

FARMWORKER COMIX

A HISTORY OF FARM
LABOR STRUGGLE IN
CALIFORNIA



GOODS GROWN ON BIG FARMS IN CALIFORNIA ARE SHIPPED ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD.



EVEN IN THE 1850'S CALIFORNIA WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FOOD GROWING AREAS ON THE GLOBE.



THE PROBLEM HAS ALWAYS BEEN, WHO WILL DO THE WORK TO PICK THE CROPS ONCE THEY ARE READY? IF THEY ARE NOT PICKED ON TIME THE CROPS WILL SPOIL.



FARMWORKERS, THAT'S WHO! THE FIRST FARMWORKERS WERE FORCED WORKERS, NATIVE AMERICANS WHO WORKED ON CALIFORNIA'S BIG MISSION FARMS.



LATER CALIFORNIANS LIKE JACK LONDON, WHO BECAME A FAMOUS WRITER, WORKED IN THE FIELDS, WHICH WERE THEN OWNED BY COMPANIES AND GROWERS.



BUT WHEN THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE WILLING TO DO THE HARD WORK, FARM OWNERS OR GROWERS BROUGHT WORKERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.



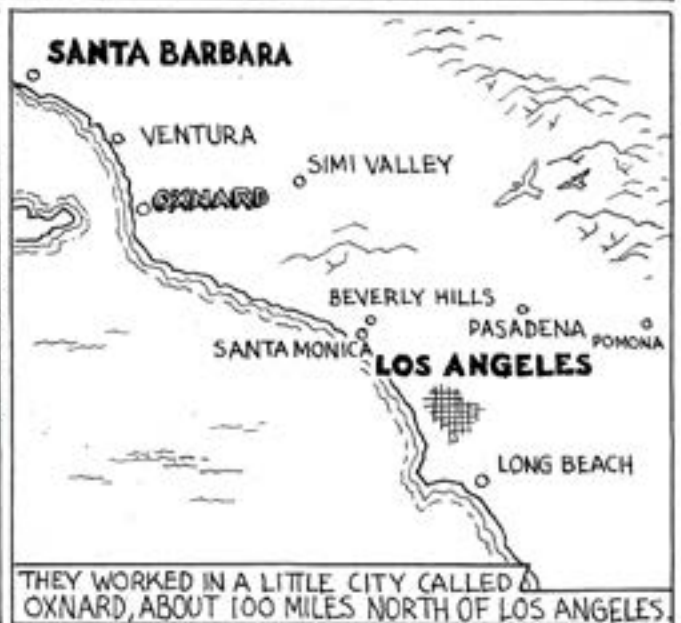
THERE WAS NO ONE TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY WERE TREATED FAIRLY. ONCE WORKERS CAME TO CALIFORNIA TO WORK, THE OWNERS PAID THEM AS LITTLE AS THEY COULD.



THE WORKERS NEEDED A UNION TO PROTECT THEM.



IN 1903 MEXICAN AND JAPANESE FARMWORKERS GOT TOGETHER TO FORM THE FIRST FARMWORKERS UNION IN CALIFORNIA.



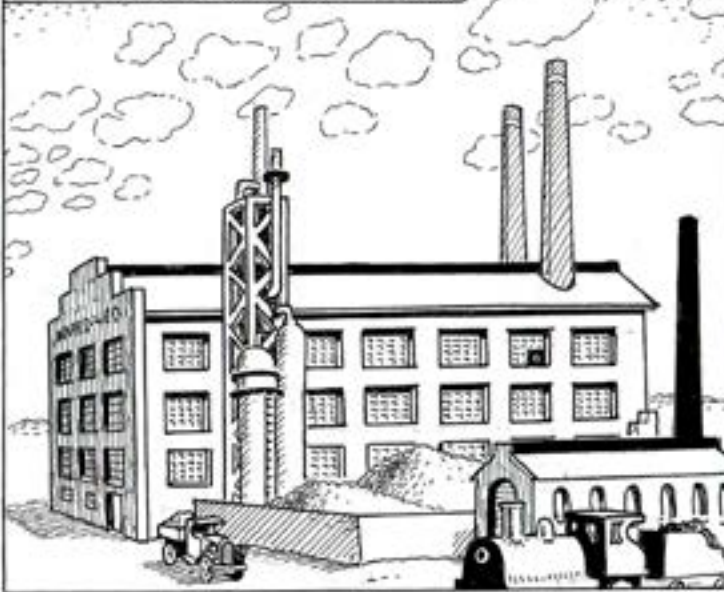
THEY WORKED IN A LITTLE CITY CALLED OXNARD, ABOUT 100 MILES NORTH OF LOS ANGELES.

