

Never before on this continent has a boycott caught the imagination and support of so many people.'

The 'bare bones' story of the California grape strike and boycott leaves untold the real mystery of a cause which has made the eating—or not eating—of grapes a matter of controversy all across the United States and Canada.

Never before on this continent has a boycott caught the imagination and support of so many people. What began in the labor movement has been lifted into the public arena. Like Chicago, Detroit and many American cities, Toronto and Windsor city councils have endorsed the boycott. So have a number of Members of Parliament in Canada.

Trade unionists have been joined by students, clergymen and housewives in boycotting supermarkets in Montreal, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Regina, Vancouver.

What has been done in Canada, has, of course, occurred in spades in the United States. But in either country, the boycott is a phenomenon.

That so many people should get so worked up about grapes is fantastic. It would be easy to understand if somebody had cut off the supply of steel, or automobiles, or airplane travel, or milk, or electricity, or TV, or whatever. But grapes!

As the strikers in Delano will tell you, it all began "When Cesar came to the valley (the San Joaquin in Northern California)".

But Cesar, now 42, had been to the valley many times before 1962, as a grape-picker and a worker in the many 'stoop crops' of the area. The unshod, unlettered child of migrant workers, he was undistinguishable from the thousands of Chicanos (Mexican-Americans) who eked out their existence following the crops working 12 to 16-hour days in the heat and dust.

Not just the low pay and living in tents and broken-down cars and eating beans (and little else) drove Chavez to lead his people. What he could no longer take were the



indignities which were heaped on the Chicanos, the discrimination because a man was of mixed Mexican-Indian blood and spoke Spanish.

In 1952, he was contacted by organizers for something called Community Service Organization, which taught him that concerted action is the only means through which the poor can gain political and economic power.

By 1962, he was convinced that the two jobs were too much to try at the same time. He left the political, taking his life's earnings—about \$1,200 and started the National Farm Workers Association, setting up headquarters at Delano.

The Delano grape strike began in September, 1965, the boycott two years later.

The Cesar Chavez nobody knew became the man everybody knew.

The boy who had been a town tough in the Delano barrio had become a man. He had seen what violence and hatred could do. Ghandi and Martin Luther King and a renewal of the Catholicism he had been taught as a youth—particularly the social encyclicals such as Rerum Novarum ("On Reconstructing the Social Order") became his guide-posts, non-violence his password.

The strike and boycott did more than raise the wages of the pickers and improve their housing. It focused attention on the problem of the migrant workers and made the Chicanos proud of their people. In effect, what Chavez did was to start a Mexican-American civil rights movement. When he wins the boycott, the victory will mark not only the end of poverty, bad housing, poor schooling and indignities on the job. It will be the beginning of a whole new day for Mexican-Americans.

"Boycott California grapes" is more than a slogan. It is a way of life. Which side are you on?

'Huelga!', cried the campesinos; 'Solidarity!', replied the Canadians.

Huelga!

The word has an alien flavor on a Canadian tongue. But not bitter like the grapes of California that it is intended to keep Canadians from consuming can sometimes taste. Nor sweet like them. Strong. Strange. Evocative.

Huelga!

Its meaning is quickly learned, its message soon familiar.

Strike!

Boycott. Don't buy California grapes. Help the United Farm Workers organize. End the degradation of the migratory fieldhands. Lift up an unseen people.

· Huelga!

Boycott grapes and make the growers recognize their workers' union. Thirty-two years after the "sit-downs" in the auto industry, "Huelga!" is the cry of the workers in the agribusiness for recognition.

Huelga!

Canadians buy 20 percent of the struck grape crop. They

bear 20 percent of the guilt. They help make the scabbing possible. They, not the Mexican 'wet-backs' who have no choice but the choice between scabbing and abject poverty, prolong the struggle.

Canadians, who mistake being asked to give up grapes for being asked to wear a hair shirt. To sacrifice!

Against this record of their country's indifference, 32
Canadian trade union, church, student and political representatives journeyed to California—to the heat and dust and unsightliness of Coachella, Indio and Delano—to show their solidarity for the cause of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and Cesar Chavez.

La Causa.

Viva La Causa!

Huelga!

Led by Dennis McDermott, Canadian Regional Director of the International Union UAW, the Canadians knew before they left home which side they were on. They were not going as 'fact-finders' but as supporters of the Farm Workers in their fight for recognition and bargaining rights.

They had been told of the inhuman living and working conditions, the low pay and the chattel-like existence of the Mexican-American and Filipino field-hands. They thought they were prepared.

Then they saw it like it is.

But most of all, they met the people.

"A rich, spiritual experience," said McDermott. "These are beautiful people. To meet them is to be convinced that they cannot be beaten."

This booklet is a sort of pilgrims' progress, a report of the journey of the Canadians to Los Angeles, where they met Paul Schrade, West Coast



regional director of the UAW, and were provided with buses to take them to Coachella Valley, 100 miles east near the Mexican border, where the first of the season's new crop of grapes was coming in. It tells in word and picture something of what they saw and felt at Coachella, Indio and nearly 400 miles north at Delano.

Many things were new and strange.

