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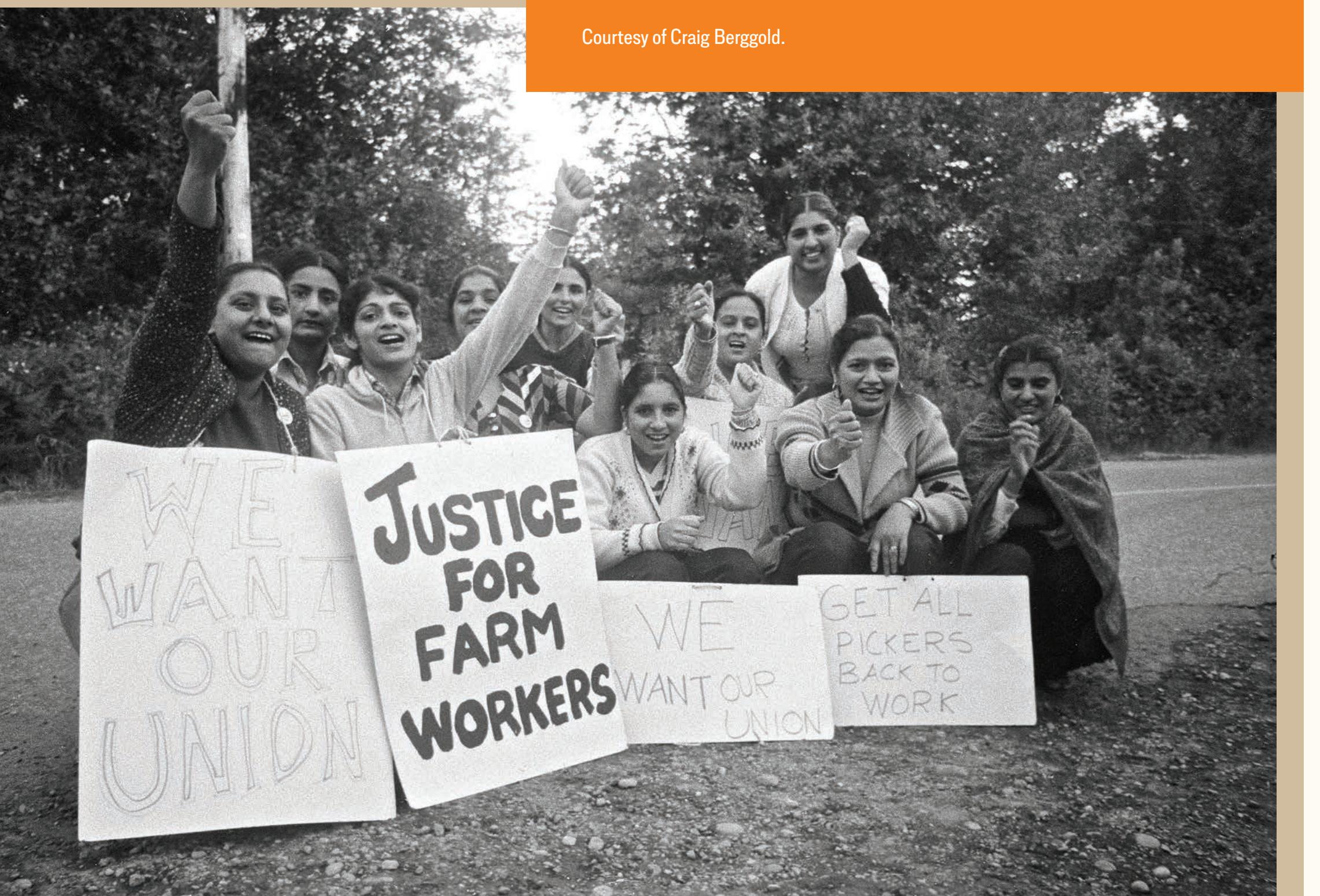
