

Camp Pendleton racial violence

Ironically, policies that let Black Panthers on the base in 1971 have allowed the KKK to flourish.

San Diego. It was a Saturday at the Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, Calif., about 40 miles north of San Diego. Seven Marines—all white—sat in their barracks drinking beer, which, although against regulations, is hardly unusual.

There was a knock on the door. "Is Chuck here?" a voice asked.

"There's no Chuck here," replied one of the beer drinkers. And with that the door swung open and a group of Marines—all black—charged in. The assault was effective: six of the seven beer drinkers were stabbed with screwdrivers and beaten with clubs.

The Marine Corps issued routine statements about the incident; it was, after all, getting to be an accepted norm at the base. In the last three years, for example, there have been some 200 incidents of racial violence at Camp Pendleton, over 170 of which resulted in serious injuries, and about a dozen that the Corps calls major brawls.

Complaints from whites about blacks, and vice versa, are not uncommon at Camp Pendleton. Whites gripe about the influence of black culture on the base: music, clenched-fist salutes, and elaborate handshaking. Blacks, meanwhile, say that whites talk in derogatory terms, spit on and often beat up black Marines. They say that in proportion to their numbers at the base (18 percent of the 32,000 Marines are black) they have an unusually high number of "dead-end type military jobs," that they are punished more harshly than their white counterparts, and that they are discriminated against in the Corps' promotion process.

In that light, the incident on that Saturday, Nov. 13, didn't really surprise anybody at the base or in the surrounding cities and suburbs.

►Thought attacking Klan meeting.

It wasn't until an Urban League official revealed that the blacks had thought they were breaking up a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan that the incident took on major proportions.

Clarence Pendleton (no relation to the base), executive director of the San Diego Urban League, said that although the KKK meeting was actually taking place in the barracks next door, the blacks did break up a group of Marines who were at least sympathetic to the Klan. After the attack, Marine investigators found in the attacked barracks a list of Klan members, a .357 pistol, eight night sticks and a buck knife. (Many white Marines carry small buck knives, it has been reported. They casually refer to them as "nigger

stickers.").

The Klan's existence at Pendleton came as news to everyone except rank and file Marines. While military higher ups were issuing statements saying that they had been unaware of any KKK activity, enlisted men were detailing open Klan organizing at the base. Racist, pro-white literature had been passed out, a poster announcing a Klan meeting on Nov. 13 had been posted around the base, an 8-foot cross was burned in nearby Oceanside "as a message to drug pushers," and a molo-



David Duke, chairman of the Ku Klux Klan, at Camp Pendleton.

Photo by Image Arts-SD

toxic cocktail had been thrown into the Oceanside office of the Urban League, which counsels many Marines, most of them black. Although no one was ever charged with this crime, sources say it is widely accepted that the Klan was involved.

That the Klan is allowed to exist on the base is justified by a 1971 policy decision by then-Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, which said that no political group could be banned within the military as long as it did not violate any military regulations. Ironically, the decision was handed down as the result of rising membership by black G.I.s in the Black Panther party.

►Triggered strange set of events.

The blacks who led the barracks attack have been charged with assault and conspiracy to assault. Confirmed Klan mem-

bers have been shipped out of Camp Pendleton to other Marine bases. And the whole incident has triggered a rather strange set of events, involving right wing extremists, left wing protesters, and moderate civil rights activists.

Radicals and rightists clashed outside the base when David Duke, the 27-year-old Klan national chieftan, came to Camp Pendleton to rally his troops. Duke and five other Klan members tried to unfurl a KKK banner outside the base and in front of demonstrators marching in sup-

port of the arrested black Marines. A small fight ensued, with Duke getting hit over the head with a 2x2 block of wood by a woman protester, identified as a member of the Progressive Labor party.

Meanwhile, the Urban League has called for a congressional investigation into the incident at the base and for an examination of the Klan's existence in the Marine Corps. The latter request involves the dual-edged-sword suggestion that there be a "review of Melvin Laird's policy allowing persons in uniform to belong to subversive or extremist organizations to determine whether or not it is in the interest of national security."

The Urban League's position is that the Klan's mere existence on the base was enough to drive the black Marines to violence.

"In their minds," offers the League's Clarence Pendleton, "those guys were right. Legally they were wrong. But morally they were justified. It was a crime of passion."

►ACLU defends First Amendment.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has also gotten involved in the case. Not only will they lend legal support and assistance to the accused black Marines, but they are filing a civil law suit on behalf of 12 white Marines who, suspected as Klan members, have been transferred from Camp Pendleton. The white Marines, the ACLU says, had their rights violated and were transferred only because of their political beliefs.

