



**UNION DRIVE IN
THE SOUTHWEST**



**CHICANOS
STRIKE AT
FARAH**

By The San Francisco Bay Area Farah Strike Support Committee



A FILM ABOUT THE FARAH STRIKE IS IN PRODUCTION! This 45-minute color documentary was filmed in El Paso, Texas and on the Farah boycott lines in the San Francisco-Bay Area.

The film includes footage of the original walkout in El Paso in May 1972 that was shot by Farah strikers. The Chicano women and men who work at Farah tell the story of their strike, and how their fight for a union is part of the long history of the Chicano people's struggle against oppression in the U.S.

The film is scheduled to be completed in March 1974. Contributions are needed to complete work on the film. For further information, contact:

Cine News
P.O. Box 40014
San Francisco, Calif. 94140

Contributions for the Farah strikers should be sent to:

Farah Distress Fund
P.O. Box 998
El Paso, Texas 79941

Copies of this pamphlet, 3-color posters (75¢), and buttons (25¢) may be obtained from:

S.F. Bay Area FSSC
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January 1974

CHICANOS STRIKE AT FARAH

Since May, 1972, 4000 Chicano* workers, 85 per cent women, have been on strike in Texas and New Mexico against the Farah Mfg. Co. Farah is the largest manufacturer of men's and boy's pants in the U.S. The main demand of the strike is union recognition.

Wages and working conditions at Farah are not unusual for unorganized Chicano workers in the Southwest—\$1.70 an hour starting pay, constant pressure and speedup, no job security, no maternity benefits, and daily discrimination on the job. All the company provides is free donuts and a bus ride.

In late 1969, Farah workers decided they'd had enough and began organizing to bring in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACWA). The owner, Willie Farah, refused to negotiate. Dozens of union supporters were fired. But this only strengthened the union drive and led to massive walkouts at all 9 Farah plants in the Southwest. The strike is now over 1½ years old.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRIKE

Like the Farmworkers, the Farah strike is an important step forward in the continuing struggle of the Chicano people. A victory at Farah will be a turning point in the struggle to organize the non-union industries of the Southwest, where Chicanos work at the lowest-paid, hardest jobs.

Most of the four thousand strikers at the Farah plants are Chicanas (Mexican-American women). Their long strike has blasted the myth that "women can't be organized" and is a powerful example to all working women that they don't have to stand for low wages, discrimination, and no unions.

Working people throughout the country also have an important stake in the strike. A decisive victory at Farah will make Northern employers think twice about closing union shops and "running away" to unorganized areas like the South and Southwest.

NATIONWIDE BOYCOTT GROWING!

Millions of people around the country have taken up the strikers' call to BOYCOTT FARAH PANTS! Farah's profits have taken a nose dive, and 5 of his plants have been shut down due to lack of work. There are now over 20 Farah Strike Support Committees in major cities across the country helping to build support for the strike. Farah may have millions of dollars, but the strikers and their growing number of supporters have the power to bring the company to its knees!



* People of Mexican descent born and raised in the U.S.

"Union representation has a different meaning in areas where the majority of the workers are non-white; in these areas the demand for a union becomes a major threat to people like Willie Farah, who has built his empire on the blood and sweat of Chicano labor paid cheaply, and to all the Northern businessmen who practice runaway shops. That is, they shut down their plants in the North, putting hundreds of thousands of people out of work, to open their plants in the South and Southwest, the land of 'cheap labor and no unions.'"

—from strikers' leaflet to the El Paso community

The center of the strike is El Paso, Texas, a rapidly growing city of 350,000. El Paso is an isolated city, surrounded by mountains and desert. Just a short walk across the bridge spanning the Rio Grande is Juarez, Mexico. Like other border cities, the overwhelming majority of the people of El Paso are Chicanos.

Clothing is El Paso's largest industry and is almost entirely unorganized. Garment plants such as Levi's, Hortex, and TexTogs dominate the city. But Farah is far and away the biggest, employing one out of every seven workers in El Paso. On the outskirts of town is the huge Gateway plant. Inside this 7/10 mile long slab of concrete, over 5000 El Paso Chicanos work.

In 53 years of operation, the Farah Mfg. Co. has grown rich off the backs of Chicano workers in Texas and New Mexico. Wages are so low (average take-home pay is \$69 per week) that whole families have had to work at Farah in order to make ends meet. The owner, Willie Farah, likes to brag about his "modern, air-conditioned plants," but in the stories that follow, the strikers themselves explain what it is like to work at Farah.

SPEEDUP

Willie Farah is concerned about only one thing, how many pairs of pants can be produced and how fast. While Farah's profits have soared over the years, the workers who actually make the pants have had to pay the price because of the exhausting speed-up in the plants.

Estela Gomez, who worked at the 3rd St.



plant in El Paso for 2 years, talked about the speedup inside the plant:

The first thing I learned was the button-hole machine. The quota was 20 bundles (60 pants per bundle), with 4 or 5 button holes for each pair. The machines were always going out of order and you couldn't make your quota.

"Then they put me on two machines. You set up one machine to sew and when you start to sew



Farah's Gateway plant in El Paso, Texas—seven-tenths of a mile long, employing 5,000 people.

you turn and set up the second one—but you always have to keep an eye on both of them to make sure that they are doing right. Then they tried to get me to run three machines. But that was just too much!"

Armando Telles, 32 years old, walked out after working 11 years at Farah. He explained how Farah created competition between workers by offering raises for higher and higher quotas.

"On the zipper stop machine, the quota was 180 a day in 1960. The supervisor said if I did more they'd give me a raise. So I did more, first 190, then 200, and so on until 220. But that was way high, see. What it did was put more pressure on the other workers."

"MAYBE THIS DAY I'LL BE FIRED"

Armando said that he went on strike because he has eight children and didn't like knowing that he might be fired from day to day. "For me it was job security. I saw a lot of people fired for no reason. Everyday you have to think maybe this day I'll be fired because something else happens."

Without union protection, there are many reasons for getting fired at Farah. If you talk

while you work, take too long in the bathroom, or if the women refuse to date their supervisors, you can lose your job.

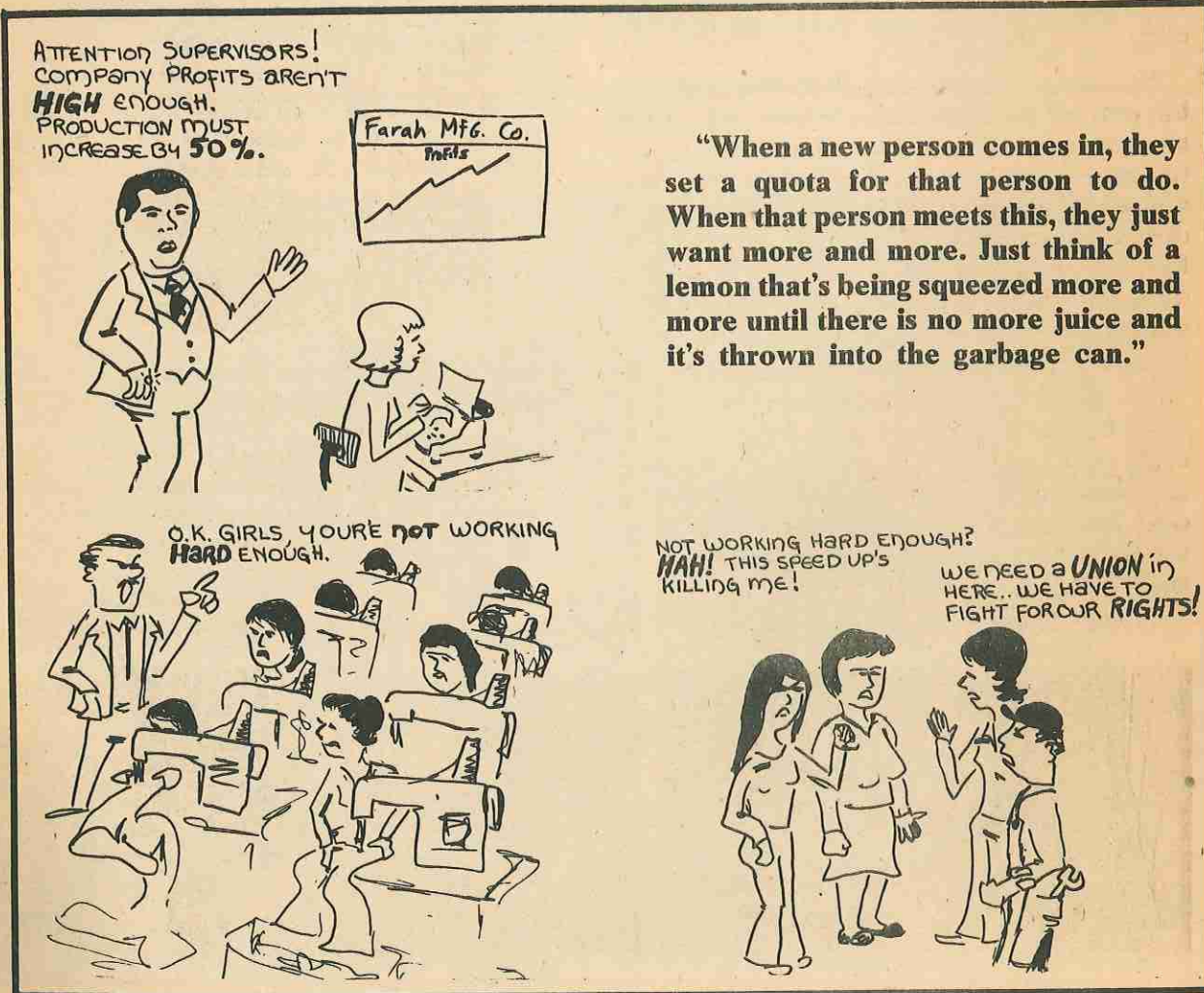
One example of the company's racism is that even though 98 per cent of the workers at Farah are Chicanos, there was not one single Chicano supervisor before the strike. And there has never been a woman supervisor even though the great majority of the workers are women.

"BENEFITS"

On top of all this, when you get sick at Farah you don't get paid and might lose your job.

"When you are sick," one striker said, "they won't let you go home. You have to take a number and go back to work and listen for your number to be called to see the company doctor. And you don't get paid for the time that you are in the clinic. He gives you some pills and you go back to work again, so the company doesn't lose any production."

Farah says he has a retirement plan, but it is a big fraud. In 53 years of operation not one Farah worker has retired, since they are fired or forced to quit as they reach retirement age. With one



"the great majority of Farah workers receive \$69.00 per week (take home pay) which for 52 weeks amounts to \$3588.00."

older woman, Farah's speed-up wasn't driving her out fast enough so he had a supervisor standing over her every day until she couldn't take it any more. She was then forced to sign a form saying she quit on her own.

CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

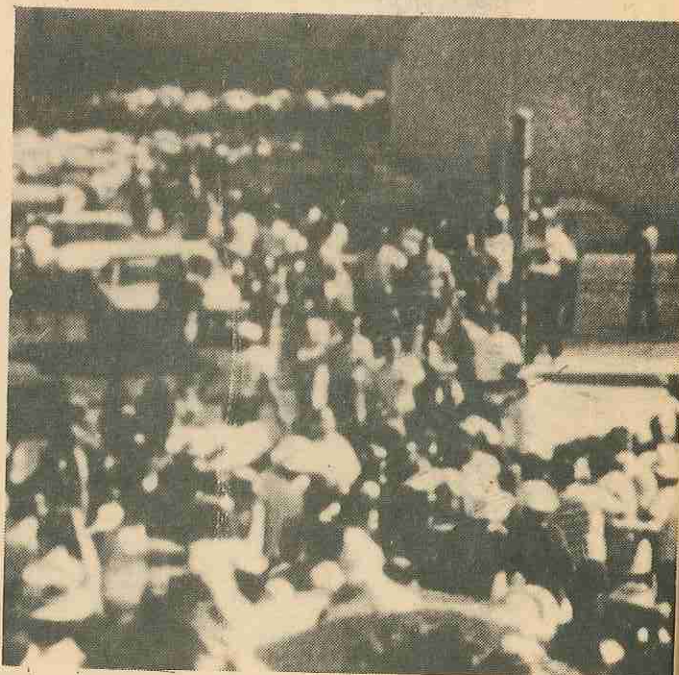
At Farah the women are particularly discriminated against. Though most of the workers are women, there is no paid maternity leave. When women leave to have their babies, they risk losing their jobs.

"When you go back to work, if your supervisor likes you, you will get your job back. But if he doesn't like you, say you didn't do your quota all the time, well, then you don't get your job back!"

If the women get back they often lose all of their seniority and have to start back at \$1.70 an hour. Because of the low pay and pressure many women have to wait until the last week or two to take leave. Several women have even had their babies at the plant!

The clinic at Farah is supplied with birth control pills for the women employees, who are indirectly asked to take them. Farah's attitude is why should they be delivering babies when they can be delivering pants at this factories.

Sequence of the walkout at Gateway on the second day, May 10. Taken from strikers' home movies. →



"This is reality for thousands of Chicano workers who make Farah pants. This is how Farah has grown to be the largest men's pants manufacturer in the U.S. today."

UNION DRIVE STARTS

In the fall of 1969, Farah workers decided they'd had enough and began organizing to bring in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACWA). A year later, the first election was held in the cutting department at the key Gateway plant in El Paso, and the workers overwhelmingly voted for the union.

Just before this election, Willie Farah called the cutters and over 100 women from the sewing room into the plant cafeteria. A striker, who worked in the cutting room since 1965, described this meeting (see box on pg. 5).

Farah management went far beyond speeches in their attempts to stop the union drive. They hired lawyers to stall in the courts. The company stepped up its harassment and firings of union supporters. The company split up the pro-union cutting department at Gateway, sending the cutters to different plants. But this backfired when the cutters organized the other plants. Farah tried to keep the men and women workers separate, but some of the men in the shipping department at Gateway got around that too:

"Farah knew we were organizing, so he found all kinds of ways to make it hard for us to get ahead of the girls. We were signing the men up, but it was the vast majority of women working in the sewing department that we actually needed.

We had to reach them on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays because we couldn't do anything during working hours.

"Then what we did was develop something like raiding parties. We used to get about 50 or 60 guys together. We didn't even go to lunch. We used to come out and get a quick bite, get a burrito or something. Then we'd go into the cafeteria and all over the plant. We used to send three guys in each team, divide in about 12 parties, and send the guys scattered all over the plant. The supervisors couldn't keep track of all of us that were in the sewing department. We developed this tactic:

about the last 3 months before the actual walkout, it was pretty effective."

More and more the women were becoming involved in the organizing drive. Though they had little experience in unions, the women at Farah knew very well what years of exploitation had meant for them and their families. Estela Gomez described how they began:

"We started getting union cards signed by friends first. We had to be careful because there were a lot of fingers (company spies) in the plant. Secretly or at lunch time we got people to sign."

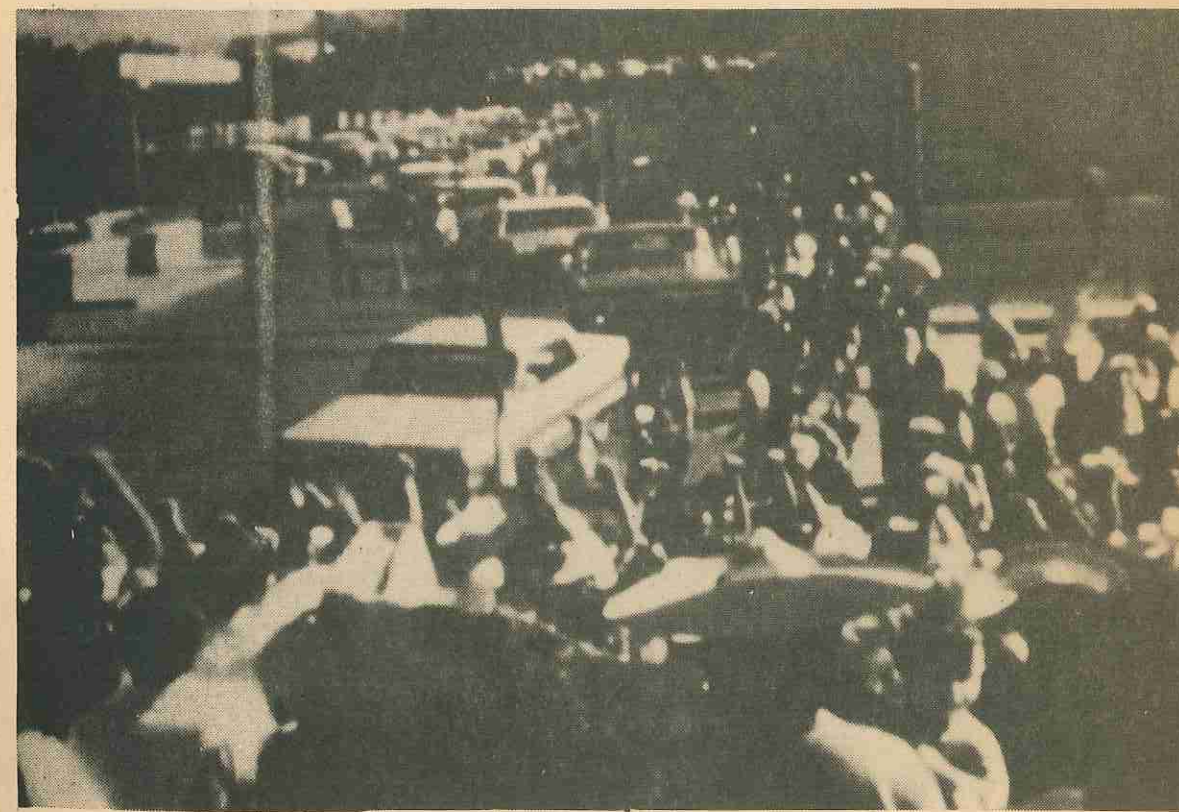
FARAH CALLS A MEETING

"This is what the boss Willie Farah said: 'First I would like to welcome all of you who were smart enough to stay out of the union.' After that I didn't pay attention to what he was saying until he said something about the Chicano movement—because when we started this movement we began to insert pride into our people of unity, of Chicanos, of La Raza.

"As I understood him he said, 'All of this Chicano, La Raza thing isn't going to help you at all, don't believe anything they say. It is we the Americano (pointing to the supervisors) who has done more and will do more for the Mexican.'