OXNARD WAS OWNED BY BIG GROWERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. IT EVEN GOT ITS NAME FROM A RICH GROWER FAMILY.

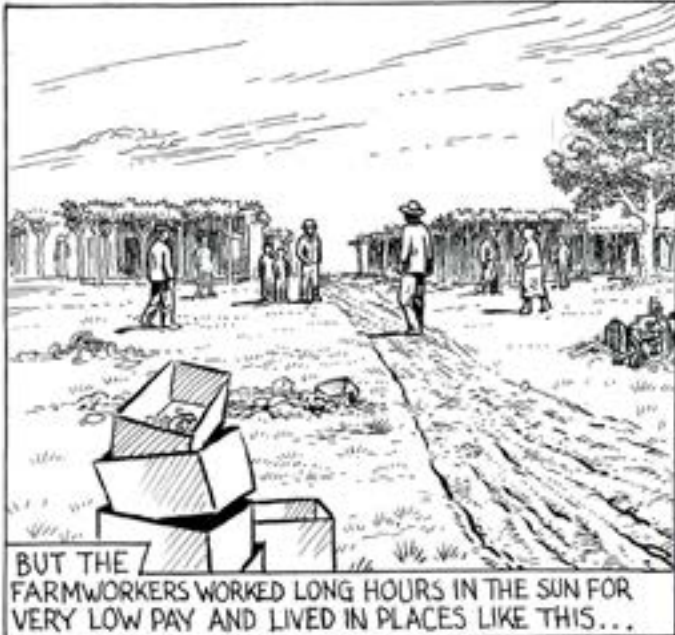


OXNARD WAS FAMOUS FOR ITS ORANGES AND FOR BIG SUGARBEET FIELDS. MOST OF THE SUGAR WE EAT IS MADE FROM SUGARBEETS.

THE OXNARD FAMILY OWNED ONE OF THE BIGGEST SUGAR-BEET FACTORIES IN THE WORLD.

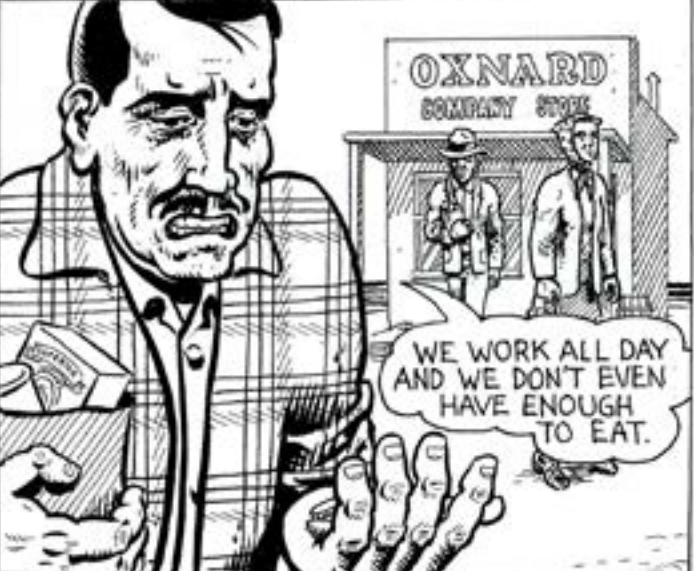


THEY LIVED FAR AWAY AND THEY PAID THEIR MANAGERS LOTS OF MONEY TO RUN THE SUGAR FACTORIES.



BUT THE FARMWORKERS WORKED LONG HOURS IN THE SUN FOR VERY LOW PAY AND LIVED IN PLACES LIKE THIS...

THE ONLY STORES AROUND WERE OWNED BY THE GROWERS. THE PRICES WERE VERY HIGH.



IN 1903, THE GROWERS REDUCED THE WORKERS' PAY. THE MEXICAN AND JAPANESE WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE. COULD THEY STAY TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH TO WIN?



