

1995, June

Labor Board Slaps Greensboro Kmart with Kmplaints



Photo courtesy of ACTWU

KGGO's media partners fail to probe 3rd set of Kmart violations - see page 2

by Andy Rogers

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hit Kmart Corporation with the third set of complaints in less than two years for violations of federal labor law at Kmart's Greensboro distribution center. Among the 25 violations in the latest set of complaints against Kmart: terminating employees in retaliation for union activities, threatening employees with discharge and other retaliation for union activities, failing to supply records of occupational injuries and other information regarding work hazards and employee health and safety requested by union representatives and illegally telling employees that wage increases were withheld

"I realized that many of these workers were single mothers who provided for their families..."

or frozen in retaliation for voting for the union. Workers at the Greensboro facility voted several years ago to be represented by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU). The workers say the Union representation is needed to fight abuse

TEED OFF: Workers get distinctly lower wages and benefits at the Greensboro Distribution Center than at other Kmart DCs.

1996, February

Swine Stench Stalks Siler City

Chatham County: Next Hog Haven?

by Steve Seilkop

Chatham County may soon be on the receiving end of spill-over from industrial pork producers just like the fecal slop that has contaminated eastern North Carolina.

Over the past summer, breaches and overflows of animal waste "lagoons" have resulted in the discharge of millions of gallons of pollutants into the rivers and streams of eastern North Carolina. Nearly all of these catastrophes have occurred at large-scale hog operations, with one spill into the New River exceeding 25 million gallons. Coupled with unusually large die-offs of millions of fish in our coastal rivers and estuaries, these disasters have brought publicity to the rapid growth of the hog-production industry in our state and its role in the escalating degradation of our water quality and fisheries.

Until the events of the summer, many

of us in the Piedmont were unaware of the growth in the state's hog production which has occurred primarily in eastern NC. Over the past five years, hog production has doubled to nearly eight million animals per year. These animals generate more than twice as much biological waste as the state's human population.

The treatment of the hog waste is however, much more rudimentary and loosely regulated. The "farms" that produce the hogs are enormous, with a single operation having as many as 20,000 hogs confined in barns from which feces and urine are periodically flushed into multi-acre open ponds ("lagoons") and then sprayed onto agricultural fields. The situation for individuals living near these large-scale hog operations is grim. In addition to suffering intolerable odors and contamination of their wells by nitrates and bacteria, neighboring residents have experienced severe degradation in the value of their property.



Does Big enjoy wild times? 17 of the 19 commissioners on Governor Noel's pork family reform panel are pork producers or are closely associated with pork producers.

1996, June

Abandoned in Durham

by Michael Steinberg

Perhaps a million people in the richest nation on the planet continue to wander for want of shelter, while empty houses proliferate within their sight but not their grasp. The Triangle may be continuing its economic expansion, but perhaps several thousand in Durham alone face homelessness every day.

This two-part series investigates homelessness in Durham. Part One (below) focuses on the plight of those having to rely on Durham's shelter system. Part Two, in the next issue, exposes those who profit by controlling empty and abandoned housing.

Part One of Two Parts

In the Shadow of the Jailhouse

On a blistering hot Saturday last May I met three people sitting in the shadow of the Community Shelter For Hope at 412 Liberty Street just east of downtown Durham. The shelter, also known as Community Shelter for the Homeless, is operated by the county, though its continuing future is in doubt, as some county commissioners want to reduce or cut off its funding.

Flyers posted ominously at the shelter's entrance had already given me a foul warning:

Attention Residents
Beginning June 1, 1996, DCSH will be charging residents a fee of \$5 per day to stay here and receive services.

Outside, one of the three people in the shelter's shadow had nothing good to say about it. Alice Suggs said she'd been thrown out of it into a hard rain early one recent morning because a steak knife, one she said she kept for protection, had been found on her.

"They told me to go to the library," she said. "It's like a prison in the shelter. If you don't do what they want they treat you like dirt."

Suggs protested the strict regimentation inside the shelter. To her this reflects a public mentality that simply because one is homeless one is less than human or some kind of criminal.

Suggs, who has lived in Durham most of her adult life, said her last job, which paid \$4.50 per hour, "fell through the cracks" and that her 3 week stay at the shelter had not enabled her to find another one.

"You can't get a job," she complained. "You gotta fix your hair and have nice clothes. You can't get to sleep in there until 1, then have to be up at 4 or 5 just to go to Labor World (a day workplace nearby at 715 North Mangum). And when you do go to sleep you still better watch your stuff."

Suggs said she ended up in the shelter after her unemployment ran out and she could no longer pay her \$50 weekly rent. Suggs' companions, George Burnett from St. Paul in Robeson county, and James Parker from Virginia, had been staying at the shelter too, and agreed with her assessment of it.