"Like I said, throughout the plant people were afraid to speak out, but at this meeting I stood up and said, 'Would you repeat that Willie, I didn't understand what you said. Farah said, 'You understood me, shut up and sit down, you're on paying time.'

"... As I was walking away to my work area he pointed to me and said, 'There's few people like him.' So I turned around and told the man that the only interest he has in the workers is the profits that we can make for him. And as I moved out of the area a lot of people followed me out. That was the first meeting we had."



Rosa Garcia, a 19 year old striker, described how a friend of hers persuaded her to go out the week of the big walkouts. Her friend reminded her that Rosa's mother had ruined her health working in a non-union garment factory for 18 years. Rosa's friend made the point, "Put yourself in your mother's place and try to understand why we want the union, and GET OUT. It's for your own good!"

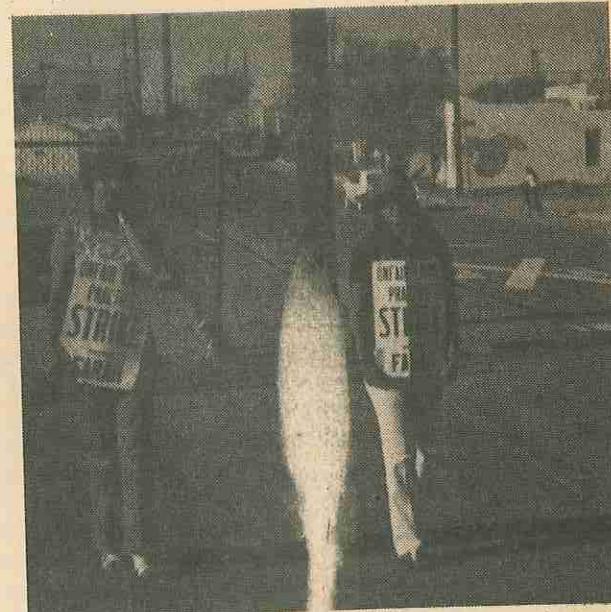
During the organizing a Chicana who had taken leave to have a baby and lost 11 years seniority told her husband, "God I was mad. As soon as they walk out, I'm going out with them. My husband said, 'Well let me walk out first.' What good will that do, I said, We should go out together."

STRIKE!

During the first week of May 1972, the ACWA called a union rally in El Paso. Hundreds of Farah workers joined this demonstration, including many from San Antonio. Supervisors from all of Farah's plants were at the rally taking pictures and writing down names of workers they could identify.

The following day, 7 workers were fired at one of the San Antonio plants. That was enough! The workers had had it. Without waiting for union sanction, 500 walked out!

The news of the walkout traveled to El Paso, and on May 9th, hundreds of workers walked out of the El Paso plants. In the following weeks, thousands more joined the strike. The unity shown in these massive walkouts swept away years of intimidation and fear. This was the beginning of the end for Willie Farah's non-union empire.



Picket duty in El Paso. The courts have limited picketing to two strikers at a gate.

"COME ON VIRGIE, WE'RE GOING ON STRIKE"

Virgie Delgado described how she decided to walk out during the week of May 9th:

"We had heard that everybody was going to walk out on Wednesday. There were all these rumors about Wednesday. But on Monday during our break time, people started walking out at 9:30 in the morning. They said, 'Come on Virgie, we're going on strike.' But I didn't know why we were going on strike, even though everybody in the cutting room wanted the union. I was really confused so I didn't go with them.

"I went back to my machine, but I felt so bad I couldn't work that day 'cause I knew my friends were outside. I went to a meeting of the strikers after work. They talked about what we were striking for. For job security so we would not have to be afraid of losing our jobs all the time. And because we had been waiting for 3 years and the company wouldn't recognize our union. I decided to walk out the next day.

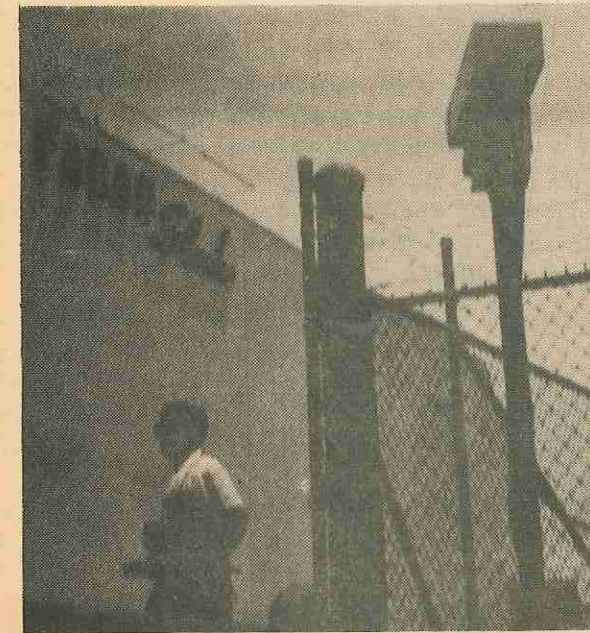
"But I had to think about it before I walked out, because there are 9 kids in my family, and me and my sisters work at Farah to support our family. I had to go home and tell my mom what I was going to do. She said to do what I thought was right.

"The next morning I got my girl friends together and said we were going to walk out. I got all their purses. We started in the very back and started calling to the other workers to walk out with us. My legs were shaking the whole time. We were really scared because we didn't know what was going to happen. My 3 sisters joined us and all these guys and girls followed us. By the time we got to the front door I looked back and saw 150 people behind us.

"We were about to walk out the door when the supervisor stepped in front of me and asked us where did we think we were going. So I told him he had better step out of the way or I wouldn't be responsible for what I would do. Then he said for us to punch out and I said no, we're walking out and he'd better get out of the way. He was real shocked that I talked like that so he moved out of the way and we walked outside. Then we saw all the other people outside who had left the day before and we were really happy. We started hugging each other and singing even though we didn't know each other. It was really something."

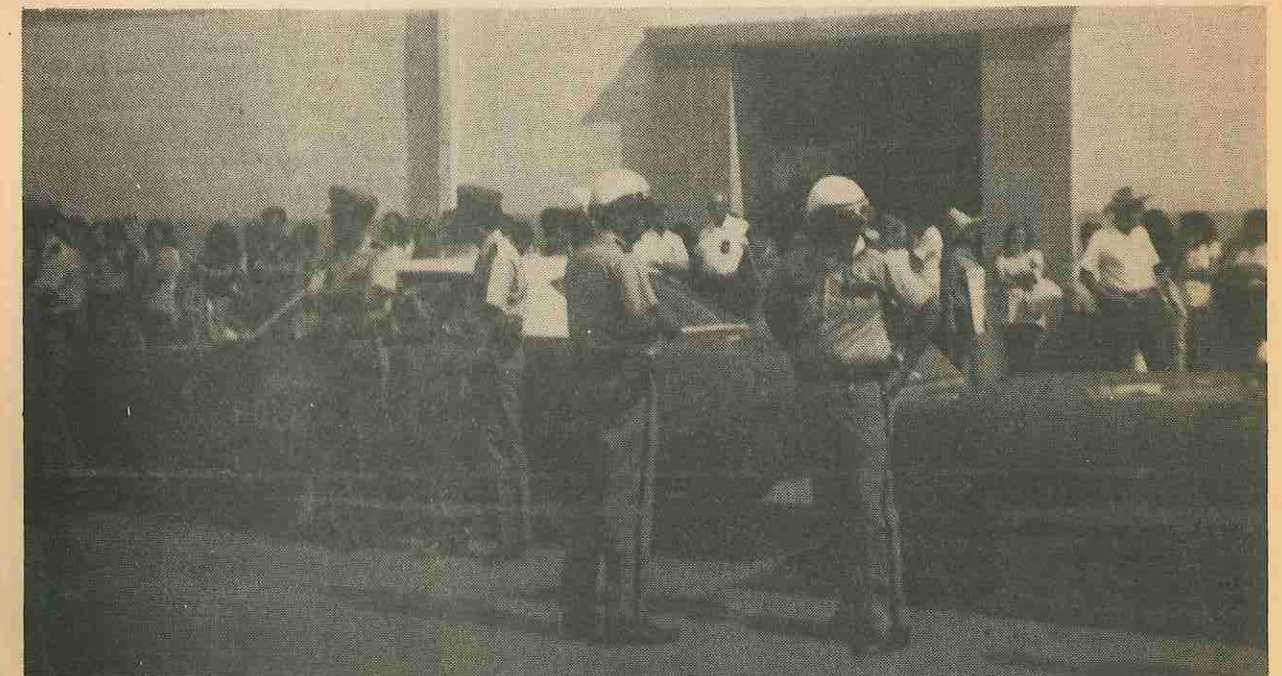
A nearby park was the striker's headquarters where they made picket signs, organized picketing, and announced new walkouts. Every day hundreds of strikers went down to the plants at lunch time and breaks, calling on the other workers to walk out. They also sent people to the Farah plants in Victoria, Texas, and Las Cruces and Albuquerque, New Mexico to spread news of the strike.

The strike was on!



(Above) "Fortress Farah"—Plants were surrounded with barbed wire and telescopic cameras after the walkout.

(Below) Afraid of the hundreds of pickets, Farah called out the El Paso police department.



"If anything, we've been guilty of keeping some people around here too long, hoping they would straighten out. The union did us a favor by cleaning house, getting the troublemakers out. With that filth gone, the plant is more cohesive."

—Willie Farah in the Los Angeles Times, Nov. 23, 1972

Though Farah has been pictured as a "behind-the-times" union hater who is standing alone, this is not the case. Farah has strong financial and political ties with Southwestern banks and industrialists. They know that the Farah strike is the opening round in upcoming union drives throughout the Southwest. Farah's board of directors includes figures such as the president of El Paso Natural Gas (one of the biggest gas pipeline companies in the U.S.) and the Dean of University of Texas Business School.

Farah also gets help from the U.S. Government. The federally-funded Cotton Growers Institute has been using our tax money to sponsor BUY FARAH commercials. During the Farmworkers grape and lettuce boycotts, the U.S. Army bought trainloads of scab produce to be served in the mess halls. Now it is buying Farah pants for the PX's.

STRIKE KEEPS GROWING

Soon after the walkout the strikers and the union set up a Strike Committee made up of representatives of the different departments. The Farah Distress Fund was also organized at the suggestion of a group of active strikers who wanted to help distribute contributions directly to the 4000 strikers and their families. In El



Strikers gather for one of the weekly union meetings.

Paso, the Phelps Dodge workers, butchers, and oil workers were some of the first unions to contribute to the strike fund.

As the news of the strike spread outside El Paso, the Farah strikers received increasing support—from unions, La Raza groups, students, clergy, and from working people all over the country. But most important is the determination of the Farah strikers to fight until they win!

Walking the Gateway picket line, Jose Urquiza, a 27 year old striker, told a *New York Times* reporter,

"A year is a long time and sometimes it is discouraging. But we will win, I knew we will. It's not just Farah we are fighting. There are a lot of Farahs in the Southwest—businessmen who think they can treat Chicano workers any way they want.

"This strike is the biggest thing Mexican-Americans ever took part in. It's history and I am glad to be part of it."

**Don't Buy
Farah Pants**

THE FARAH STRIKE AND THE SOUTHWEST

"I would say that there are few unionized factories and shops in the El Paso area and all throughout Texas. That part of the U.S., the Southwest, has been known for many years as one of the cheapest labor in the U.S."

—striker in El Paso, Texas

The Southwest part of the U.S. is the homeland of over 10 million Chicano people. Throughout the cities and barrios of the Southwest—from El Paso and Albuquerque, to Denver and Los Angeles—there are hundreds of low-wage, non-union plants like the Farah Mfg. Co. employing mainly Chicano workers. Forced to the bottom of the ladder, Chicano workers make only 51 per cent of the income of Anglo workers in Texas.

El Paso itself has the largest unorganized pool of garment workers in the country. 90 per cent of the city's 20,000 Chicano garment workers do not have unions. For unorganized Chicano workers, a victory at Farah's nine plants in Texas and New Mexico will be a major turning point in their struggle for union representation, decent wages, and better working conditions.

Like Blacks and other minorities, Chicanos are subjected to racism and discrimination in every area of life. From East Los Angeles to San Antonio's Westside, Chicanos are forced to live in run-down barrio districts. In the barrios, housing is falling apart; schools, medical care, and city services are all poor or non-existent. The native language of the Chicano people,

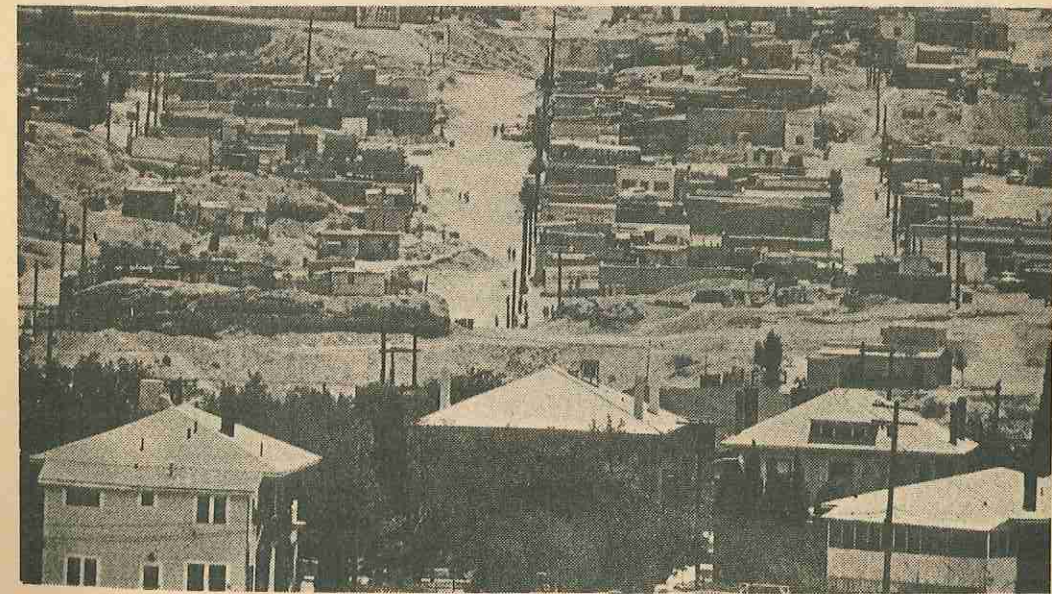
Spanish, is suppressed in the schools and all areas of public life. Harassment by police and immigration officials is an every-day occurrence and the murder of Chicanos by authorities happens all too frequently.

Unemployment rates in the barrios range from 25 to 40 per cent. This is a result not only of job discrimination, but also of the Southwest's relationship to Mexico, where severe poverty and high unemployment have forced millions of workers and campesinos to come north to look for work in the fields and factories of the U.S.

A striker at Farah's Gateway plant explained what living in the heart of the Southwest meant

"It all started out when I came out of the service in '68. That year I had about seven jobs, and each one I went to was the same story. You couldn't talk back to the boss, even though you knew how to do the job. Right away he'd say, 'If you don't like what I'm telling you, there's the door. I can put an advertisement in the newspaper and tomorrow morning I can have twenty or thirty people looking for your job.'"

These conditions are a day-to-day reality for the Farah workers and millions of other Chicano people in the Southwest.



Workers in Juarez, Mexico (background) are forced to come looking for jobs in El Paso (foreground). U.S. business uses low-paid Mexican workers to keep wages down in the Southwest.

History of the Southwest

Before the strike, El Paso was voted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as the "All-American City," with no racial unrest or labor problems. The intent of this award was to erase the years of oppression and resistance that is the real history of the Chicano people.

Because of this history of struggle, the Farah strike is more than a fight for a union. As one of the strikers said, "It was people like Willie Farah who long ago stole our land and paid cheaply for our ancestors. It's time that we, the Chicanos, stand up and say that's enough!"

CHICANO PEOPLE ROBBED OF THEIR LAND AND CULTURE

The history of the Chicano people begins before the Civil War, when the Southern plantation owners eyed Mexico as new territory for their expanding slave system. During the "Mexican-American War" (1846-48), the U.S. invaded and seized over half of Mexico's land—now making up the Southwestern states and California.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded the Southwest to the U.S. in 1848. Under the treaty, the U.S. promised to respect the civil rights and land grants of the 75,000 Mexicans living there. In addition, Spanish was to remain an official language in the Southwest.

But the U.S. began to break the treaty even before the ink on it had dried. The Mexican people's culture and language was trampled on and ignored. In Texas, Richard King and other big cattle ranchers set up a semi-official police force, the Texas Rangers, to drive small Mexican farmers off their land. The Rangers' method of law enforcement was "Shoot first and ask questions later."

In California, the situation after the Conquest was similar to the rest of the Southwest, land robbery and violence directed against the Chicano. One of the first acts of the California legislature was the "foreign miners' tax," a signal for driving Mexican workers out of the mining camps. The first person to be lynched in California was a Chicano, and lynching became



Areas outlined in black show boundaries of Mexico before the U.S. invaded and seized over half of Mexico's land in 1848.

the accepted penalty for a Chicano accused of a crime.

CHICANO RESISTANCE

Throughout the Southwest and California, Chicanos fought to regain their land, to defend their culture and rights as a people. In northern New Mexico, Las Gorras Blancas (the White Caps) cut fences and railroad ties—effectively stopping the invasion of Anglo ranchers and railroad men in the 1880's.

The most famous example of organized resistance was the guerrilla army of Juan Cortina in Texas. In the 1860's Cortina led several hundred armed men against the ranchers and the Texas Rangers. When his forces seized the cattle that the ranchers had stolen from Mexican farmers, he was called a "bandit." When Cortina's men brought murderers of Mexicans to justice, they were called "criminals." Because of his support among the people, Cortina was never captured by the Anglos. His story has been passed down from generation to generation in the "corridos" still sung in some parts of Texas.

"MANIFEST DESTINY"

According to Anglo (white) expansionists, the Conquest of the Southwest was their "Manifest Destiny." Sam Houston expressed this racist doctrine in the U.S. Senate: "The Anglo-Saxon must pervade the whole southern extremity of this vast continent. . . . The Mexicans are no better than the Indians and I see no reason why we should not take their land."