SOME NEWSPAPERS TRIED TO MAKE PEOPLE HATE THE STRIKERS.

OUR UNRES

LABOR RIOT IN OXNARD ENDS IN FATALITY

AUTHORITIES WERE CALLED IN YESTERDAY WHEN DISGRUNTLED FARM WORKERS TRIED TO PREVENT REPLACEMENT WORKERS FROM ENTERING THE FIELDS. ANGRY PICKETS THREW ONES AND OTHER OBJECTS AT THE SHERIFF DEPARTMENT STORE ORDER PATIES WERE ORCED TO STORE ORDER TO THE HOSPITAL ED OF INJURIES THE STRIKERS THE FIDST

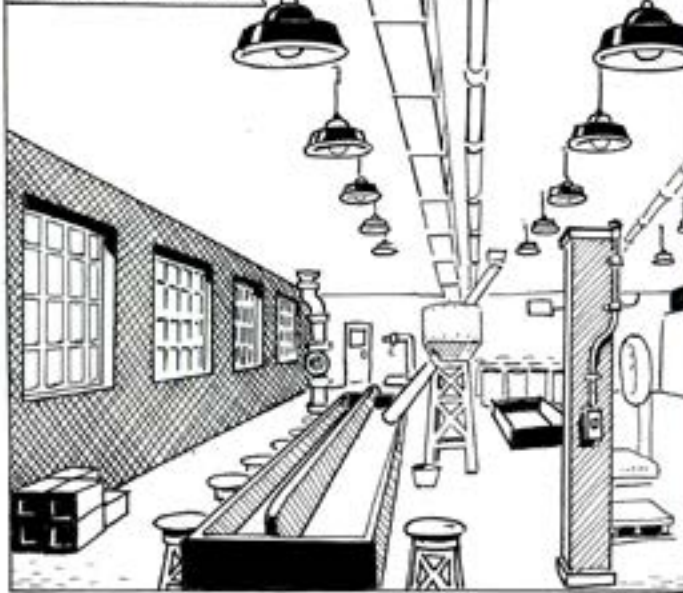
FIVE MEMBERS OF WARRING FACTIONS SEVERELY WOUNDED

ONE VICTIM DIES IN HOSPITAL

EFFORTS TO PLACE NON-UNION MEN IN FIELDS CAUSES OUTREA

A SPOKE FOR THE S DEPARTMENT TOLD REPO NOT BE TOL IN THIS COL THE RIGHTS GROWERS TO CONDUCT BU AS THEY SEE FIT. WE WILL NOT ALLOW ANARCHY TO PERVADE OUR AND DISRUPT THE PEACE AND GOOD ORDER OF VENTURA CONN FURTUN

BUT FOR TWO MONTHS THE SUGAR FACTORIES WERE STOPPED...



...UNTIL THE OWNERS GAVE UP. THEY AGREED TO RAISE THE PAY BACK TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE. IT WAS A BIG VICTORY FOR THE FARM WORKERS.



THE FARMWORKERS WROTE A LETTER, ASKING TO JOIN A BIG GROUP OF UNIONS CALLED THE AF&L.



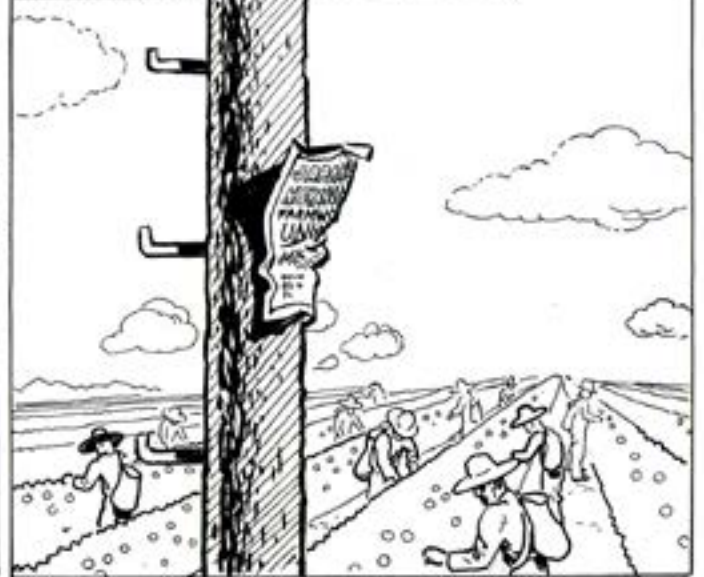
THE PRESIDENT OF THE AF&L SAID THE MEXICANS COULD JOIN, BUT NOT THE JAPANESE.



