

FROM THE GROUND UP

a publication of STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS

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THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

ACTION NEEDED TO PROTECT FARMWORKERS' RIGHTS

Since the early 80's farmworkers have had the right to sue their employers for damages if they are injured due to unlawful and dangerous transportation. However, in recent years farmers and Agricultural associations have spent thousands of dollars lobbying for legislation that would change this federal law that was intended to protect farmworker rights.

A bill introduced by Vic Fazio, a Congressman from an agricultural district in California, seeks to overturn a U.S. Supreme Court decision which upheld the right of farmworkers to sue employers for damages from injuries that result from unsafe and illegal transportation to and from the fields. The bill (HR-1999), if passed and signed into law, would completely eliminate the right of farmworkers to sue abusive employers for injury or death on the job as long as the employer is covered by a workers' compensation policy. Nothing in the bill requires the employer to prevent the injury from occurring nor guarantees farmworkers that they will be treated fairly and equitably by the state workers' compensation system. In some (See "Farmworker Rights", page 5)

In celebration of their twentieth anniversary as a volunteer support group, Triangle Friends of the United Farm Workers hosted nationally prominent labor leader Dolores Huerta. Huerta is co-founder and first vice president of the United Farm Workers of America and one of the best known women in the American labor movement. Now the 60-year old mother of eleven and grandmother of ten, she has been an active member of the UFW for more than twenty-eight years and been arrested twenty-two times-usually for disobeying growers' anti-picketing injunctions. She was once described by the late Cesar Chavez as "totally fearless, both mentally and physically."

Huerta began her visit to the Durham area by speaking on Saturday, January 30 at an ACLU dinner where she was honored with an award for her work. The next morning, she addressed a forum at the Pilgrim United Church of Christ. She started her speech by reminding the audience how connected they are to farmworkers. "Each time people sit down to eat, they should give thanks to farmworkers who get up early every morning to pick our food", she said. Huerta spoke on the many problems facing farmworkers, particularly those due to pesticides. She showed the video "No Grapes" and further urged the public to join in the grape boycott. Since the

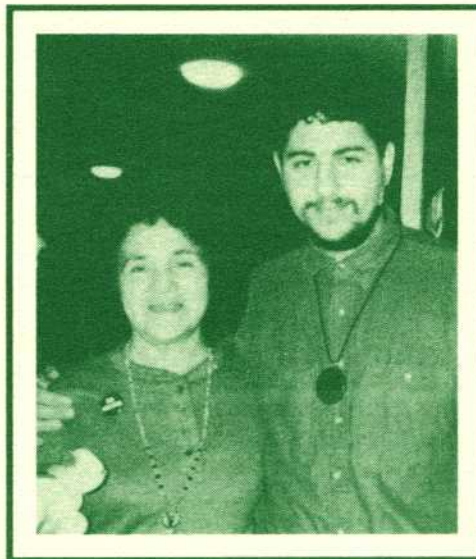


photo by Debbie Rosenstein
Huerta with SAF intern Jackson Allers

(See "The Struggle Continues", page 6)

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The SAF Mission:

To bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.

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Editor: Felice Anaïs James

Note: I would like to take this opportunity to briefly describe the new federal Corporation for National and Community Service and its programs, which promise to have a positive impact on communities throughout America and on people of all ages involved in service.

In October, President Clinton signed into law the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. This legislation created the Corporation for National and Community Service by merging the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION, the federal agency which oversees VISTA. The bill provides funds to continue programs begun under the Commission, such as its Serve America K-12 programs (promoting service-learning among elementary and secondary school students) and Higher Education Learn and Serve America programs. SAF received a two-year grant last May under this higher education sub-title.

The major new component is the creation of Americorps, the new national service program the President talked about throughout his campaign. Americorps was created with a mission to "get things done" in our nation's troubled communities by engaging participants in community-based service that directly and demonstrably addresses unmet educational, public safety, human and environmental needs. The Corporation plans to have 18,000 Americorps participants working in communities across the nation by the end of 1994. US citizens or permanent residents over the age of 16 are eligible to participate. During each full-time year of service, participants receive a minimum wage stipend and accrue \$4,725 as an educational award, which can be used to pay off educational loans or to pay for school after participation. Full-time participants may serve for one or two years, for 1700 hours of service per year. Part-time participation requires 900 hours of service over 2-3 years, and participants receive an educational award of \$2,363 upon completion of service. In general, the recruitment and selection of participants will take place at the local level, although a state and national clearinghouse of open placements and interested applicants will also be coordinated.

Institutions of higher education, federal, state and local agencies, private non-profits and partnerships among these entities are eligible to apply for Americorps funding. For national programs operating in more than one state, applicants will apply directly to the Corporation by April 15, 1994. For programs operating in only one state, applications will be made to newly created state commissions on community service, which are appointed by each governor.

(See "National Service", page 7)

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