CHICANO WORKERS ORGANIZE

As the economy of the Southwest expanded rapidly in the early 1900's, Anglo business interests recruited Chicano and Mexican workers to pick the crops, mine the ore, and build the railroads of the Southwest. Mexicans and Chicanos were also brought up to the coal mines and steel mills of the Midwest. Along with Black workers from the South, they were forced to take the lowest paying, dirtiest, most dangerous jobs.

At the same time, grinding poverty and the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 forced millions of Mexican workers and campesinos to migrate north. As a result of this massive migration—eventually involving 1/8 of Mexico's total population—the Southwest developed a huge pool of unorganized labor that could be exploited by U.S. agribusiness and industry.



U.S. BUSINESS IN MEXICO

For over 100 years, U.S. business has exploited the labor of Chicano and Mexican workers on both sides of the border. Each year, U.S. corporations such as GM, Del Monte, and Anderson and Clayton Cotton take over \$200 million in profits out of Mexico. As U.S. agribusiness giants have pushed through large-scale mechanized farming, millions of Mexican campesinos have been driven off their land and forced to go north for work.

This large pool of unorganized labor on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border is what Farah, Levi's, and others have come south to exploit. In the last seven years alone, over 400 U.S. corporations—ranging from RCA to Mattel Toys—have set up runaway shops in Mexico just south of the border. Wages are 55 cents an hour for young Mexican women. Border cities such as Tijuana and Juarez have swollen with new arrivals from Mexico's interior, creating extremely high unemployment on the Mexican side of the border.

Farah himself isn't really bothered by the "border." After 400 Mexican workers from nearby Juarez joined the walkout in 1972, Farah started bringing in busloads of workers from across the border to break the strike. Commenting on Farah's tactics, one Chicano striker said,

"Just like anywhere else in the country, in the world, they're trying to divide two poor people to have them fighting among themselves and have the capitalists just making more money."



Wages are 55 cents per hour in this Mexicali factory owned by L.A.-based Olga Co.



This 1933 cotton pickers' strike in Corcoran, California was one of the many struggles of La Raza workers in the history of the Southwest.

Over the next 50 years, in the face of racism and discriminatory job practices, Chicano and Mexican workers organized and fought back.

- One of the main targets of Chicano miners was the "Mexican Rates," under which the copper corporations paid Chicanos 25 to 50 per cent less than Anglo miners doing the same job. During the famous Clifton-Morenci (Arizona) strike of 1915, 5000 Chicano miners in the Western Federation of Miners led a successful 5-month strike for equal pay scales.
- During the harvest of 1933, 18,000 predominantly Mexican cotton pickers walked out of the fields in Corcoran, California. Braving evictions, mass arrests, and grower-inspired violence, the strikers won their demands for higher wages.
- In 1938, a wage cut triggered a strike of 6000 Chicano pecan shellers in San Antonio, Texas. After a long and bitter battle, they won their most important demand of union representation, a significant victory for Chicano workers in open-shop Texas.

The fighting spirit shown by Chicano workers in these strikes exposes the myth of the "docile Mexican worker" spread by rich Anglos. Despite extremely heavy odds, Chicano workers began a long tradition of militant labor struggle.

DEPORTATIONS

The Depression years were a period of particularly intense suffering for the Chicano

people. Their labor no longer needed, Mexican nationals and Chicanos alike were thrown aside like worn-out machines and deported to Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of Spanish-speaking families were herded onto trains heading south from Los Angeles. In the industrialized Midwest, over half of the Chicano workers lost their jobs and were deported.

When World War II began to lift the U.S. economy out of the Depression, low-paid Mexican workers were again in demand. This time the U.S. government set up the *Bracero Program* to prevent seasonal Mexican workers from organizing. The grower could have the braceros returned to Mexico if they demanded higher wages, joined unions, or refused to be used as strikebreakers.

DISCRIMINATION

During the war, the old patterns of discrimination continued. While thousands of Chicanos were serving in the U.S. Army, Chicanos in the growing barrios of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Chicago were the subject of racist attacks by the press and Anglo gangs. In the so-called "zoot-suit riots" in L.A. in 1943, young Chicanos were assaulted and jailed for dressing in "unpatriotic" styles.

Chicano veterans returned to find signs in public facilities throughout the Southwest like "For whites only, Mexicans and Negroes keep out." In response they helped form groups such as the GI Forum to fight discrimination on all levels. This post-war political activity helped lay the seeds for the present-day Chicano movement.



Mexican braceros working on a lettuce pack.

"Before the war, all the good jobs were held by Anglo-Americans. The low bracket jobs were held by Mexicans. When the war came, the majority of those drafted from our town were Mexicans. Curiously enough, a good percentage of those supposedly stupid Mexicans became pilots, radio operators, and radarmen. . . . Now that we are together again, if only some of those Aryan-minded Anglos would discard their white supremacy thebries, they would realize that we are just workers kept divided to be used against each other."

—New Mexico copper miner, 1946

CHICANO MOVEMENT GROWS

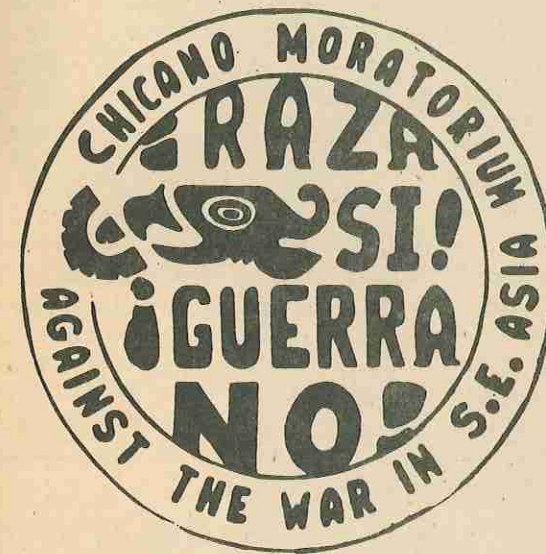
In the 1960's, the struggle of the Chicano people surged forward, especially in the big city barrios where over 80 per cent of all Chicanos now live. This movement had its roots in years of

oppression of the Chicano people, but it was also influenced by the Black liberation struggle and the anti-war movement.

In 1968 and 1969, massive Chicano student walkouts swept the Southwest. Students and parents demanded more Chicano teachers, the use of Spanish in the schools, and classes teaching the real history of La Raza. Other targets of activists in the barrios have been massive immigration raids, poor housing, and police brutality.

The Chicano Moratorium in 1970 brought over 25,000 workers and young people from all over the Southwest into the streets of East L.A. to march against the Vietnam War—particularly against the high draft and casualty rates of Chicano youth. This was a big step forward in identifying the real enemy: not Anglos in general, but a worldwide system that oppresses both the Vietnamese and people of La Raza.

The rapid growth of the Chicano movement led to the formation of groups like La Raza Unida Party, the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Chicano student organizations, and the Alianza Movement, which fought for the land rights of Chicanos in northern New Mexico.



500 Chicano furniture workers in Los Angeles held a one-day political strike against the Pay Board—August, 1972.

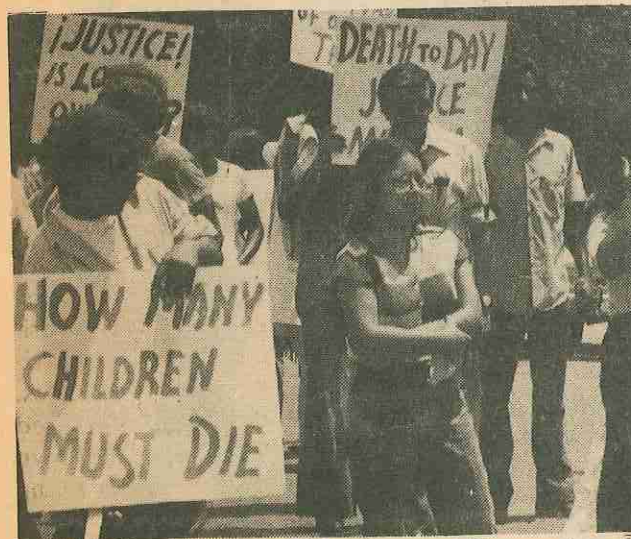
"From the age of 14 to 26 years, I worked in the fields, where we didn't have anything and they paid us very little. I thought that working in a factory would be different. But it didn't take me long to see the way they treated the people at Farah was the same way they treated us in the fields—in Texas, California, all over."

FARMWORKERS AND FARAH

An important new thrust to the struggle of the Chicano people came in 1965 when grape workers in California went on strike and formed the United Farmworkers Organizing Committee. Since then, "La Huelga!" has become a rallying cry for Chicanos. The Farmworkers' determination to stand up to the growers and government and to organize themselves into a progressive union has inspired other Chicano workers to do the same thing.

After they went out on strike, the Farah strikers adopted the farmworkers' union eagle as the symbol of their own struggle. Many farmworkers show their support for the Farah strike by proudly wearing the Boycott Farah Pants! button.

The union drives of the UFW and Farah are key for two reasons. They are striking a heavy blow at U.S. businesses' strategy of keeping the Southwest unorganized. In addition, the Farmworkers and Farah strikers are linking their own



Demonstration in El Paso against the murder of 11-year-old Santos Rodriguez by Dallas police—August 1973.



The Farah strikers have adopted the Farmworkers' union eagle.

struggles with the struggles of all working people for a better life. This solidarity has built increasing support for the struggles of the Chicano people among all nationalities.

THE FARAH STRIKERS AND EL PASO

The strike at Farah has had a big impact on the Chicano community in El Paso, particularly on other workers. In a number of recent strikes in El Paso, Farah workers have come out and marched on the picket lines. One striker explained the changing labor scene:

"El Paso hasn't been famous for its labor struggles. There used to be a strike here maybe once every five years. Now since we came out there's been five strikes here in El Paso. There's a general strike in Albuquerque concerning the city's employees. . . . There's 3 strikes going on in San Antonio at this time, and all of them are Chicano workers. I mean this didn't happen before!"

In reaching out for support in the Chicano community in El Paso, the strikers themselves have helped to unite the city's Chicano movement. They are linking their struggles as workers with demands for the rights of all Chicanos. When 11-year-old Santos Rodriguez was murdered by police in Dallas in August, 1973, a group of strikers got together with Chicano groups and organized a protest demonstration in El Paso.

The strikers have supported student walkouts demanding education relevant to them as Chicanos. Right before graduation in June, 1973, strikers wrote a letter to El Paso's high school students, explaining why they shouldn't go look for a job at Farah. The letter points out, "To shout Chicano Power in the streets or writing it on the wall is meaningless if you don't understand that it should mean the ability to change the conditions inside the plants where you surely will spend the best years of your life." In response, hardly any students showed up at Farah.

Strikers also helped organize a march in September, 1973, to celebrate Mexican Independence Day (Sept. 16). Over 100 strikers joined with other Chicano organizations and with students who had walked out of school. The march passed by a housing project where a recent gas explosion killed and injured many residents because of the negligence of the owners (the family of Congressman Richard White). They also passed by a slum housing project known as "Siete Infernos," the Seven Hells, to dramatize the demand for better housing in El Paso.

During a speaking tour, strikers Rosa Garcia and Termutz Gonzales joined with the L.A. Farah Strike Support Committee in picketing a store that has continued to sell Farah pants.



WE WOMEN ARE ON THE GO NOW

Most of the four thousand strikers at the Farah plants are Chicanas (Mexican-American women). Their long strike has blasted the myth that "women can't be organized."

The Farah strike is an example to working women that they don't have to stand for low wages and no unions, because they supposedly don't have to support a family. Many of the women at Farah are either sole supporters of their families, or their families depend on their income to make ends meet.

The film, "Salt of the Earth," made during a New Mexico miners' strike in 1951 (see box), brings out the crucial role women have played in the struggles of Chicano working people.

Twenty years later, the Chicanas at Farah are continuing in the same tradition. Only now, more and more women have been drawn out of the home into the industrial workforce, and are fighting on the job for their rights as workers.

Though the women at Farah had little experience in unions, many were active in the organizing and were fired for their union activities. After they walked out, the Chicanas organized most of the picketing of El Paso downtown stores. And increasingly they have been going out on nationwide speaking tours.

On the other hand, many of the women say this is just a beginning. For instance, there are few women on the Strike Committee, and family

SALT OF THE EARTH

In 1951 during the now famous Empire Zinc mine strike in Silver City, New Mexico, an injunction was brought against the predominantly Chicano miners in the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union. It prohibited them from blocking the road leading to the mine being struck. The strike had already been going on for nine months.

The day the injunction was handed down, the wives of the miners went to the union hall and said "We Won't Quit!" They took over the picket lines and with their children faced the guns, blackjacks, and harassment of police and company officials. They carried on the strike for another nine months. Had the women not done this, the strike would have died soon after the injunction came down—instead they won!

The following is taken from the contempt trial for violating the injunction:

Q. They (the men) just let the women decide whether they would take over the picket line?

A. That is true.

Q. Did the men say anything to the women about their being able to do this—just let them go ahead?

A. No, they said there were all sorts of objections to the women taking over the picket line—all sorts of objections. But then they (the women) said, "Well by gosh we are just taking over from here on out. You fellows take care of the diapers and the dishes."



(Left) 1951—Chicanas take over picketing for their husbands during the Empire Zinc strike.
(Above) 1973—Chicanas in El Paso carry on their strike with this same spirit and determination.

responsibilities still tend to limit their activities.

At first, many of the women were hesitant to step forward and encountered resistance from their husbands and the rest of the men. But as they've changed their attitudes—not sitting back, being quiet and letting the men run things—they've seen how sharing leadership and responsibility is strengthening the strike and bringing them closer to victory.

Julia Aguilar, who has worked at Farah for ten years, talked with the *People's Voice* newspaper in Detroit about being on strike.

"We women are much more on the go now than before. Because we were women, we were staying behind. Now, we just bring our children to our meetings, and we bring them to the picket lines.

Sometimes they ask, "Are we going to the picket today, mommy?"

"It's kind of hard with kids. But I'm willing to sacrifice myself and I think my husband is beginning to understand. Like when I first wanted to go on a speaking tour to the West Coast, my husband told me I couldn't go. But this time, he could see how my going would help the strike. He's for the union all the way.

Talking to many striking women in El Paso, it was clear they were determined never again to accept the old conditions. While they were discussing what they'd learned during the strike, one Chicana said: "As for myself, I learned how to fight!"

RUNAWAYS TO THE SOUTHWEST

The Southwest has historically been known as a non-union area. In large part, this has been due to the brutal union-busting tactics employed by Anglo business interests and the Chicano people's oppression in the Southwest for 125 years.

Ever since Northern textile mills fled the first union drives in the early 1900's, the South's unorganized and low-paid labor has been a haven for runaway shops. In the last few years, the number of employers closing down their unionized Northern plants and running away to the non-union areas of the South and Southwest has increased tremendously. Many employers are using the threat of runaway shops to blackmail northern workers into accepting wage cuts, speed-ups, and weakened unions.

One recent example of a runaway to the Southwest is Ampex, a manufacturer of tape recorders and other electronic products. In 1968, Ampex employed 1600 unionized workers in Redwood City, California, paying \$4.00 an hour and higher. But by 1973 there were only 400 production workers left in the Northern California plant. Part of the plant was moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the majority of the women workers make under \$1.90 an hour.

Another company that has made the move to the Southwest is Levi Strauss, the largest pants maker in the world. Levi's is also the largest manufacturer in the state of New Mexico, where it operates five plants (mostly non-union).

In addition to moving to the South and the Southwest, many companies have gone over-

seas, particularly since WWII. In Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mexico, wages range from 14 cents to 55 cents an hour for garment workers.

FARAH & EL PASO

The Farah family started out in El Paso as a small pants maker in 1920. During World War II Farah really made his fortune. A non-union shop and the exploitation of El Paso's Chicano workers enabled Farah to underbid unionized Northern clothing businesses for government contracts for military uniforms.

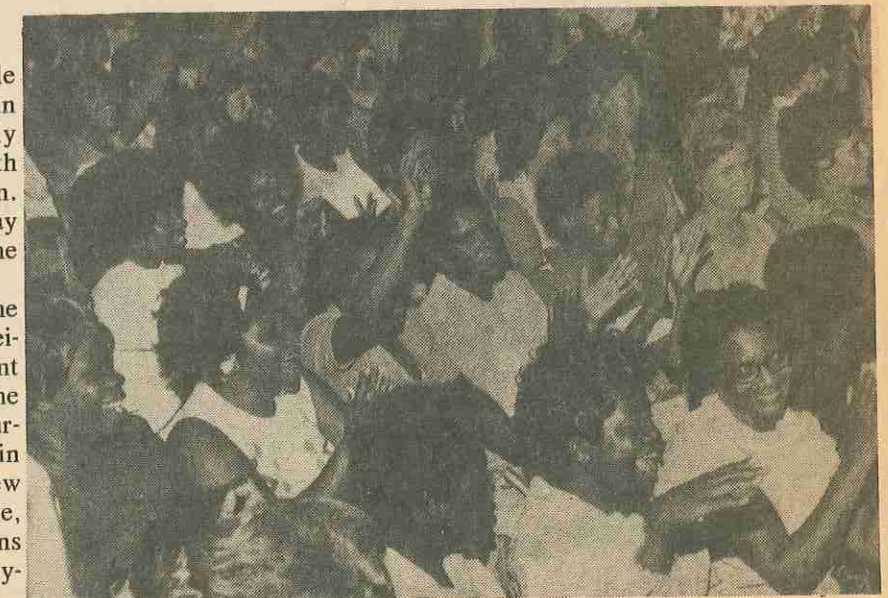
Recently, Farah has built plants in Hong Kong and Belgium. Though the company isn't yet importing from these plants, Farah has threatened to move more of his production overseas if his plants in the Southwest are unionized. In September, 1972, Farah told the *New York Times* "There are two billion foreigners out there willing to work for 10 cents an hour."

In many recent struggles against runaway shops—ranging from a Detroit auto parts plant to pineapple plantations in Hawaii—workers are seeing that labor solidarity is key to stopping runaways.

From the Farah and Oneita strikes to the Farmworkers, unionization drives in the South and Southwest have been gaining strength and are receiving widespread support from workers across the country. This kind of labor solidarity will strike a blow at runaway shops. It's this working class solidarity that corporations in the Southwest and all over the U.S. are really scared of!