MEXICAN WORKERS REFUSED TO JOIN WITHOUT THE JAPANESE.

It would be like stabbing our brothers in the back

BUT WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE AF&L THE JAPANESE-MEXICAN UNION SOON FELL APART.



1913 WHEATLAND

ON THE HOT SUMMER OF 1913, 3000 PEOPLE CAME TO WORK ON A RANCH NEAR SACRAMENTO, BUT THERE WAS ONLY ENOUGH WORK FOR HALF OF THEM.



THE OWNER OF THE RANCH, A MAN NAMED DURST, THOUGHT THAT WAS FINE. THAT WAY HE COULD PAY THE FARMWORKERS LESS MONEY.

THERE WERE NO SEWERS OR GARBAGE DUMPS IN THE WORKERS' CAMPS. IT WAS VERY HOT, BUT THERE WAS NO WATER TO DRINK IN THE FIELDS.



PRETTY SOON MANY WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN WERE SICK.

THE WORKERS HELD A MEETING AND DECIDED TO PROTEST. THEY ALL AGREED TO KEEP IT PEACEFUL.



SOME MEMBERS OF A BIG UNION CALLED THE I.W.W. WERE THERE LOOKING FOR WORK. ONE OF THE I.W.W. MEN HELD UP A BABY.



BUT DURST CALLED THE SHERIFF...



... AND ONE OF THE DEPUTIES FIRED HIS GUN.



SOME OF THE WORKERS WERE ARMED AND FIRED BACK. THE SHERIFF, A DEPUTY, AND TWO WORKERS WERE KILLED.



WHEN MORE POLICE ARRIVED THEY ARRESTED THE IWW MEN, EVEN THOUGH ONE OF THEM HAD NOT EVEN BEEN AT THE MEETING AND THE OTHER DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A GUN.

THE MEN WERE BEATEN. THEY WERE BOTH CONVICTED AND SERVED TIME IN PRISON.



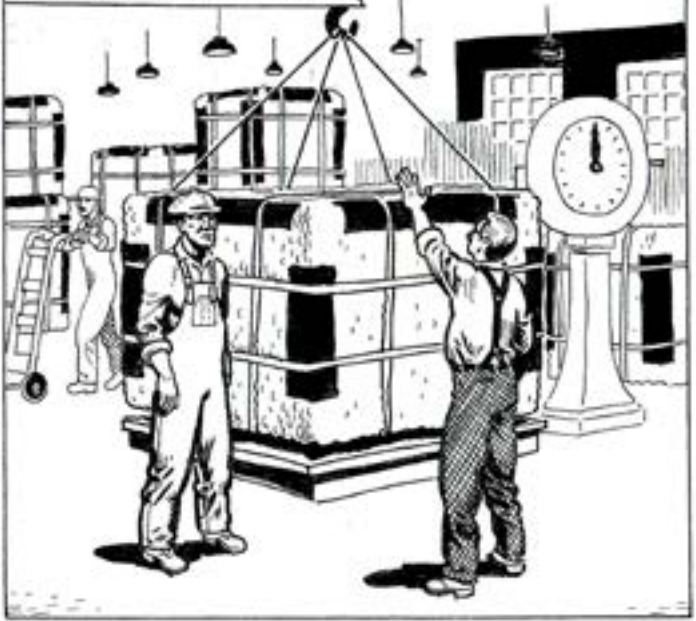
AFTER WHEATLAND, THE STATE GOVERNMENT SENT INVESTIGATORS TO SEE HOW FARMWORKERS LIVED. THEY RECOMMENDED SOME SMALL CHANGES, BUT FARMWORKERS' LIVES DID NOT IMPROVE.

1933-THE GREAT COTTON STRIKE

BY THE 1930'S THE LARGEST COTTON FIELDS COULD BE FOUND IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA.



BUT WORKERS WERE PAID ONLY 60¢ FOR PICKING A 100 POUND BAG OF COTTON.



THEY LIVED IN THE SAME BAD CAMPS. CHILDREN HAD TO WORK TOO. BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A FAMILY TO MAKE ENOUGH TO LIVE ON.



