# UFW wins Salinas contract



### By Sam Kushner

LOS ANORLES

HE CELEBRATION THAT ACcompanied the Lebor Day weekend at Salines, Calif., was one of the most joyous in the nation after the Aug. 31 announcement that the largest lettuce producer in the United States had reached an agreement with the United Farm Workers (UFW).

The settlement ended the astionwide hoycott of United Brands products, of which Sun Harvest brands is a subsidi-

From the UFW's national headquarters at Keene, Calif., UFW president Cesar Chavez said the agreement "reflects the vision and courage of Sun Harvest in helping to bring this dispute to an end." He described the three year contract as a "victory for both the workers and the company."

But in Salinas, workers who had walked the picket lines were less magnanimous.

"We beat them, we won. We forced them to their knees," said workers, many of whom suffered beatings at the hands of strikebreakers imported into the area.

Trade unionists throughout the state

UFW celebrated Labor Day with a Sun Harvest lettuce contract. The UFW is becoming known as a \$5 hr. union.

publicly denigrated these settlements and claimed that the conditions in the short season tomato fields being different from the lettuce, broccoli and other vegetable fields, did not set a pattern for the lettuce fields.

Meanwhile, an unusual development took place at the one Salinas area ranch still under contract with the Teamsters Union. The Bud Antle Company, which has been involved in a bitter internal struggle among past and present officers of Teamster Local 890, reached a tentative agreement of less than \$5 per hour, but rank and file resentment and militant action forced Antle to raise its offer to \$5 per hour. The Antle agreement however provides none of the contractual safeguards that are contained in the UFW agreements.

Along with the boycott against Sun Harvest, the UFW concentrated on another lettuce grower, West Coast Farms. During the early morning hours of Aug. 26 the UFW concluded its first settlement with a lettuce firm when West Coast Farms signed up. This agreement cut the ground from under the feet of many of the other growers. The West Coast agreement featured the following terms:

•A three year contract that would provide \$6.20 per hour for common labor by July 15, 1981. This new rate will be effective if the rate of inflation continues at the present level. Otherwise the common labor rate will be no less than \$5.70 per hour.

•In the event that workers are displaced

# Farm workers win suit

killed and 28 injured in a bus ac near Blythe, Calif., while being driven to the High and Mighty farm from the Mexican border. On Aug. 28 survivor and relatives reached an out of court settlement for \$1.2 million. The defendants were Riverside County and the Palos Verde Irrigation District, General Motors and the Ward Bus. Co. of Arkansas and Texas and High and Mighty farms of Blythe. The disaster took place about dawn on Jan. 15, 1974 while the bus was enroute to the jush fields of the Palos Verde Valley near the Colorado River. Most of the workers were Mexican nationals. The bus turned over into a drainage ditch while taking a curve. Survivors contended that the bus was being driven too fast and that the seats were not properly fastened to the floor. The bus landed in the ditch on its side and 19 workers trapped beneath the seats drowned in water 10 feet deep. David B. Epstein, the lawyer representing the workers, said that the High and Mighty company had been named in the suit because it was aware that the bus was unsafe, and that the driver Pablo Navarro Arellanos, 54, was overworked and exhausted at the time of the accident. Arellanos was em-

by machines the number of jobs would be subject to negotiation, with the union having the right to strike if no agreement is reached.

\*Piece work rates were raised to 75 cents per carton (24 heads of lettuce). This contrasts with the old contract rate of 58 cents per carton. It is estimated that on a normal field, under fair conditions, lettuce cutters will earn \$13.50 per hour the first year, \$14.22 the second year and \$14.76 in the final contract vear.

•The company will pay for union representatives to police the contract.

·Striking workers will receive an average of \$700 back pay, retroactive to Dec. 2, 1978.

•Substantial increases in company contributions to the union run health and welfare plan, which is called the Robert F. Kennedy Plan.

#### Unionization sweeps the fields.

This settlement encouraged pro-union sentiment in the fields. The workers at Frudden Produce, a tomato producing firm, walked off the job demanding the same kind of contract that the UFW had won at the West Coast, Meyer, and Gonzales companies. Under the California Labor Relations Act striking workers can demand representation elections within three working days and election was scheduled for Aug. 29.

When the ballots were counted 201 voted for the UFW and only four against. There were 10 challenged votes.

On the day that Sun Harvest settled with the UFW the workers at Mission Packing walked off the job. In an attempt to prevent the unionization of its workers, Mission announced that it was paying 77 cents a carton of lettuce picked. Despite this higher rate 80 percent of the workers left the fields and signed up with the union. An election was scheduled at Mission for the day after Labor Day.

In an attempt to avoid union organization Hansen Farms raised its labor rate to \$5.06 an hour and 76 cents per box for lettuce picked.

After the Sun Harvest agreement was signed Marshall Ganz, a union organizer and member of the UFW's Executive Continued on page 5.