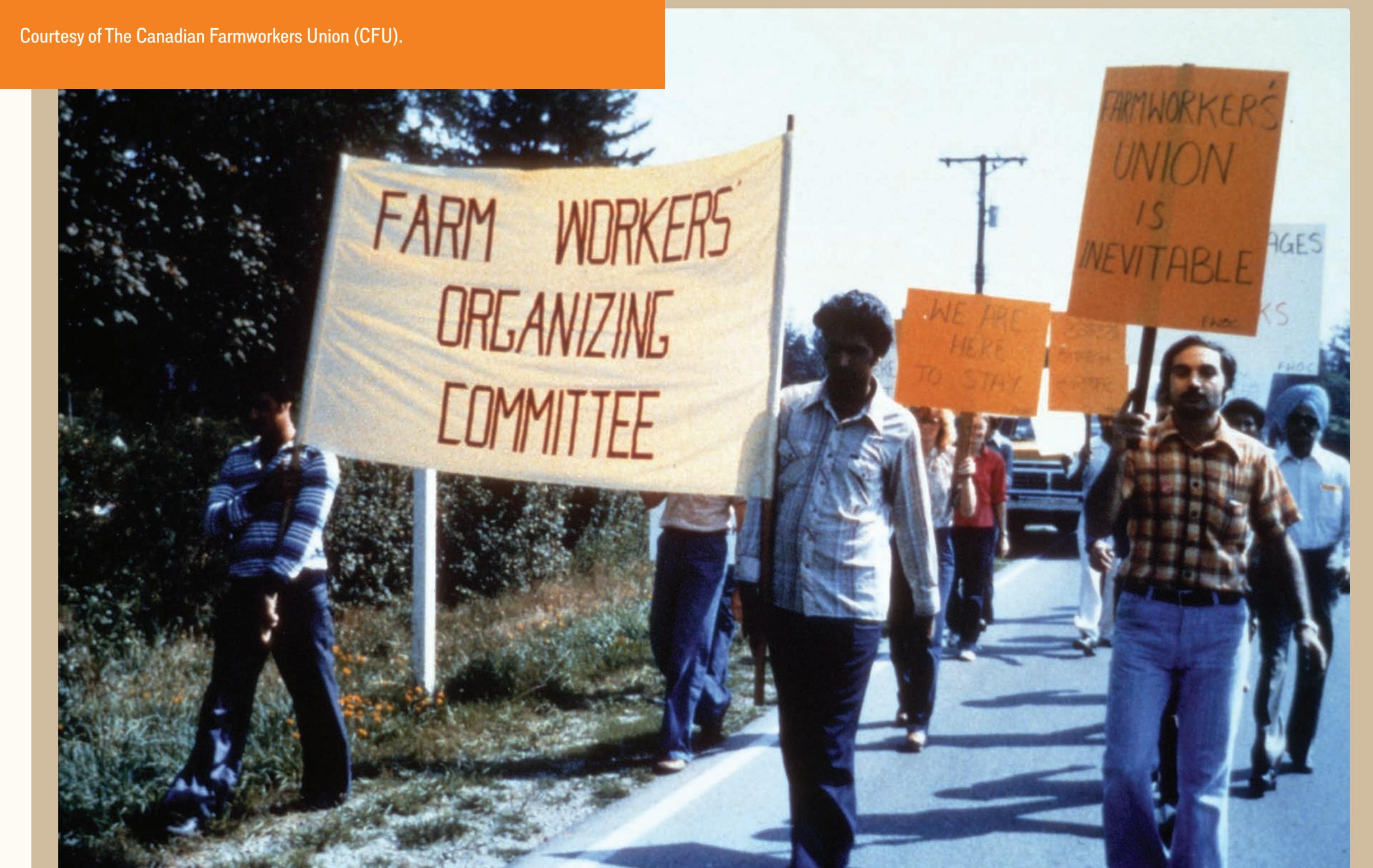
- Raj Chouhan

