



JIMMY CARTER

November 30, 2007

To Reggie Brown

I have read your web statement, posted on November 4, that urges your members not to participate in deals reached between Yum, McDonald's and Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) lest they violate "federal and state laws relating to antitrust, labor and racketeering." I understand that you have told members that significant fines will be imposed for sharing payroll information with third parties. Your position has had the short-term effect of stopping the penny-per-pound raise to a small number of tomato workers, who are among the poorest paid workers in the country.

I have been following the issue of pay and conditions in the Florida tomato industry for over a decade. In January 1998, I wrote to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association stating that "direct talks between workers and their employers is a fundamental tenet of good labor relations." Unfortunately, since that time your members have consistently refused to discuss pay and conditions with the worker's representatives and now are actively working against what progress has been made.

I appreciate that there is significant pressure on wages from buying mechanisms. However, in the absence of a meaningful raise in the piece rate for over two decades, and with the continuing prosecutions for slavery within the industry, it is clear that there is a problem that must be resolved. Growers, consumers, and workers must be active participants in establishing a fair wage and good conditions.

Companies such as YUM and McDonald's are taking important leadership roles toward that goal. Burger King and others are continuing to support a market system that keeps workers in sub-poverty conditions and stand silently as modest gains are deliberately rolled back. It is time to take a fresh look at the problem in order to restore the dignity of the Florida tomato industry. Your leadership and the active participation of all involved will be required.

Sincerely,

Mr. Reggie Brown, Executive Vice President
Florida Tomato Growers Exchange
800 Trafalgar Court, Suite 300
Maitland, Florida 32751

Cc: Lucas Benitez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers