

# Teamster Sweethearts

Few episodes in recent labor history have been more repulsive than the undisguised partnership between the scandal-ridden Teamsters Union and large-scale agricultural interests in California to smash the tiny United Farm Workers, headed by Cesar Chavez.

Hope that the two-million-member truck union would abandon its union-busting role in the fields had been stirred by the willingness of its national and regional leaders to participate in peace talks initiated by George Meany of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. But—even though these talks are still in progress—local Teamster officials in the San Joaquin Valley seem to be doing everything in their power to assist the growers in snuffing out the Chavez organization.

The latest raid has been in the vineyards of the E. & J. Gallo Winery, the nation's largest winemaker, where the farm union had had a contract for six years. In July, taking advantage of the absence of any Federal or state laws requiring union elections to determine the wishes of farm laborers, Gallo threw out the Chavez group and signed a four-year agreement with the Teamsters. Aided by sheriff's deputies acting to enforce highly restrictive injunctions, the company has rendered ineffective the picket lines established by the U.F.W. to discourage strikebreakers.

Deprived of any statutory route to the eradication of unfair labor practices and to a democratic determination of the workers' union preference, the farm union is sponsoring a nationwide consumer boycott of the kind it has already initiated against the growers of lettuce and table grapes. Boycotts represent a poor alternative to orderly election machinery, but until Congress extends to wretchedly exploited agricultural laborers the same protection that has been universal in basic industry for nearly four decades, no better weapon is available.

There is no need for the Teamsters to wait on Congress for legislation. This giant union can still demonstrate that it has some dim awareness of what unionism is all about. It can still reinstate its pledge of several years ago to respect the right of the Chavez organization to unionize California's giant farms without having to fight the piratical raids and sweetheart contracts of the nation's biggest, toughest union.

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