In Canada, a picketline circles in front of plant gates. In California, it stretches for miles along the highway across from the fields where the pickers are at work; and in a single day, it may cover 100 miles or more as pickets (including wives and ehildren) in the kind of ramshackle cars and trucks John Steinbeck wrote about move along to points where the workers are within calling distance from the highway.

And sometimes they dart like rabbits, or like World War II soldiers along hedgerows in TV movies, down the unending rows of grapevines until they come to where the workers are, deep in the fields. There they squat and talk, desperately, earnestly, fast, ignoring the sweat which has covered them in their run, the white dust which has risen like a cloud into their lungs. They plead their case as one poor man to another. "Come out on strike. You need a union as much as I do. Don't steal our jobs from us."

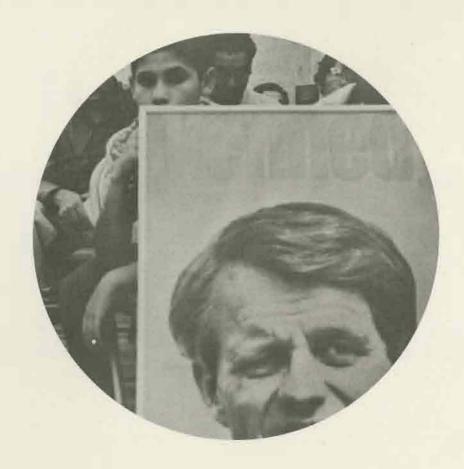
The rising dust along the runways is not unnoticed by the overseers. They know it means that United Farm Workers organizers have made another foray. They move in quickly to order the intruders out. Failure to comply on-the-double means a "citizen's arrest", a handy-andy tactic the growers have developed to a fine art.

In spite of recent liturgical changes, a Mass is something Canadians of the Catholic faith regard as familiar and routine. But in Delano, the Mass that was held in the evening at the union hall caught the Canadians by surprise.

First of all, the priest wore the (black Aztec eagle) emblem of the United Farm Workers on his Mass vestments—but prominently!

When he raised the chalice, he said "Lord, we ask You to bless this union-made wine!"

New and strange, also, and warm and human, was the



absolute dedication of the strikers to the principle of non-violence as laid down by Christ, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez. The spirit of each was omnipresent in the union hall and on the picket-line.

The Canadians got the 'once over' from the California State Police and what might be called the 'twice over' from the armed guards of the growers. Everything was proper. But when there was nobody there but Chavez and his United Farm Worker adherents, it wasn't always so. The State Police have finally come to a real hands-off policy, which

means they don't interfere with the guards or the strikers. To date, none of the guards is known to have adopted nonviolence as either principle or practice.

Strangest of all to the Canadians was the charismatic leadership of Cesar Chavez and the tremendous fervor the strikers feel for the greatest friend they ever had, the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

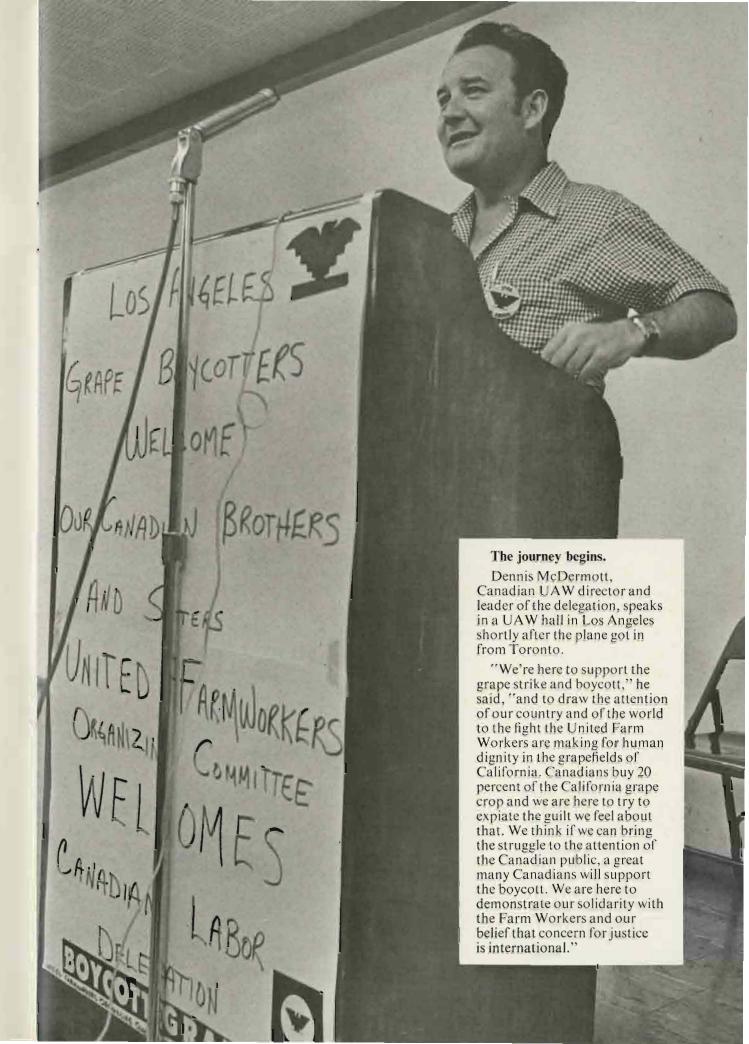
"When Cesar came to us (the strikers often start their sentences), he showed us the light. He convinced us it didn't have to be the way it had always been. Children of the fieldworkers could get an education. We did not have to go on being just 'hands'; we could become people."

