

REMARKS BY WAYNE C HARTMIRE, JR
at the
FARM WORKERS RALLY in SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA
APRIL 10, 1966

Until I resigned two (2) weeks ago I was a member of the California State Social Welfare Board, closely associated with Governor Brown's efforts to eradicate poverty. His absence today, for whatever reason - and the Governor should know that he is not the only one who is accustomed to spending Easter Sunday with his family - his absence today makes a joke of the efforts to eradicate poverty among farm workers.

The Governor has now demonstrated that he is either indifferent or hostile to the basic aspirations of seasonal farm workers and their children. He is apparently willing to continue and expand a degrading welfare system rather than help farm workers establish justice and pay their own way.

Today in Sacramento the Governor has turned his back on the hopes of farm workers for social justice and embraced the present farm labor system with all that means for human suffering and continued social unrest.

Cesar Chavez regularly thanks the churches and churchmen for their support of the farm workers' cause. He really shouldn't have to. Standing with oppressed people ought to be as natural to us as breathing and singing hymns. It should be part of our daily style of life - unexceptional and uncontroversial. But as many of you know it is not necessarily so. In fact the Protestant churches of this State are involved in a costly internal struggle to decide the future course of the Migrant Ministry. Like Peter, James and John, we have discovered that following Jesus is most difficult when it is most costly. (I would like to take this opportunity to thank those many churchmen who have stood with farm workers and the Migrant Ministry during the difficult months of this fall and winter.)

On this day I would like to say a special thank you to Cesar and to Fred Ross and those who have worked with them in the Community Service Organization (CSO) and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). They have taught us new things about courage and honesty and hope. Most of all they have helped many of us see the world as it really is, in place of the pleasant world we imagine for our comfort's sake. Farm workers suffer in that world - not just by accident but because some men live off the sweat of their brows and because too many of us are silent and complacent. Men live at the expense of other men in that real world. Important people lie in public and conspire in private to maintain their own privilege. The strong take advantage of the weak until the weak assert their manhood through unity and strength.

All is not bleak in that real world and thank God for the hope of this glorious Easter morning. But there is too much pain and too much loneliness and too much human suffering - and Jesus cares - and Christians should be free enough to face the worst honestly and then take risks for the sake of their brothers. If that means losing some institutional flesh and blood, then we will be closer to our

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Lord who loved life but gave his flesh and blood for the world of men

Since this day is not the end of a struggle but the beginning of a new hope and strength for a long struggle ahead I would like to close by reading a challenge to Christians that comes from the pen of a non-Christian Albert Camus

"Hence I shall not try to pass my self off as a Christian in your presence I share with you the same revulsion from evil But I do not share your hope and I continue to struggle against this universe in which children suffer and die

What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt never the slightest doubt could rise in the heart of the simplest man That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today The grouping we need is a grouping of men resolved to speak out clearly and to pay up personally

And what I know--which sometimes creates a deep longing in me--is that if Christians made up their minds to it millions of voices--millions I say--throughout the world would be added to the appeal of a handful of isolated individuals who without any sort of affiliation today intercede almost everywhere and ceaselessly for children and for men " ---Quoted from Resistance, Rebellion and Death by Albert Camus

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Written from full notes by
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