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Striking farmworkers suspend picketing and gear-up to fight temporary restraining order.

Sunnyside. Striking Apple workers at Auvil Fruit Company Inc. exercised their legal right today to return back to work upon advice of the United Farmworkers of America, AFL-CIO. The workers returned back to work because they had determined that they made their point about the unfair treatment at Auvil Fruit Company.

"Both the Company and the workers have been hurt economically, therefore, workers excised their legal right to return to work," said Guadalupe Gamboa. "The issues that prompted the strike, the arbitrary and unfair treatment imposed on the workers continue," added Gamboa. "Those issues will only be addressed when the workers have the protection of a collective bargaining agreement."

As proof that the company has been hurt economically Gamboa cited the temporary restraining order that today was issued in Kittitas County Superior Court. "This temporary restraining order was issued without notice and an opportunity for the Union or farmworkers to be heard," continued Gamboa. "In the temporary restraining order Auvil Fruit Company admitted they would suffer 'irreparable harm' if the strike continued in its present form. At the hearing to be held September 19, 1997 the farmworkers will demonstrate that the allegations in the temporary restraining order are completely without merit and that the main motivation for the restraining order was to interfere with a lawful strike," concluded Gamboa.

The temporary restraining order which alleges that striking farmworkers blocked the roads, prevented workers from entering the property, trespassed upon Company property, and generally intimidated workers is the latest in a series of obstacles that striking farmworkers faced during their four day harvest time strike. On Labor Day, the day that the strike began, farmworkers were surrounded by 26 law enforcement personnel, some with drawn rifles and video cameras. The following day Tuesday, September 2, 1997 a caravan involving at least 15 vehicles from the Kittitas Sheriff's department and the State Highway Patrol escorted the strike breakers past the peaceful worker protesters. On Thursday, September 4, 1997 the workers were confronted with professional union strike breakers hired from California by Auvil Fruit Company.