

## BUILDING THE WINNING BOYCOTT

The Boycott in each city is a four-pronged operation requiring organization of (I) the Community, (II) the Church, (III) the Schools, and (IV) Labor.

### I. Organization of the Community

The City should be divided into workable areas with one Organizer assigned to each area. The Organizer, by means of House Meetings, will locate, educate, "turn on" and activate a large, permanent cadre of Boycott Volunteers who will make up the area's action crew and the area-wide Farm Workers Support Organization.

A House Meeting is simply a few friends someone calls together in the home so that the Organizer can come and "make them an offer they simply can't refuse". There are several steps leading to the House Meeting.

#### A. Finding that "Someone"

Somewhere in every area are people who are ready to be persuaded to hold a House Meeting; and the Organizer's first job is to find them. A Priest, a Minister, or the head of some other broad-based organization can often flush them out. Don't merely get a list of names from such leaders; persuade them to take you around and introduce you personally and help you convince the prospects to let you return later and talk to them at length.

Also, in every Boycott office are lists of people who, at one time or another have picketed, subscribed to El Malcriado, made financial contributions to the Union, etc. These should be phoned and persuaded to let the Organizer come and talk to them. Never try to sell them over the phone on the idea of helping; it's much easier for them to turn you down through Ma Bell than when you're looking them straight in the eye.

A couple of good openers over the phone are: "Have you heard about the new organization we're building in this area?" or "Have you heard about the new strategy we're using this year to stop the grapes?" Of course they haven't, so your next ploy will be: "You haven't! Well, why don't I come over and tell you about it. Only take about twenty minutes. How about this afternoon? Tonight? Well, how about tomorrow, then?"

#### B. The Preliminary Meeting

Once in the house of the potential House Meeting Holder, (the future "host") the Organizer's job is two-fold: selling that person on the idea of holding a House Meeting, and providing enough information so that the person will know what he or she is talking about in convincing friends to come to the house for the meeting. The Organizer can accomplish both objectives by giving a brief, dramatic presentation along the following lines:

"The UFW is now going through one of the most critical periods in its entire history. The Grower-Teamster combine has ripped off all but one of our table-grape contracts; and the Teamsters are now on a \$100,000 a month rampage throughout California in a massive effort to destroy our Union.

To prevent this from happening, to regain those contracts, we've got to get the help of thousands of people like you who will agree to call together a few people in their homes so I can come and tell them of the horrible conditions under which the farm workers lived and worked before the coming of the Union, the long heart-breaking struggle of Caesar Chavez and a few others to build this Union, how they eventually defeated the Growers and won the contracts which made it possible for the farm workers, for the first time in history, to stand up and demand and get their rights in the fields of California.

And finally, of how, in the most nauseating type of intercourse in the whole history of labor, the Teamsters joined forces with the growers, ripped off all but one of our table-grape contracts and slammed the workers back down into the hateful peonage and exploitation of the past.

This is the message that we must bring to tens of thousands of people right in their homes, so that they, in turn, will join with us in convincing millions of others not to buy grapes, lettuce, and Gallo wines. Will you help by having a few friends and neighbors come to your house as soon as possible so I can come and go to work on them?"

### C. Reminders and Rejections

Since there is usually a gap of several days between the Preliminary Meeting and the House Meeting, in order to make sure your "host" is definitely organizing the friends and neighbors to come, the Organizer will want to make reminder phone calls after the Preliminary Meeting. The last call should be made two nights before the proposed House Meeting itself--just to make sure everything is coming along all right and, in particular, to see to it that the host remembered to invite the people to the meeting, as well as to answer any questions the host may have run into in the course of organizing the House Meeting.

Sometimes, you run into the Organizer's "bug-a-boo" - the "House Meeting nobody came to!" This morale-buster usually occurs because in the Organizer's over-confidence or haste to crowd too many things into a limited length of time, or just plain laziness, he/she knowingly omitted one essential step in achieving the objective and fell flat on his/her face. With that empty house staring you in the face, there is only one thing to do: grab your host and get him/her to take you around to call on one or two of the people who were supposed to come and didn't. In this way you salvage at least some of the planned night's work. Then when you take a look at what you did wrong you will see that either you failed to "sell" your host sufficiently or to give him/her enough information to use in selling the people, or you neglected to remind the host often enough to remind the people, or all three. When you can admit that you, rather than someone else, were at fault, you are well on your way to becoming an organizer - especially if you profit by your mistake.

#### D. The House Meeting

Assuming Organizer and "host" have done their work well, and the people have responded, the meeting will proceed as follows:

1. Introduction: The host presents the Organizer, who thanks the host for calling the people together. Then the Organizer explains briefly that she/he has made a commitment of so many months or years as an unsalaried volunteer to help the Farm Workers win their struggle. The Organizer then asks those present to introduce themselves, at the same time passing around a tablet to obtain the names, addresses and phone numbers both for future use and to use as an immediate aid in addressing the people by name.

#### 2. Content of Presentation

- a) Open on the same dramatic note described above (under "Preliminary Meeting, Page 1)
- b) Describe the century-long subjugation of the Farm Workers, their sub-human living and working conditions, and their long, fruitless struggle to exact justice from the growers through organization.
- c) Ask for questions
- d) Describe how Caesar came in and, with the help of Dolores, Manuel and a few others, built the organization which launched the historic, 3-year Grape Boycott that defeated the growers and won the contracts
- e) Explain the contracts (Hiring Hall, Pesticide Protection, Medical Plan, Seniority, etc.)
- f) Ask for questions
- g) The lettuce strike.
- h) Tell how the growers, failing to crush the Union in economic combat, tried the political route (in Washington, Oregon and California) and, failing again, in desperation signed 70 sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters; and in the summer of 1973, in collusion with the same cut-throats, seriously injured 200 Farm Worker members, shot 17, murdered two, sent over 4,000 to jail with injunctions obtained in the Court House bargain basement, and are now engaged in that statewide \$100,000-a-month rampage to destroy our Union.

#### 3. The Climax

Now is the time to really ram it into them. "There is only one way out of this bloody mess and that is to convince at least a quarter of the American public not to buy the boycotted products (as we did in 1970) and thus drive down the sales to a point where the growers are hurting so much that they'll have to restore our contracts to us or go bankrupt! The only way this can be done effectively is: -

- a) For each person here to hold a House Meeting. I am just one person and even though I'm putting in 14 hours a day I'll never be able to make even the slightest dent in this huge area by myself. But if each person in this room will lead to me others by holding a House Meeting, and those others will lead me to still more, etc. (like a tupperware party) and the same process