"ਖੇਤ ਮਜ਼ਹੂਰਾਂ ਲਈ, ਇੱਕ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀਆਂ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਅਗਲੇ ਕੌਨੋਂਗੀਅਨ ਮਜ਼ਹੂਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਰ੍ਹੋਂ ਪੱਧਰ ਤਨਖਾਹ ਵਾਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਸੋਸ਼ਿਟੀ ਵਰਗ ਦੇ ਲੰਬੇ ਦਿਹਿਰਾਸ ਦਾ ਮੰਨ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ, ਮਹੱਤੀ ਸਨਮਾਨ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ, ਮਜ਼ਹੂਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਆਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਸੰਗਠਿਤ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਜਾਰੀ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਸਾਮੱਗੇ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ"

- ਰਾਜ ਚੌਹਾਨ

Picket line at Mukhtiar Growers Ltd. in Clearbrook, BC in 1979. Raj Chouhan on far right.

Courtesy of The Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU).



## Farmworker rally knocks conditions

More than 200 people attended a Canadian Farmworkers Union public meeting Sunday in Abbotsford, and called on the government to improve working and living conditions for farmworkers.

Union spokesman Judy Cavanagh said the meeting was held to publicize the fact that farmworkers have no protection from pesticides, or through Workers' Compensation Board schemes.

"The prevention of injuries and diseases in Canada is affected by federal and provincial laws and regulations, and the farmworkers' union is fighting to improve the existing working conditions of farmworkers," she said.

"One aspect of this fight is to put pressure on the government to ensure that farmworkers are covered by laws extended to other workers, and to ensure that all these laws and regulations are enforced."

Speakers at the meeting included Verna Ledger, safety

director for the regional council No. 1 of the International Woodworkers of America and Raj Chouhan, president of the farmworkers union.

Chouhan said: "For over two years, we've been stressing the need for daycare facilities for farmworkers, and four children's deaths in July were due to lack of

daycare facilities.

"The demand for daycare facilities for farmworkers was one of the main recommendations in our brief to labor minister Jack Heinrich. We demand the B.C. Government enact legislation to force growers and contractors to provide free daycare for workers with children."



CANADA FARM  
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With no access to day care, children as young as 8 years would work alongside their parents. Free daycare was one of the CFU's first demands to improve working conditions for themselves and their families.

## Farm union meeting draws 150

A lengthy, and at times bitter, organizing campaign throughout the Fraser Valley last year was capped on Sunday by the formation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union, Local 1.

Raj Chouhan, the union's 31-year-old president, told 150 farm workers at the founding meeting in New Westminster that "we can expect trouble."

"I say it very clearly to the membership: our fight will be a long one and we should not expect miracles overnight. We are very aware of what happened in California... We have just tried to make our membership aware that we can't let the farm owners and contractors intimidate us.

"For farm workers, the

achievements of a union will mean an end to the long history of being the most underpaid and exploited section of the Canadian workers, of being denied human dignity, of being unable to carry on organized struggle of their rights as workers.

"Not only will the union be able to phase out the labor contractor who is greatly responsible for the oppression of the farm worker, but it will enable the farm worker to wage successful struggles for legal protection and better working conditions."

The way for the newly-formed union was paved by the Farm Workers Organizing Committee in 1979, which responded to complaints in

Canada in the next few years."

Holding meetings in Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack as well as demonstrations at several farms, the committee grew to 1,400 members (half of them farm workers).

Of B.C.'s 11,000 farm workers, an estimated 7,000 work in the Fraser Valley.

Chouhan hopes to sign up 6,000 in the union's first year.

But activities will not be confined to the province.

"We hope to organize throughout Canada, as there are hundreds of thousands of farm workers in Canada," he said. "Hopefully, the Canadian Farmworkers Union will be one of the biggest unions in

be covered by UIC."

Chouhan said that farm workers rarely meet these conditions.