In July, 1973, 700 textile workers at the Oneita Mills in South Carolina, primarily Black women, won a six-month strike for union recognition. Oneita itself was a runaway shop from Utica, N.Y. in the 1950's.

Like the Farah strike in the Southwest, the victory at Oneita may well be a turning point in the struggle to unionize the South. It has directly encouraged other textile workers in the Carolinas to launch new union drives. During the strike, textile workers and unions started up a nationwide boycott of Oneita products.



STRIKE SUPPORT GROWING NATIONWIDE

Since the beginning of the strike, the Farah Mfg. Co. has taken a beating. Millions of people across the U.S. have responded to the strikers' call to **BOYCOTT FARAH PANTS!**

The Farah Mfg. Co. has already lost over \$20 million. Since early 1972, Farah stock has taken a nose dive, from \$49 to under \$4 a share. The combined effect of the nationwide boycott and inexperienced scabs in the plants has resulted in the closing of the New Mexico plants, the San Antonio plants, and the plant in Victoria, Texas. The rest are not working full weeks.

UNIONS AND CHURCHES

In July, 1972, the AFL-CIO officially declared a Nationwide Boycott of Farah pants. Unions all over the country have publicly come out in support of the Farah strikers and the boycott, including the United Farmworkers, the UAW, the American Postal Workers Union, and many Central Labor Councils. On December 11, 1972, 175,000 ACWA members and other trade unionists held "Don't Buy Farah Pants" rallies.

The Archbishop of El Paso, the Rev. Sidney Metzger, made a call to churches across the

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Farah Reports a Loss
Totaling \$5.1 Million
For Third Quarter
For **Don't Buy
Farah Pants**

After a Chicano longshoreman in San Francisco listened to two Farah strikers one night, he wrote this letter:

"One cold and rainy night, I and a group of concerned people met and listened to Jesus Bustamante and Jaime Saldana. These people had come to ask for our help to fight our common enemy, *the big man with the whip*. In this case, it is the Farah Mfg. Co. They told us of many different injustices which have been done to them.

"This reminded me and probably many others there that night of things that happened to all of us at points in our lives. It also is almost the same way that the grape and lettuce boycotts had begun. These are the same type people struggling to just survive and exist in this dog-eat-dog world of high taxes and prices.

"It seems like this will be another long battle for my people, one that will be only won if we all get together one and all and join hands. **DON'T KEEP OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO DOWN ANY LONGER.**"

country to support the just cause of the Farah strikers. Many of his parishioners are workers from Farah plants. In response, many churchmen sent letters and delegations to stores asking them to stop selling Farah slacks.

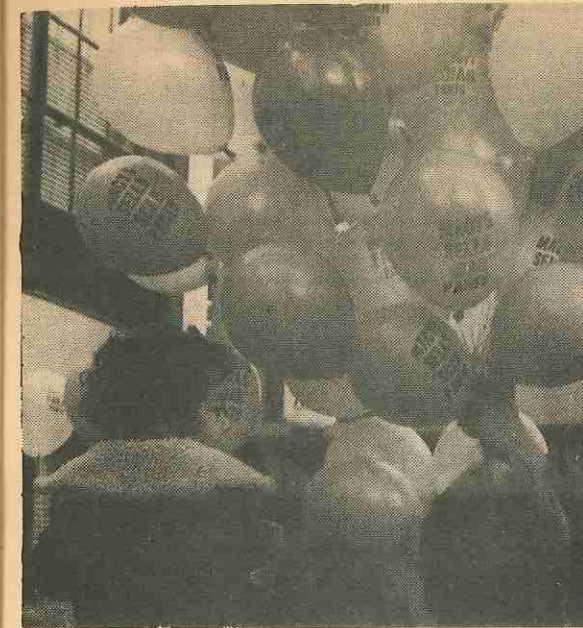
Support for the Farah strikers has also spread internationally:

- At Farah's Hong Kong plant, the Hong Kong Textile Workers Union refused to work on unfinished cloth sent from the striking U.S. plants.
- In Cuernavaca, Mexico (near Mexico City), 1100 striking garment workers at the Rivetex Factory sent a message of solidarity to the Farah strikers.
- In October, 1972, the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers Federation unanimously called for a **Worldwide Boycott** of Farah pants.

FARAH WORKERS SPREAD SUPPORT COAST-TO-COAST

In late 1972 and early 1973, groups of strikers left El Paso and San Antonio to go on nationwide speaking tours. As they told the story of their struggle to "Break the Cactus Curtain of the Southwest," the strikers gained increased support from workers, students, and Raza communities across the country. (see box)

This worker-to-worker solidarity led to the formation of the first *Farah Strike Support Committees* (FSSC) on the West Coast in late 1972. A nationwide speaking tour in mid-1973 by representatives of the SF-Bay Area FSSC and the Revolutionary Union, a nationwide Marxist-Leninist organization, helped set up new FSSC's in over a dozen Midwest and East Coast cities.



(Left) 2,000 "Boycott Farah" balloons were handed out at Macy's 1973 Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City by students in the Attica Brigade.

According to Macy's, over \$20,000 worth of scab Farah pants were spray painted on October 18, making them unsellable.

Detroit FSSC pickets Hudson's, the major retailer of Farah pants in Detroit.



Garment workers from Blackburn's in Birmingham, Alabama (who had just won a union election) join an ACWA picket line at a local department store—June 1973.

Working themselves for \$1.65 an hour, the women from Blackburn's knew from their own experience how important solidarity among workers is in winning a union drive and a strong union contract.

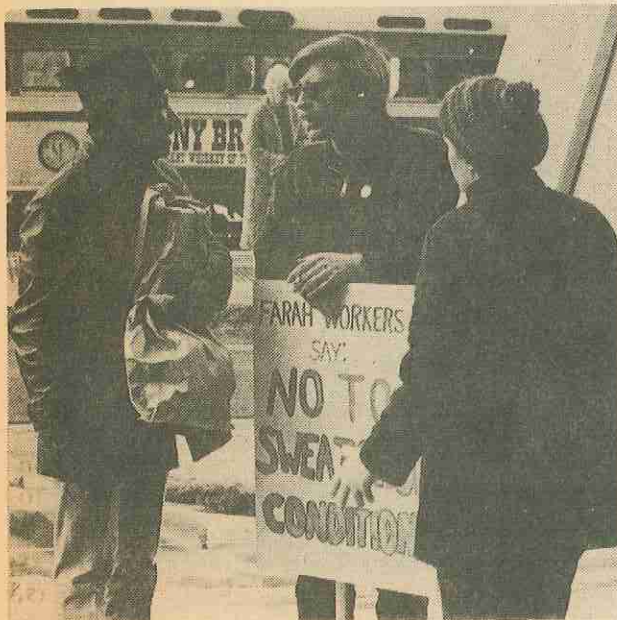
Over 75 workers, Black, Latin, and white, attended a Milwaukee rally in support of the Farah strike. Representatives from the United Farmworkers and a local department store strike shared the speakers' platform with two Farah strikers from El Paso.



Message of Solidarity from El Paso strikers

It's eleven months on strike and our people are not starving. As a matter of fact, most of us are gaining weight and look much better than when we were working. We stood summer in 104 degrees. We stood winter this year, and many of us are ready for this year's summer and the next and the next.

Why? Simply because we have nothing to lose and everything to gain! We do not possess property, luxuries, or a roof over our heads. But thanks to you, our working brothers and sisters, we know that Farah is losing part of his wealth and support. It is common sense that unity makes strength. It is also common sense that since we have nothing to lose—we know we will be victorious! Viva La Huelga!



These city-wide committees are made up of workers from various industries, groups of Raza workers and students, student organizations, and many other progressive groups. The committees have 3 main goals:

- To inform people in the cities about the Farah strike, explaining its importance for the Chicano people in the Southwest and for working women

and men all over the U.S.

- To build the boycott of Farah pants, especially by picketing major department stores.
- To raise much needed money for the Farah Distress Fund. Many of the strikers have had to sell their homes, cars, and furniture in order to continue the struggle.

"BUCK-A-MONTH CLUBS"

Many workers on the support committees have set up "Buck-a-Month" or "Buck-a-Week" clubs in their plants. For instance, at Soule Steel in San Francisco (which is closing down its S.F. plant to move to Indonesia), the runaway shop issue helped to start a Buck-a-Month Club. A group of workers in Chicago got help from an unlikely source in starting up a club:

"Our foreman here helped us out a lot with the club. When he found out about it he came into the lunch room and told us that nobody should give money to the Farah strike. He said they don't need the money, because there aren't any poor people in Texas. All there are, he said, were oil millionaires and the people that the oil millionaires take care of. So instead he wanted us to give him a dollar a month!

"Right after lunch, people seemed eager to support the strike. We hope that we will soon have almost everyone in the plant supporting this strike."



