

Rev. Joe Keesecker
Executive Director of AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS
FLOC march and rally at Reynolds America
Sunday, October 28 2007



I would like to thank everyone for coming to this important historic event and for all the solidarity demonstrated by farm workers, unions, church representatives present. I bring greetings from Agricultural Missions. We would like to express our solidarity on behalf of our many partner rural people's organizations around the world, themselves engaged in struggles for land, livelihood and dignity. I would particularly like to thank the Lloyd Presbyterian Church for hosting this gathering and continuing its long dedication to the struggles for human dignity and rights.

I was sorry to learn that Susan Ivey, Chairman of the Board, President and CEO of Reynolds American, declined to be with us today. I am even more sorry that she has refused even to meet with Baldemar and representatives of the farm workers.

However, I did bring a message from Susan Ivey to share with all of you this afternoon. These are her own words, written in a letter she sent to shareholders of Reynolds American last March, as they were preparing for their annual shareholder meeting on May 11. Incidentally, at that meeting, Ms. Ivey reported the company had enjoyed \$8.5 billion in sales over the past year, with net income of \$1.2 billion, and a return on investment to shareholders of 43%. She did not report anything about workers, either in the company itself or the workers in the fields, upon whose labor their profits and their industry rest, nor did she say anything about what the return was on labor they invested.

Near the end of her March letter, Ms. Ivey shared some very positive thoughts. She said, "In addition, we continue to maintain a very strong focus on corporate social responsibility. And supporting all of our efforts is our continuing drive to build a high performance culture that is based on four core values - being Principled, Creative, Dynamic and Passionate."

I know all of you will join me today in calling on Susan Ivey and Reynolds American to live up to those values, by:

- * Becoming PRINCIPLED in dealing with the workers in the fields;
- * Being CREATIVE in finding ways to meet and deal with farm workers through FLOC;
- * Being DYNAMIC by putting energy into addressing the real and critical needs of the human beings upon whose labor the very life of their industry rests; and
- * Being PASSIONATE for justice and for fair treatment of workers.