

1998, March

Farmworkers Challenge Mt. Olive Pickle

by Baldemar Velasquez

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) won a stunning victory with its unprecedented three-way agreement in 1986 with Campbell's Soup Co. and Midwestern produce growers (see Prism 12/94-1/95). Now FLOC is about to launch an all-out campaign to induce Mt. Olive Pickle Co. to recognize farmworkers' right to union representation and to redress their grievances.

You can expect this effort to make national news and draw solidarity from all over the world—unless, of course, Mt. Olive's CEO budges from his current intransigence.

"Organize the South," said the FLOC convention delegates last August, and everything we've learned during three decades of farmworker organizing is now being put to the test in North Carolina! Our target is the Mt. Olive Pickle Co., of Mt. Olive, NC, largest pickle producer in the South.

If it was difficult convincing farmers in Ohio that we had more in common with each other than with corporate agribusiness giants, it will be even more difficult in North Carolina.



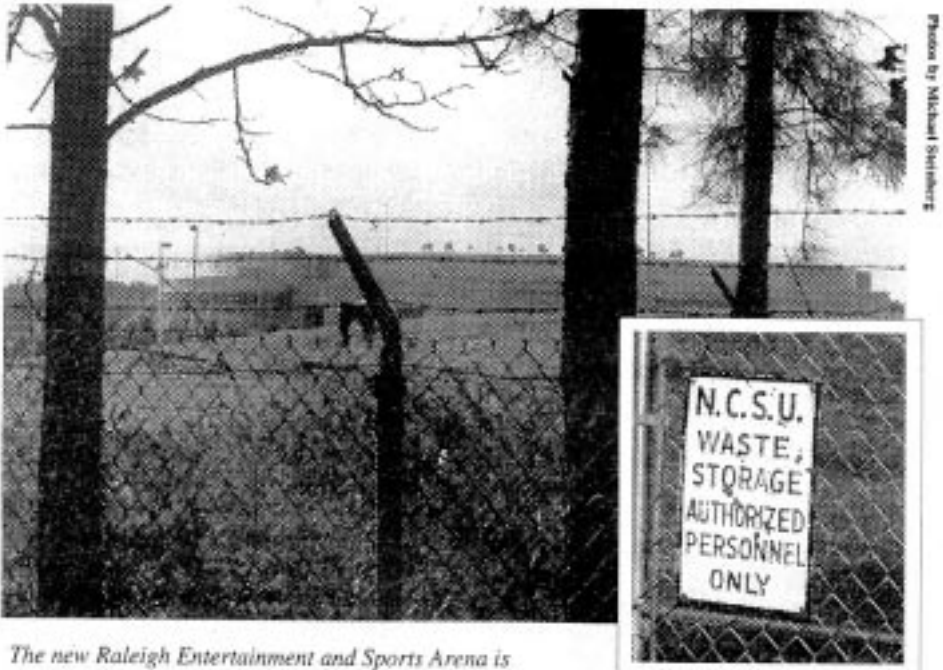
If it was hard to persuade impoverished migrant workers in Ohio that they could improve their families' lives by sticking together with the union, it will be even harder in North Carolina.

If it was tough to generate support for organizing and boycotts in Ohio, it will be even tougher in the land of Jesse Helms!

Baldemar Velasquez is president and founder of the Ohio-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee.

1999, December

Raleigh Sports Arena Fouled by Toxic Dump



The new Raleigh Entertainment and Sports Arena is right across the street from this EPA Superfund Site.

Radioactive sheep, DDT, and contaminated groundwater don't stop the Hurricanes

By Michael Steinberg

The Raleigh Entertainment and Sports Arena (ESA) opened in late October with hosannas of hoopla and hype. North Carolina State University basketball and the Carolina Hurricanes professional hockey teams now call the \$155 million complex home, and James Taylor will ring in the millennium there on New Year's Eve.

But in all the frothy media reports on the ESA's inauguration, there was no mention that it is located directly adjacent to an EPA Superfund Site containing carcinogenic hazardous and radioactive wastes that have leaked and contaminated the surrounding groundwater.

