

MEETING TO CONSULT ON THE PROBLEMS OF
MEXICAN FARM WORKERS ILLEGALLY IN THE U.S.A.

*ahh
3/18/75*

Background

One of the manifestations of the critical situation in the rural areas of Mexico is, without doubt, the yearly emigration to the U.S.A. of at least 3 million campesinos looking for employment. Many of these people find work in agriculture as cheap labor under conditions inferior to those for U.S. workers in the same jobs, and under particular exploitation because of their illegal situation. In addition to working in this oppressive situation, which enables ranch owners to obtain a higher rate of profit, the undocumented workers are used to counteract the efforts of farm workers to unionize. Many times they become strikebreakers.

This situation has caused friction and tensions between the undocumented workers and the members of the United Farm Workers Union, headed by the Chicano leader Cesar Chavez. The problem is deepened by the conflicts of interest among various groups in this situation: the ranch owners (growers), agribusiness companies, the governments of Mexico and the United States, the United Farm Workers and illegal immigrant workers. There have been solutions proposed from different viewpoints, ranging from initiating another "bracero" contract between the U.S. and Mexican governments like the one in force until 1968, to use

of the U.S. laws prohibiting employment of illegal immigrants, to stronger and more effective measures to prevent people without papers from crossing the frontier, to proposals for giving legal status and rights to immigrants now illegally in the U.S.A.

The basic problem is rooted in the precarious economic situation of the rural Mexican, which is linked to other problems of Mexico as a Third World country with the limitations of its economy within the international scene, as well as the limitations of the possibilities for moving out of underdevelopment. There is no doubt about the disadvantageous situation in which the affected groups find themselves, both the rural Mexican who emigrates and the Chicano farm worker trying to defend his subsistence, both placed in conflict when both are subject to exploitation within the existing structures of their societies. There is a clear need to find a framework within which these two groups may channel their energies into a common struggle against interests which clearly affect them both.

Being aware that the scope of the problem will not allow a definitive solution in the short run, we believe that an effort to bring together rural Mexicans and UFW members and other farm workers in a common strategy to defend themselves and reduce the exploitation they suffer will be of the highest.

importance. This task will demand full and extensive common effort among organizations (both in Mexico and the U.S.) related to rural problems, with possible participation of some governmental bodies from both Mexico and the U.S.A.

To plan work of this type it is proposed that there be a preliminary meeting with representatives of various groups, both Mexican and U.S., who are deeply involved with farm workers in their day to day struggles for justice. To this end a consultation has been planned to take place in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico with objectives and agenda as indicated in the following outline.

Objectives of the Meeting

1. To analyze the problem from 3 view points:
 - 1.1. The situation of the rural Mexican which forces him to emigrate.
 - 1.2. The United Farmworkers Union and the effect of illegal immigration upon it and other organizational efforts.
 - 1.3. The problems of Mexican farm workers in the U.S. illegally.
2. To discuss the possibility of developing cooperation among U.S. and Mexican organizations, looking for a

common strategy for the solution of the problems between undocumented Mexican farm workers in the U.S. and other farm workers in that country.

3. To discuss specific suggestions from participants for approaches and cooperation, and to define the limits and possibilities for work.

Meeting Location

Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Dates

April 18 - 20, 1975.

Organizations Represented

- * Centro Coordinador de Proyectos Ecumenicos (CECOPE) - Mexico
(Coordinating Center for Ecumenical Projects)
- * Centro de Comunicacion Social (CENCOS) - Mexico
(Center for Social Communication)
- * Comite de Servicio de Los Amigos en Mexico - Mexico
(Mexican Friends Service Committee)
- * Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (PMT) - Mexico
(Mexican Workers Party)
- * United Farm Workers Union - U.S.A.
- * American Friends Service Committee - U.S.A.
- * Third World Coalition (TWC) - U.S.A.
- * Representatives from Chicano Organizations - U.S.A.

Tentative Agenda

Friday, April 18

Arrival and introductory session

Saturday, April 19

Outline of the problem:

1. The reality of the rural situation in Mexico. Presented by Dr. Ricardo Pozas Arciniega and Dr. Isabel Horcasitas de Pozas (Experts on Mexican rural conditions and well-known authors).
2. Peasant farmers organizations in Mexico. Presentation by Ing. Heberto Castillo* (Head of the Mexican Workers Party).
3. The situation of farm workers in the U.S. and their efforts to organize. Presentation by Cesar Chavez* (President of U.F.W.).
4. The problems of Mexicans illegally in the U.S. Presentation possibly by Jorge Busa* (From a Mexican migrant farm workers organization).

Sunday, April 20

Development of proposals for action.

1. Discussion of specific program ideas.
2. Guidelines for implementation.

* unconfirmed

Resources

1. Transportation

Each organization taking part will cover travel costs for its representatives.

2. Lodging

Lodging will be provided courtesy of the CECOPE project in Ciudad Juarez. Attenders should bring sleeping bags or bedrolls.

3. Meals

Expense of meals will be covered by the organizers of the gathering.

Background Materials (documentation)

1. Bibliographical: Each organization having materials related to the subject should bring copies to distribute to attenders.
2. Working papers: It is suggested that those participating prepare short written outlines of suggestions for possible actions, indicating the resources each could contribute.

March 1975