

# Pork workers, union eye industry boycott

## Workers accuse top plant of poor conditions

By Lorinda M. Bullock  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Angry pork plant workers from Smithfield Foods in Tar Heel, N.C., are leaving the tobacco roads and crisscrossing the country this week to gain national support for a boycott of Smithfield's pork products.

The workers have teamed up with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union "A Change to Win Week" is set to bring more attention to what the UFCW and other labor and civil rights group call sub-par working conditions in the plant and the company's alleged illegal practices to curb the formation of a union.

The company is the largest hog producer and pork processor in the world and nets \$7 billion annually under the name of Smithfield Foods.

That figure doesn't include 32 other international acquisitions that also include beef production.

Rallies, supermarket initiatives and church services will be held in seven of Smithfield's retail markets including Richmond, Chi-

cago, New York, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Raleigh and Boston, said Leila McDowell, spokesperson for the UFCW.

"Find an alternative product if you can besides Smithfield products. If they don't want to listen, then start hitting them in the pocket," McDowell said.

Joseph W. Luter, IV, the president and CEO of Smithfield Packing Company, said in a statement, "Since the UFCW has chosen this week to launch a nationwide 'anti-Smithfield' campaign, we must question the sincerity of the union's motives now. If the union's campaign succeeds, the people who will be hurt the most are the Smithfield employees that the union claims to want to help."

There is momentum for the protest because a recent Washington, D.C., Court of Appeals ruling sided with the National Labor Relations Board and upheld a "cease and desist" order the NLRB issued to Smithfield in 2004 "forbidding the company from interfering with, restraining or coercing its employees in the exercise of

their rights" under the National Labor Relations Act. Smithfield representatives filed court documents rigorously denying management took part in any anti-union efforts.

After receiving complaints from the UFCW, the NLRB investigated the plant, which has about 6,000 employees.

The NLRB found the company used a number of scare tactics, including the confiscation of union materials, unfair discipline of employees displaying interest in union activities and the firing of four union supporters — Rayshawn Ward, Lawanna Johnson, Margo McMillan and Ada Perry.

The court also ordered the jobs of the four employees be reinstated. The UFCW reports that the plant's overall employee turnover rate is close to 100 percent annually.

Luter, who has announced his resignation as CEO, said "When a new election is called, we will comply fully with the NLRB's remedies to ensure a fair vote that represents the wishes of our plant's employees. The union (See Pork, Page 15)

# Jackson's finances at center of legal matter

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) - A year after Michael Jackson was acquitted of child molestation charges, a lawsuit by a former associate is headed for a trial that will put Jackson's chaotic financial dealings in the spotlight.

The pop star is not expected in court but he will be seen through videotaped depositions.

"To my knowledge, he's not scheduled for any court appearances," said Jackson's spokeswoman, Raymone K. Bain. She said that Jackson, who has been living in Bahrain, is traveling in Europe. He answered questions twice in depositions in London.

Jackson is being sued by F. Marc Schaffel for \$3.8 million in what Schaffel says are unrepaid loans and expenses, unpaid salary for work on a charity record and his share of proceeds from two TV specials that were produced to bolster Jackson's battered reputation after child molestation allegations surfaced.

Facts involved in Jackson's criminal trial last year are likely to be revisited when Schaffel testifies about his role in attending to the family of a boy who claimed he was molested by Jackson.

But most of the witnesses called by Schaffel will be money managers and business advisers. Jury selection is set for June 26.

Bitter feelings between Jackson and

Schaffel are evident in pretrial briefs.

Schaffel's attorney, Howard King, portrayed the 47-year-old singer as an incurable spendthrift who sought financial guidance from advisers, then ignored it.

"Jackson carried no credit cards, wrote no checks, carried no 'walking around money' and had people attending to his every need," said King's trial brief.

For his part, Jackson claims that Schaffel defrauded him and hid the facts of his allegedly shady past.

"This case is deceptively simple," Jackson's lawyer, Thomas C. Mundell, said in his trial brief.

Rather than owing Schaffel money, Jackson's lawyer said Schaffel owes Jackson funds.

Jackson's depositions show the singer claimed a poor memory of transactions involving millions of dollars and said he never met his business manager, Alan Whitman.

In a bizarre detail, Jackson maintained he got his spending money by leasing cows that lived on his Neverland ranch. During the deposition there was this exchange between King and Jackson:

Q. "So all your cash, whenever you need cash to shop or whatever comes from the cows?"

A. "Yes, believe it or not."

Q. "I don't, but that's OK. I don't have to."

## NAACP

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the national convention, July 15-20, in Washington, D.C.

"We've taken a lot of time to analyze our membership base, to look at the Democratic mix of that membership base and to put the proper kind of programs in place to really now begin to accelerate membership drives," Gordon said. "So, until we got all of that in place, we were not ready to crank up a new campaign."

Gordon said he is not after numbers just for the sake of numbers.

"We need enough people on the ground who are connecting broad-based areas of advocacy into a local context," he said. "So, we think nationally, but we need to act locally. And I expect our people to be in their communities, to be in their respective communities and to be engaged."

"Despite impressive civil rights gains in the last three decades, one needs to look no further than Georgia's voter identification law and the way Black New Orleanians were treated after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf to realize that we still have not reached the point where there is equality for all," he said in a statement.

The campaign began June 1 and is being extended through the convention, according to the campaign director, Brooke McCauley.

McCauley said that all 1,600 adult NAACP branches and 400 youth and college

units are being challenged to aggressively and creatively recruit new membership.

"The overwhelming majority of our memberships are driven by our local sales force — the members in the field who believe in our mission for racial equality and social justice," says McCauley. "Some people will be soliciting memberships via the new technology of the Web. They will be using email chains and text messaging to drive college students and the technologically savvy to the website to join."

Others, she said, are continuing traditional campaigns through partnerships with local churches, fraternities and sororities, unions and other community organizations. Give-aways, barbecues and receptions are still other ways that branches are enticing people to join.

"We're also encouraging people to include voter registration and education," McCauley said.

The membership drive, coupled with the encouragement to vote and be educated on issues go hand in hand with this year's convention theme, "Valuing Our Votes, Voting Our Values," said Gordon. "We're about to go into historically one of the most important election cycles in the history of our community — 2006 and 2008."

"You're going to see this non-stop for as long as you see me in this job," he said. "And 20,000 is just a step."

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