Pavilion at 8 pm Monday evening, April 25th. Preceding Dolores will be "Conjunto Aztlan." They are a California-based Chicano band known for their revolutionary music revolving around the Chicano Movement.

Please Support Chicano Week

ENCHILADA DINNER

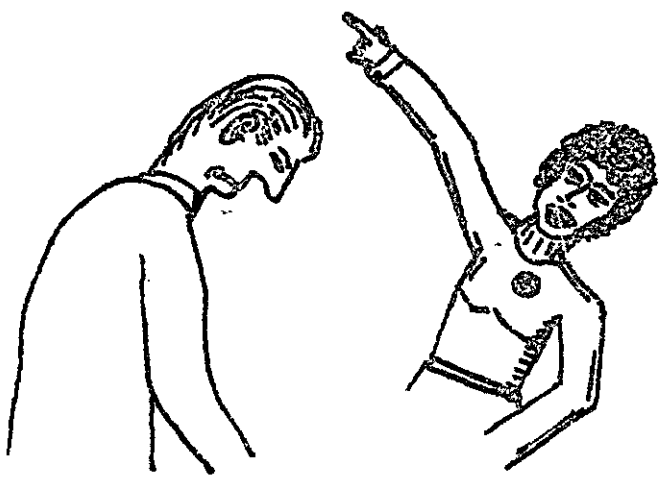
LIVE MUSIC

Cardinal Bar
418 E. Wilson

April 30, 4-8

$3.00

SUPPORT THE FARMWORKERS



"YOUR LETTUCE DOESN'T HAVE THE UNION LABEL (UFW). I WON'T BUY IT!"

Madison to Raise $1400

Currently, one of the main activities of the Madison UFW Support Committee is fundraising. All funds raised here go directly to California to support UFW activities. Recent fundraisers have been very successful and have proven to be fun for all.

Our most recent benefit at the Catholic Center was Sunday, March 13. We served a variety of food, had live music, and showed the film "Why We Boycott." At this benefit about $150 was raised to send to California.

A large benefit dance was held at the Freedom House on February 19. The evening was spent drinking beer, conversing, and dancing to the music of Even Break, Northern Light, and Buz Gunderson. We raised about $900! !!VIVA LA CAUSA!!

Madison now has pledged to raise $1400 by Farm Worker Week, May 1-8. UFW supporters can look forward to an enchilada dinner at the Cardinal Bar April 30, 4-8 PM. Other activities will be held during Farm Worker Week. Anyone wanting to help organize fundraisers, activities, or information tables should contact David (251-3325), or Glenna (257-7423).



National Farm Worker Week

Spring is a time of renewal for all of us, a time of new spurts of energy, a new season, a new beginning. It's a good time to renew our commitment to those who need our help. The United Farm Workers are continuing their struggle towards basic rights for all farm workers. It is essential to remember that the boycott of non-UFW head lettuce, grapes and Gallo wine continues.

During the first week in May, keep the farmworker in mind. Farmworker Week is a yearly springtime event celebrated nationally and here in Madison. It is sponsored jointly by the National Council of Churches, the United States Catholic Conference and the Synagogue Council of America. It will begin in Madison with the UFW Support Committee's annual famous enchilada dinner at the Cardinal Bar and Grill, for 4 PM to 8 PM, Saturday, April 30. Watch for posters and more information of this event.

Later on, in the first half of May, will be the Mifflin Street Block Party, with tacos and beer. Bake sales are also planned at various community churches.

Please plan now for events at your local church, synagogue, organization or home. Contact us for more information: Katy ~~(849-4690)~~, Glenna ~~(257-7423)~~. 231-1247

Law Suit Suspended

In October, 1976, Larry "Gallo" Weinstein filed suit against the Madison Support Committee and the United Farm Workers of America. "Winestein," of General Beverages Co. and attorney Michael Jacobs seek $50,000 damages from the UFW of America, and a "permanent injunction on illegal picketing" against the support committee. The suit was prompted by the successful efforts of UFW supporters to clean Gallo wines off the shelves of downtown liquor stores.

Little legal action has been taken in the past seven months, and UFW counsel Lee Cullen has moved for dismissal on the grounds that the Court here does not have jurisdiction over the UFW of America, whose major activities are in California.

Now, in response to the UFW-Teamster pact, Weinstein has suspended the suit for six weeks. The original dispute between Gallo and UFW was over the election in which the Teamsters had participated. Now that the Teamsters have withdrawn, it is only a matter of time before UFW will be certified as the union to represent Gallo workers. When Gallo negotiates a contract with the UFW, the Gallo boycott will end. Weinstein's harassment suit of the UFW of America and the local supporters will be moot and meaningless.

But the suit has not yet been dropped, and is still hanging over our heads. And of course the boycott of Gallo continues.

credits..

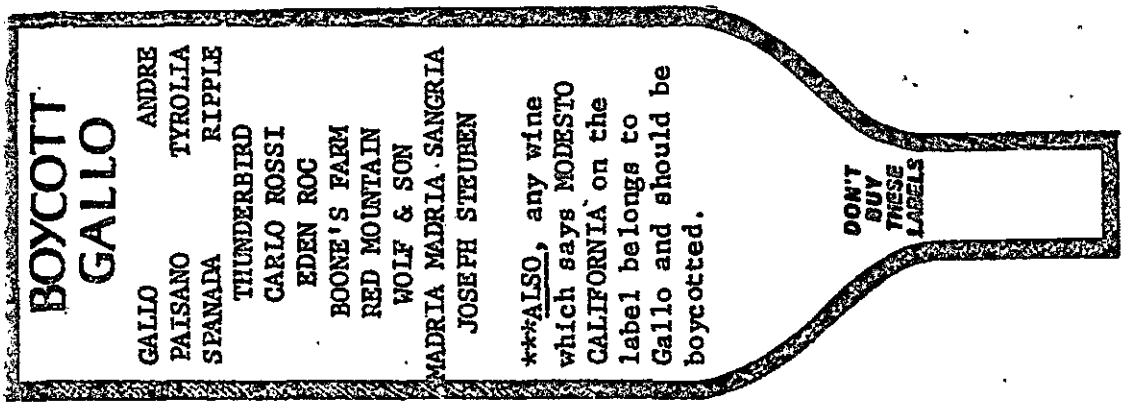
For the newsletter--Katy, George, Jane, Tony, Karl, Glenna, Jim, and Dave, with special thanks to Val.

For "la Causa"--the farmworkers and boycotting supporters.

LABOR DONATED

THE BOYCOTT CONTINUES





Madison Support Committee for the UFW
306 N. Brooks
Madison, WI 53715

FARM WORKERS NEED YOUR HELP

For as many years as we can remember farm workers have suffered. They have labored under poverty level wages, massive pesticide poisonings, child labor starting as early as five or six years old, racial discrimination, intolerably poor sanitation, chicken shack housing and endless other injustices. These abuses result in extremely high job injury rates. Farm work is the third most hazardous occupation, yet farm workers are the poorest laborers in this country. To end this suffering, the farm workers have sacrificed to build their own union.

The growers will sign contracts o if the economic pressure of the b cott is strong enough. With your support of the boycott of grapes, lettuce and Gallo wines, farm wor ers can achieve the rights they h been denied for so long.



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