Responding to criticism for filing the law suit for the Klan, San Diego ACLU head Michael Pancer said that he sees no conflict in the group's position. "The primary purpose of the ACLU is not to eradicate racism, to get rights for blacks, or to get rights for gays, although we are not opposed to that," he explains. "But we exist to protect the First Amendment for everyone, not any one particular group."

Right wingers, for their part, have come out in force. Besides the Klan, the White Brotherhood, the National States Rights party, the American Rangers, and the Nazi party all have shown support for the transferred Marines. To these groups, the handling of the incident is "another case of discrimination against whites."

The emergence of the Klan in the Corps seems a logical extension of Marine mentality. Extreme patriotism, blind obedience to authority and rigorous combat training are drummed into Marine recruits from day one in boot camp.

The "enemy" is usually a "gook," "chink," or "slopehead," and it is an all too easy extension for white Marines to regard all peoples of color like that.

That racial tension in the Marines escalates into violence is hardly surprising, given this atmosphere where people are highly trained to be violent.

Without meaning to define the situation like that, Klan leader Duke summed it up best. In explaining the various subjects of the Klan, he said, "We have the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Invisible Empire Ku Klux Klan, the Southern Ku Klux Klan, and the United Klansmen of America. We're all Klansmen. It's like the First Marines, the Second Marines, and the Third Marines." ■

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Tanker explosion triggers fight for harbor safety

By Dave Lindorff

Los Angeles. On Friday, Dec. 17, the Sinsinena, a 70,000-ton tanker unloading light industrial fuel in Los Angeles Harbor, exploded, killing four crewmen and leaving five missing and presumed dead. The blast, which shook buildings 20 miles away, shot flames over 1,000 feet into the sky. It also loosed a tidal wave of popular resistance in the working class communities around the harbor against plans to bring bigger and more dangerous ships and cargoes into their back yards.

One day before the Sinsinena exploded, the Los Angeles City Council had voted overwhelmingly to approve property leases to the Pacific Lighting Corp. for construction of a huge terminal in the crowded harbor to receive liquefied natural gas (LNG) from supertankers.

The council members, overlooking critics' claims that the gas (which must be carried in liquid form at a temperature of -260 degrees F) is highly volatile and hard to contain, listened instead to testi-

mony from Pacific Lighting, the city's gas utility, and representatives from the city harbor commission warning of shortages of natural gas by 1980 and "widespread unemployment" if the terminal was not approved.

Council members ignored a recent Rand Corporation study which said: "In the maximum credible accident—the release of an entire shipload of LNG—a cloud covering several square miles would be formed within five to 20 minutes. This cloud could be ignited when any ignition source contacted its boundary, the resulting fire probably causing severe fire damage. Until ignition or gradual warning and dispersal through the lower atmosphere, the cloud would freeze of asphyxiate any living thing caught in its path."

The council couldn't, however, ignore the Sinsinena. Under popular pressure from residents of the harbor area, the council "reconsidered" its earlier decision. Just one week after its first vote, the council voted 13 to 2 to "delay the final decision" on whether to build the terminal for 120 days.

While few opponents of the plan had

been at the first meeting, after the Sinsinena they were there in numbers. Representatives of the Campaign Against Utility Service Exploitation (CAUSE), a local consumer group, local harbor citizens' action groups like the Planning Alliance and several home owners' associations, former senate candidate Tom Hayden and others packed the room.

They watched angrily as council president John Gibson, who represents the harbor area, proposed the delay and said he would not permit any testimony, saying "My concern is not safety, it's economy."

Said CAUSE coordinator Tim Brick, "It's obvious that what the council members are doing is stalling until after municipal elections (in April). Brick noted that the so-called study commission is composed only of members of city agencies. "There are no representatives from the community," he said, "and the city bureaucracy has already shown it's behind the plans."

Brick and CAUSE have tried unsuccessfully to have the city attorney's office investigate possible corruption in the LNG

deal. "Pacific Lighting has really been using its muscle on this one," he said. "They want that terminal facility badly for their tankers."

Town meetings are now being called to map a strategy for preventing construction of the LNG terminal. The specter of a LNG explosion and the smouldering ruins of the Sinsinena have united the people of the harbor area with city-wide environmental and consumer groups.

We want to make sure that when the next tanker explodes it isn't LNG," said Tom Politea of the Planning Alliance, the largest protest group. "We don't want to get blown away with it. But this LNG is just a manifestation of our real problem. It just shows how the city government is not concerned about us, only the harbor. We have to face the question of whether the citizens of the harbor area have a right to determine our own destiny." ■

Dave Lindorff is an investigative reporter who writes for the L.A. Vanguard.

