

Memo from Chris Hartmire to NFWM Action Mailing List. 1973

TO: NFWM ACTION MAILING LIST

May 9, 1973

SUBJECT: Grapes of Wrath, AGAIN!!!

Enclosures: Cesar Chavez' letter to Safeway
Cesar Chavez & the Farmworkers Renew their Struggle in the Grapes
L.A. TIMES: "Role of the Farmworkers in Teamsters Stalled"
Teamsters-Growers-Safeway Unite to Defeat Farmworkers' Movement

I hope you will read the enclosures with some care. Obviously, Cesar's letter could have been addressed to A & P as well as to other chains. Safeway, however, is the largest chain in the world (4 countries), has the closest ties to the growers and has consistently joined the agricultural industry in fighting the farmworkers' union.

The four-page piece entitled "Teamsters-Growers-Safeway Unite..." was written before the crisis developed in grapes. Some of the background information should still be helpful.

We have some copies of Jane Kiely's excellent 22-page report to Safeway (asked for by Safeway) in which she summarizes much of the history, considers the issues and recommends to Safeway that they support UFW. We will send a copy of the report to anyone who sends in a contribution (\$5.00 or more, we hope) and who indicates a desire for the report. We will include a careful 17-page history of the Western Conference of Teamsters' collusion with employers to destroy indigenous unions. This report was written by the Rev. Fred Eyster of the NFWM staff.

In addition to the 5 key priorities listed on the enclosed yellow sheet, there are some other important ways to help:

- Publish Cesar Chavez' letter to Safeway in magazines, newsletters, newspapers, etc. If you are in A & P territory add an editorial comment about its relevance to A & P and other chains.
- Let Chris or Dave know if your group will consider a loan to the United Farm Workers. There will probably be major strikes this summer in Coachella, Arvin, Delano and Salinas. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be needed to pay even the most modest benefits (e.g., \$20.00 per week) to strikers.
- Join other religious leaders from around the country in Coachella, Ca., Friday, May 18, 1973 (4:00 A.M.-10:00 P.M.). Cesar Chavez has invited us to come to be with the farm workers at this time of crises for the farmworkers' movement and by our coming to demonstrate that the religious community will keep supporting the UFW.

If you plan to come on May 18, let the Ohio or Los Angeles office know about it!!

— Please make dollar contributions as the spirit moves you. The money is needed!!!

There is a lot of work ahead. But the farm workers are going to win! Si, se puede!

Your brother,

Wayne C. Hartmire, Jr.

Coachella, California

May 9, 1973

Mr. Quentin Reynolds
Chairman of the Board
Safeway Stores, Inc.
Oakland, Ca. 94660

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I am sending this letter from Coachella where our farmworkers' union is struggling for its life. Mr. Reynolds, you must be blind to what is at stake here or you would surely be using your influence with the growers and the Teamsters to resolve this conflict in the lettuce and the grapes. Seasonal and migrant farm workers have been poor and powerless since before Safeway was founded. We have been treated with contempt by the most respected people of our communities. Our women have been insulted and abused. Our children have too often cried from hunger and given up their brightest dreams to work in the fields so that their brothers and sisters could eat. Still we did not surrender our lives to exploitation and misery. Farm workers were willing to get up off their knees, to strike and boycott, to struggle and sacrifice for five long years to gain contracts in the grapes. For the first time we could see and feel the beginnings of our own union. It has been a beautiful experience for farm workers, Mr. Reynolds. Dignity and hope and a little bit of justice have filled us with new strength and a new determination to build a union for all farm workers.

The growers and the Teamsters are now working together to destroy that dream, they apparently do not care what farm workers think or feel. The Teamsters substitute goon squads and intimidation for union democracy. The growers and the Teamsters have been willing to make sweetheart deals behind the workers' picket lines. In recent weeks they have outraged the whole nation by secretly stealing the grape contracts away from the workers. The Teamsters say they represent the workers. How is that possible? The grape workers have been members of our union for years. Mr. Reynolds, do you and other

Safeway officials really believe that farm workers want the Teamsters Union? Why don't we find out once and for all! Why don't you join me in a public appeal for elections so that we can settle this important matter of representation before we are locked into a long grape strike and boycott?

