

Huelga women and the boycott

FROM THE FIELDS TO THE PICKET LINE

With 300 boycott centers stretching across the United States and reaching as far as Canada, Europe and Hong Kong, the grape boycott has been the major factor in the success of United Farm Workers Organizing Committee's grape strike. Activities such as organizing, picketing stores carrying scab grapes, handing out union literature, convincing and influencing people (and consumer power) in favor of the boycott, preventing trucks from unloading hot grapes at various markets have definitely curbed the economic power of non-union farmers.

Approximately 200 persons are on the grape boycott; of this total about half are women. Past labor movements have disregarded the woman's role in union organizing. But UFWOC's realization that women are excellent organizers has been instrumental in the union's successful grape strike and economic boycott.

JESSICA GOVEA

Heading the Montreal and Quebec boycott, for example, is 23 year old Jessica Govea. Citing several reasons why she joined the union four years ago, Jessica said, "I did farm work, and I went to schools where children's futures were determined not by their intelligence but by the color of their skin and the size of their parents' pocketbooks. I hated the way we were made to exist by the present power without knowing what to do about it."

When she first arrived on the Montreal boycott two years ago, Jessica's two biggest obstacles were (1) not speaking French in a 75% French-speaking city, and (2) being the sole boycotter in the fourth largest grape eating city in the world.

"It has been difficult to come

"I belong to the thousands of people who are struggling to be free... farm workers, native Indians, blacks, Vietnamese."

--JESSICA GOVEA



from the 'farm' to the big city (never having been in the big city before), but we are making tremendous headway in the boycott in Montreal now. Also, I was in Toronto nine months when I first went on the boycott, and under the 'directorship' of Marshall Ganz, we cut grape shipments about 50 percent," she states.

Facing no family opposition to her boycott activities, Jessica said her family understands what she's doing and support her "wholeheartedly."

Jessica's boycott experiences haven't changed her general outlook on life. However, she feels she's grown and become a better person because "our movement has grown and become a stronger and more determined movement."

"I no longer belong to myself but to the thousands of people who are struggling to be free...farm workers, native Indians, blacks, Vietnamese. They are proud and they are brave, and I am happy that I am a part of them," she explained.

CAROLINA VASQUEZ

A five year veteran striker who's working on the Connecticut boycott, 26 year-old Carolina Vasquez and her husband Manuel have spent their married life as boycott organizers. She and Manuel first met when the union was being



"The only way to convince the public is by saying the truth."

--CAROLINA VASQUEZ