

SETTING UP A BOYCOTT

By Eliseo Medina

I. Internal Organization

- A. Break up the city into areas, with an Area Coordinator working with all organizations in their area. This is preferred since it is very difficult to coordinate when several organizers are working with different organizations in the same area. In addition, it is expensive for an organizer to run from one side of the city to the other when assigned according to organizations rather than by area.
- B. Have at least weekly staff meetings where strategy is discussed and reports are made by the Area Organizers.
- C. Meet with each area organizer separately to deal with specific area problems or projects.
- D. Have weekly supporters' meetings in order to:
 1. Disseminate information from California and other boycott cities.
 2. Boost morale.
 3. Involve people in planning so they will be more likely to work on implementing those plans.
- E. Monthly newsletter - your mailing list is expensive and you can't afford to send to everyone so be selective and send to:
 1. Picketers and leafletters.
 2. Those who give money.
 3. Those who make phone calls or write letters.
 4. The heads of unions, churches and community organizations.
- F. Put one person in charge of money (income and expenditures).
- G. Since there is no money for P.R., full page ads, or radio and TV spots, the entire staff should do the job by speaking to as many groups as possible. This is also good experience.
- H. One thing that is important, but often forgotten, is to compliment the staff when they are doing a good job.
- I. The coordinator should be the one to deal with the heads of unions or churches. This is important politically because if you mess up with them, you mess up the whole organization, not just one local or one church.
- J. Do not limit yourself to asking help from only one group. You need to have a broad cross section of the community--church, labor, students-- if you are to win.
- K. Remember that there are levels of involvement - some people will only give money, others will only do phone calls or letter writing, others will picket night and day. Organizers must understand this and accept people at the level at which they are willing to participate.
- L. Use people in the ways that they can be most helpful. Don't ask a bishop to picket. Ask him to:
 1. Send a pastoral letter to parishes.
 2. Be on a Blue Ribbon Committee (for press conferences, special services, special reports, etc.)

3. Attend meetings with chain stores.
 4. Participate in inter-faith services.
 5. Be on delegation to Coachella.
- M. Be sure to ask for names of friends to build a chain and have something very specific in mind when visiting so you don't waste time.

II. Speaking

A. Structure your speech in four parts:

1. Conditions of farm workers (annual wage, health and working conditions, housing, education, etc.).
 2. What the farm workers are doing to solve these problems:
 - a) organized a union of their own,
 - b) struck in 1965,
 - c) benefits in the union contract (hiring hall, pesticide protections, medical plan, seniority, etc.),
 - d) April '73 strike and Grower/Teamster collusion to break farm workers' union. Importance of boycott to win back contracts.
 3. Questions.
 4. Pitch:
 - a) Boycott grapes, lettuce and Gallo.
 - b) Sign up if you can help picket or phone or help in some other way.
 - c) Tell them about buying buttons or bumper stickers. I always tell them that we all make \$5.00 a week so that their money goes to support the strikers, not for fancy salaries. And that if they have any old, moldy money that they have been meaning to throw away, now is their chance. That we'll take from 25¢ to 30 million dollars. This usually cracks them up and makes their giving something they want to do and something they feel a part of, instead of something they have been pressured into doing.
- B. Never assume that your audience knows everything. Be sure to leave the pitch for last so that the last thing they hear is how they can help.
- C. The cardinal sin for an organizer is to go to a meeting, turn people on, and then not give them anything specific to do.
- D. Remember the importance of 'follow-up!' Contact the people who sign up, get them to form a committee, get them out on the picket line, make sure there is something for them to do.

III. Organizations

- ### A. Unions - First visit the District Director and the Central Labor Council President.
1. From the Central Labor Council you can ask:
 - a) to speak to the delegates' meeting
 - (1) get endorsement
 - (2) ask for money (floor collection, monthly pledge),
 - b) that a letter be sent out to the affiliates requesting help for the farm workers,
 - c) for articles and/or blurbs on the boycott in their publications on a regular basis,
 - d) to use office machines,
 - e) them to run leaflets for us,
 - f) appoint a boycott committee.

2. From District Council of Union you can ask:
 - a) to speak at District Meeting (composed of all the locals of that particular union)
 - (1) get endorsement
 - (2) ask for money (floor collection, monthly pledge),
 - b) for a letter to the locals asking for help,
 - c) for regular publicity in their paper,
 - d) for use of their office machines,
 - e) help in running leaflets,
 - f) that a boycott committee be appointed.
3. From Local Unions you can ask:
 - a) to speak at membership meeting,
 - (1) get endorsement
 - (2) ask for money (floor collection, union donation, gate collection),
 - b) publicity in paper,
 - c) to leaflet the plant through the stewards,
 - d) to post boycott material in plants,
 - e) help in getting pickets out,
 - f) that a boycott committee be appointed.