THE WORKERS WANTED BETTER PAY AND BETTER CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS WHERE THEY LIVED. A UNION CALLED THE C.A.W.I.U. WENT TO THE CAMPS TO HELP TO GET PEOPLE TOGETHER.



WHEN THE GROWERS WOULD NOT LISTEN TO THEM, **18,000** COTTON WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE ALL UP AND DOWN THE VALLEY.



MOST OF THE WORKERS WERE MEXICAN-AMERICANS. SOME HAD FORMED UNIONS BEFORE. THEIR FAMILIES WERE USED TO HELPING EACH OTHER OUT DURING STRIKES.



BUT IN THE TOWN OF PIXLEY A GANG OF GROWERS MURDERED TWO WORKERS WHILE THEY WERE AT A MEETING AND WOUNDED FOUR OTHERS.



INSTEAD OF ARRESTING THE GROWERS, WHO HAD DONE THE SHOOTING, THE POLICE ARRESTED SOME OF THE STRIKERS AND UNION LEADERS.



SOME WERE CONVICTED AND SENT TO JAIL. SOME WERE SENT OUT OF THE COUNTRY.



BUT THE STRIKE WENT ON. NEWSPAPERS AND POLICE HELPED THE GROWERS.

AFTER THREE WEEKS THE STRIKE WAS LOST, BUT TWO GOOD THINGS HAD HAPPENED. FOR THE FIRST TIME, FARMWORKERS FROM ALL OVER THE STATE HAD GOTTEN TOGETHER TO MAKE THEIR LIVES BETTER.



GROWERS WERE ALSO FORCED TO RAISE THE PAY OF COTTON WORKERS A LITTLE.

1947 - STRIKE AT DIGIORGIO

IN 1948, MOVIE WORKERS IN HOLLYWOOD AND FARMWORKERS MADE A MOVIE CALLED "POVERTY IN THE VALLEY OF PLENTY"



THE MOVIE TOLD PEOPLE ABOUT A STRIKE AT A BIG FARM NEAR BAKERSFIELD.



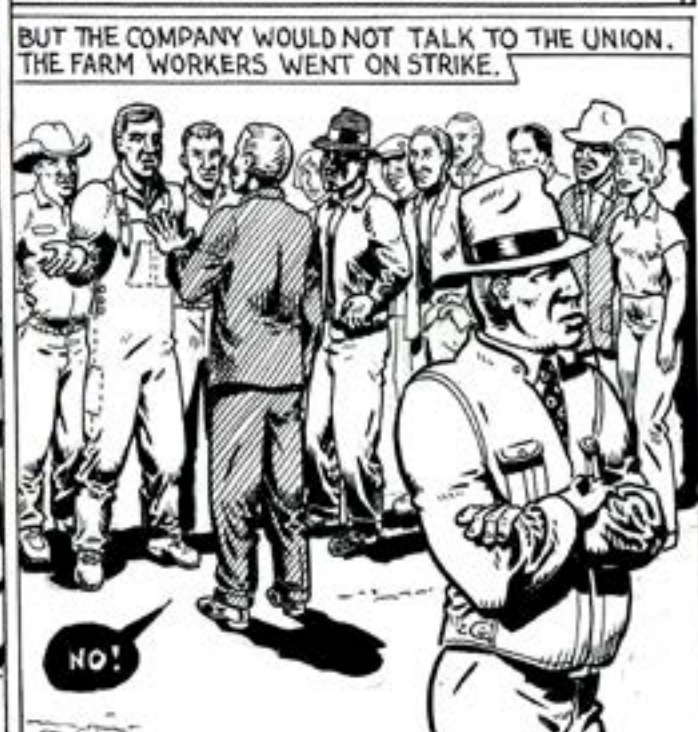
THE WORKERS WERE KEPT SEPARATE TO MAKE SURE THEY WOULDN'T GET TOGETHER AND ORGANIZE. THEIR PAY WAS VERY LOW.



ONE OF THE UNION MEMBERS WORKING NEARBY WAS A YOUNG MAN FROM ARIZONA NAMED CESAR CHAVEZ.



THE WORKERS WANTED BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, IMPROVED SANITATION AT THE CAMPS WHERE THEY LIVED, AND A RAISE OF 10 CENTS AN HOUR.