Five years ago 19 farm workers were ployed as a company foreman in addition to being the dus univer. claimants contended that he received only three to four hours sleep each night because of his multiple company responsibilities. Because some of the dead farm workers had no living relatives and some of the injuries were relatively minor, the settlement covered only 13 of those drowned and 22 of the injured. In commenting on the settlement Epstein said this case puts the legal responsibility on the growers for the welfare of their employees. In the past the growers have used farm labor contractors, thinly disguised employees of the growers, to insulate themselves from such responsibility. At the time of the tragedy the United Farm Workers (UFW) had warned that many school buses used in California were in bad shape. The UFW also charged that the state safety inspectors failed to keep the buses up to legal safety standards. Those with lesser injuries were awarded between \$3,000 and \$4,000 each. The largest award was to Esther Villa de Mendoza. She was awarded approximately \$250,000. She lost her husband Manuel, 43, and three children-Lucia, 19, Maria, 18 and Javier, 16. —Sam Kushner

ary, and marked a major breakthrough in the nine month old lettuce pickers strike.

Sun Harvest, which employs between 1,000 and 1,400 workers, has fields throughout California, including Calexico. Huron, Brentwood, Oxnard and Salinas.

In addition, the company has lettuce fields at two locations in Arizona.

The UFW is fast becoming known as the "Five Dollar Union" among California vegetable workers. The Sua Harvest agreement was the fourth in recent weeks where the UFW has signed a contract guaranteeing a minimum common labor rate of \$5 per hour. When the workers went out on strike in mid January, the labor rate in the fields was \$3.70 per hour.

In the third year of the agreement, the field labor rate, without piece work, will be \$5.70 per hour.

"This is a victory for all workers in this state, not just for these at Sun Harvest," said Jerry Cohen, the UNW's chief negotiator in the Salinas area. "It was really sweet," he added, agreeing with other union officials that farm workers have provin in this strike and in the victories achieved alsowhere that they will no longer remain at the bettern of the economic ladder

hailed the UFW victory over the Labor Day weekend. In the labor movement it has become axiomatic that the longer the strike, the less chance there is of winning one's major demands. The Sun Harvest strike proved to be an exception to that rule. When the strike began, the company, in concert with others in the vegetable fields, offered a seven percent increase in line with President Carter's wage guidelines.

In addition, Sun Harvest and more than two dozen other growers demanded major contract changes that would have weakened the UFW. So far the growers have accomplished none of their goals. and have conceded major contract language changes that will strengthen the union's ability to enforce the agreements.

#### Breaking the log jam.

The log jam in the Salinas negotiations burst on Aug. 12 when the Meyer Tomato Company broke away from the industry wide bargaining group and signed the \$5 per hour minimum labor rate agreement with the UFW. Just a few days later another tomato grower, Gonzales Packing, followed suit and signed a contract that duplicated the wage, fringe benefit and contract language features of the initial agreement signed with Meyer. At that time growers' representatives



## Move to pardon Joe Hill grows

He told them to organize, not mourn, but 30,000 wept over Joe Hill's body at his Chicago funeral in 1915.

October 7—Hill's birthday centennial -the Illinois Labor Society plans to cap a nationwide posthumous pardon petition campaign with a rally at Chicago's North Park College for the martyred Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) activist and songwriter.

Hill came to American from Sweden in 1902 as Joel Hagglund, working around the country in mines, on waterfronts and railroads and occasionally making a buck from his songwriting and performing.

In 1910, he began organizing for the IWW, stopping in Utah in 1913 on his way east from California.

On the same January 1914 night a Salt Lake City grocer was killed after a shootout during a holdup, Hill turned up with a bullet wound he said was the result of a fight over a woman. The law said it was the result of the grocery shooting.

Anti-labor, Mormon-controlled justice prevailed, however, despite pleas for

the reconsideration of flimsy evidence by President Woodrow Wilson, Sweden's ambassador, Eugene Debs, Helen Keller and the American Federation of Labor.

His lawyers wrote "the main thing the state has against Hill is that he is an In dustrial Worker of the World and there fore must be guilty."

About to die by firing squad Nov. 19, 1915, Hill telegrammed fellow Wobbly "Big Bill" Haywood "Good bye, Bill. I will die as a true blue rebel. Don't waste any time mourning. Organize."

According to Gibbs M. Smith's Labor Martyr, the 36-year-old condemned prisoner tried to fight off police with a broomstick before facing his five executioners.

A poet and cartoonist as well as songwriter, Hill's tune "The Preacher and the Slave" chastized clerical hypocricy.

You will eat, bye and bye In that glorious land above the sky; (Way up high) Work and pray, live on hay. You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

(That's no lie)

After cremation, Hill's ashes were distributed to Wobblies in all states except Utah and cast to the winds of Labor Day, 1920.

Hill's 100th birthday celebrants, including about 1000 still active IWW members and the AFL-CIO executive council, will petition Utah Democratic Gov. Scott Matheson for Hill's pardon.

## Teachers strike across country

School teachers walked off their jobs in 97 strikes across the country as students resumed fall classes.

