

T H E Y A R D S T I C K

Union Against Union

By Msgr. George G. Higgins

Father Richard Humphrys, pastor of Our Lady of Soledad Church in Coachella, Cal., recently issued a personal report on the farm labor problem in the particular Valley in which his parish is located. Copies can be obtained by writing directly to Father Humphrys, 52-525 Oasis Palm, Coachella, Cal. 92236.

Father Humphrys' report is based on his own investigation of the three-way conflict (between the United Farm Workers on the one hand and the Teamsters and the majority of the California growers on the other) which lead to a major strike in the Coachella Valley last spring and will probably lead to another strike as soon as the crop comes in again this year. I found the report heavily slanted against the UFW and in favor of the Teamsters. In other words, though Father Humphrys says that "to come out in favor of either union is a tremendous mistake" and insists that "we should be fair to both unions," he ends up -- perhaps unwittingly -- disregarding his own advice in this regard. I might add that my somewhat negative reaction to his report is shared by a number of other Protestant and Catholic clergymen who heard Father Humphrys summarize his findings in person when he was kind enough to receive us at his rectory in Coachella several weeks ago.

This group of clergymen from Canada, with whom I was traveling as a consultant, spent a week in California making their own investigation of the farm labor problem and, more specifically, of the dispute between the UFW and the Teamsters. The President of the Teamsters, Frank Fitzsimmons, who was in California just before we arrived, alluded to our trip in the course of a wide-ranging interview on the farm labor problem with Dick Lyneis, the highly respected labor reporter for the Riverside (Cal.) Press Enterprise.

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