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CHAVEZ MURDER PLOT?

By Dick Meister

An alleged plot to assassinate Cesar Chavez was disclosed today by representatives of Chavez' United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

The union representatives first heard of the supposed plot through a federal agent, who warned them back on July 31st that Chavez' life was in danger. The agent told me he now believes that the threat has disappeared, and that the Federal Government thus has abandoned its investigation.

But the union men told me they nevertheless are convinced that there is someone who is still planning to spend \$15,000 to hire men to kill Chavez. As the union people see it, the assassin was only sidetracked by the government investigations, and now may go after Chavez at any time.

I don't mean to sound melodramatic or come on like some headline hunting police reporter. But I have every reason to believe that the fears of assassination are genuine. Whether there actually was or is a plot to kill Chavez is an entirely different matter. But there is genuine concern that there may very well be such a plot – concern by some quite trustworthy news sources – including, mainly, Jerome Cohen, the chief lawyer for the Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

Cohen was one of the union representatives present at a meeting to which the union officials were called on July 31st by Mal Warner, regional director of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms Control Division of the Internal Revenue Service.

Warner told the union representatives that a paid government informer had passed on word that two men had been hired, for \$25,000 in all, to kill Chavez. Warner gave the union men photographs of the man who was to do the actual killing – a man who was being sought at the time on a murder charge.

The photographs were shown to the union people around Chavez, but the union did not publicize the threat, for fear of hampering the government investigation.

Finally, in August, the man who was supposedly hired to do the killing was arrested and jailed on the murder charge for which he had been sought. This was just two days before he allegedly was going to kill Chavez. One month later, the man who was supposedly going to help him kill Chavez also was arrested, he on a narcotics charge.

And that was that, as far as the Federal Government was concerned, according to Warner, the government agent most directly involved in investigating the alleged assassination plot. Warner said there was no proof that the two arrested men had been in on a plot anyway or that anyone else was involved in any such plot.

Warner's paid informant disagrees. He's a Bakersfield mechanic by the name of Larry Shears. He sticks to the story he told Warner back before the government investigation was made, and says, in fact, that he was offered \$5000 to take part in the assassination plot himself.

Shears named the man who was supposedly going to give him the \$5000 and pay the two alleged assassins another \$20,000 after Chavez was killed. But this man has not been arrested. And both the informant and union representatives feel there probably is another person behind him, whom neither of them know, who is masterminding an assassination plot.

They passed on this information to law officers today in hopes that it will prompt them to take action to head off what they sincerely fear will be an attempt to assassinate Cesar Chavez.

As of now, however, the law officers seem convinced that the fears are groundless.