The Canadians were in the Coachella Valley on the first anniversary of Robert Kennedy's assassination. A memorial service which told

them more than any words ever could have what Kennedy meant—and means—to the disadvantaged Mexican—Americans drew a tremendous crowd, the tone of which was deep reverence.

Robert Kennedy's picture is in the union hall and carried often on the picketline. It is in an honored place in many a worker's hovel. Signs on many a striker's shirt pocket say "Kennedy in '72."

Yes, to meet these people is to know that they cannot be beaten.



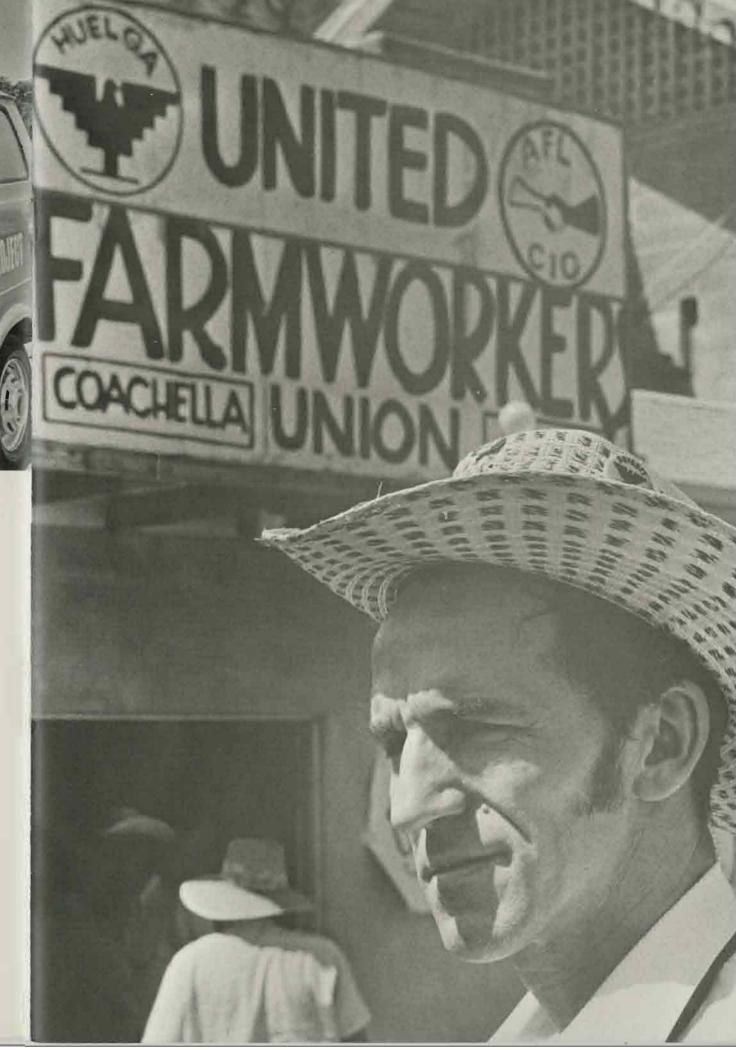


Next morning the "Watts Express" bus set out from Los Angeles to Coachella Valley, 150 miles to the east, where the 110 degree heat helps bring on the first grapes of the new season. The bus service, arranged for the Canadians by California UAW director Paul Schrade, is a story in itself. Watts, scene of the first 'burnin' in the United States, has been a great source of support for the strike and boycott of the United Farm Workers.

Rev. Arch McCurdy, national secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada, was one who visited the Coachella Valley the first day the Canadians were in California and felt its 110 degree heat. Here he tours the Farm Workers' hall at Coachella.

"Not the heat, the inhumanity," is what struck him.

Over the border from Coachella, in Mexicalli, 'contractors', using their own version of 'hiring hall' in a vicious combination of feudalism and capitalism, load peasant scabs into rickety trucks they have the nerve to call buses and drive them north to pick the grapes of wrath.

