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Encounter

FLOC MARCHS ON

Chanting "BOYCOTT CAMPBELL'S SOUP" midwestern farmworkers and their supporters marched through Philadelphia on August seventh. Rallying at Independence Mall, the marchers and representatives of local unions were addressed by Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) and Cesar Chavez, United Farmworkers president. The marchers then continued across the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to Camden, N.J., for an all-night vigil and a demonstration at Campbell headquarters the following day.

The weekend demonstration culminated a 560-mile march from Toledo, Ohio, to Camden by a core group of about 70 members of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). FLOC is attempting to pressure the company to negotiate contracts for harvesting tomatoes in Ohio by promoting the boycott of Campbell's products.

FLOC marchers received constant and enthusiastic support during the month it took to cover the distance from Toledo through Cleveland, Youngstown, Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Harrisburg, and Reading to Philadelphia and Camden. Various people joined the march over the weekends, and others provided various support services. Their national boycott director preceded the march by ten days or so, meeting with local residents to arrange accommodations and meeting places for the marchers.

Several cities along the march route declared "Farmworkers Day" as FLOC marched through. Various church social justice groups, the Quakers, the Penn. Public Interest Coalition, the Penn. Social Services Union, and NOW were mentioned by a FLOC spokesperson in Philadelphia as having been particularly helpful. Organized Labor also helped out, as when, in Johnstown, Pa., the worn-out shoes of the marchers were replaced by the UMWA and the Steelworkers. A lot of government employees involved with the problems of migrant labor also lent a hand on their own time.

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