You say you are neutral, Mr. Reynolds, but in fact you and chains like A & P have taken sides with the growers and the Teamsters. Safeway promotes Teamster lettuce as "union" lettuce. You continue to support the growers by handling lettuce that comes from struck fields. You argue that the Teamster contracts are good for farm workers. How can you in good conscience support the Teamsters in this matter, Mr. Reynolds? Are you under duress? Surely, there is nothing persuasive about their position. Consider for a moment some of the most obvious facts:

- The Teamsters are afraid of elections because they have never tried to organize farm workers and they do not represent farm workers (perhaps they remember the first election in grapes at DiGiorgio Fruit Corp. in 1966; the company invited the Teamsters in and used all of its intimidation powers to get workers to vote for the Teamsters; but the workers voted 2-1 for the United Farm Workers.
- The Teamsters have already made arrangements to continue the farm labor contractor (crew leader) system — a system of peonage that goes back to the days of slavery. Labor contractors are hated and feared by farm workers everywhere in our country.
- The Teamsters are paying \$67.50 per day to hired thugs who are in the vineyards of California to force workers to stay in the fields and who have used clubs, chains and tire irons to attack strikers.
- The Teamsters accepted thousands of dollars of illegal cash payments from the lettuce growers to destroy our union.
- The Teamsters' leadership is now under investigation for illegal contributions of over \$500,000 to the Watergate espionage fund.
- Frank Fitzsimmons, General President of the Teamsters and other Teamster officials are implicated in criminal relationships to the Mafia and to Las Vegas gambling interests.
- Einar Mohn, West Coast Teamster official, has made it very clear how he feels about farm worker participation in the Teamsters union: "We have to have them (farm workers) in the union for a while. It will be a couple of years before they can start having membership meetings, before we can use the farm workers' ideas in the union." (L.A. TIMES, 4/28/73) Mr. Mohn is so racist that he is apparently looking forward to the day when machines will wipe out Mexican-American workers and pave the way for a more "sophisticated White work force."

- The Teamsters do not care about pesticide protections for farm workers. That is why Safeway was caught with lettuce contaminated by excessive residue of the poison, Monitor 4.
- The Kiely report, prepared at your request and paid for by your Company, recommends that you support the union that the farm workers want by selling only United Farm Worker lettuce.
- Frank Fitzsimmons is a wealthy and powerful man with connections that reach to the White House. Everyone knows of his huge salary. How can this rich man claim to represent the poorest workers in our country?

Mr. Reynolds, you must know how corrupt the Teamster leaders are. They talk about how good their pension plan is for workers while at the same time they are stealing from that same pension plan to further their own wealth. For decades they have made financial arrangements with employers and then set about to break strikes of legitimate unions. Now these corrupt Teamster leaders are in collusion with large growers to destroy a struggling poor people's union that truly represents farm workers.

Bishop Joseph Donnelly, Chairman of the Roman Catholic Bishops Committee on Farm Labor and all of the California Bishops have directly asked the Teamsters to hold secret ballot elections. Fitzsimmons has publicly rejected the suggestion, saying that elections are unnecessary. Surely, Safeway does not accept the Teamsters' position! Your Company, Mr. Reynolds, is on record on this matter: "The (farm workers) right to join a union of their choice through properly supervised elections by secret ballot is another (right we have consistently supported.)" (SAFEWAY NEWS, Feb.-March 1973)

In light of all these facts how can Safeway continue to support the grower-Teamster conspiracy? Doesn't your conscience require you to support the desire of farm workers to build an honest and democratic union that they can believe in? Mr. Reynolds, we ask you in this time of crises to stand for justice by selling only those grapes and only that lettuce that bears the UFW label.

If we cannot resolve this matter quickly than all of us are in for another long struggle in the grapes. Mr. Reynolds, I urge you not to underestimate our patience and determination. Farm workers are not going to be defeated because the rich and powerful want them defeated. The growers and the Teamsters can rob us of all of our contracts. But what will they have accomplished? We have always been poor; life has always been a struggle; there is no easy way to gain justice and to make life better for our children and our grandchildren. We will keep organizing and striking; we will build a new worldwide boycott of grapes. Our people will again go to every city in this country. They will live on subsistence and they will tell Americans of the crimes that are being committed against farm workers. We will stand in your parking lots and go to jail if necessary; we will work and sacrifice for as many years as it takes to regain the grape contracts and to build a farmworkers' union that will serve all farm workers and all rural poor people in America.

If you say it cannot be done you do not understand how much we yearn for justice and for the right to control our own destiny. If you say it cannot be done you are blind to the love and compassion in the hearts of millions of people who will join us in another grape boycott.

Our cause is just; the prayers and deeds of people around the world will strengthen us. Time is the great friend of the poor!