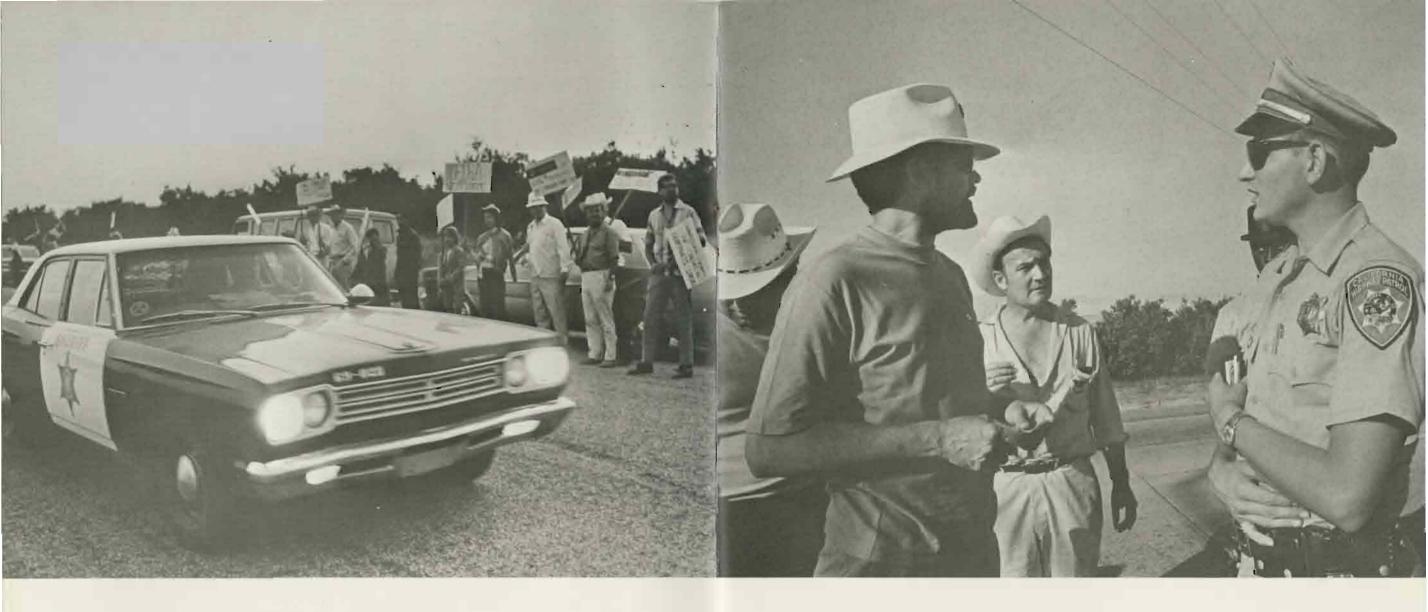






Dennis McDermott carried his message to the fields and to the families of the strikers. The fact that people would come all the way from Canada to show their support for the strike shook up not only the strikers but the growers. The latter went out of their way to try to convince the Canadians they were wrong. "It was like General Motors trying to tell the Auto Workers what's good for them," remarked the Canadian UAW leader. "Some of the growers are just paternalistic, but a lot of them

are just plain anti-social. Just like GM in 1937, all they have to do to put their money where their mouth is is to negotiate with the union of their workers' choice." The real issue in the strike, he said, is racial discrimination. "We have heard a lot about white vs. black discrimination. Well, this is white vs. brown, with the Mexican-Americans and the Filipino workers being the victims."



Long before daybreak, the picketline is at the grapefields. So are the patrol cars of the State Police and the sheriff's office.

Unlike a Canadian picketline, the strikers stand in a straight line on one side of the highway and shout to the workers in the fields to come and join them. They shout and chant as long as the workers are within hearing distance. When they have moved too far down the rows, the strikers sometimes—in ones, twos or threes—run down the rows after them, or more often set out down the highway for the next place where the workers are close enough to hear them. "Huelga! Huelga!", they cry.

The Canadians came in for their share of attention from the police and the sheriff's office as they joined the picketline and ran up the rows trying to speak to the workers in the grapefields. Drivers' licences were checked, names noted, reports made. But the Canadians prevailed. In the end, the dust and heat bothered them more than the police or the overseers.





The pathetic weakness of the picketline to really do anything to stop the scabbing in the nearly four-year-old grape strike, as the 'green cards' (Mexican labor in the U.S. on work permits) from below the border go hurtling down the highway in contractors' trucks on the way to the fields as day breaks, is mirrored by this picture of the pitiful little Canadian flag which this man has added to his Huelga banner.

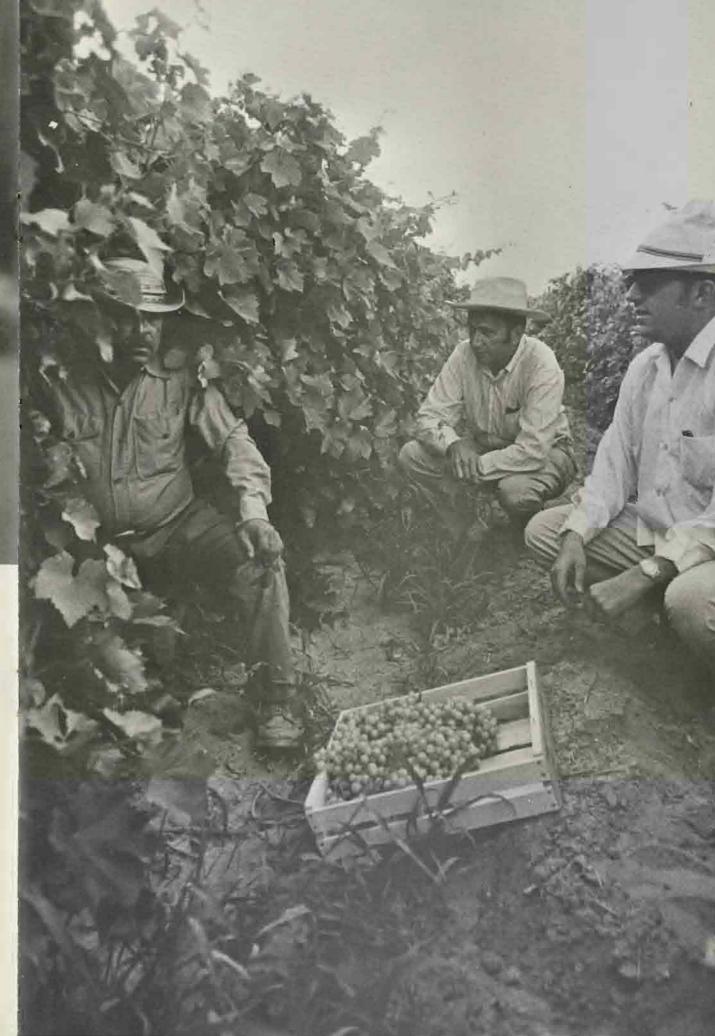
Yet it demonstrates that the Canadian visit was a morale-builder of no mean size. Behind the man stands his daughter, even more inoffensive than he, and down the road other pickets hold their signs to catch the headlights of the passing vehicles. Pathetic, yes, but

