

MINUTES OF STATEWIDE MEETING - MFLU - SEPTEMBER 4

On Saturday, Sept. 4, there was a statewide Freedom Labor Union meeting in Shaw. People came from most areas where there are unions, and they discussed many issues, from the possibilities of having a Fall Strike, to where support will come from, and how it will be distributed, to the idea of lobbying up north for minimum wage bills. The following will give some idea of the discussions, and the different attitudes of those present.

When people were discussing a Fall picking strike, a woman from Sidon, a small town in rural Leflore county, said they're trying to get a strike, but they can't get all the people to agree - the people don't want to suffer - a man from Indianola felt that "People should suffer in this thing... God will make a way -- let's have a strike, but a lady from Indianola said that the people won't hold together there -- where now there are only 11 on strike. Shaw said that they already have people on strike (Mrs. Adkins of Shaw said the "we've suffered, but we understand that you can't get everything you want-- we must keep on working and strikin"...William Springfield of the Freedom Labor Union in West Tennessee said there are 100 or more there ready to strike; they are planning a Fall strike, including tractor drivers (who only earn \$2 - \$3 a day).

Shelby, Miss, said that they weren't planning to strike this Fall, they're just now building a union and have 10 members. They are going to try to build up the union more. Sunflower, Miss. also said that they have only about 10 members, and that they weren't ready to strike yet.

A vote was held on whether to strike, which was definitely in favor of a strike, so most areas will try to organize as many as possible in a strike this Fall.

In Cleveland, there are 10 cooks in a restaurant who went on strike Saturday-- they are demanding \$1.25 an hour wages. There are about 30 union members, mostly pickers, who are on strike now.

The next discussion was about support-- Mrs. Adkins of Shaw said that the Shaw people plan to keep on writing letters for support to go to the statewide union. Mr. Foster, chairman from Tribbett, said that they keep running short of money, which lately has gone to get more tents for the families thrown off the plantation, and moving them. Mr. Gibson of Washington county talked of setting up self-help projects, like Washington and Bolivar county people coming together and setting up a grocery store. Ossie Lee Barr, chairman from McComb told the people that there is a service station available that they could rent for a year, and set up cooperatively, but that they need \$1500 more-- Their idea was that profits from the service station could be used to set up a chicken farm. They already have land for this. She said there are seven maids on strike in McComb (at the Holiday Inn) and some money to support them has come from northern unions like steelworkers and longshoremens. Aaron German of Shaw suggested that people go on a speaking tour up north to raise funds for the union.

They discussed the distribution of support-- Aaron German said that there isn't now a functioning state issuing committee. Mrs. Johnson of Cleveland said they already agreed to have big money reported to Shaw, and Shaw should know the needy areas and issue funds. Mr. Nelson of Batesville said that if you can't get your bunch to strike, just work on getting union members. If you all need help, we that aren't striking will help you.

A man from Tribbett said "What is the number needed to strike? For every one that walks off the plantation not to go back, that hurts the white man-- why not let one come in with us and work with us. Let it be one or two or three, let them come along." Mrs. Adkins of Shaw said "I think I've been on strike all my days 'cause I've been sufferin all my days. I don't mind sufferin.. Let me suffer till I get to the good.. For God's sake stop grumbling and see the thing right."

The decision was made to set up a 5 man state issuing committee whose first meeting will be Tues., Sept. 7 in Promised Land Center, Shaw. (Minutes of that meeting are enclosed).

People discussed and decided to encourage on person from each local to come together with a lawyer (Bruce Rogow, LCDC) to write a constitution. They'll meet in Shaw Thursday, Sept. 9. The Freedom Labor Union is trying to get a charter, so the constitution must be written very soon.

It was discussed and decided that union people going up to lobby for the Challenge in Washington next week, would also lobby for a minimum wage bill. It was suggested that people go to the employment offices in Cleveland and Greenville, and if ther's discrimination, perhaps we ought to demonstrate there. It was also suggested that members of the union visit the dept. of agriculture and ask for commodities year round (Mr. Hawkins from Shaw has already written to this dept. concerning this)-- and possibly demonstrate there asking for these commodities.

The statewide union will meet again next month.

PEOPLE ON STRIKE NOW

Shaw	100
Indianola	11
Tribbett	80
McComb	7
Rosedale	30
<u>Cleveland</u>	<u>40</u>
Total	268