OTHER WORKERS FROM ALL OVER CALIFORNIA HELPED BY SENDING FOOD AND MONEY TO THE STRIKERS. IT BECAME THE LONGEST FARMWORKER STRIKE IN AMERICAN HISTORY.



AGAIN THE GROWERS ATTACKED THE STRIKERS USING GUNS. THEY HIRED SOMEONE TO MURDER ONE OF THE UNION LEADERS, BUT NO ONE WAS EVER ARRESTED FOR THE SHOOTING.

MANY WORKERS WERE SURE POLICE WERE HELPING THE GROWERS AGAIN.



ON AND ON, FOR TWO MORE YEARS, THE FARMWORKERS KEPT UP THEIR STRIKE. DURING THIS TIME, "POVERTY IN THE VALLY OF PLENTY" WAS SHOWN AROUND THE STATE, LETTING PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE STRIKE.

THE GROWERS WENT TO COURT AND SAID THE MOVIE WAS NOT FAIR TO THEM. AGAIN THE JUDGE HELPED THE GROWERS.



BUT SMART PEOPLE, LIKE YOUNG CESAR CHAVEZ, REMEMBERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND LEARNED FROM IT.



THE UNION HAD TO END THE STRIKE, AND AGREE NOT TO EVER SHOW THE MOVIE AGAIN.

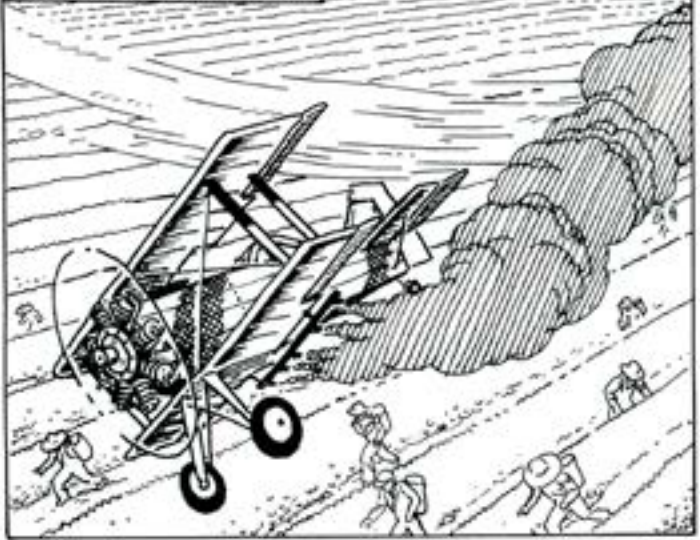


1965 - THE ANSWER

IN THE 1960'S, THINGS FOR FARMWORKERS WERE JUST AS BAD AS EVER. THEIR LIVES WERE STILL CONTROLLED BY THE GROWERS. THEY HAD NO STRONG UNIONS TO PROTECT THEM.



BECAUSE OF THE POISON CHEMICALS USED BY THE GROWERS TO KILL INSECTS, FARMWORKERS LIVED SHORTER LIVES THAN OTHER PEOPLE AND THEY MADE ABOUT \$1.20 AN HOUR.



MANY STILL LIVED IN SHACKS AND TENTS IN CAMPS WHERE THERE WERE NO TOILETS OR RUNNING WATER. THEIR CHILDREN HAD TO WORK, TOO.



WHEN THEIR CHILDREN COULD GO TO SCHOOL, FARMWORKERS' CHILDREN ARRIVED HUNGRY AND WITHOUT SHOES. OFTEN OTHER KIDS MADE FUN OF THEM.



A TEACHER IN STOCKTON NAMED DOLORES HUERTA REALIZED THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE. SHE LEFT TEACHING AND BECAME A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER.



IN 1959, A TV REPORTER MADE A FILM CALLED "HARVEST OF SHAME" WHICH SHOWED MANY PEOPLE HOW FARMWORKERS LIVED. BUT NOTHING CHANGED. THE GROWERS WERE TOO POWERFUL.