there. There today, tomorrow and yet another tomorrow. Each one is a Cesar Chavez, patient, indomitable, nonviolent.

The Canadians got an idea of the size of the problem the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee has when they visited one of the grape ranches, many of which stretch for more than 2,500 acres. Somewhere out there are the workers and the Canadians will join UFWOC organizers in searching them out and bringing the union story to them.



Furtive, scared, almost as though they were peasants in Vietnam instead of farmworkers in the richest country in the world, these workers listened to the appeal to join the strike and not be afraid of the growers. Described by the growers as "happy", they looked anything but. Those who would say anything at all said they wanted the union but needed their job and were afraid.







When a strike goes three or four years, it etches its story on the faces of men like Paul Velasco, United Farm Workers organizer. Pleased by the moral support of the Canadians, he is nevertheless ready for whatever long and hard road there may be ahead. So many faces the Canadians saw at Delano and elsewhere tell the same story.

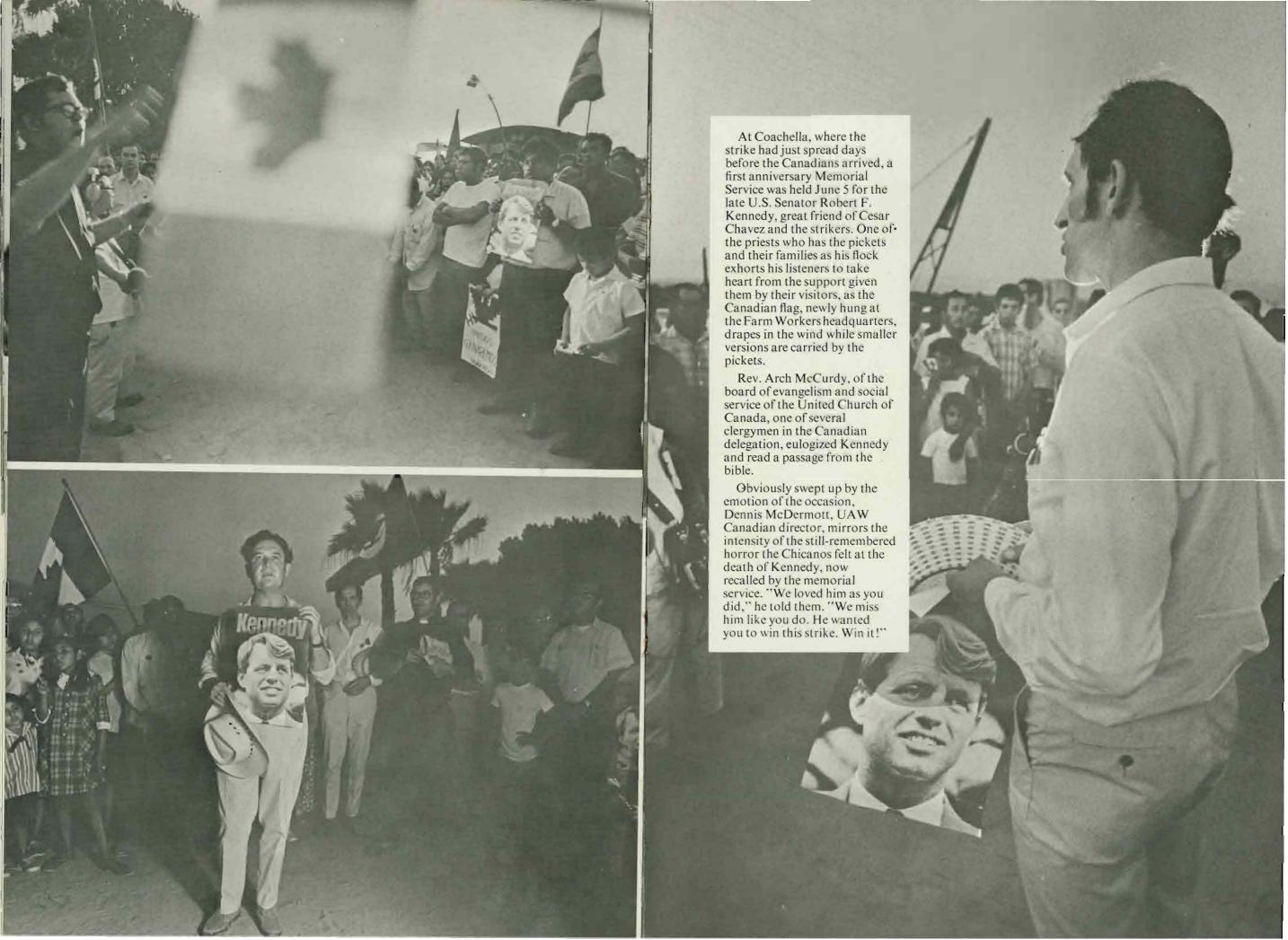
More than 95 percent of the Filipinos are not married and have no homes or property, says UFWOC organizer Pete Velasco, himself a Filipino.