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Si, se puede,

Cesar E. Chavez

CEC?m

“Cesar Chavez & The Farmworkers Renew Their Struggle In The Grapes”

Farm workers struggled for five years to get the first table grape contracts in the Coachella Valley in Southern California. Those contracts expired April 15, 1973. Even before the contracts expired, grape growers were negotiating secretly with the Teamsters because of their desire to sign with a union that does not represent their workers and thus will demand little of the growers. Here is a brief run-down of the current situation:

- 1) The Teamsters apparently have contracts with 85% of the table grape growers in the Coachella Valley. Only two growers (David Freedman Co. and Keene Larson) have renewed their UFW contracts.
- 2) The table grape growers to the north of Coachella in Arvin, Delano and Fresno are watching the events in Coachella; it is likely that they will also go with the Teamsters. Most of those contracts expire this summer. Strikers are in progress at several ranches where contracts have already expired.
- 3) The lettuce struggle continues. Strikes are in progress at D'Arrigo farms and La Victoria farms (formerly Pic 'n Pac). The harvest has now moved to Salinas.
- 4) The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare is investigating the charges that growers made illegal cash payments to the Teamsters in Salinas in 1970.
- 5) Cesar Chavez has asked for secret ballot elections in Coachella but so far the Teamsters and the growers are not interested.

The Teamsters and growers are seeking to destroy the UFW by continuing the fight in the lettuce while at the same time chopping away at the farmworkers' base of strength in the grape industry. It is the worst kind of grower-union collusion aimed at defeating an indigenous, poor peoples' movement.

Cesar Chavez and the farm workers with him intend to keep organizing and striking and boycotting for as long as it takes to win. Since UFW has to drive the Teamsters out of the fields they might as well do it on the issue of grapes. A lot of Americans joined the farm workers in the long grape boycott. All of us feel robbed!

You can help in the following ways:

- Priority #1: Observe the Safeway and A & P boycotts and tell all your friends and colleagues.
- Priority #2: Continue the non-UFW iceberg lettuce boycott and expand it to include non-UFW table grapes. The first table grapes will reach the market in late May. Please get the word out in resolutions, publications, action networks, etc.
- Priority #3: In California & Arizona food is needed for the strikers. Contact Pat Hoffman in the L.A. office of NFWM for details.
- Priority #4: Cash contributions are needed for food, for people, for paper and phone, etc. Checks can be made out to NFWM or UFW and sent to the address below.
- Priority #5: Give Fitzsimmons a piece of your mind and please send us a copy of your letter. (Frank Fitzsimmons, General President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, 25 Louisiana Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20001.)

Farm workers want their own union. They are willing to keep sacrificing and struggling for that goal. They are asking for our prayers and our deeds.

National Farm Worker Ministry – 1411 W. Olympic Blvd., Rm. 511

(Mike Miller has asked that participants in the REP Seminars on “The Politics and Vision of the New Left” read the enclosed articles as background for his remarks on Sunday evening, October 6, 1968.)

Farm Workers Face Long Struggle – By Robert Dudnick
(Reprinted from the Guardian, 1968)

La Huelga—grapes of wrath or raisins in the sun?

This is a good question to ask as two seasons—harvest and election—close in on the AFL-CIO's United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) in California's San Joaquin Valley.

On the one hand, UFWOC, headed by Cesar Chavez, is expanding its boycott of table grapes even to the European Common Market and is trying new methods to keep scabs out of the fields at 32 ranches where it is on strike.

But the other hand holds less promise. The strike, which started in this little town nearly three years ago, is in long-range trouble. Automation threatens to turn farm workers into economic surplus items. Erratic—at best—union democracy threatens their control of what they have built so far. And the leadership's increasingly Gompers-like approach does not threaten the system which made the strike necessary in September, 1965.

The best indicator of what the political season will be like around here came when Chavez joined Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's (D-N.Y.) California delegation.

Although this decision set off a shockwave in places like Berkeley and Union Square, it was hardly inconsistent with what the farm workers themselves wanted. The overwhelming majority of those who labor in the fields favor Kennedy. While this certainly is the fault of poor political education by the union, it is a fact nonetheless.

Kennedy has an excellent record of holding hearings and visiting the poor. Farm workers know who he is because they have seen him. They have not seen his twin, Eugene McCarthy, nor have they seen his opposites, thanks to radical-baiting by the AFL-CIO's national organizing bureaucracy and, to a lesser extent, by UFWOC.

