Multi-Market Corporations Easy Target Of Unions

Subsidiaries surrender to well-organized boycott tactics; Salinas growers form organization to fight Teamsters and UFWOC

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BOYCOTT activity by United Farm Workers Organizing Committee captured another major contract in California's Salinas Valley last month. But the majority of shippers held firmly to their Teamster contracts and vegetable movement was at normal seasonal levels in spite of sporadic picketing and boycott efforts by UFWOC.

Freshpict Foods, Inc., a large shipping firm that is a subsidiary of Purex Corp., signed a UFWOC contract after lengthy negotiations. Meanwhile, Pic'n Pac Foods, Inc., the nation's largest grower and processor of strawberries, also began negotiations with UFWOC. This company, which had a Teamster contract, is a recently-acquired subsidiary of S. S. Pierce & Co. of Boston.

These cases, as well as the earlier surrender of Inter Harvest, Inc., a subsidiary of United Fruit Co., underlined the weakness of multi-market corporations in resisting the UFWOC's well-organized boycott tactics. Purex is a large supplier of household bleaches and of processed foods and liquor.

They're Just Union Labels to Consumers

For other shippers, UFWOC picketing and boycott efforts were sometimes troublesome but few consumers seemed to be influenced by the difference between the UFWOC and Teamster union labels.

Recent weeks also brought these developments:
- A major Salinas area tomato shipper, Rober Meyers Co., signed a UFWOC contract, but D'Arrigo Bros. of California rejected the union terms after participating in the negotiations with Freshpict.
- More than 30 other area vegetable growers formed a new organization, the Salinas Valley Independent Growers Association, and mapped plans to fight both the Teamsters and UFWOC. The new group moved rapidly to seek state legislation governing farm-worker-employer relations.

Top Executives Resign from Subsidiaries

- Howard Leach, president of Freshpict, resigned in protest against the Purex decision to sign a UFWOC contract. He was replaced by another top Freshpict executive, Daryl Arnold. Together with the resignations of the two Inter Harvest executives, Tom and Bob Nunes, these moves indicate a sharp conflict of opinion between the operating executives and the parent firms.
- One of the predicted hazards of the UFWOC contract became a reality when workers at the Almaden vineyards at Tres Pinos, west of Salinas, protested against tests of a mechanical grape harvester. Like most other California wineries, Almaden has for several years been operating with a UFWOC contract that includes a "no strike" clause. Workers claimed that they had not been properly consulted about the machine harvesting tests.
- Efforts to obtain new federal legislation presently are stalled by the approaching elections, but farm groups are reported to be preparing a new proposal that includes some administration recommendations for introduction in Congress in January.