Most of them are over 55 and were imported as cheap labor in the 1930's. "It is like they have been in the army 40 years—always living in boot camps." Here 14-year-old Wendy Collie, of Toronto, youngest of the Canadian delegation, says a few words of encouragement at Coachella.



Faces of Coachella

"A rich, spiritual experience"-no
wonder we called them "the beautiful people."





At Delano, with Cesar Chavez, we forged an unbreakable chain that will link Canadian support to the strike and boycott against California table grapes for as long as the strike and boycott last.



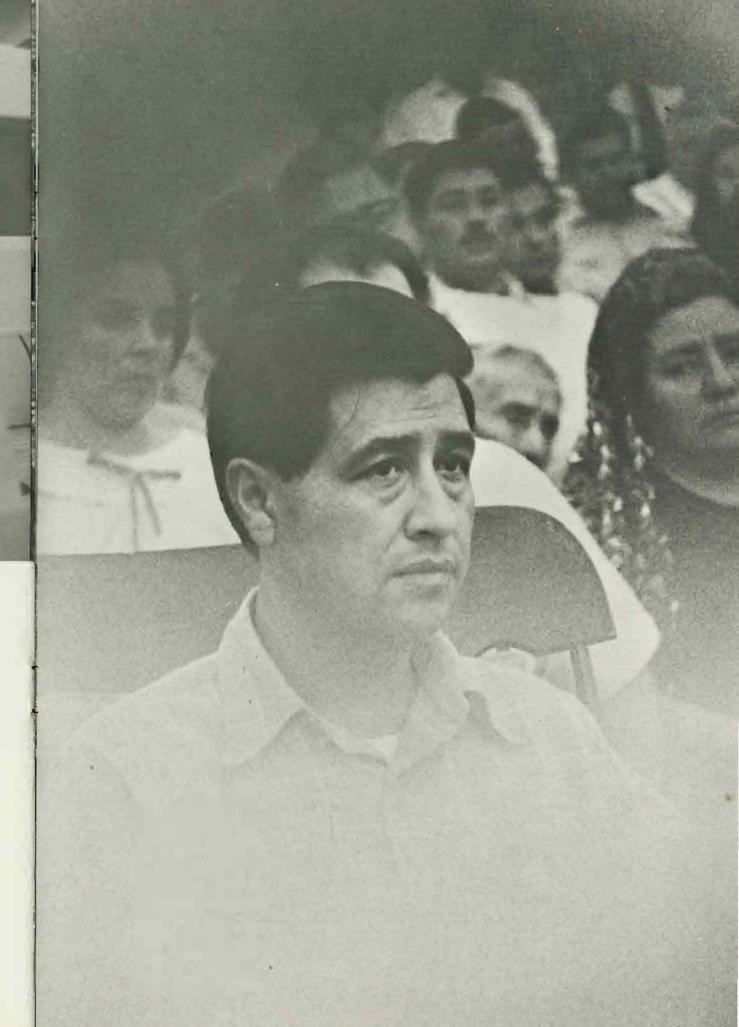
Cesar Chavez, embodiment of the strike and boycott, leads the grape-workers to their promised land of union security with the kind of charisma reserved to few men—Chandi, Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy. The only violence Chavez would countenance in this struggle has been against himself. When he found his resolve to remain non-violent

in the face of the insults, beatings, arrests and indignities which were being heaped on his followers, he went on a self-imposed hunger strike to strengthen his resolve, to purify his motives.

Only at the personal intervention of Kennedy after 25 days and nights of fasting did Chavez take food, and then almost too late, so late that even now, more than a year later, he is still far from being a well man. And in that year, Kennedy was taken from him. But he sits by the Huelga flag and waits, with the searing loneliness only men who must give leadership to great followings can know. Ghandi,

King and Kennedy. All—inevitably, it seems—slaughtered.

Is it for death that Chavez waits? Is it that which gives him his calmness? Or is it his sure knowledge that in 1969 agricultural workers can no longer be denied the right to have a union of their choice? To have visited the grapeworkers is to know that no point would be served the enemies of Chavez by his death, so alive is his spirit in his supporters.



