

# PCUN SUSPENDS 10-YEAR BOYCOTT OF NORPAC FOODS

*As a result of a two-week mediation effort conducted at the request of Governor John Kitzhaber, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), and NORPAC Foods, Inc. jointly announced February 15 an agreement that will result in labor relations guidelines for farm workers and farmers.*

The parties will define the specifics for these guidelines in a process they have committed to complete by early May. Additionally, under the agreement, PCUN suspended its boycott of NORPAC products.

PCUN (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United) is a union of farmworkers, nursery and reforestation workers based in Woodburn. NORPAC is a cooperative of 240 Willamette Valley growers of fruits and vegetables.

The innovative agreement — still subject to ratification by NORPAC's board of directors — is a direct result of the Governor's concern about the future well-being of Oregon agriculture, including farm workers and growers.

Ramon Ramirez, president of PCUN, and Rick Jacobson, president and CEO of NORPAC Foods both said the joint agreement holds the promise of a new era in farm labor relations between NORPAC and PCUN in Oregon.

"This is a historic accomplishment for farm workers, who will now have clear and enforceable guidelines that provide them with an opportunity to elect PCUN to represent them," said Ramirez. "If they do elect to join PCUN, it also establishes a framework for contract negotiations with the participating NORPAC member-growers."

"We are extremely pleased with what we've worked out so far because it provides a regulated, fair process that the growers and farm workers are involved in," said Jacobson. "I appreciate that PCUN has cooperated with us in developing a framework that will bring benefits to farm workers and NORPAC's

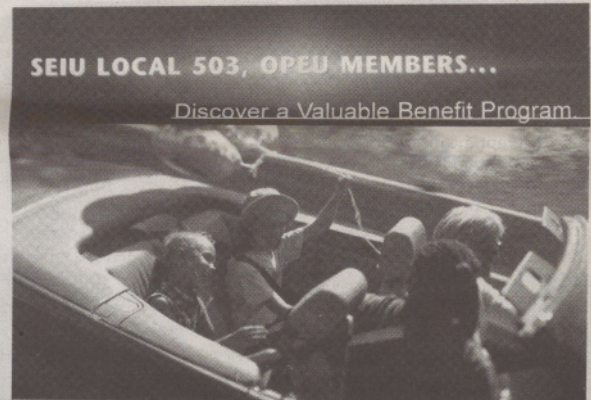
participating family farmers."

Governor Kitzhaber's mediation process was in part encouraged by the involvement of one of NORPAC's major customers. Sodexo, the leading provider of food and facilities management in the U.S. and Canada, became involved when PCUN asked them to support its boycott. Sodexo sent a senior executive to Oregon to investigate the situation and then issued a letter urging PCUN and NORPAC to resolve their dispute.

The mediation has been taking place under the direction of the National Consensus Center (NCC) at Portland State University with the involvement of NCC Director Greg Wolf and Mediator Paul F. Stuckenschneider of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

The agriculture industry in Oregon is exempt from state and federal

collective bargaining laws. Because of this exemption, and in an effort to provide collective bargaining for some of Oregon's farm labor force, PCUN called for a boycott of NORPAC products in 1992. NORPAC has maintained that in order for a representation and collective bargaining process to be fair to workers and farmers, there had to be a framework of protective rules for all parties. Both NORPAC and PCUN said today that the current agreement is an important step in the right direction toward providing those guidelines. ●



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