The United Farm Workers push organizing drive after defeat in California referendum.

'It's tough to fight a two-front war'

By Bill Wallace

The United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO continues to try to build a mass agricultural union, but the battleground once again has changed. In the wake of its failure to secure passage of the Agricultural Labor Relations Initiative of 1976 (Proposition 14), the union is regrouping in the farms and fields where it began. Swelled by hundreds of new volunteers recruited during the Proposition 14 campaign, the UFW is beginning a massive drive to sign up 100,000 new members and will petition for representation elections on as many California farms as possible within the next few months.

Returning to field organizing under conditions established by the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975 (ALRA), Prop 14's predecessor, the UFW is likely to reach its goal of expanding union jurisdiction to cover 75 percent of California's farm laborers. Of 327 representation elections held under ALRA provisions between September 1975 and February 1976, the UFW won 204. They wound up representing nearly 70 percent of all farm workers who cast ballots.

One reason for the union's success is the ALRA's controversial "access rule" allowing union organizers to enter legally a growers' property for up to three hours each day to talk with workers.

A union organizer in industry can stake out the gates of a plant and talk to workers while they enter and leave, but since many agricultural workers live on the farms they work, contacting them is more difficult. Allowing union representatives access to the fields reduces this handicap. Growers opposed the access rule from the start, claiming it was an unlawful violation of the right to private property. They successfully pressured the state legislature to cut off funding for the ALRB, thus cutting off elections in February 1976.

In response, the UFW organized the campaign for Prop 14, which would have replaced the ALRA with a beefed-up version less susceptible to future cutoffs.

Having succeeded in defeating Prop 14, the growers are now mobilizing to restrict the ALRA in ways that will make it harder for the union to repeat its earlier successes. Their efforts already appear to be bearing some fruit.

On Nov. 24 the Agricultural Labor Relations Board cut back the number of days per year organizers could visit workers in the fields under the access rule. Whereas the ALRA had originally allowed year-round access for organizing purposes, the new board ruling restricts union reps to 120 days per year—30 days each during four peak seasons.

A new move to eliminate the access rule entirely was announced Dec. 7 by State Senator John Stull, a conservative Republican from Escondido in largely agricultural San Diego county.

There is little chance that Stull's measure will be adopted, since even such foes of the ALRA as California State Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy (D-S.F.) grudgingly admit that the access rule is appropriate for farm organizing. But Stull's proposal and others like it will be used as tools by the growers to restrict access for union organizers and to hinder the UFW's union-building efforts.

Union officials admit they will be hard put to maintain intensive organizing in the fields at the same time they are fighting agribusiness interests in Sacramento—as one put it, "It's tough to fight a two-front war"—but say they have no choice.

"We'll win, eventually," said Susan Gilkey, a Bay Area boycott coordinator for the UFW. "It's going to take longer than it would have if Prop 14 had passed, but we'll do it. We've been fighting too long to give up now."

Bill Wallace is an investigative reporter from Berkeley.



Photo by John Judis

Dolores Huerta affirms future of U.F.W.

"We don't want all the people who supported and worked for the Farmworkers to view the vote against 14 as a loss."

On election day in November, a proposal heavily backed by the United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO, Proposition 14, lost overwhelmingly in California—4.3 million against to 2.6 million for. The failure of Prop 14 was widely interpreted as a defeat for the UFW in their decade-old struggle to unionize the nation's farmworkers.

Dolores Huerta, vice president of the UFW, recently talked to *In These Times* correspondent Steve Chapple on the fate of Prop 14 and the future of the UFW. (A longer version of the interview was published in *Common Sense*, published by the Northern California Alliance.)

Do you plan to make any changes in strategy now?

We're just going to continue organizing. It's not a new thing. It's something we've been doing, as you know, for a great many years.

We don't want all the people who supported and worked for the Farmworkers to view the vote against 14 as a loss. It was certainly a big win for the Big Lie. But in terms of the Farmworkers and the law, the fact that the campaign was done, that the union reached many thousands of people who had never been involved before, that agribusiness had to come out publicly in support of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board—it was extremely important since what we started out to protect and secure was the law. The employers had to state that they wanted no change in the law, even though they had spent the last year trying to make damaging amendments to the ALRB.

So you don't think in hindsight that it was a mistake to try for Prop 14 at this time?

We had no choice. The legislature held up the money and we had to go to the

voters. We were acting to protect the law. You can't call it a mistake.