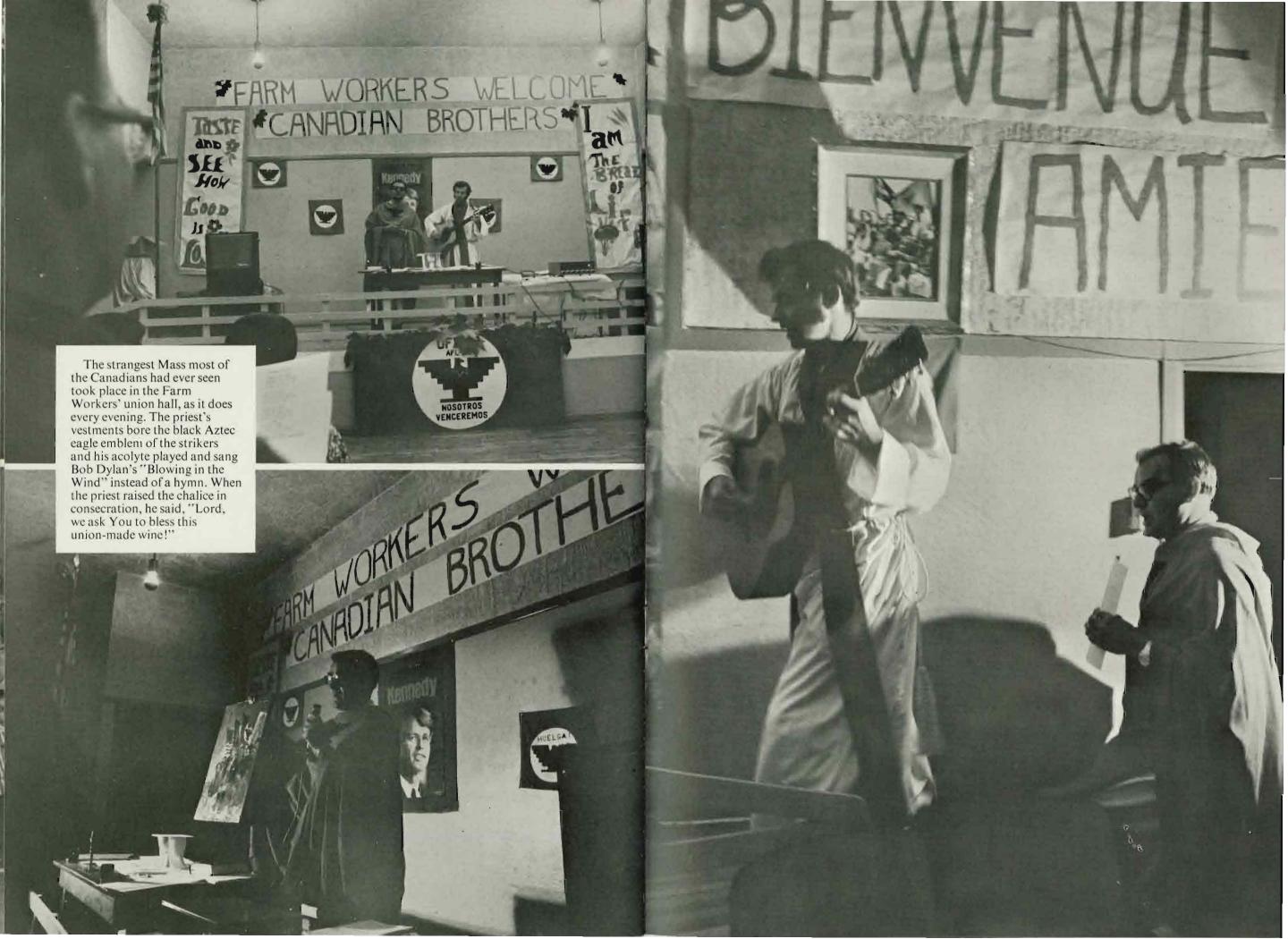


Cesar Chavez, leader of the United Farm Workers, takes delivery of the Canadian flag, sent as a symbol of international solidarity by the Canadian Labour Congress.

The 'Maple Leaf' was carried by the Canadians on the Farm Workers' picketlines, and into the fields where the unorganized pickers labored. It flies now over the strike headquarters and, Chavez promises, will be given a place of honor in the fiesta that will mark the success of the strike and boycott.

Officers of the Canadian UAW Council, representing the union's 120,000 members in Canada, conferred at length with Cesar Chavez. Here, left to right, are Marty Caputo, of Local 1067, Milton, Ted O'Connor, Local 222, Oshawa, James Maxwell, Local 676, St. Catharines, and Ed Bruce, president of Ford Local 707, Oakville, and president of the Canadian UAW Council. The UAW vowed to set up or join California Grape Boycott committees everywhere it has membership across Canada.





Statement by Dennis McDermott, leader of the Canadian delegation to California's grapefields:

"One of the great irrelevancies of this strike is the quality of the "pig pen"—otherwise known as the worker's camp. Adequate or inadequate, pig pens are for pigs and not for people. People live in homes and they quite properly demand the sanctity of a private home vs a pig pen or a prison compound be it unbelievably squalid or reasonably up to date as some were.

"The work camps in the organized Delano ranches are gone. In their place stand individual homes with gardens and with flowers. The former

migrant workers assured of job security through a union contract have driven down roots. they plant gardens and raise children in the fashion of people everywhere. Credit unions, cooperatives, community centres, self-help housing programs have replaced the company store and the company work camp in the organized section of Delano. The work camp is no substitute for the sanctity of a private home whether it is out of date or up to date, it is still very reminiscent of a military barracks or a prison compound.

"Improved working conditions in the Delano organized fields are readily apparent. Rest periods, seniority provisions, the cut and control of the murderous saw weed, all help to improve the workers lot.