The decision to endorse Kennedy perhaps marked the high point of union democracy, as the term is understood here. In nearly every other instance, the membership has been allowed to vote only on what the leadership already decided. But in the Kennedy case, what happened was this:

Kennedy called Chavez late one night and asked him to file for the delegation. Chavez then called together the union's department heads and ranch committeemen. Many came from other parts of the state. After a long meeting, at which it was reported that the membership favored Kennedy, Chavez was given permission to go on the delegation.

A general membership meeting was called in Delano and other meetings were held elsewhere in California. The membership voted to back what the department heads and ranch committeemen had decided. The difference here was that the membership favored Kennedy in the first place.

The reason for this is that UFWOC is not the same outfit that started out in the grape strike in 1965. Then it was the independent National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), which joined the strike a few days after it was started by the old AFL-CIO Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC). At that time, NFWA had a radical rhetoric and some radical content. But the leadership of the AFL-CIO, NFWA and AWOC decided that two unions in the same field were wasteful. So they joined the Mexican-American

NFWA with the Filipino-American AWOC into a combined union. This brought “technical assistance” from Washington and the rhetoric and content moved steadily away from radicalism. During the DiGiorgio campaign in 1966, the AFL-CIO’s Washington-dispatched organizers fought the Teamsters with, among other things, a leaflet promising “No Crooks—No Commies.”

It is likely also that Kennedy offered UFWOC something solid—such as a final push to give farm workers coverage under the National Labor Relations Act, which legitimizes collective bargaining. He may also have promised to do something about scabs imported from Mexico.

Chavez sees nothing wrong with this drive to middle-class status. That, he says, is after all what farm workers want. “Ideology means shit until you have bread,” he told the Guardian. Further, he said, there are only two things you can do in regard to poor people—organize them for these kinds of immediate demands or forget them. Could they be organized for anything more? “If they were sheep,” he answers.

He is highly critical of people he believes have an ideology wrapped up “in a cellophane bag” that has never been opened to what he calls the realities of an organizing situation. This once was a point of difference between some of the staff, especially those who came to Delano after the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, and the leadership. But there are few radicals left in Delano and those who are still here seem to have sheathed their Marxist claws.

And then there is the harvest season. The union here runs up against a difficult problem, but one which it probably will manage to lick as it has beaten so many other giants.

So-called “green-carders” are being used as scabs at all struck ranches, especially at those of Giumarra Bros., the target of the international boycott. Green-carders—called that because of their green work permits—are Mexican nationals who work in U.S. fields. They differ from braceros in that the bracero program was a contractual arrangement between the two governments, while the green-carders come into this country individually and find work individually. Many of them are from the petit bourgeois owning class in Mexico. They work here, but pay slave wages to their workers in bars, restaurants and the like in the Old Country.

The Labor Department and the Agriculture Department have promised to enforce the regulation, which provides that green-carders cannot work behind picket lines. But there has been no enforcement.

“It’s a matter of political expediency,” Chavez says. “So we have to make it expedient for them to enforce the regulation.” Failing this, he said, UFWOC will mobilize its forces and whatever students can be found and seal the Mexican border with bodies from Tijuana, Mexico, to Brownsville, Tex., “at every bridge.”

Among other reasons this would be a major undertaking is the perpetual personnel crisis in Delano. Although the chiefs deny it ever happened, UFWOC staff members were in effect told to get in line with the Catholicism of the great mass of farm workers.

The strike has always had a deeply religious nature. Its constituency is, after all, generally highly religious. The Virgin of Guadalupe has appeared on everything from posters to placards. But non-Catholic members of the UFWOC staff put up an unsuccessful fuss when they were in effect ordered to report for Mass nightly near the building where Chavez fasted for 25 days “for non-violence and the farm worker movement” this spring.

Farm workers came from all around and pitched tents near the fast site. Many of them were mobilized. Staff members were virtually told they needed either their own tent or their own bus ticket out of town. The leadership is extremely defensive about these issues and treats questions concerning them as accusations.

While this may be no way to run a staff, the leadership is not entirely to blame. The Anglo volunteers have usually kept themselves aloof from the Mexican-Americans and Filipino-Americans and neither group understands the other. There is considerable resentment against some students and other Anglos who were born with the means to decide whether they want to be middle class or not.