At press time, a spokesperson for the **1.8 million member National Education** Association (NEA) said elementary, high schools and colleges in 13 states were still being struck. The striking teachers

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Author James Ridgeway has been widely praised for his



## UAW targets General Motors

tors as their target company to establish a pattern contract this year just before the Labor Day weekend, but there appears to be a fairly good chance that they won't shoot their strike weapon at the giant corporation that sells 60 percent of U.S.-made vehicles.

has been making fail to head off a strike more forcefully that the union is not by the Sept. 14 deadline, the UAW may choose to strike only the small car plants, where GM has the smallest inventory and would feel the pinch most. That in turn could lead to a retaliatory lockout.

Although UAW president Douglas Fraser rejected GM's first offer, he indicated that it provided a basis for reaching agreement. The UAW also called off the "mini-strikes" it had announced for seven GM plants at the end of August.

GM spokespersons have adamantly rejected the principle of automatic costof-living adjustments for retired workers, the major union demand this year. Although the union hasn't made details public, its plan reportedly involved peg-

are represented by NEA, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

AAUP's strike targets include two colleges in New Jersey as well as the University of Rhode Island.

Strikes were scattered from Anchorage, Alaska, to suburban New Orleans' Jefferson Parish, where 2000 teachers joined in the first school strike at the Louisian parish in its 154-year history.

At Oklahoma City, Okla., about 1,000 strikers were supported by those who shouted taunts, honked horns and raised clenched fists as some 1,200 strikebreakers crossed picket lines for triple substitute pay rates. AFT's Phyllis Franck told IN THESE TIMES many of the scabbing teachers were "highly unqualified" and lacked teaching certificates.

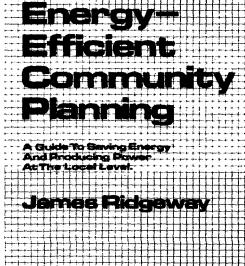
Auto workers named General Mo- ging pensions to a certain percentage of active workers' incomes. That would give retirees the benefit of not only costof-living adjustments but also the annual improvement factor pay increases. Presumably both active and retired workers would also feel even more of a common interest in negotiations. However, If the conciliatory gestures the union Fraser has recently emphasized even committed to any particular formula, opening speculation that the retirees might get yearly pension increases over the life of the contract without any principle of automatic adjustment being established.

> After GM announced new price increases on its cars-for an accumulation of more than 11 percent over the year according to the union, Fraser called for a price rollback. He also said that the union "would moderate our demands if we could get a commitment from General Motors that they would not increase their prices during the life of our agreement."

#### -David Moberg

greater conservation. Commoner was so impressive in presenting his ideas on dealing with our energy problems, that at the end of the evening Warner said: "Mr. Commoner, you've made the best contribution to tonight's discussion. I'm going back to my company to find out why my experts don't agree with you."

Commoner and Warner agreed that the President's synthetic fuels program would do little toward solving our energy crisis. "It will not make an important impact until 1990, if by then," Commoner said. "We don't know what the total costs will be, although we do know it will be frightfully expensive. We don't know what the environmental consequences will be and we don't know which of the processes is likely to be successful." Commoner and Warner agreed, however, that the program should be



perceptive writings on energy issues. An earlier book, The Last Play "is filled with more insights and information about the so-called energy crisis than any other book ... It towers above everything else on the subject!" (Saturday Review). His other books include The Closed Corporation, Politics of Ecology, and New Energy. Ridgeway is the founder of the Public Resource Center in Washington, D.C.

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AFT represents about 520,000 teachers, she said.

Strikes were averted at Detroit and San Francisco as negotiations continued.

According to Franck, San Francisco's 4,000 teachers and 2,000 teachers' aides want a 15.7 percent raise in the first year of their contract. She said they had received an average of only two percent per year wage hikes over the past four years.

Detroit's 10,500 organized teachers were to have decided whether to ratify a tentative agreement for a seven percent increase in the first year of a three year pact, with a nine percent across the board raise in the third year, she said.

## Commoner takes on Mobil oil

The following is an excerpt from an Aug. 6 newsletter from Rep. Sidney R. Yates (D.-IL) to his constituents.

week I found myself with Raleigh Warner, Chairman of the Board of Mobil Oil Company and Professor Barry Commoner, who has long been the leader in urging greater use of solar energy and

supported on a limited scale to determine how well it could work.

"The important question is what we can do now to attack the problem," said Commoner. "We can save a lot of energy by cutting down, by using our cars less, by pooling rides, by better insulation of our houses...every little bit helps." He approved the congressional action in requiring more fuel efficient engines, but he though it should have been done before the Congressional deadline of 1985, pointing to the fact that other countries had already achieved such fuel efficient standards.

"We ought to produce alcohol, alcohol from grain, lots of it," he said.

Commoner admits that the greatest problem the proposal faces is whether we have enough land to grow food and produce alcohol in the quantities we need. There will have to be a major restructuring of the nation's agricultural economy for his plan to succeed.

There was a time when Federal agents At an interesting dinner meeting last harassed mountain people for brewing corn "likker" in illicit stills. If Commoner's program takes hold, it would appear that the agents will now be looking for the mountain people to encourage them to use their stills for gasohol.

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