The union also called legislation protecting agricultural and domestic workers; the same protection offered the majority of other workers under the labor code and Minimum Wages Act.

Besides Chouhan, other officers elected were: Jowala Singh Grewal, vice-president; Charan Gill, secretary; and Sarwan Boal, treasurer.

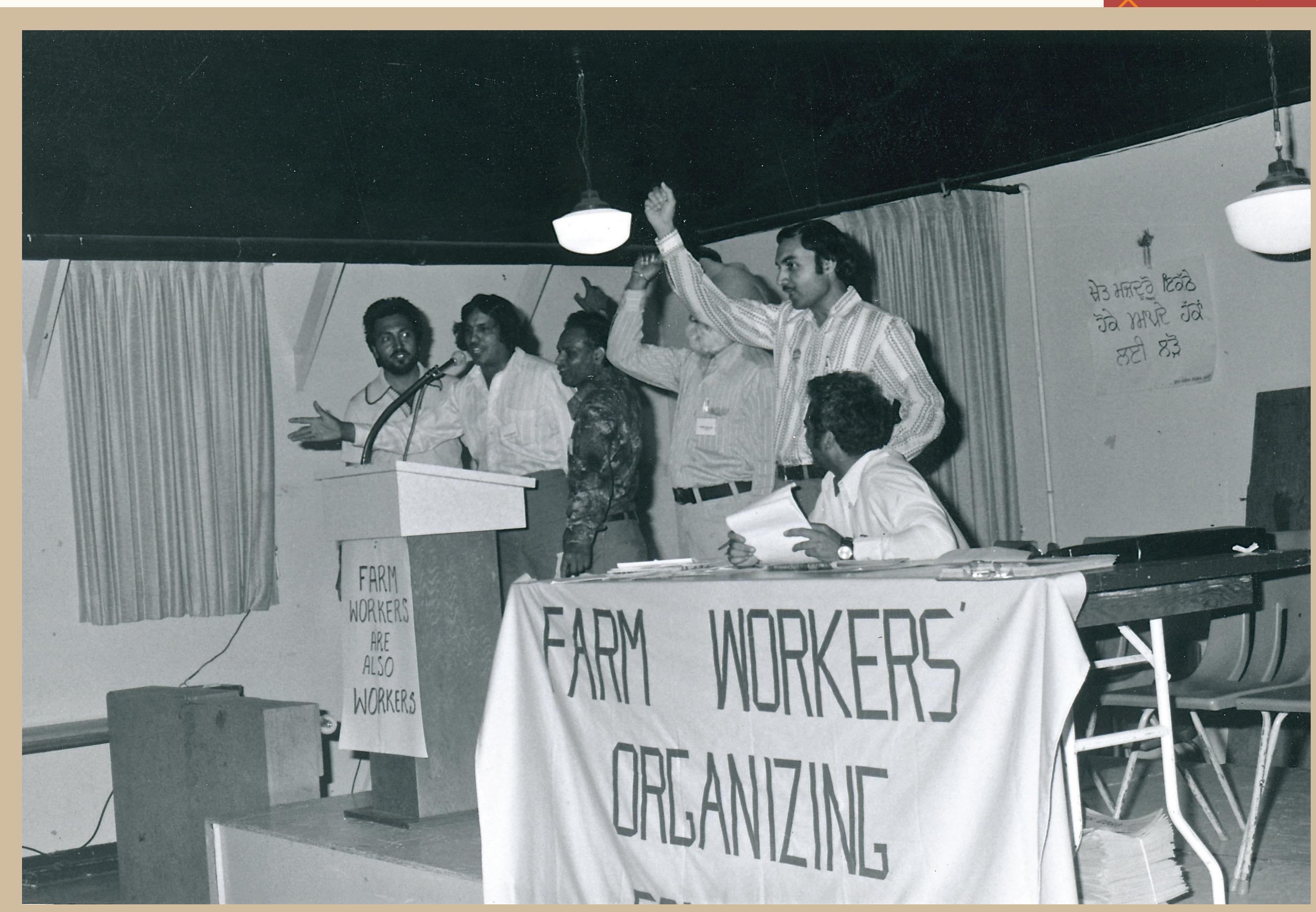
To celebrate their founding, the union has invited Cesar Chavez of California, president of the United Farm Workers, to be the guest speaker at a dinner April 26.

