

We've Been Spit at, Sworn at

We, the editors of Los Desarraigados, felt that an article written by Carla A. Moody, published in the June '77 issue of Nuestra Lucha, was excellently written and that it should be passed on to our readers in its entirety. The article is written through the eyes of Carla who participated in the struggle at the Lakewood Greenhouse, in Toledo.

Toledo, Ohio -- Most of the FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee) members and sympathizers in the Toledo area have been pretty busy these days, what with picketing, handing out leaflets, court appearances. All part of an effort to get Walter Krueger, Sr. who runs Lakewood Greenhouse, Inc., to rehire seven women who had been fired earlier this spring.

Lakewood Green house is located just outside of Toledo, and is known as one of the area wholesalers with the lowest prices on houseplants and young vegetable plants.

Krueger has been able to build this reputation by working his employees hard, and scrimping on safety and health measures. For instance, not providing protective clothing for those watering or working with poisons. And if a worker complains? Fire her!

So what if Amelia Uribe has worked there for five years. When Krueger found out that she had filed a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, he fired her. He told the other workers she was laid off — at the peak of the season.

Eloise Salazar, a Lakewood worker for ten years, was told she could take her previously discussed leave of absence, immediately and permanently. Her crime? Telling the truth to the preliminary OSHA investigating team.

Within two weeks, eight people had been fired. "And then," states Amelia, "he wanted me to sign some paper that said I was a temporary worker, and said that he would call me back if he needed any more help. Then Krueger said if I didn't sign, he wouldn't give me my check."

Greenhouses are considered to be farms, and as such the workers are not limited or protected by the National Labor Relations Act. When we, the fired workers, went to Teamsters for help, they turned us down for just this reason. We needed help. I had been hospitalized for exposure to Temik, the insecticide used by Krueger to control aphids, and had no hospital-

ization, so the bills were enormous.

Mary Rodriguez was six months pregnant. The doctor said she could work, and babies cost money. Jane Hernandez, another Temik victim, had children to support and a husband who was laid off due to the fuel crisis.

FLOC was the only organization willing to stick its neck out to help us, and within days of contacting FLOC we were on our way.

On April 28, we closed Lakewood down, stopping all traffic in and out with our cars and bodies. We were there from 5:30 in the morning in the snow and pouring rain, refusing to move until seven of us, including FLOC's president Baldemar Velasquez and Mary Rodriguez were arrested.

The entire time, we had been hit by employees' cars and company trucks, gestured at, and threatened. Moreover, the arrest was not even valid, and the temporary restraining Order, signed by Judge Gale Williamson of Bowling Green, was thrown out of court by His Honor himself.

As soon as this had happened the first week of May, we were back at the greenhouse. The only difference was that this time, we closed the place down for an entire day, and we didn't leave until a second order was served, limiting us to three pickets.

When there are three pickets on the line, and those women, they get abused. We have been spit at, sworn at, and had gravel from spinning tires injure our eyes. We have had our signs stolen and ripped up. One truck driver of a Krueger customer even tried indecent exposure, and Walter Krueger, Jr., sales agent for daddy, has peeked out from behind every possible corner clicking his camera like crazy, and in general trying to harass us.

But no matter what, we'll go on picketing, distributing leaflets, and trying, in spite of everything from assault to court orders, to exercise our First Amendment rights. □

by Carla A. Moody