

Chavez Praises Religious Units For Farm Help

By GERARD E. SHERRY

Delano, Calif.—(NC)—Farm worker leader Cesar Chavez praised more than 250 religious and lay leaders meeting here for "practical help religious groups have given" in solving disputes between farm workers and growers.

He spoke to leaders who came from throughout the nation to discuss the status of the five-year-old grape strike and boycott. The meeting was held under the auspices of the California Migrant Ministry, the Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara and the California Board of Rabbis.

"The clergy do not realize their powers," Chavez said. "Signing their name to a statement of support is not enough. It doesn't count among the workers. Only an activist clergy can have influence in the social message of the gospels."

Chavez said a large measure of the success of the recent contracts with growers in the Coachella and Sanjoaquin valleys, was due to the mediation efforts of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Committee.

Chavez reiterated his opposition to violence and said that his union seeks only peaceful means to obtain contracts with the growers.

"But if the growers won't listen to us," Chavez said, "I cannot guarantee peace. The workers are seeking justice, so long denied to them. The workers look to the church for both moral and active support in the struggle. If all reasonable means fail, the workers will more particularly blame the church for not doing enough in using its influence."

"Many people think we have won, but in truth we are just beginning. Most grape growers still haven't signed contracts; and there are hundreds of thousands of rural poor people in our country who need the dignity and security of an organization of their own. We intend to reach them," Chavez said.

No Rights Bill For Illinois Unborn

Springfield, Ill. — (RNS) — A unique anti-abortion proposal, a three-word phrase guaranteed an unborn child's right to live, was rejected here by the Illinois Constitutional Convention. It had been suggested for inclusion in a new "bill of rights."

After a heated five-hour debate which dealt with religion, morality, ethics, birth control, and even pollution, the convention delegates voted 80-32 to strike the three words, "including the unborn," from the constitution's "due process" section.

Father Francis X. Lawlor of Chicago was a staunch supporter of the guarantee for the unborn child's right to life, mainly as a barrier to eventual abortion law reform. He described liberal abortion laws as a trend toward genocide, and predicted that such laws would eventually lead to mercy killing and the elimination of those no longer deemed useful to society.

Opponents of the proposal, including the American Civil Liberties Union, contended that the measure would eliminate any possibility of obtaining an abortion in Illinois by causing long court delays. Most said it was the business of the legislature to provide guarantees for the unborn.

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