Is the UFW putting more energy into electoral campaigns now? Isn't that a departure from your past strategy of boycotts and direct action?

Let's not say it's a "departure." Let's just say it's something that has to be done. You can't ignore politics because it's ever present. When you have the growers using the legislative process to try to destroy the union and laws like the ALRB that protect the union, then you have to get into it.

You've been with the UFW almost from the beginning—have the goals changed?

I wouldn't say so. The original goal was to bring farmworkers into the union, to make them more active in their lives on the farms and in the community too. The goals are very much the same.

If anything, they've been clarified. We didn't use to think about non-violence; it was just part of it. Now it's a very big part of the movement. The battle against racism has been more ingrained in the movement. The lifestyle—organizers working for \$5 a week and expenses—wasn't planned; it just happened. The idea of sacrifice, too. These are things that evolved and have become part of the movement.

As you know, we are a socialist paper. If the UFW is successful in the coming years, would the union expand to work for some sort of socialist goals.

We don't go by labels. They don't mean anything. People use them for a lot of different purposes, and sometimes only for their own purposes.

We are committed to justice and to social justice. We're for poor people and we fight for people working for their own justice, not for people handing down a philosophy to them. We have faith that the farmworkers create their own political philosophy and that they will carry it out.

When you ask me a question like that, I can't give you the answer you want.

Another way of asking it would be this: do the long-range goals of the Farmworkers, in your mind, include fighting against corporate control of America?

That's what we're doing now, right? Trying to give a little bit of the pot back to the workers. If the goal is somehow to develop in a humanistic way against greed, then that might be a similar philosophy to ours. But it's got to be done with some element of sacrifice for the people involved. ■

UFW alive and well in Salinas

Los Angeles. Despite a shooting and threatened firings, the workers at the Arakelian Farms near Blythe, Calif., stood solidly with Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers in the first election held in the "second round" of elections under California Agricultural Labor Relations Board supervision.

The election on Dec. 15 came just two weeks after the ALRB took the padlocks off its area offices, abruptly closed on Feb. 6 due to a lack of funds. At Arakelian Farms the UFW received 139 votes, with only 12 voting against union representation.

In 1973 the Arakelian workers had demanded union representation by the UFW, but the company, like almost all others in the Imperial Valley, had refused and the workers were forced to go on strike. In an attempt to undercut the UFW, the Arakelian management then signed an agreement with the Teamsters. That contract expired in 1975 and the Arakelian workers apparently thought so little of it that the Teamsters were unable to get 20 percent of them to sign cards to permit the union to be on the Dec. 12 ballot.

In the second and third representation elections the UFW also emerged victorious. On Dec. 21 row crop work-

ers at the Jack Bros. and McBurney Ranch near Brawley voted for the UFW 40 to 30.

On Dec. 23 the workers at the West Foods mushroom plant in Soquel in the Salinas area voted almost two to one for the UFW.

The outcome of the early votes in this second round confirms the claims of the UFW that the failure of the union and its allies to win Prop 14 via the initiative process last November will not affect the loyalty of farm workers to the union.

Further elections are already scheduled, as well as the resolution by the ALRB of a series of disputed elections from the first round (September 1975 to February 1976). Hearings on many of these disputed elections are due to be held next month.

—Sam Kushner

Sam Kushner is the author of *Long Road to Delano* and is a labor reporter and commentator on radio station KPFF in Los Angeles.

Brown optimistic about union talks

Los Angeles. Cesar Chavez publicly revealed on Dec. 22 that the United Farm Workers and the Teamsters union have been secretly meeting during recent weeks and that he was "extremely optimistic" that a jurisdictional a-

greement would be reached following the holidays.

Meetings between Teamsters officials and the UFW have been taking place intermittently since April. In recent weeks the pace of the talks has been stepped up. No comment was forthcoming from any Teamsters officials.

Gov. Edmund G. Brown appears to be the key to the current talks. He has had representatives in many of the joint negotiations between the unions, which have been battling in the fields for most of the past decade. On three previous occasions since 1966 the Teamsters and the UFW have reached jurisdictional agreements. On each occasion the UFW charged the Teamsters with breaking the agreement. This agreement, however, comes about following massive Teamster defeats in representation elections in the fields.

It also comes several months before an impending battle for representation in the Delano area, where the Teamsters were credited with winning the largest number of elections last year. At that time the UFW charged massive violations of the new California farm labor law and filed a large number of unfair labor practice charges, many of which are still pending.

Gov. Brown said that he too is "optimistic that the latest talks will bring about an agreement between the parties." ■