

Ballot Argument Against Proposition 22, The Agri-Business Initiative by
Cesar Chavez, John Henning and Wayne C. Hartmire. July 1972

Migrant and seasonal farm workers are among the poorest of our nation's workers. The average migrant lives to be only 49 years of age. Child labor is common. The people who harvest the food we eat do not have enough even for their own children.

Farm workers are struggling non-violently to change these conditions. They are not asking for charity. Through sacrifice and hard work the United Farm Workers have gained over 200 contracts with growers. The union provides new protections for farm workers: toilets in the fields, improved wages, protection from poisoned pesticides, health insurance, job security, holidays with pay, credit union, medical clinics, legal services, educational programs, etc. Farm workers are emerging from decades of poverty and powerlessness. Much work remains. Only 10% of California's farm workers are protected by union contracts. Farm workers are currently engaged in a struggle with the lettuce industry and are asking supporters to "Boycott Iceberg Lettuce" (if Proposition 22 passes we would be thrown in jail for saying that!).

PROPOSITION 22 turns the clock back on programs for farm workers: It would destroy existing contracts. It outlaws fair elections and takes away strikes and boycotts, the farm workers only non-violent means for brining about collective bargaining.

PROPOSITION 22 is being financed by giant agribusiness corporations: The initiative was organized and paid for by lettuce growers, the Farm Bureau and other right wing groups to serve their own interests and to crush the farm worker's union.

PROPOSITION 22 takes away from farm workers their right to vote in representation elections: Almost all migrant and seasonal farm workers would be disenfranchised.

The Law Says:

"THE DATE OF SUCH ELECTION SHALL BE SET AT A TIME WHEN THE NUMBER OF TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES ENTITLED TO VOTE DOES NOT EXCEED THE NUMBER OF PERMANENT AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES ENTITLED TO VOTE."

This means that if a grower has 20 permanent workers and 200 harvest or seasonal workers the election would have to be held at a time when there are not more than 20 harvest workers on the ranch, taking the vote away from 180 seasonal workers—the workers who are most in need and who are most likely to vote for a union.

PROPOSITION 22 takes away from consumers their constitutional right to help farm workers: Under this law it will be illegal to ask people not to buy "lettuce". Violation of the law is punishable by one year in jail or a \$5,000 fine or both.

PROPOSITION 22 is an attack on all working people: It outlaws all secondary boycott activity and most primary boycott activity. It provides for 60-day injunctions against strikes and boycotts; it outlaws collective bargaining over certain “management rights” (e.g., use of labor contractors and use of machinery); Proposition 22 is the first step toward anti-labor legislation in industries other than agriculture. PLEASE VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 22!!!

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