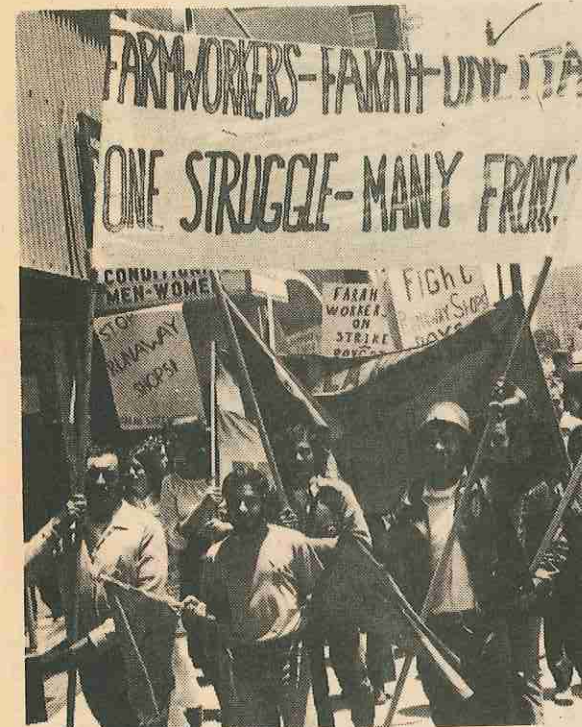
In May 1973, two strikers spoke at a meeting in Martinez, California of 300 Shell oil workers and their wives, who had been out on strike for several months themselves.

FARAH WORKERS BUILD SOLIDARITY

As Farah workers have travelled across the country, they have linked their strike with the struggles of other workers—including the Farmworkers and the Oneita and Shell strikers.

When one of the El Paso strikers first heard about the strike among primarily Black women at the Oneita Mills in South Carolina (see pg. 17), she said, "That's our same struggle." Even though she had been on a speaking tour for 3 weeks and wanted to get back home, she said she was going to talk to the unions about going to South Carolina to help these women out.

In the fall of 1973, 500 farmworkers and their



Farmworkers from Salinas lead Farah picket line in Oakland—June 1973.

families from California traveled east to build the boycott of scab grapes, wines, and supermarket chains such as A&P, Safeway, and Jewel's. In a number of cities, Farah workers and FSSC's have held joint rallies and picket lines.

The weekend of October 20 in Detroit, over 250 people came out for a dinner and speeches by farmworkers and two Farah strikers from El Paso. All evening, the crowd was on its feet chanting, "Viva la Huelga, Boycott Farah Pants, Boycott A&P, Boycott Grapes, and Take the Slacks off the Racks!"

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES STEPPED UP

As Farah is getting more desperate, strike supporters in many parts of the country are stepping up their activities.

In the S.F.-Bay Area, the FSSC is initiating a boycott of Mervyn's stores as of December 1, to put the squeeze on during the Christmas season, when Mervyn's does 50 per cent of its business.

In Seattle, major victories have been won through a series of demonstrations involving hundreds of workers and students at downtown department stores. Out of 16 stores originally carrying Farah slacks, only two are left! The Seattle FSSC has launched a boycott of Bon Marche stores, which broke prior agreement to stop ordering Farah pants.

The direction of things is getting clearer every day. Willie Farah may have millions of dollars, but the Farah strikers and their growing number of supporters all over the country have the power to bring him to his knees.

To do this, the Farah workers need your support. They are determined to stay out on strike as long as it takes to bring a union back with them into the plants, but victory will come sooner as more and more people join in solidarity with the just cause of the Farah strikers.

A recent letter to a UAW support group in Oakland, California expressed the spirit of solidarity that will bring a victory at Farah:

"Dear Brothers, we sense a victory for the working class on the Southwest Front. We know it is coming and when it does we hope to implement the old Domino Theory of bringing down all the Willie Farahs of the Southwest.

"There are many of them, but with this victory which is definitely around the corner, they will get the message that solidarity does exist among us. We also understand that this victory is but a single round and that the knockout or final blow is still far from us.

"A lot of people are surprised that we have resisted this long, but they are beginning to understand the reason why. It is very simple. It has been because workers like you have shown concern for us in El Paso. It is your concern and your true workers' spirit that will bring us the victory and our alliance in all future struggles. We will be more than glad to assist in this endless fight because we know that UAW Local 76 will be alongside of us.

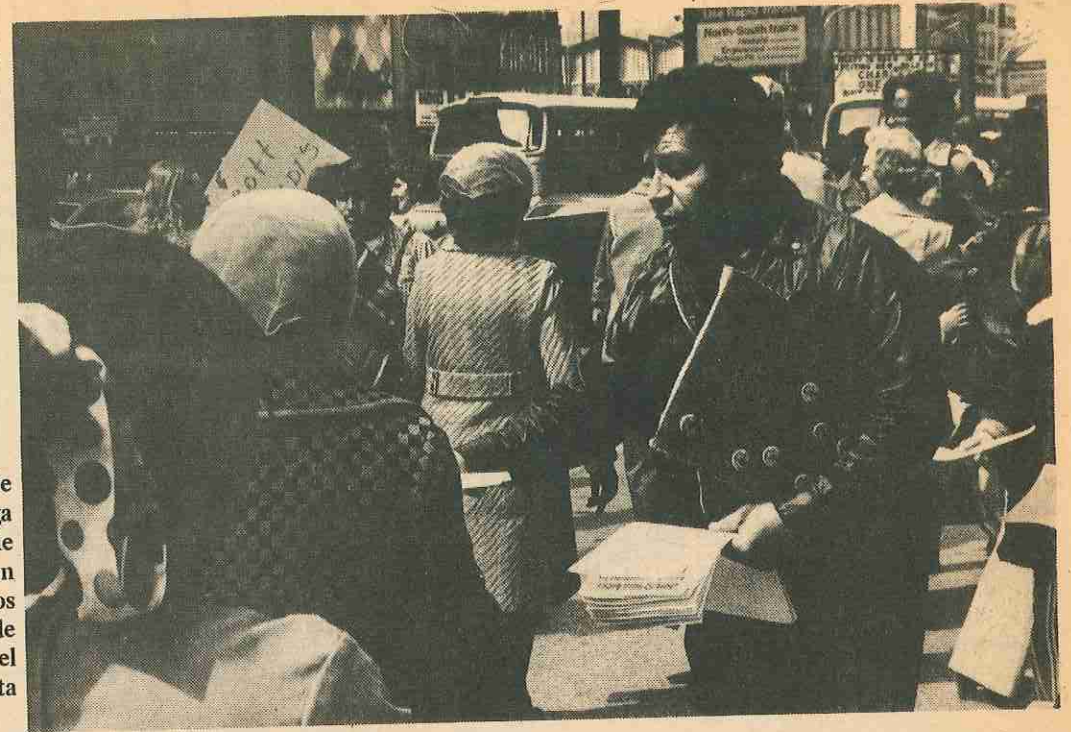
"Our victory will be your victory!"



Striking chicanas picketing in front of a store in downtown El Paso, Texas.

Huelguistas chicanas picketeando en frente de una tienda en el centro de El Paso, Texas.

The Chicago FSSC leaflets shoppers at Wieboldt's in downtown Chicago.



El Comité de Apoyo la huelga contra Farah de Chicago pasan folletos a los compradores de Wieboldt's en el centro de esta ciudad.

"The decision to walk out in support of our brothers and sisters in San Antonio was motivated by more than just support for other Raza workers. It was motivated by the countless years and generations of La Raza being used, abused, only to make the Farahs and alike of this country rich."

"La decisión de salir en huelga para apoyar a sus camaradas de San Antonio fue motivada por algo mas que solidaridad con otros trabajadores de la Raza. Fue motivada por los innumerables años y generaciones en los que la Raza, el trabajador chicano, ha sido usado y abusado, solamente para enriquecer a los Farahs de este país."



On Sept. 16, 1973, Mexican Independence Day, Farah strikers lead march past Farah plant in El Paso under the banner "Long Live the Workers' Struggle."

El 16 de septiembre, el Día de Independencia de México, los huelguistas encabezaron una marcha en frente de una fábrica de Farah en El Paso.

FARAH STRIKE SUPPORT COMMITTEES

Seattle FSSC P.O. Box 22169 Seattle, Wash. 98122	Chicago FSSC 685½ W. Wrightwood Chicago, Ill. 60614	Rochester FSSC Box 234 Rochester, NY 14601	Boston FSSC 80 Pleasant St., #3 Dorchester, Mass. 02125
Portland FSSC P.O. Box 10121 Portland, Ore. 97210	Milwaukee FSSC P.O. Box 3250 Milwaukee, Wis. 53708	Detroit FSSC 4308 W. Vernon Detroit, Mich. 48237	Seacoast Area FSSC P.O. Box 233 Dover, N.H. 03820
S.F. Bay Area FSSC P.O. Box 21247 San Jose, Calif. 95151	Madison FSSC 731 State St. Madison, Wis. 53703	Cleveland FSSC Box 10520 Cleveland, Ohio 44110	Providence FSSC Box 455 Annex Station Providence, R.I. 02801
Los Angeles FSSC Box 26462 Los Angeles, Ca. 90026	Cincinnati FSSC Box 19304 Cincinnati, Ohio 45219	New York FSSC 248 W. 105 St., #2B NY, NY 10025	New Jersey FSSC Box 57 Elizabethport Sta Elizabeth, NJ 07206
		Trenton FSSC P.O. Box 1056 Trenton, N.J. 08607	Philadelphia FSSC 2440 Kensington Ave. Philadelphia, Pa. 19125
		Baltimore FSSC 109 S. Gilmor Baltimore, Md. 21223	