Sifting out the crosscurrents, charges, denials and rumors in Delano, this can be seen:

The union started out as a genuine people’s movement. Because it grew, it became the target for more powerful groups’ efforts at co-optation. The AFL-CIO did a good job of this. Chavez’s integrity and dedication to La Causa cannot be questioned, but there are pressures on him. As the ball got rolling and some contracts were signed, the union also began to co-opt itself. UFWOC has not lost its value to the farm worker in the immediate range, but it has turned into a good example of economy-ism.

Role of Farm Workers in Teamsters “Stalled”

Union Official Denies Racism Is Reason for Two-Year Wait

By Harry Bernstein
Times Labor Writer

A high Teamsters official was quoted Friday as saying farm workers will not be able to take part in Teamsters Union meetings “for about two years” when he expects more “whites” and fewer Mexicans in California fields.

The comment was contained in a study of the battle of Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers Union against grape and lettuce growers who have signed union contracts with the Teamsters.

Einar Mohn, head of the Western Conference of Teamsters, was the official quoted in the doctoral dissertation by Jane Yett Kiely, a student at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, who interviewed various industry and union leaders.

Mohn said after the report was disclosed that it is "very misleading because I was talking about probable trends in the composition of the work force."

"But I do believe it will be a couple of years before farm workers will be able to take any real part in membership meetings."

Conspiracy Charged

Chavez has accused the Teamsters and growers of conspiring to destroy the UFWU, and has alleged that part of the reason for the alliance of the Teamsters and growers is their "racist" attitude.

The allegation has been strongly denied by both growers and Teamsters and Mohn called it "nonsense." He noted that the Teamsters Union has large numbers of Mexican-Americans as members, especially in the canning industry which, like field work, is predominantly Mexican-American.

In the Kiely report, Mohn was asked, "What role do you see the farm workers playing in the Teamsters Union which represents them?"

Answer: "We have to have them in the Union for a while. It will be a couple of years before they can start having membership meetings, before we can use the farm workers ideas in the union.

Future Outlook Given

"I'm not sure how effective a union can be when it is composed of Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals with temporary visas. (Mohn insists he did not say "Mexican-Americans" in the Kiely interview).

"Maybe as agriculture becomes more sophisticated, more mechanized, with fewer transients, fewer green carders (aliens), and as jobs become more attractive to whites, then we can build a union that can have structure and that can negotiate (with management) from strength and have membership participation."

(Persons of Mexican ancestry are members of the Caucasian race, as are other whites, who generally are known as Anglos. However, some persons of Mexican ancestry refer to themselves as being brown.)

Mohn was then asked if union contracts will afford protection to workers displaced by mechanization, and, according to the Kiely report, he replied:

"No, that isn't a problem to solve in this way. Shortage of jobs is the problem. If there weren't such a shortage of jobs, Mexican-Americans could get jobs. I don't know what will happen to the Mexican-Americans. After all, you can't expect whites (who often operate

machines now) to step aside and let Mexican-Americans and Negroes have the (machine)P jobs they have had for years.”

“Chavez, whose union has an estimated 40,000 members, says UFWU—which is primarily composed of Mexican-Americans—conducts most of its membership meetings in Spanish, and that meetings are held each month on ranches under contract to the UFWU.

UFWU Meeting Procedure

The UFWU members on each ranch elect five officers who call the regular meetings, and, in addition, the UFWU brings large groups of workers from various ranches to La Paz, the UFWU headquarters in Central California, for regular conferences, he said.

Chavez contends that farm workers who join the 2 million member-Teamsters Union are forced to do so by threats and intimidation from the Teamsters and growers. This is also strongly denied by both growers and Teamsters.

The Teamsters Union has hired about 50 to 60 organizers, Mohn said in an interview with The Times, and plans to vigorously press its campaign to organize farm workers.

He declined to estimate the cost, but said the Teamsters “are not worried about money” in the campaign. Other sources said the Teamsters are spending at least \$20,000 a week in the drive.

Chavez’s UFWU called a strike and boycott April 16 against grape growers in the Coachella Valley who signed with the Teamsters when their three-year contract with the UFWU expired.

The growers said the Teamsters showed cards signed by a majority of farm workers saying they wanted Teamsters recognition.

Chavez is demanding a union representation election. Growers have refused to comment on the proposal. The Teamsters say they want an election, but only if it can be held under terms of legislation which they are advocating in Congress and the state Legislature.

Meanwhile, in Riverside, Sheriff Robert Presley said his deputies have been working 12-hour shifts to maintain order in the Coachella Valley area, and so far it has cost Riverside County \$104,629, mostly in overtime pay for the deputies.

