

RIGHT TO WORK

Union supporters rally against bill

By Dede Feldman

SANTA FE, N.M.

THE SIGN SAID "LUCHEN CONTRA El Derecho A Trabajar," and it was one of many carried by Chicano organizations, farmworkers, Navajo miners, Catholic priests and local teachers who gathered outside the New Mexico state Capitol to register their opposition to a right-to-work bill now before the New Mexico legislature.

Right-to-work has been an issue in New Mexico for over a year now. Last January, the state Senate passed a Right-to-Work bill, but it was defeated in the House. This year, as expected, it has surfaced again in the legislature—this time passing the Senate by a 22-to-19 margin.

The bill is expected to pass in the House as well, but Bruce King, the state's newly elected governor, has promised to veto it if not passed by a two-thirds majority. If King vetoes the measure, Right-to-Work proponents say they will introduce a constitutional amendment that will put the measure before the voters in a referendum next year.

New Mexico, with its wealth of uranium, gas and oil reserves, and its minority workforce, has been a particular target of the national Right-to-Work Committee. Both Texas, Arizona and the Navajo nation, Southwestern neighbors of New Mexico, already have Right-to-Work laws and Right-to-Work forces would like to see New Mexico become the twenty-first state with such a law.

New Mexico is in a vulnerable position. Wages in the state are already low and unions are weak. The average hourly wage is \$4.69, as opposed to the national average of \$5.96; only 12 percent of the workforce is unionized and, as a result, per capita income is among the lowest in the country (forty-third).

But the area, with its vast mineral reserves now so important in the national energy picture, is fated to grow. It already has one of the highest growth rates in the country. And, for the energy corporations and other big businesses, that means profit.

In the past year, Right-to-Work advocates, with strong support from big oil and agriculture in the southern part of the state, have blitzed local residents with direct mailings and phone calls.

Playing off the unfortunate name of



Strong opponents to right-to-work laws picket the capital in Santa Fe, N.M., as the legislature considers the passage of such a law.

the bill, Right-to-Work advertisements and letters have appealed to a sense of decency and fair play. This sense, however, was lost in this fall's tough battle between Joe Skeen, Republican Right-to-Work candidate, and Bruce King, a New Mexico rancher who now sits in the Santa Fe roundhouse.

Also lost in the election fray were key members of the legislature, many of them Chicano, who might have turned the tide

against Right-to-Work there.

But if anti-Right-to-Work forces in New Mexico lost in some areas they have gained in others. The Jan. 24 anti-Right-to-Work rally drew over 500 from community and labor groups throughout the Southwest. Representatives from the Texas Farmworkers, the Maricopa Organizing Project in Arizona, and members of the Navajo locals of the United Mine Workers, brought home the fact that the Right-to-Work struggle is part of a larger ethnic and regional struggle going on for some time now.

Members of the NAACP, the National Organization of Women, the GI Forum and even Bishops from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe stressed the right to organize as a human—and a minority—right, not just an economic issue.

Representatives from the United Mine Workers in West Virginia, the Longshore and Warehousemen in Southern California, and the Retail Clerks in New Mexico, served to show that labor in the South—beleaguered as it is—is capable of standing together to prevent passage of Right-to-Work laws and even to begin to move on to repeal Right-to-Work laws already on the books in many states.

Markedly absent from last week's rally were representatives from the state's largest labor organization, the AFL-CIO. Their absence was due to a tactical disagreement that preceded this year's legislative session. The larger unions preferred to work with the state's newly elected Democratic Governor Bruce King, who was elected largely through labor and minority votes. His friends in the larger unions don't want to embarrass or risk alienating him after his promise to veto the act.

But Right-to-Work opponents, including Judy Pratt, a newly elected Representative from Albuquerque's university area, who is at the center of an emerging labor-minority coalition here, went ahead with their plans anyway.

"Today is the beginning of a massive educational effort in New Mexico," Pratt told *IN THESE TIMES*. And the effort, say Pratt and other labor organizers, will not end with a defensive battle against Right-to-Work.

Instead, the struggle will move on towards repeal of other states' Right-to-Work laws and the repeal of the Taft-Hartley law itself. In the coming battle, local organizers may look less toward big union support, preferring instead to rely on the example set by the Texas Farmworkers, many of whom have extensive contacts in New Mexico.

Organized in 1975, the Texas Farmworkers Union is an independent union that broke away from the United Farmworkers after disputes over "illegals," and the UFW's lack of financial support. Currently the Texas Farmworkers are engaged in a 40-day march from Muleshoe to Austin, Texas, where they will present the legislature with demands for collective bargaining for farmworkers in that state.



UPI

Farm workers strike for big pay hike

By Larry Remer

EL CENTRO, CALIF.

STRIKING MEMBERS OF THE UNITED Farm Workers (UFW) were attacked by private security guards who wielded sticks, used dogs, and fired shotguns at the feet of striking pickets, as a walkout by 3100 Imperial Valley, Calif., lettuce pickers entered its second week.