(Remember that you are not there to change the political or social views of the union heads; you are there to ask for boycott help.)

B. Churches

1. Council of Churches:
 - a) public endorsement,
 - b) speak to meeting,
 - c) letter to affiliated churches,
 - d) money,
 - e) use of office machines,
 - f) periodic special mailings about farm workers to local churches updating them on the latest information.
2. Denomination heads:
 - a) public endorsement,
 - b) pastoral letter to parishes asking that
 - (1) the letter be read from the pulpit
 - (2) support the boycott of grapes, lettuce, etc.
 - (3) invite UFW speaker to your church
 - (4) give address of UFW office for further information,
 - c) have fund raisers at the church such as bake sales, bingo, fiesta, etc.
 - d) put blurb in bulletin,
 - e) put inserts in bulletin or leaflet the church,
 - f) get pickets out.
3. School committees:
 - a) leaflet the school and/or set up information table,
 - b) have fund raisers, bake sale, dance, car wash, sell buttons,
 - c) have food drive,
 - d) put article in school paper,
 - e) arrange to speak to classes,
 - f) get students out to picket.
4. These suggestions will pretty much work with community groups as well.

IV. Fundraising

A. Gate collections

1. Get permission from union.
2. Pick a day when the workers are likely to have money (the day after pay day).
3. Leaflet the plant announcing the collection the day before, making sure the UFW and the union's name are on the leaflet.
4. Get union officers to help with the collection on every shift.
5. If the union is strong they can take up the collection in the plant through the stewards (usually resulting in more money).
6. Count money at the union hall and immediately report total.
7. Send a nice letter with a receipt thanking the local.
8. Keep a file of the unions and dates of collections and amount collected for future reference.
9. Schedule one good gate collection each month.

B. Monthly pledges by unions - it is better to get \$25.00 a month for a year than \$300.00 all at once. This way you have a steady income, the union is committed for a long time, and they remember the boycott every month they mail out the check.

C. Selling buttons and stickers at meetings brings in a steady trickle of money.

D. Fasts in schools where most of the students eat in the school cafeteria can be very profitable. Get the school to agree to reimburse you the cost of a meal for every student who does not eat at the cafeteria. At Oberlin College we have done it twice. First time about 600 students fasted on dinner and we got \$1,000.00. The second time 1,069 students fasted at lunch and we got \$633.94. (Cost of dinner is greater than cost of lunch.)

E. Walkathon and/or Fast-a-thon: Get students to walk a certain distance, and have them find sponsors who will pay so much per mile for every mile they walk. Organize a church youth group or other group to fast for a day or a weekend and they can get sponsors to pledge so much money for each hour fasted.

F. Special events where you sell tickets in advance are good because you already have your money regardless of how many people attend. This can be used with banquets, fiestas, film festivals, plays, etc.

V. Stores

A. You must always do your homework before picking a target store.

1. Who owns it?
2. What percentage of the market do they have? If they crack will others follow?
3. Where are the stores located? (white reactionary areas or liberal, Black, Chicano neighborhoods)
4. Any alternative stores for shoppers?
5. Are the stores located in big shopping centers or are they single stores?
6. Union or scab?
7. How strong are you?
8. Will the fight be won quickly or will it be a long one?

- B. Always remember that while the picket line is the most important thing you have, you must develop alternate sources of pressure as well, such as delegations to headquarters, petitions, phone calling, picket owners' houses, leaflet their churches, etc.
- C. In short, you must wage a strong, determined campaign designed to convince the store to get rid of the grapes, lettuce, and Gallo. You must make it an issue in the community.

VI. Materials

- A. Important background materials on
 - 1. Conditions of farm workers.
 - 2. Elections held and won by UFW.
 - 3. Endorsements (Bishop's Committee, AFL-CIO, National Council of Churches, etc.)
 - 4. Background on IBT hassle.
 - 5. Supreme Court decision.
 - 6. Comparison of UFW/IBT contract.
 - 7. Services offered by UFW.
 - 8. Msgr. Higgins Labor Day 1973 message.
- B. Remember these rules on materials:
 - 1. Don't make leaflets lengthy or wordy.
 - 2. Always include your address and phone number.
 - 3. Reprints of newspaper articles are better than what you write. Most people accept what they see in the papers better than what you write yourself.
 - 4. Be neat and factual. The better your leaflets look the better your chances that they will be read.
 - 5. Use good pictures.
 - 6. Avoid rhetoric. It turns people off.