The deputies Friday arrested four more persons at the strike scene, including Fred Chavez, 21, of Delano, a nephew of UFWU leader Chavez. He was booked for assault.

Two Teamster union members and an AFL-CIO member were arrested for battery.

In Indio, Superior Judge Fred Metheny warned the Teamsters to avoid confrontation with UFWU members at Coachella Valley labor camps.

The UFWU, in another Indio court action, sued eight Coachella Valley growers for more than \$32 million. The suit was a cross-complaint in a case in which the growers obtained temporary court injunctions restricting UFWU picketing.

Named in the suit were Coachella Imperial Distributors, Ben Laffin, Ralph Melikian and Sons, Karahadian and Sons, Inc., Richard Bagdasarian, Inc., Mirage Ranch, H & M Tenneco and Marion P. Tudor.

The UFWU charged that the growers “entered into a conspiracy and systemized campaign of terrorism, intimidation, threats, assault, battery and collusion designed to forcefully prevent the UFWU from exercising its constitutional rights of free speech and expression.”

The suit asked for \$25,000 in actual damages and \$32 million in exemplary damages.

Teamsters–Growers–Safeway Unite To Defeat Farm Workers’ Movement

On January 16, 1973, the lettuce growers of California and Arizona announced that they had “renegotiated” contracts with the Western Conference of Teamsters* covering 170 growers and 30,000 vegetable workers. The growers acknowledged that their workers had not been consulted. The Teamsters have hired over 50 new “organizers” who are currently forcing lettuce workers to sign Teamster authorization cards on the basis of “sign the card or be fired.”

The Teamsters are telling their members, friends and associates that the Teamster involvement is a good thing for farm workers because Chavez and UFW are “incompetent” and under the Teamsters farm workers will be protected by an “efficient, powerful and businesslike union.” SAFEWAY is also promoting the Teamsters and their lettuce “contracts” as a beneficial development for the struggling farm workers of America.

The Grower-Teamster-Safeway alliance goes back many years. They have worked together before to oppose justice and to destroy grass roots union movements:

- 1935 Teamsters joined Safeway in successfully opposing a statewide referendum that would have limited the growth of monopoly food chains in California.
- 1945–46 Cannery workers in No. California voted to be represented by the Food, Tobacco & Agricultural Workers, AFL-CIO. The Teamsters in concert with the canners and growers forced the FTA out of the canneries. The Teamsters took over the contracts and have never protected the membership effectively. Chicano cannery workers are now in open rebellion against discrimination by the cannery owners and by the Teamsters.
- 1949 The retail clerks in Oakland, California on strike against Safeway. Teamster leaders broke the strike using their own members; in return they gained a sweetheart contract with Safeway. (Einar Mohn, now director of the Western Conference of Teamsters led the Teamster strikebreaking effort.)
- 1961 Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), AFL-CIO organized lettuce workers and led a strike in Imperial and Salinas Valleys. Bud Antle Co. signed with the Teamsters as a way of getting around the demands of his own workers. 90% of the Antle’s field workers were Mexican braceros and the contract excluded braceros from its protection. In 1963, the Teamsters loaned Antle \$1 million from the workers’ pension fund

*Throughout this paper the word “Teamster” refers only to Teamster officials, especially Frank Fitzsimmons, General President of Teamsters and Einar Mohn and Bill Grami of the Western Conference of Teamsters.

1966 After a 9-month strike and a 3-month boycott led by Cesar Chavez’ UFW, DiGiorgio Corp. invited in the Western Conference of Teamsters in a final effort to maintain unchallenged power over their workers. On 8/30/66, farmworkers defeated the Teamster-grower effort by voting to be represented by UFW.

1966–67 On 9/9/66, UFW workers at Perelli-Minetti ranch in Delano went on strike. Nine days later Perelli-Minetti signed a sweetheart contract with Teamsters. In July 1967, Perelli-Menniti gave u Teamster contract and signed with UFW. Teamsters & UFW signed first jurisdictional agreement in which Teamsters agreed to respect the right of field workers to build their own union. UFW agreed to honor Teamster jurisdiction with respect to truckers, frozen food plants, etc.

1970 On 7/23/70, lettuce growers invited Teamsters in to thwart the efforts of UFW. The workers were never consulted. On 8/24/70, 5-7,000 farm workers went on strike in Salinas and Santa Maria Valleys. L.A. Times called it “Largest Farm Labor Strike in U.S. History.” Denied elections, the workers demonstrated through the most successful farm labor strike in history that they want to be represented by Cesar Chavez’ United Farm Workers.