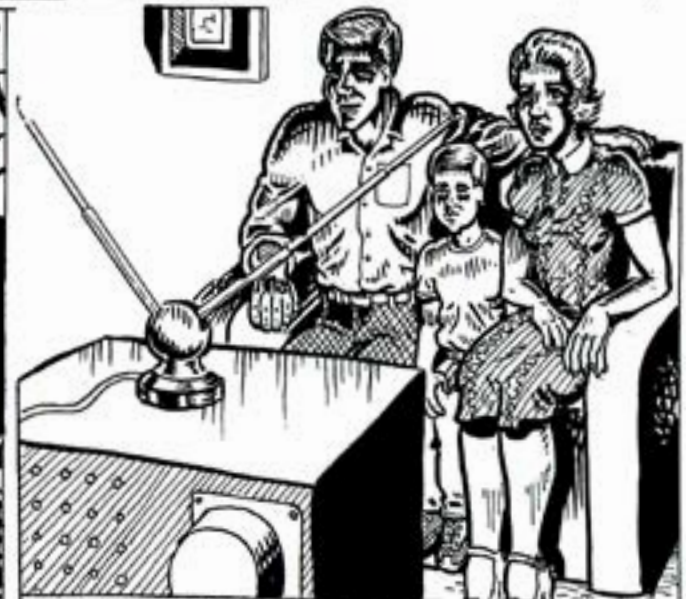
IN 1965, THE MOSTLY FILIPINO WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE IN THE GRAPE FIELDS OF DELANO.



THEIR PRESIDENT, LARRY ITLIONG, ASKED CESAR CHAVEZ AND DOLORES HUERTA, NOW LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL FARM WORKERS ASSOCIATION, TO JOIN THE STRIKE. SOON THOUSANDS OF FARM WORKERS WERE ON STRIKE.



EACH DAY, THE STRIKERS WENT OUT TO FARMS ALL AROUND DELANO AND CALIFORNIA AND TRIED TO GET THE WORKERS THERE, TO GO ON STRIKE, TOO.



ALL OVER THE STATE, ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD, PEOPLE HEARD ABOUT THE FARMWORKERS' STRIKE.

BOYCOTT GRAPES



ALL OVER AMERICA, THE FARMWORKERS ORGANIZED A BOYCOTT - THEY ASKED PEOPLE NOT TO BUY GRAPES.

THE STRIKE GOT STRONGER. OTHER UNIONS SENT HELP.



THE STRIKE WAS NONVIOLENT. EVEN WHEN THEY WERE ATTACKED, THE STRIKERS WOULD NOT FIGHT BACK, BUT THEY WOULD NOT RUN AWAY EITHER.



IN APRIL 1966 CESAR CHAVEZ LED A MARCH FROM DELANO TO THE STATE CAPITOL IN SACRAMENTO TO GET LAWMAKERS TO LISTEN TO THE FARMWORKERS.

ALL ALONG THE WAY, PEOPLE GREETED THEM AS HEROES.



BY THE TIME THEY ARRIVED IN SACRAMENTO, 10,000 PEOPLE WERE MARCHING WITH THEM.



AND THERE THEY GOT GOOD NEWS. DIGIORGIO AND SCHENLEY, TWO OF THE BIGGEST GROWERS, AGREED TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH THE UNION AND PAY THE WORKERS \$1.65 AN HOUR. IT WAS A HUGE VICTORY.



OTHER STRIKES, OTHER BOYCOTTS FOLLOWED. THE U.F.W. WAS MORE THAN A UNION. IT HAD A CLINIC AND HEALTH PLAN FOR ITS MEMBERS, AND A BANK THAT MADE LOANS SO MEMBERS COULD BUY HOUSES.



AT LAST THERE WAS AN ANSWER TO CALIFORNIA'S FARM LABOR PROBLEM. LARRY ILLIONG, DOLORES HUERTA, CESAR CHAVEZ AND THE POWER OF WORKING PEOPLE HAD DONE WHAT EVERYONE THOUGHT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.



EVEN FROM ANOTHER UNION...



AND IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, THE U.F.W. FACED NEW CHALLENGES, FROM THE GROWERS AND THEIR POLITICAL ALLIES...

BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT, AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY OF STRUGGLE, FARMWORKERS HAD LEARNED YOU COULD MAKE THINGS BETTER IF YOU GET TOGETHER AND ORGANIZE. AS CESAR CHAVEZ WAS FOND OF SAYING...

**SI SE PUEDE,
YES WE CAN!**



FROM PESTICIDES, WHICH POISONED AND SICKENED THE WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.