

Father Munoz: Parish Priest for Farah Strikers

By PAT PETRASKE

The visit of Father Jesse Munoz, parish priest for striking Farah workers in El Paso, Texas, last week brought promises of "financial and moral support" from approximately 40 members of the Rochester clergy.

The 34-year-old pastor of Our Lady of the Light Church described Rochester as a "stronghold for Farah. If we lose here we may lose the strike."

However Father Munoz believes the 20-month-old boycott against Farah, a leading manufacturer of men's and boys' slacks, "is slowly bringing Farah to its knees."

The boycott of Farah products in Rochester has so far been conducted on a "hit and miss" basis without any real coordinated effort, according to Father Charles Mulligan, director of the Office of Human Development which sponsored the visit of Father Munoz. He



Father Jesse Munoz

predicted a renewed effort of boycott activities as a result of the appeal made by the Mexican-American priest.

Father Munoz's schedule last Thursday included a discussion with Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, a meeting with leaders from the Spanish community and an appearance at Mercy High School with folk singer Tom Paxton.

Bishop Hogan in his final statement on the Farah controversy (Courier-Journal, Jan. 2, 1974) reaffirmed his "original position" with even greater conviction but emphasized that his statement of support not be used to harass local retailers and consumers.

Saying that he was not a representative from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers who have been waging a five-year fight to unionize 10,000 Farah workers, Father Munoz explained the need for "social justice" at the El Paso plant which he said had 2,000 out on strike against alleged unfair labor practices. He believes the company's refusal to allow unionization is "one of personal pride."

Grievances against Farah include no published company policies, no written personnel policies, no written procedures for the hearing of grievances or the granting of raises and no living wage scale. "People are told just to trust Farah," Father Munoz exclaimed.

[On Jan. 28, a government trial examiner in Washington found Farah Manufacturing guilty of repeated violations of federal law. He ordered the company to rehire six discharged employees and all strikers who wanted to return to work.]

[Administrative Law Judge Walter H. Maloney Jr. of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) accused Farah of a "broad-gauged antiunion campaign consisting of glaring and repeated violations" despite numerous government orders.]

[Maloney also recommended that Farah pay the cost of all litigation by the government and the union. The company has until Feb. 17 to appeal the ruling.]

The legal battle continues while workers remain off their jobs and support their families on the \$30 a week relief checks from the Workers Distress Fund. Those who have remained on the job have not walked out for fear of "financial suicide," according to Father Munoz.

As parish priest for one fourth of the striking workers, Father Munoz was besieged with questions on whether it would be "doom" to take part in the strike. "Many of the workers thought the strike would fail since other efforts have failed," he said.

"Other efforts" included an attempt in 1970 to organize the cutters' room of the Farah plant in El Paso but a vote of 71-30 defeated a proposal to unionize the workers. Father Munoz believes the elections were "rigged" since 150 of the workers were out on strike and could not vote.

One charge made by the Farah supervisors is that the ACW has repeatedly blocked a plant-wide election for unionization. Father



Singer Tom Paxton

Life 'More Than Kind' To Singer Tom Paxton

His job was simply to entertain, and away he went strumming and singing humorous ditties, to make the audience laugh before they heard more serious things.

Folk singer Tom Paxton proved to be the drawing card last Thursday night at Mercy High School with his original songs that touched upon everything from "taking a look around Watergate" to Jesus Christ "who's making it big on Broadway." He warmed up the crowd before the appearance of Father Jesse Munoz, parish priest of the

striking clothing workers, who made an emotional appeal for support of the boycott against Farah Manufacturing Co. in Texas.

Paxton, who grew up in Oklahoma, considers the Farah controversy a "cut and dried issue" and expressed surprise that it "was still going on." Terming Farah's practices as "1930's management policy," Paxton stated that he supported the El Paso workers in their battle for unionization.

The appearance of Paxton was arranged by Father Walter Hanss, associate pastor of St. Monica's, whose work with the Catholic Peace Fellowship in New York last year brought him into contact with Paxton's friends.

Paxton thinks his last visit to Rochester was four years ago, when he was part of the whirlwind campaign of Democrat Paul O'Dwyer, a candidate in the Senate primaries. "If it's 4 a.m., then it must be Rochester," he recalled thinking. "Until recently he lived in England with his wife and two daughters. They now reside in East Hampton, L.I."

When asked what was the strongest influence in his career, Paxton smiled. "My wife," he said.

"My wife has got a lot of guts and integrity. When I'd be feeling low because I wasn't making enough money, she'd say 'Hang the money, you go to the rally,'" Paxton said, in reference to his performances at numerous civil rights and peace demonstrations.

His career was launched in 1964 with the success of his album "Rambling Boy." Since then "life has been more than kind," he sang quietly.

Minnesota Issues Abortion Rules

St. Paul, Minn. (RNS) — Minnesota's first set of abortion regulations — detailing who can do abortions and where — have been adopted by the Minnesota Board of Health.

They provide that abortions may be performed in approved clinics during the first three months of pregnancy providing the clinic offers counseling, family planning help and laboratory examinations.

The clinics would have to file regular reports with the state health department with information about their patients — other than the patients' names.

In Minneapolis, the information would include the census tract in which the patient lives so the city health department can spot areas where family planning help is needed.

The regulations will go into effect within 20 days unless the Minnesota attorney general finds the provisions are unconstitutional.

as "anti-everything that still has life left in it." Father Munoz declared that the Jesuit priest failed to talk to workers or to Bishop Metzger or himself. "Father Lyons claimed to have presented both sides of the issue. Yes, Willie Farah's and Poling's," Father Munoz said.

The 12-page booklet presented by Rev. Poling was produced from information gathered by a vice president from Farah, claimed Father Munoz who added that "Poling was just asked to sign it." He called the publication "devastating for ecumenism" and set church against church "since most of the Mexican-American workers are Catholic."

JOB ADVICE FORELDERS

Free employment counseling will be offered on three dates this month to men and women 55 years old and older. The service is provided by CROW (Gaining Resources for Older Workers), which reports that it has placed more than 300 persons in less than a year.

Counseling sessions will be held at neighborhood libraries on this schedule: Edgerton, 183 Bloss, Friday, Feb. 8, 10 a.m.-noon, 2-3 p.m.; West Irondequoit, 45 Cooper Rd., Friday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; Winton Road Branch, 611 N. Winton, Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2-4 p.m.

WINE PARTY

Homell — The Kieran Guild of St. James Mercy Hospital will hold a wine tasting party Feb. 19 at 8 p.m. in the Hospital Cafeteria.

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