"In the Schenley fields for example, the worker is no longer afraid. He walks with his head high and a spring in his step because he has obtained at least the beginnings of human dignity and an opportunity for human self-fulfilment.

"It must also be pointed out that we called the Delano grape growers to hear their side of the story and were curtly refused an audience.

"In an exchange of flag ceremonies, a pact was sworn between the grape strikers and the Canadians. The Canadian flag will fly high over the workers' strike headquarters in Delano. The flag of the California strikers will be flown in a selected location in Canada, and neither will be lowered until the strike is won and total social and economic justice assured for the brave and beautiful people of Delano and Coachella."



"It is absolutely imperative that everyone understand the unique aspects of this struggle. This is not a strike in the ordinary sense of the word. This is a deeply moving spiritual crusade for human liberty and social justice. It is the ancient biblical cry of release from bondage. The strike is not a means of cutting off production. The strike is a symbol—the picket line is a constantly moving communication and organizational vehicle but is not a means of preventing people from working in a struck field. And that is why it is immensely important that people everywhere understand and appreciate the purpose and the importance of the consumer boycott. Because the consumer boycott is the only effective. non-violent means of winning this struggle and that boycott belongs to us. It is our opportunity to participate. It is our way, our means, of making

a tangible contribution to the cause of human and social justice.

"It is vitally important that people everywhere understand that Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers is a movement deeply committed to the non-violent philosophies of Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King and born out of deep and abiding religious convictions. The picket lines of the grape strikers can be mutilated and crushed by the collective brute force of the growers with no resistance from the strikers. The most effective non-violent vehicle is the

boycott. Moreover it provides participation for those who care and for those who open their hearts to the grape strikers.

"This cause has no parallel anywhere. Certainly not in Ontario, Certainly not in Canada. And while we realize that workers everywhere have continuing problems, the grape strike is a basic cause that requires assistance and real help from people who are concerned and who we happen to believe constitute the majority of this land. Therefore we propose to extend the boycott nationally, internationally and with every means at our disposal because the boycott and only the boycott will be instrumental in removing the scar of ugliness from the otherwise beautiful valleys of Coachella and Delano.'

'The gut issue in this strike is the fundamental right of human dignity and human freedom.'

"The gut issue in this strike is the fundamental right of human dignity and human freedom. The right to manhood the right to emancipation. Overriding all of the side issues of economics, living and working conditions etc. is the confrontation of whitevs brown, no different than white vs black. The whole racial issue understood by almost everyone in this day and age. Cesar Chavez is a Mexican-American. The farm workers and the members of Chavez' union are predominantly Mexican-American and Filipino and that is the real stumbling blockthat is the real hang-up—that is the real gut issue.

"One has to understand and appreciate and perhaps must see

firsthand the white power structure of California which is known as agribusiness - not the small share croppers who hacked out their living from the dusty uninviting hot desert. The real owners are financial institutions such as the Bank of America, Southern Pacific Railroad and a number of others of equal size and proportion. The grape growers indicated that they would probably relent and deal with an orthodox union such as the Teamsters but they constantly refuse to deal with the brown people whom they obviously still regard as peons and

"Without indulging in selfcongratulation, it can be safely said that the Canadian delegation made a tremendous impact. We lived—we ate with -and we walked the hot dusty picket lines in Coachella with the strikers and shared the intense 110 and 115 degree heat.

"The Canadian flag was hoisted high in the vineyards of the grapes of wrath and in the work camps and in the incredible slum housing centres of one kind or another. As evidence of our effectiveness we witness the hastily contrived importing three Canadians hastily selected in an endeavour to offset the effectiveness of the Canadian Citizens' delegation. of organized management, the other a minister of the church who had, previous to his arrival in California, written a





number of letters to local news media, protesting the boycott and the other a journalist from the Catholic Register. These people arrived late Friday and were flown by private plane. courtesy of the growers, to some of the points which we visited presumably to rebutt our impressions of the situation by substituting the growers' line, and in fact to create the impression that they visited the same people, went to the same places, witnessed the same conditions, but their impressions would be totally different from ours.

"In recent articles the person from the Canadian Register is quoted as saying "I agree that these people need a union, but not this union" and that is the \$64 question because this union is brown and not white and this union is something more than a bread and butter agency. It demands total racial and social emancipation which, of course, it should. These people did not see it firsthand as we did. They were not on the picket lines in Coachella at 3:00 in the morning as we were. They were in the vineyards but they were talking to pre-selected people surrounded by the growers and, of course, the captive worker's story bound by the managerial influence was not the same as when he spoke freely. We talked to strikers and non strikers alike. They did not. It is also alleged that these three individuals were boycott supporters before their departure and this is absolutely untrue. MacDonald was never a boycott supporter and neither

was Herb Irwin. And, to my knowledge, neither was the person from the Canadian Register.

"At the growers' request we met with their spokesmen in Coachella to hear their side of the story. Nothing was new. We heard the same old arguments expressed by industry 30 years ago when the CIO dared to organize the millions of workers in the mass production industries of North America. We could not help but notice the diametric difference between the fear and hostility prevailing in Coachella and the comparative serenity of the organized ranches in Delano.

These Canadians made the journey to California to express their solidarity with the strike and boycott.

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