



NEWS *Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO*
1221 Broadway Toledo, Ohio 43609 419-243-3456

Contact Number: 919-731-4433 Dudley, NC

Embargoed until Thursday, September 16, 2004

Precedent-Setting Agreement Reached; Mt. Olive Pickle Boycott Over

After five years of a public action boycott by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO (FLOC), it has reached a precedent setting agreement with the North Carolina Grower's Association (NCGA) and the Mount Olive Pickle Company.

This Thursday, September 16, 2004, over 8,000 "guest" farm workers in North Carolina will become the first such workers in the history of the United States to win union representation and a contract. It will be the largest union contract in North Carolina's history.

A press conference and ceremonial signing will be held at 10:00am at the Community United Church of Christ, 814 Dixie Trail, Raleigh, North Carolina.

The international component of the contract to be signed on Thursday will allow the union to oversee the employment of over 8,000 workers from most Mexican States who will come to work in North Carolina with H2A visas through the U.S. Department of Labor. The standards set by this agreement are significant because of the agricultural industry's almost exclusive use of undocumented workers. The agreement will cover over 1000 North Carolina farms.

A side-bar agreement will extend the influence of this agreement as far as Ohio as a pact with the Mount Olive Pickle Company increases wages to workers and prices to growers by over 10% over the next three years in settling the more than five year old boycott. Most growers who contract with Mount Olive are also members of the NCGA.

The NCGA has been accused of blacklisting workers for supporting the union and for complaining about workers' rights and protections. The agreement between NCGA and FLOC will make the blacklist debate a moot issue through the development of a system of seniority based on number of years worked, growers' requests, and union membership. The contract's non-discrimination clause, a three-step grievance procedure, and camp representatives in labor camps will oversee implementation and protection of workers' rights. FLOC will have union organizers present in Mexico to enforce this agreement and assure the elimination of the blacklist.

The agreement is a new initiative to bring the entire agricultural industry of North Carolina together to work on different issues that require investigation and long-term

development. Standing committees with the NCGA and other public entities will improve housing, health care, and examine issues of fair trade in regards to competitive growers and industries that compete with workers and growers under this agreement. The Union and the NCGA will approach the Mexican government together concerning graft, bribery, and blackmail committed by recruiters and Mexican police.

The agreement covers a broad range of crops throughout the entire state from the late days of February to the harvest of the last Christmas trees in November.

FLOC President, Baldemar Velasquez stated, "This agreement will set an important standard to the rest of the agricultural industry. Everyone else almost exclusively utilizes undocumented workers and the conditions of those workers are tragic and shameful."

H-2A worker Jose Hernandez-Coronado said, "We will continue struggling and give it all we got, because there is still work to do. We will never forget those that started this, those that made it possible, those workers and leaders who were in the front lines of the campaign and the union. Right now we do it for ourselves and for our families in Mexico, but we also sign this contract for the future generations who will come in the coming years. Hasta la Victoria, somos hermanos en la lucha."