In one incident, 24 people were injured in a rock-throwing melee after growers attempted to remove boxes of scab-picked lettuce from a struck field. In other fields, UFW members report that local sheriff's deputies aided grower-paid security guards in attempting to harass and intimidate farm worker pickets.

UFW spokesman Marc Grossman condemned what he called "a deliberate campaign of intimidation and provocation at violence on the part of the growers."

But the growers are facing a very solid pro-UFW base of farmworkers from both the Imperial Valley and Mexicali, across the border in Mexico. UFW leader Cesar Chavez addressed this issue in an emotion-packed speech before a crowd of more than 5000 at the beginning of the third week of the strike.

"We've never been stronger," declared Chavez. "We're going to set a precedent

of dignity and justice for farmworkers all over the country."

Chavez declared that, if necessary, the UFW would launch a nationwide lettuce boycott to bring the growers to the bargaining table.

\$5.25 an hour sought.

The strike now involves 28 Imperial Valley lettuce growers who produce 95 percent of the nation's winter lettuce crop. The UFW is seeking to increase the minimum wage for pickers from \$3.70 an hour to \$5.25, and is seeking pay hikes ranging from 30 to 90 percent in some job classifications.

The growers have offered a 7 percent pay hike, which they state is in line with President Carter's anti-inflation program. But UFW negotiators rejected the proposal, noting it would leave farm workers with less real purchasing power than they had a year ago.

For the UFW, the Imperial Valley strike is the first large-scale confrontation since California's famed Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) took effect in 1975. That legislation, which was pushed through by Gov. Jerry Brown, gave the UFW organizing rights farm laborers never had before in California. In providing for state-regulated elections and sanctions to reluctant growers, the ALRA has permitted the UFW to solidify its

base, win contracts throughout the state in several crops, and provide union scale employment and improved benefits for more than 50,000 farm workers.

Threats to gains.

But some other factors here conspire to pose a threat to the UFW's gains. Large-scale mechanization of agribusiness has thrown thousands of farm workers out of work and, in the next decade, UFW president Cesar Chavez has predicted that mechanical harvesters and sorters will eliminate 100,000 of California's 250,000 agricultural jobs.

In addition, the flow of Mexican laborers into the U.S. has steadily increased. Though many head for the cities, a large number of *campesinos* (peasants) search for work in rural areas, giving growers a vast reservoir of impoverished workers in search of employment. This keeps wages in the fields low and provides an ever-present pool of strikebreakers when labor strife erupts.

Though the UFW has begun a campaign against agricultural mechanization and has steadfastly organized *all* workers during UFW drives, the pressure of a dwindling supply of jobs and an increased supply of workers is taking its toll.

The present campaign in the Imperial Valley is seen by many UFW sympathizers as an effort to win for the UFW the same kind of pivotal economic wedge enjoyed by other unions like the Longshoremen. The goal seems to be to gain a decent living wage for UFW workers in California, the UFW is looking to a victory in the lettuce fields to serve as a springboard for taking the union in force to other states, Chavez told *ITT*.

LETELIER-MOFFITT MURDER

The prosecution goes on resting

By Max Weisenfeld

WASHINGTON

THE PROSECUTOR IN THE Letelier-Moffitt murder trial, that began Jan. 15, has rested after four weeks of testimony that ranged from spy-story excitement to dull legal technicalities.

To many observers, the presentation of what could have been a strong case against three Cuban nationalists, charged with the bombing deaths of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Karpen Moffitt on Dec. 21, 1976, has been uninspired.

The prosecution case has been fragmented by continued disputes over evidence and testimony usually resolved in lengthy courtroom consultations from which the jury and press were excluded. However, Judge Barrington D. Parker Jr. recently opened the legal hearings and transcripts of the trial to the scrutiny of reporters.

The statements of the three defense lawyers are framed in flamboyant rhetoric, frequently interrupted by admonitions from Judge Parker about proper courtroom demeanor. By contrast, Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugene Propper addresses the court in a flat monotone.

Surprise witness.

After the prosecution's star witness, Michael Vernon Townley, DINA agent, spent a grueling five days on the witness stand, the prosecution ended with several surprise witnesses. Jose Barral, a friend of the defendants, stated that defendant Alvin Ross and Dionisio Suarez, a fugitive in the case, came to him in need of a "large-sized blasting cap," a device used to detonate explosives. Barral explained that he kept the blasting cap in a flower pot behind his house "because of the children."

Another Cuban Nationalist Movement member, Ricardo Canete, testified that he had heard Alvin Ross boast that he constructed a bomb used to kill Letelier and had been the "wheel man" for the assassination. Subsequent to that meeting, Canete continued, he was threatened by Virgilio Paz, also a fugitive charged in the case, who declared, "We did it, they know it, let them prove it," in reference to the Letelier murder.

The third surprise witness, Antonio Polytarides, is a Greek gun-runner who was in jail with Guillermo Novo in New York. Novo allegedly tried to buy 160 machine guns from him, as well as 20 pounds of C-4 plastic explosives (similar to those used in the Letelier bombing) and 200 fragmentation grenades. Polytarides quoted Novo as claiming that he had been "betrayed in his case but will pay them back."

