

September 21, 2004

Dear FLOC friends, supporters, and allies:

As many of you already know, last Thursday September 16th we signed an historic contract with the North Carolina Growers' Association (NCGA) and a side bar agreement with the Mt. Olive Pickle Co. This ENDS THE BOYCOTT OF MT. OLIVE PICKLE PRODUCTS.

It's a tremendous victory that all of us made possible. This struggle was made of many little steps. You who called the company and urged them to negotiate, you who once talked to a manager at your local grocery store to stop carrying Mt. Olive, you who helped us leaflet, you who invited us to speak to your church, you who marched, you who prayed, you made this possible.

FLOC has signed up over two thousand workers to date and continues to sign up members throughout the current season. The NCGA brings about 8,000 workers every year from Mexico under the H2A guestworker program, many of whom work on the farms contracted to Mt. Olive Pickle Company.

What will this mean for the workers?

- The Union will be the tool for negotiating wages, working and living conditions for the members.
- There will be a seniority system. No worker will be unfairly denied the opportunity to come as an H2A worker or be blacklisted.
- Workers can file complaints about any abuse or injustice through a grievance procedure.
- The Dunlop Commission will be used as a private labor relations board.
- Full day's work paid if injured at work.
- Three days of paid leave for the funeral of a close family member.
- The cucumber pickers whose farms sell to Mt. Olive Pickle Company will receive a wage increase of over 10% in the next three years.
- Committees will be developed to look at issues of improving housing, health care, and other issues.
- All workers will be given at least one ½ day of rest every week in a "Freedom to Worship" clause.

The contract gives these workers the means to enforce the protections of the H2A program which have heretofore been ignored. The abuses of the H2A program by recruiters, contractors, growers, and the NCGA will now be addressed through the union grievance process.

A private labor relations board will be available when the grievance process exhausts its remedies. The Dunlop Commission established after the conclusion of the Campbell Boycott will be repositioned with members from the North Carolina agricultural community to do the job. Furthermore, the contract provides for joint labor and industry committees to address the housing, health, and other special needs of the workforce.

The NCGA contract and MT. Olive agreement are not automatic fixes for the problems of the exploitation of the Latino workforce in North Carolina. Rather these are hard earned opportunities for worker empowerment through education, training, and further organizing.

We organized a seventy-nine member farm worker advisory group from which the negotiating committee was drawn. Camp representatives must be elected for the more than 1000 labor camps in North Carolina. Education meetings will be called for those same camps.

FLOC will monitor the recruiting process in Mexico to secure its new seniority system and the dismantling of the old black-listing and bribery that have long plagued this system. This historic moment is not the end of the story of the struggle for farm worker rights and economic justice, but the opening of a new chapter in the book.

We thank all of our friends for their support during the long struggle in North Carolina and ask you to continue to walk with FLOC to overcome the challenges that face us in implementing these agreements and as we re-tool to achieve breakthroughs for other workers.

Hasta la Victoria!