# Canadian Farmworkers Union: A Fight to End Labour Exploitation

Farm work is known to be difficult, with long hours and manual labor. Now imagine you return from a hard day's work to a converted barn to rest your head each night. There is no running water and no toilet. To make matters worse, you have not been paid a fair wage for your days' work. In the 1960's and 70s, destitute living and working conditions like this was the reality for many South Asian farmworkers.

Fed-up with mistreatment and exploitation, farm workers organized and fought back. In April 1980, Raj Chouhan, a young Punjabi immigrant, led the official establishment of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. This was Canada's first union formed to improve agricultural working conditions.

## ਕੈਨੋਡੀਅਨ ਫਾਰਮ ਵਰਕਰਜ਼ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ: ਵਿਰਤ ਸੋਸ਼ਟ ਨੂੰ ਖਤਮ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਲੜਾਈ



Founding meeting of the Canadian Farmworkers Union in New Westminster, BC on April 6, 1980.

Courtesy of The Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU).

ਖੇਤ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਐਖਾ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੰਬੇ ਪੰਡੇ ਅਤੇ ਹੱਥੀ ਮਿਹਨਤ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣ ਕਲਪਨਾ ਕਰੋ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇੱਕ ਸਖ਼ਤ ਇਨ ਦੀ ਮਿਹਨਤ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਹਰ ਰਾਤ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਆਰਾਮ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਫਾਰਮ ਵਰਕਰਜ਼ ਸਿਲਾਰਿੰਗ ਤੋਂ ਬਦਲਾਏ ਹੋਏ ਕੌਨੋਂਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਾਪਸ ਆਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ। ਇੱਥੇ ਨਾ ਤਾਂ ਪਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਟਾਇਲਾਟ ਹੈ। ਮਾਮਲੇ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਬਦਤਰ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ, ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਨੇ ਇਨ ਦੇ ਕੰਮ ਲਈ ਉਚਿਤ ਤਨਖਾਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। 1960 ਅਤੇ 1970 ਦੇ ਦਰਾਵੇ ਵਿੱਚ, ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਬੇਸ਼ਗਾਰ ਸ਼ਿਦਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਡਿਤੀਆਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੇ ਦੱਖਣੀ ਏਸੀਆਈ ਖੇਤ ਮਜ਼ਹੂਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਹੱਕੀਤ ਸਨ।

ਦੁਰਵਿਵਹਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸੋਸ਼ਟ ਤੋਂ ਤੇਰਗ ਆ ਕੇ, ਖੇਤ ਮਜ਼ਹੂਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਸੰਗਠਿਤ ਹੋਏ ਅਤੇ ਵਾਪਸ ਲੜੇ। ਅਪ੍ਰੈਲ 1980 ਵਿੱਚ, ਇੱਕ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਸੀ, ਰਾਜ ਚੌਹਾਨ ਨੇ ਕੈਨੋਡੀਅਨ ਫਾਰਮ ਵਰਕਰਜ਼ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਦੀ ਆਧਿਕਾਰਤ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਦੀ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਕੀਤੀ। ਇਹ ਕੌਨੋਂਗ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਸੀ ਜੋ ਖੇਤੀਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਕੰਮਕਾਰੀ ਗਲਾਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬਿਹਤਰ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਬਣਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ।



Indo-Canadian strawberry pickers with a young child harvesting in the fields. Fraser Valley, BC. c. 1970s.

Courtesy of The Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU).