

Cesar E. Chavez

President

United Farm Workers
of America AFL-CIO
La Paz
Keene, California 93531

The California Farm Bureau Federation announced plans to raise up to \$2.5 million in an effort to defeat Cesar Chavez's farm labor initiative on the November ballot.

Los Angeles Times, June 27th, 1976

Dear Friend of the farm workers,

This is going to be a savage, all-out effort on the part of Agribusiness to defeat the Farm Labor Initiative and eventually bust our union.

After ten years of struggle, some bloody, full of incredible hardships and sacrifices, we finally won a Farm Labor Law in California giving farm workers, for the first time ever, the same right to choose their union with a secret ballot as guaranteed to other workers forty years ago by the National Labor Relations Act. We said all along, when the workers could vote in secret, without intimidation, they would choose their own Union, The United Farm Workers. And they did--overwhelmingly.

All over the state the workers demanded elections. Then the growers and the Teamsters tried every trick possible. So the Farm Labor Board not only had many more elections than anticipated, but a great many of them were contested. The Board ran out of money. Now the growers moved quickly. They put together a group of Republicans and rural Democratic legislators to block more appropriations for the Board.

What did we do? We went to the people. In one month we got an unprecedented 3/4 of a million people to sign a petition for an initiative. This Initiative would create a Farm Labor Board responsible directly to the people--and not subject to any lobbying pressures on the legislature.

That frightened the growers. So they pulled a few more strings and suddenly the legislature funded the Farm Labor Board. On the theory this would make it hard for us to win with our Initiative in November.

But we learned our lesson bitterly. Because the growers have tremendous financial resources and can always get some legislators to go along with them--what they give they can also take away.

WE MUST PASS THE FARM LABOR INITIATIVE - PROPOSITION 14--OR THE GROWERS WILL STILL BE ABLE TO PREVENT FARM WORKERS FROM PICKING THE UNION OF THEIR CHOICE.

But in this day of mass media, how can a small, poor Union compete with millions of dollars of advertising? The growers will flood television, radio and the newspapers with their lies--confusing the issues and confusing the voters.

We have a secret weapon. Our bodies. We will have thousands of our members, and tens of thousands of volunteers who will give us their bodies for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We will create Human Billboards, as we have done before, but now on a much larger scale. On freeway approaches, busy streets our Human Billboards will deliver our message.

We will also reach the people at Supermarkets, theatres, sports events, wherever there are large crowds.

However, although our spirits are high--we are realists too--or we couldn't have come this far. No matter how dedicated, no matter how hard they work, our people cannot reach all the voters in California. We must do some advertising to reach those we can't reach in person.

For this we need your help. Our goal is a modest \$750,000, nothing perhaps compared to their millions. But Agribusiness has to buy everything and everyone. Our people either work for free or the uniform United Farm Worker salary: \$5 a week plus room and board. And we don't throw away money on fancy things like entertainment, trips, limousines. We never forget we're working for poor people. Every cent goes to gas, food, mailings, clinics--not one cent is wasted.

We know the grower strategy. Flood the broadcast media a few weeks before the election with slick slogans and lies. They think that before we can raise the money for Broadcast time to expose their lies--the election will be over.

WRONG! They don't know our people. We got 3/4 of a million people in just one month to sign our petition. Even if we have to go back to every one of those people and ask for a dollar--we'll raise the money!

But we need some starter money. Urgently. Our funds have been exhausted winning the elections--so we desperately need some early money. A hundred dollars now would be worth a thousand dollars next month.