

UFW Boycott Gains Support of Bishops

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, in their first such combined action ever, Friday backed a summer boycott in support of demands by Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers (UFW) for free union elections among field hands.

The bishops called for a nationwide boycott of table grapes and head lettuce until elections are held for farm laborers to determine which, if any, union they want to represent them.

The action, approved without an audible dissenting voice, came on the closing day of the week-long annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

It was the first time they had thrown their collective weight behind a particular tactic in behalf of a specific labor group's cause.

Last Resort
"There was no other avenue open," John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia, president of the bishops, told a news conference. "It was a last resort measure."

Chavez's union has been locked in a drawout struggle with growers in California and the southwestern United States and the Teamsters Union, claiming the Teamsters have signed collusive "sweetheart"

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U.S. Bishops Set Support For Boycott

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contracts not in the workers' best interests.

President George Meany of the AFL-CIO at the same time accused the Teamsters of renegeing on a farm labor agreement with the federation. He threatened a boycott of some California agricultural products.

Meany said the AFL-CIO would "take whatever actions are appropriate" to support Chavez's union, including consideration of a nationwide boycott. A spokesman said grapes, lettuce and other row crops would be involved.

Fitzsimmons Hit
Meany denounced President Frank Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters, who has denied that his union had an agreement with the AFL-CIO to leave organizing of California farm laborers to the Chavez union.

The boycott approved by the bishops was proposed by Bishop Joseph F. Dornelly, an auxiliary bishop of Hartford, Conn., who said "the very existence of the United Farm Workers is at stake in this struggle."

He added that Chavez's union offers the best hope of protecting the "legitimate rights of one of the most disadvantaged group of workers in the American economy."

Although Chavez's union won contracts with growers in California's Coachella Valley in 1970, the Teamsters Union obtained agreements with growers the next year, bringing a prolonged strike by Chavez's supporters.

Despite several temporary lulls in the fight, including recently aborted jurisdictional pacts, the Teamsters Union a few weeks ago renounced them to continue contracts with most major growers.

National Boycott
Archbishop Francis J. Furey of San Antonio, Tex., said the only weapon left to Chavez's union is a national consumer boycott of grapes and head lettuce.

He added that beyond the bishops taking their stand, "We've got to do something about it when we get home." He added they would face opposition from various interests, including supermarkets.

Various Catholic agencies, including a farm workers committee headed by Bishop Donnelly, have backed Chavez, but it had not previously been done by the entire body of American bishops.

"Every other method had been tried and the bishops felt there was no other option open, that there was no other recourse for the workers," Cardinal Krol said.

Groups To Picket At Finast Store

Two groups representing farm workers said Friday they plan to picket a Finast food store in West Hartford next week.

The United Farm Workers of America and the Committee of Connecticut Religious Leaders for Farm Workers said they would conduct a "protest vigil" Tuesday at 4 p.m. at the Finast store at 27 S. Main St.

The groups say they are protesting the sale of non-United Farm Worker picked grapes and lettuce.

Please complete and return this pledge to the United Farm Workers:
17 Belmont Street 1915 Park Street
Hamden, Ct 06517 Hartford, Ct 06106
288-4905 233-7234

To America's Farm Workers,
I support your non-violent struggle for justice.
I will not eat table grapes or iceberg lettuce unless I see the Aztec eagle on the wrapper.
Contact me to arrange for a film or speaker at the next meeting of my church, union, class or organization.
I enclose a donation.

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ City _____