1970 Safeway made a formal public announcement that it would not cooperate in any way with the farmworkers’ lettuce boycott.

December Frank Fitzsimmons (Teamster President) met with American Farm Bureau
1972 Federation in Los Angeles and the next day announced that the Teamsters would renegotiate contracts with the lettuce industry.

1973 Safeway begins advertising campaign on behalf of Teamster “contracts” and Teamster “union” lettuce. Safeway fillies \$150 million damage suit against UFW and Interfaith Committee to Aid Farmworkers.

Safeway and the growers are promoting the Teamsters as the union that can best represent farm workers. In fact the opposite is true: for decades — and especially since 1965 — the Teamsters have acted as the willing tool of agribusiness employers. Agricultural employers have tried to defeat the farmworkers’ union by use of strikebreakers, court injunctions, propaganda and repressive legislation. When these methods fail, growers from Antle to DiGiorgio to the lettuce growers have turned to the Teamsters as the final way to hang on to their one-sided power and deny to their workers any real strength of their own. The

growers make “businesslike” backroom deals with the Teamsters without consulting with their workers. The Teamsters gain new members and more dues and the growers gain a softer contract: in the process the Teamsters betray the workers by giving up the hiring hall (thus prolonging the labor contractor–crew leader system), by giving up pesticide protection and by giving up strong, grass roots contract enforcement.

The growers are upset with the UFW because they are “too democratic”: The Teamsters and Safeway echo the same theme calling Chavez and UFW “Incompetent” and arguing that UFW is not a union but is rather a “social movement”. When UFW negotiates a contract, workers participate in the negotiations. Under UFW contracts the workers form ranch committees on every farm and work every day at contract enforcement. When the Teamsters take over all, all that complicated democracy disappears. Everything is accomplished by “white business agents in far-away offices.” The growers have fewer problems; Teamster officials gather in more money and the workers lose all sense of participation in their union and all control over their own destiny (which is exactly why Chicano cannery workers are now filling discrimination charges against the Teamsters and seeking new union elections in their locals).

What happens in lettuce is crucial for all farm workers in our country. If the Teamster-grower deal succeeds in lettuce then growers in every part of the country will turn to the Teamsters whenever their workers organize seriously and press them for recognition and collective bargaining. (Grape growers who have had contracts with UFW for three years are now flirting with the Teamsters.)

Safeway calls Teamster lettuce “union lettuce”. It is an insult to the term “union”. In this instance the Western Conference of Teamsters is just an extension of the lettuce growers’ power; the Teamsters and growers are one flesh — united against the true aspirations of the seasonal and migrant farm workers.

Following are specific responses to recent Teamster claims:

- 1) Lettuce workers have not received the benefits of the 1970 Teamster “contracts”. They have had dues deducted from their pay but they have not seen Teamster business agents; they have not had a grievance procedure; they have not been getting unemployment insurance. None of this is surprising since Chicano cannery workers who have been under Teamster contracts in California for more than 10 years have never seen contracts in Spanish, are excluded from union positions and do not receive many of their most important contract benefits (e.g., medical insurance).
- 2) The Teamsters are using false, grower-produced statistics to try to prove that lettuce workers are affluent. (The Free Marketing Council is the public Relations arm of the Western Growers Association.) Why would the Teamsters need to rely on the grower’s wage survey – if they do in fact represent 909% of the lettuce workers? Why would the Teamsters want to rely on employer statistics?

