



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Vermont Migrant Farmworkers March and Picket for Return of Withheld Pay, 2014

15 May

2014

to: 16 May

2014

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Ferrisburgh, VT

Goals:

Return of pay for three workers who had quit due to stressful living conditions and withheld pay.

Broadly, a recognition of migrant farmworkers' basic needs.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 113. Strike by resignation

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

- 038. Marches

Methods in 5th segment:

- 016. Picketing

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Migrant Farmworkers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Workers at Deer Valley Farm

Partners:

Migrant Justice

External allies:

Vermont Public Radio

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Workers at Deer Valley Farm (joined)

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Migrant Justice (joined)

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Vermont Public Radio (joined)

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 3-5 hours

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Ray Brands, Ray Brands' son

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

No nonviolent responses of opponent.

Campaigner violence:

No campaigner violence.

Repressive Violence:

Threat of police violence

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Workers received their withheld pay, and the action contributed to the momentum of other efforts to improve working conditions for migrant farmworkers.

The St. Albans Cooperative Creamery was a farmer/member-owned milk-processing plant in St. Albans, Vermont (VT) in the United States with a supplying base of 360 farms. Ray Brands owned one of these farms—called Deer Valley Farm—and on 15 May 2014, two immigrant workers at his farm quit due to poor living conditions and Brands' withholding of paychecks. Earlier that May, another worker quit for the same reasons.

Victor Diaz, one of the workers who quit, recalled, "I came to this farm over two years ago. I lived in that camper with four people. It was so small we couldn't even stretch our legs out when we slept. The roof was leaking and you can see what the bosses [sic] solution was (pointing to the camper). He threw that tarp on top but that kept leaking of course. At one point, we were sleeping with nylon over us so the water would run off us." Other poorly handled repairs included a sewage-backup that Brands solved by rerouting sewage to the surface around the mobile home in which workers were housed.

The day after Diaz and his coworker quit, 16 May, Migrant Justice joined them and other workers at Brands' farm in Ferrisburgh, VT. Migrant Justice attempted to return pay to all three workers who had walked off that month. Reporters for Vermont Public Radio (VPR), a state-funded nonprofit radio news station, accompanied the group.

Protestors marched from the start of the farm road to the main premises of the farm, where they met the farmer's son, who threatened to call the police. The protestors returned to the road, where they picketed until Brands finally met with them. The workers and Brands exchanged comments until Brands agreed to write checks for the three who had walked off.

It could not be identified whether or not living conditions improved on Brands' farm since the protest, but the event stood as a jumping-off point for further pro-worker and pro-migrant actions in the state of Vermont, including Migrant Justice's Milk With Dignity Campaign.

Research Notes

Influences:

Vermont Migrant Farmworkers Advocate for Ben and Jerry's to sign pledge for Milk With Dignity (2)

Sources:

Anon. n.d. "History." St. Albans Cooperative Creamery Inc. Retrieved April 10, 2019 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190513200656/http://www.stalbanscooperative.com/learn-about-us/history/http://www.stalbanscooperative.com/learn-about-us/history/>).

Anon. 2014. "VT Farmworkers March on Dairy Farm Winning \$1800 in Unpaid Wages and Pointing Out Deplorable Housing Conditions." Migrant Justice / Justicia Migrante, May 16. Retrieved April 10, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190513200623/https://migrantjustice.net/node/237>).

Evancie, Angela. 2014. "Migrant Workers, Activists Protest On-Farm Living Conditions." Vermont Public Radio, May 16. Retrieved April 10, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190513200558/https://www.vpr.org/post/migrant-workers-activists-protest-farm-living-conditions#stream/0https://www.vpr.org/post/migrant-workers-activists-protest-farm-living-conditions>).

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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