Haganah veteran.

The final surprise was a veteran of the Haganah and the Israeli army named Sherman Kaminsky, who had been in jail with Alvin Ross this past summer. Kaminsky described how Ross had "talked and talked and talked" about loading boats with plastic explosives and blowing up Russian ships in U.S. harbors, about DINA and Chile, about Gen. Manuel Contreras (head of DINA at the time of the Letelier killing), about "a rat, an informer, a traitor...called Michael Townley."

Ross went on, apparently, about the Letelier murder itself, saying he was "glad the rotten communist was dead," and that he had contributed two wires to the bomb. He also called the CIA "a goofball organization that goofed up the Bay of Pigs, Allende, Cambodia and Vietnam."

"I am no fool," Kaminsky quoted Ross as saying, "I will not pay for the killing of Letelier. People everywhere will be glad to blame the CIA."

Despite sharp questioning by defense attorney Larry Dubin, Kaminsky maintained that it was Ross' plan to blow up Russian ships, not the Letelier case, that



FBI photos of Virgilio Paz (left) and Jose Sharez, Cubans indicted for the Letelier murder but still at large.

motivated him to tell the lawyer about Ross. Kaminsky asked his lawyer to inform the CIA that this "dangerous man" could cause an international incident.

Chilean lawyer.

Some developments of the trial take place outside the courtroom. Sergio Miranda Carrington, the lawyer for Gen. Contreras, observed the trial at the District Court in Washington on Monday, Feb. 5. In conversation with reporters, he claimed

that DINA had been dissolved because all Chilean Marxists had been eliminated. He stated that Pinochet and Contreras are "still good friends."

He denied that the CNI, the successor agency to DINA, had paid for his and the trips of two other agents to the U.S., but other sources confirm this.

Miranda Carrington, who once defended a Nazi fighting extradition from Chile, volunteered to give his word as a lawyer to the court that Townley acted

without DINA orders. The defense declined to put him on the stand.

Miranda also brought a tape allegedly of a phone call Townley made from the courthouse in Washington to a friend in Chile. In the tape, Townley insults Judge Parker, calling him a "nigger."

The appearance of the Chileans in Washington casts doubts on the claims of the Chilean government that it is cooperating fully with the U.S. government in the Letelier-Moffitt case. ■

Skeletons in confessional booth

By Marcelo Montecino

SANTIAGO, CHILE

It started in the confessional. A troubled DINA (secret police) agent seeking spiritual comfort confessed the existence of a mass grave in an abandoned lime furnace in Lonquen, some 30 miles south of Santiago. Church authorities of the Vicariate of Solidarity immediately investigated and confirmed the macabre story.

Under an elaborate cover of rocks and carefully poured concrete the remains of at least 20 people were found on Dec. 1. The skeletons and badly decomposed bodies were bound with wire and some skulls were perforated by bullets. A wall nearby had bullet holes and some spent shells were found.

Shortly afterwards, in mid-December in Cuesta Barriga, near the old road to the port of Valparaiso, more unmarked graves were found. Although the exact number of bodies is still unknown, there could be as many as 16.

For the first time, the embattled military government issued a statement that practically admitted that the grisly discovery might have something to do with the approximately 1,500 persons

that have disappeared since the military coup. Previously, the government's response had been that these people never legally existed, had abandoned the country, or had gone underground. The government statement said in part that "[the government] does not dismiss the possibility that in the inevitable confrontations that took place immediately after Sept. 11, 1973, to repel attacks from armed groups and to defeat organized armed subversion with the magnitude of a civil war, people from the other side could have been killed without being properly identified."

Subsequent investigation by the Vicariate of Solidarity and reported by the Christian Democratic weekly *Hoy*, indicate that the unmarked graves in Cuesta Barriga were the result of a mass execution. There is reportedly an eyewitness who survived the shootings and who, for obvious reasons, remains anonymous but is willing to testify.

According to some sources, Bishop Enrique Alvear personally took some of the remains of the victims of Lonquen to Supreme Court President Israel Borquez to dramatize the insistence of the Church on an answer to the problem of the disappeared.

But even if the responsibility for these crimes is ever established there is little that the judiciary can do. Last June, the government decreed an amnesty that can cover crimes of this nature.

Recently, however, the judiciary has demonstrated a remarkable degree of independence. Relatives of the disappeared told IN THESE TIMES that they were pleased with the appointment of Patricio Banados as investigator in the Lonquen case. Banados has had a long distinguished career as a jurist and is regarded as a man of initiative and independence.

The identification of the cadavers is now in the hands of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, a government institution. Ana Gonzales, leader of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared, has little faith in that institution: "In the case of Marta Ugarte (one of the disappeared whose body was found on a deserted beach in mid 1976), the Institute knew her identity and did not make it public. Her relatives had to identify her."

A poem by a relative of one who disappeared tells it all: "A photograph in my heart./My God, is that all we have left?" ■