

THE FARM BUREAU & THE FARM WORKERS

For decades the Farm Bureau has been the nation's most powerful agribusiness organization. In Washington, D.C., Farm Bureau lobbyists claim to represent two million farm families. They have used their influence in favor of right wing causes, in support of more military expenditures and against the aspirations of migrant farm workers and other poor people. Over the past 35 years the Farm Bureau has opposed every serious legislative effort to help farm workers including:

- 1.) Full social security coverage for farm workers,
- 2.) Minimum wage and unemployment insurance for farm workers,
- 3.) Child labor laws for farm workers,
- 4.) Health programs and child care centers for farm workers,
- 5.) Collective bargaining legislation for farm workers,
- 6.) Workmen's Compensation & Disability Insurance for farm workers,
- 7.) Transportation & safety regulations for migrant farm workers.

The Farm Bureau has opposed civil rights advances, supported tax benefits for oil companies and other corporations and consistently tried to squeeze the already poverty stricken condition of welfare families.

Since the beginning of the farm workers movement in Delano the Farm Bureau (FB) has launched a full scale attack on Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. The FB has

1. Recruited hungry people from Mexico to break strikes;
2. Taxed its members to provide consultative services and huge amounts of money to help growers resist the farm workers self-determination efforts. (The FB is a major force behind the lettuce growers.)
3. Printed and distributed smear literature aimed at discrediting the leadership of the farm workers movement.
4. Pressed a heavily financed campaign to pass "anti-Chavez" legislation in every major agricultural state (such bills have been passed in Kansas, Idaho and Ariz.)
5. Is supporting a November ballot measure in California that will make the boycotts illegal and give Governor Ronald Reagan control over "free and fair elections".

The FB has just produced a film entitled "Road to Delano" which purports to be the "true story" of the farm workers of California (one of the featured "farm workers" is Mrs. Dolores Mendoza, the wife of a Delano labor contractor and the key person in a series of grower-financed company unions in California). In their legislative efforts the FB expresses its great concern for free elections and the "rights of the workers". The FB apparently wants the American public to believe that they are more concerned about the rights of farm workers than Cesar Chavez and the leaders of the United Farm Workers. This incredible claim is an insult to the intelligence of every American:

- a) For more than 35 years, since the Wagner Act was first passed in 1935, the FB was the ever-present, number one opponent of collective bargaining legislation for farm workers.
- b) The FB has consistently opposed all other legislation that would seriously protect farm workers.
- c) Cesar Chavez & the United Farm Workers (UFW) have always asked employers for elections prior to strikes & boycotts (e.g., in grapes & lettuce). The FB, with no regard for the rights of workers, has advised growers to ignore these election offers and then has supported the growers financially when grower intransigence has driven the workers to strikes and boycotts.
- d) The FB legislation is not being promoted to protect workers but to outlaw the boycott and makes strikes difficult or impossible. An additional proof of this is that many FB bills carefully eliminate from the "free elections" migrant and other seasonal farm workers-the workers who most need organizational strength and protection.