In the EPA's September 1996 Record of Decision (ROD) on the site, the agency declared that, "Actual or threatened releases of hazardous substances from this Site, if not addressed by implementing the response action selected in the ROD, may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, welfare, or the environment."

Yet over three years later, while

multimillions were devoted to the ESA—including over \$100 million in public funds—the contaminated groundwater beneath and beyond the site has not been cleaned up. And when that cleanup does begin, it will likely take 30 years.

The EPA in fact identified the site for Superfund status way back in 1984, and added it to its National Priorities List for cleanup in 1986.

Hazard Hill

The 1.5 acre site is officially known as North Carolina State University Lot 86, Farm Unit #1. Today it looks like a benign grassy hill directly across the road from the east parking lot of the Entertainment and Sports Arena.

A chain link fence set back from the road has been thrown up to discourage fans from wandering closer to the site, which is set further back from the road and surrounded by another chain link fence festooned with double strands of barbed wire.

1998, April

Rogers Road re...

Our Community is the "Sacrificial Lamb"

Commentary

by Larry Reid

The Rogers Road Community has been dubbed the sacrificial lamb of Orange County.

I say this having worked on countless boards and committees which at best provide an expensive education on what happens at a landfill and who doesn't want one in their backyard. I have served with public officials from Durham, Alamance, Orange, and Wake Counties. The committees were made up of mayors, commissioners, aldermen, councilmen, citizen representatives and more.

We've spent thousands of dollars having engineers and archaeologists attempt to answer the age-old question of what to do with this garbage.

When the studies were all complete and the reports were in, the bottom line read 'big dollars to be spent by government officials.' I don't know if those big dollars just frightened them or if they thought they would lose face if they fought to carry out what the studies recommended, but it seemed to drive a wedge between the governments and they decided to dissipate as a group. This left each entity or governing body to wrestle with the question of what to do with this garbage.

In short, the studies suggested that the governing bodies consider mass burning as a means of handling solid waste. This in itself seemed to be the first of the driving wedges. The second wedge was the price tag hung on this system. I think the third was the question of who would bear the cost and how.

These questions were never put to the community as a whole, in the form of a questionnaire or debate in a public forum.

Yet, it was decided by each executive governing body that this price tag, and the suggested means of handling solid waste, was far more controversial than landfilling or having to site another landfill. My summation from this was that the current landfills in each of these counties had just been dubbed the sacrificial lamb of the county.

Needless to say, in each case, current landfills were sited near low-income and minority-owned properties, thereby lowering the likelihood of great retaliation to big government desiring these areas for public use. When a matter, such as a landfill, is defined as a public necessity, local governments are allowed to use state laws which are on their side, thereby inflicting on local residents the fear that properties will be condemned in the name of other "public use."

These thoughts enter the minds of local landowners a little more roughly by way of expensive legal fees in court, when locals are forced to defend their ownership against local governments, to whom we pay taxes for the protection of our ownership rights.

I think it's time that governments face up to the fact that we all must pay. It is a utility, much like sewer, water, and electricity, we all create garbage. It is a byproduct of being human.

Now, as to who will stand up and say, "I'll be that garbage commission," no one seems to be on the way. Maybe it should be proposed to the State Legislature that a solid waste utility be created.

Until it is perceived that garbage is a necessary utility, and that everyone should pay for a portion of this utility, we will continue to have local governments "bowing out" to landfills.

Larry Reid is an independent contractor who lives with his wife Karen in the Rogers Road community.

Students win anti-sweatshop code from UNC!

Photo by Jerry Markatos



NC State records indicate that the university disposed of an average of 3660 pounds per month of these hazardous wastes during the 12 years of the dump's operation. These included monthly averages of 900 pounds of solvents, 500 pounds of pesticides, and 550 pounds of waste oils. NCSU also reported that the total volume of these wastes was 300,000 cubic feet.



L to R: Marion Traub-Werner, web techies, and behind-the-scenes strategy session.