- 3) The Teamsters refer to 90,000 year-round workers but don't make it clear what workers they are referring to. Perhaps they are talking about California's year-round hired hands. But what about the 200,000 seasonal and migrant farm workers in Calif.? What about the two million migrant workers in the U.S. — 800,000 of whom are children under 16? The seasonal and migrant workers are the heart of the farmworkers' struggle. They do the field work. They are the poorest and the most exploited! They are the ones who want to be represented by Cesar Chavez' UFW and who have gone on strike against the Teamster-grower sweetheart contracts.
- 4) The Teamsters make the following statement. "The Teamsters success in this field (farm labor) was evident even before an end was put to the program which growers used to fight off unionization by resident farm workers." "The Program" must be the Mexican national (bracero) program which was ended in 1964 thanks to the combined work of labor unions, the churches and many other groups. The Teamsters, strangely, signed a contract with Bud Antle in 1961 in which they (the Teamsters) agreed to help Antle get braceros. In 1963, Local 890 (Salinas) of the Teamsters advocated the extension of the bracero program. The Western Conf. of Teamsters was the only labor union in the nation to give the bracero program that kind of support.
- 5) In 1966, farmworkers at DiGiorgio had a secret ballot election to vote for the union of their choice and they voted for the UFW over the Teamsters (530-331) despite employer pressure on workers to vote for the Teamsters. In 1970, in Salinas, Cesar Chavez asked again and again for elections to avoid a long strike and boycott. The Teamsters and the growers refused to consider elections.
- 6) The Teamsters seem annoyed that the public identifies Cesar Chavez and UFW with the cause of farm workers. The reason is simple: UFW has organized farm workers and struggled from the grass roots level to gain some measure of justice in the fields. The Teamsters have never tried to organize or represent farm workers. Time and again they have organized growers who have chosen to deal with the Teamsters as a way of thwarting a grass roots union.
- 7) Proposition 22 on the November 1972 ballot in California would have made farm labor strikes and boycotts illegal. It was handily defeated (58%-42%). The hard work of defeating Prop. 22 was done by the UFW and their supporters (not by Teamster officials).
- 8) The Teamsters are all in favor of extending the current NLRA to farm workers including the anti-labor Taft-Hartley amendments of 1947. But the Teamsters were protected by the original NLRA (Wagner Act) from 1935 to 1947. During that period they grew into a strong union. Why wouldn't they want farm workers to have the protections of the original NLRA so that farm workers could have "12 years in the sun" to build their own union. (Would truck drives want to be one small unit in a giant farmworkers' union? Why not a farmworkers' union by and for farm workers?)

- 9) Cesar Chavez began organizing farm workers in 1962 and not in 1965 as Teamster literature claims. From 1952-62 he organized farm workers and other Chicano workers in the Community Service Organization (CSO). He spent his childhood in the fields. Like all full-time people in the UFW he lives on room, board and \$5.00 per week. Should Cesar Chavez or \$125,000 per year Frank Fitzsimmons represent farm workers?
- 10) The Teamsters' version of the 1970 Salinas struggle is an insult to the intelligence. The lettuce industry was shut down because workers went on strike demanding to be represented by UFW. In a 6-1 ruling on December 29, 1972, the Calif. Supreme Court stated that the growers and the Teamsters had worked together to thwart the expressed will of the workers. The Court stated:

—“According to the un-contradicted affidavit of Cal Watkins, the personnel manager of InterHarvest, Inc. (a grower member of the Association) who attended the July 23 (1970) meetings, the Association members...discussed the question of Teamster representation of their field workers. The members decided to appoint a committee which was to approach the Teamsters to “feel out” that union on the prospects of negotiating an agreement recognizing the Teamsters as the exclusive bargaining agent of the growers’ field workers. There is no suggestion in the record that the growers, before taking such a step, attempted to ascertain whether their respective field workers desired to be represented by the Teamsters, or, indeed, that the question of their field workers’ preference was even raised as a relevant consideration.

—“During the first few weeks of August 1970, when the field workers finally were advised of the collective bargaining agreements that had been negotiated on their behalf, most of the workers refused either to join the Teamsters Union or to sign or ratify the Grower-Teamster agreements. Although there is some dispute as to the precise number or percentage of field workers favoring either the Teamsters or UFW, it appears clear that by mid-August at least a substantial number, and probably a majority, of the applicable field workers desired to be represented by UFW rather than by the Teamsters. Thereafter, UFW repeatedly demanded that the Salinas Valley Growers recognize it as the freely designated representative of the field workers; when these demands were rebuffed, the field workers, on August 25, 1970, commenced a recognition strike against the Growers on behalf of UFW.”

- 11) The Teamsters also re-written the history of the jurisdictional agreements with UFW with little regard for truth, e.g., it was the Teamsters who raided the fields in 1966, 1967, 1970 and 1973. The UFW has not raided Teamster jurisdiction. The UFW did not violate the 8/12/70 agreement with the Teamsters. The UFW has made no claim on those Bud Antle workers who were actually protected by Teamster contracts from 1961-1970. In March of 1971 the Teamsters agreed to get out of the fields, period! There was no proviso that the Teamsters would get out only if the growers and UFW worked out contract agreements.

Farmworkers do not want to be represented by the Teamsters. The Teamsters are the growers' choice. The invited them in and the growers can invite them out. The boycott will determine the outcome of this struggle. You can help farm workers by boycotting iceberg (head) lettuce and by staying away from Safeway and A & P stores.

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