

# CALIFORNIA MIGRANT MINISTRY

THE CHURCH AT WORK WITH SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

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THE REV. WAYNE C. HARTMIRE, JR.  
Director

July 5, 1966

TO: Forrest Weir  
Paul Shelford  
Bob Stellar  
Carroll Shuster

SUBJECT: Arrest in Borrego Springs, June 29, 1966

ENCLOSURES: Telegram from Borrego Springs visitation team  
Chip Hoffman's report on Borrego elections

The sequence of events in regard to Borrego Springs goes as follows:

- 1) Friday, June 24: Di Giorgio-sponsored elections at Borrego Springs (and Delano). Approximately 80% of the male field workers and 60-70% of the female field workers refused to vote at the request of NFWA. At the request of the California Migrant Ministry, churchmen were present as observers (they were not allowed in the polling places) (see enclosure by C. Hoffman);
- 2) Saturday, June 25-Monday June 27: Hartmires present in Borrego Springs;
- 3) Sunday, June 26: Dr. Harold Keir, executive secretary of the San Diego Co. Council of Churches and other churchmen from San Diego and Los Angeles present in Borrego Springs to hear testimony from approximately fifty (50) farm workers on the elections (see telegram enclosure);
- 4) Monday, June 27: Keir, Hartmire, Chavez present at MAPA meeting with Governor Brown in Sacramento. Keir reported on worker's testimony. Governor agreed to appoint a highly respected person to investigate the election;
- 5) Tuesday, June 28: Governor appointed Dr. Ronald Haughton of Wayne University to be investigator;
- 6) Wednesday, June 29: Chavez back in Delano; workers in Borrego Springs go on strike at 11 A.M. protesting election and other unfair labor practices including reprisals against workers who refused to vote;

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- 7) Wednesday, June 29: Chavez, Hartmire, Father Victor Salandini and ten (10) field workers arrested for trespassing;
- 8) Thursday, June 30: Charges against two (2) workers dismissed because they are juveniles; eleven (11) others released on bail; arraignment set for July 7 in Ramona.

I arrived back in Borrego Springs at approximately 6 P.M., Wednesday, June 29. The strike was in progress. Ten (10) of the workers who left the fields that day had not returned to pick up their checks and their belongings. Because of past harassments and the presence of armed Di Giorgio security guards and their police dogs, the ten (10) workers had asked that an NFWA representative accompany them back to their homes in Di Giorgio's labor camp. The company was willing to have the workers return by themselves for their belongings, but refused to allow an NFWA representative on the property. At one point the workers made their request through a priest (not Father Salandini) but the company again refused.

Cesar Chavez had decided that the workers had a right to have their chosen representative with them. He was ready to go with them and risk arrest. (He was, of course, not overlooking the strategic importance of such a confrontation) When I arrived on the scene, the company had a barricade of trucks, security guards and dogs on the roadway between the camp and the entrance to the property. Father Salandini and I offered to go with Cesar and the workers in order to help affirm their basic rights. The workers responded with enthusiasm. For most of them it was to be an entirely new and frightening experience. Our presence was in fact an important source of morale strength.

The sequence of events from that point on goes as follows:

- 1) We traveled by station wagon to the point of the barricade. A Di Giorgio security guard (Hudson) stopped us and ordered us out of the car. He placed us all under citizen arrest after I explained that we were only coming in to help the men get their belongings. We were put in a closed truck that is used to transport men to and from the fields. The time was approximately 8:05 P.M.
- 2) A sheriff's deputy (Ring) arrived on the scene on Di Giorgio's property at about 8:45 P.M.
- 3) We were taken in the same truck to the Borrego Valley Sheriff's substation. The sheriff's deputy took custody at approximately 9:45 P.M. We remained in the truck until 11:30 P.M. when special police vehicles arrived from San Diego.
- 4) With the exception of Father Salandini, we were stripped and chained together in groups of threes and then transported to the San Diego County jail in San Diego. We arrived there at approximately 2:30 A.M.
- 5) We were stripped again, booked and placed in a crowded cell block at 4:30 A.M.
- 6) We were bailed out at 10 A.M. and transported back to Borrego Springs where the strike was still in progress.

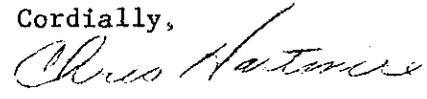
The chaining was a powerfully humiliating experience for the workers. They said it made them feel like the worst of criminals.

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I was angry. The safety of police officers is not worth that kind of humiliation for hundreds of un-convicted citizens who have to be transported to jail. It would be worth the expense to make the vehicles fool-proof in regard to protection for officers.

The lawyers I have talked with say we have a very strong case and in fact could sue the company and the County on several counts. I will keep you informed on the progress of the case.

Cordially,

  
Wayne C. Hartmire, Jr. -

WCH/sm

enc.

P.S. The charges against the forty-four (44) arrested in Delano - October 19, 1965 have been dropped by the Kern County District Attorney. WCH

cc: Harold Keir  
Wm. E. Scholes  
David Hunter