Huelga backers plan Easter caravan to Rio Grande valley

By BARRY KAPLAN

Labor movements have traditionally been involved with the processes of law and order. The story of any strike in the dear, dead days of the IWW or the Haymarket rebellion is fraught with stories of arrests, police harassment, and violence. But the Valley farm workers' strike has had some ironic twists, and the Starr County sheriff's office may go down in history as one of the most farcical groups of men ever to assemble behind the badge.

On January 26, 1967, after a rally in Rio Grande City, a number of the Huelguistas (strikers) 
knelt before the courthouse at 9 pm to quietly say the Lord's Prayer. Gilbert Padilla, national vice-president of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, and James Drake, a Congregationalist minister from Delano, California were arrested for disturbing the peace.

Janitor Complains

The charge was filed by the janitor on the third floor of the building, who charged that the sound of praying prevented him from efficiently carrying out his job. With due process delayed beyond the February 27th trial date set by the county judge, the fate of the two miscreants still hangs in the balance (owing to rumors that the FBI was in the area and that they might have some objections to the processes of justice in Rio Grande City).

The strike has now entered its public phase again. Along with a boycott of the products of La Casita Farms, which has been in progress since February, the people working to aid the strikers are arranging a caravan to arrive in Rio Grande City on Easter Sunday.

Well Supported

Leaving simultaneously from Houston and Austin, the Caravan will proceed slowly from town to town, the two branches meeting in Corpus Christi on Saturday night. Along with the cars of the caravan will come trucks bearing the donated food and medical supplies in aid of the strikers.

The organization of the local support for the strikers has extended beyond the expected cooperation of the AFL-CIO. While that is both necessary and natural to the operation of an organized labor movement, it is not usually a good project for a political party in this state.

Rice Can Help

There are signs, however, that the Democrats are viewing the Valley strike in its true perspective: not as an attempt by big, bad organized labor to subvert the ideals of whoever happens to be running the Party machine, but as a social cause worthy of the Party of civil rights and the Great Society.

In any event, the Harris County Democratic Committee has voted its support to the strikers, and support is coming in from other Party organizations.

The Rice student has the opportunity to render aid, as well. People interested in the caravan may inquire at the YD-Huelga table in the RMC for details. Also, boxes for the collection of food and medical supplies will be placed in Autry House and at the table in the RMC.