

FOOD AND JUSTICE

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**Marching Against
Grape Pesticides**



In the late 1960s and '70s farm workers boycotted fresh grapes because there was no law in California to protect their rights. The boycott was successful and resulted in a good farm labor law which was passed in 1975.

Ten years later we are boycotting California fresh grapes* again. This time it's because that law is not being enforced by self-proclaimed "law and order" Republican Gov. George Deukmejian. Once more, farm workers have no legal protections.

We discovered years ago that most growers have a pocketbook morality. They do not react to just arguments. They respond to their farm workers' grievances only when they see their sales threatened.

Farm workers are asking growers for a fair marketing agreement: we will not interfere with the sale of fresh grapes if they agree to free and fair elections without threats or firings of workers who support the UFW; good faith negotiations with farm workers as equals across the bargaining table, not as peons in the fields; and protection from pesticide poisoning for both farm workers and consumers.

These are not outrageous demands. They are, for the most part, protections already contained in existing state law...protections which are not enforced. Until these demands are met, we will boycott California fresh grapes*.

*except the 3% of grapes produced under UFW contract

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No protection "from the poisons which threaten our lives and the lives of our children."

'65 Delano Strike Observed
Farm Workers Protest Pesticide Peril

Farm labor leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta led thousands of farm workers marching to Delano on the weekend of Sept. 7-8 to commemorate a landmark grape strike and protest the pesticide poisoning of workers and consumers.

To dramatize the poison peril, marchers walked in silence and carried black flags emblazoned with human skulls.

Farm workers and supporters converged on Delano from the nearby farm communities of Richgrove, McFarland, and Earlimart for a rally that commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Great Delano Grape Strike, which began on Sept. 8, 1965. On that date grape workers walked out of Delano vineyards to begin a successful strike-boycott that lasted five years.

The call for protection against

pesticide poisoning is one of three major farm worker demands (see editorial, page 2) in the current United Farm Workers-sponsored boycott of California fresh grapes (except the 3% of grapes produced under UFW contract).

Chavez, whose address drew loud applause from a large crowd gathered in Delano's Memorial Park, said consumers can protect themselves and the estimated 300,000 U.S. farm workers poisoned each year by not buying grapes.

"We will go to the American people and tell them the truth," Chavez said. "Farm workers are being poisoned in the fields and your food is being poisoned. Join us in our struggle against law-breaking growers whose reckless use of pesticides threatens you and us!"



Cesar Chavez: "Corporate growers and chemical doesn't exist."

Excerpts from Chavez' Delano speech follow:

"On this day 20 years ago, long-suffering men and women in vineyards surrounding Delano struck out against 100 years of humiliation and oppression. We fired a mighty blow against the richest and most powerful industry in California.

"Our strike was not brutally crushed -- as dozens of other organizing efforts were crushed in past years -- because of the grape workers' secret weapon: the boycott! We dramatically transformed the simple act of refusing to buy grapes into a powerful statement against poverty and injustice.

"The grape boycott became a rallying cry for millions of Americans who never worked on a farm. During the 1960s and '70s, millions of people -- 17 million according to one nationwide poll -- rallied to the cause of the grape workers in Delano.

"We let the people know about the daily abuses grape workers suffered. And we also let people know about what pesticides did to farm workers and their families.

"A Mockery of the Law"

"That grape boycott forced growers to accept a law which was supposed to guarantee farm workers the same rights as workers in other industries: the right to vote with a secret ballot and the right to negotiate for our needs with growers as equals across the bargaining table and not as peons in the fields.

"But 20 years after the first grape struggle began and 10 years after the law was passed, growers -- through Gov. Deukmejian -- have made a mockery of the law. The law has stopped working!

"Our charges against growers who break the law are not investi-

producers act as if the pesticide menace

gated; there has been a massive cut in the money for enforcement of the law; state employees who try to enforce the law are penalized for being disloyal to the governor; farm workers can't get millions of dollars in back pay they are owed from growers convicted of violating the law; and Gov. Deukmejian's appointees settle cases -- where the courts have ordered growers to pay back workers -- for as little as 10¢ on the dollar.

"So what have farm workers really won 20 years after we began struggling in the grapes and 10 years after the law was enacted?

"Right here in Delano a baby was born with no arms and no legs because of the pesticides his mother was exposed to when she worked in the grapes.

"Last August 5 in San Diego County a young farm worker, the father of four young children, died in the field where he was working -- a

field sprayed only a few hours before with a highly dangerous pesticide.

"And every year thousands of farm workers in California who don't die right away from pesticides -- or whose children aren't born deformed -- suffer from pesticide poisoning: skin rashes, burning throats, eye irritation, difficulty in breathing, and other symptoms.

Grower Sins

"The growers often try to blame the union for their problems; they try to lay their sins on us -- sins for which the growers have only themselves to blame.

"The growers have only themselves to blame as they begin to reap the harvest of decades of abuse and damage they have brought upon the land: the pesticides, the soil fumigants, the fertilizers, the salt deposits from thoughtless irrigation -- the ravages of years of unrestrained poisoning

of our soil and water.

"These are the sins of growers, not farm workers. We didn't poison the land; we didn't contaminate the water; we didn't sow the seeds of tragedy which are poisoning farm workers and mutilating their children.

"There is something more important to the UFW than winning better wages and working conditions. And that is protecting farm workers -- and consumers -- from systematic poisoning through the reckless use of agricultural poisons.

"Gov. Deukmejian didn't just destroy the farm workers' hopes for a fairer share of what they produce with their labor. He also shattered their hopes for meaningful protection from the poisons which threaten our lives and the lives of our children.

"Corporate growers and chemical producers act as if the pesticide

menace doesn't exist. They glory in their complacency. Just last week agribusiness killed a bill in the State Assembly which would have simply required growers to place signs in their fields warning that they have been sprayed with dangerous pesticides. The growers argued that paying for the costs of the signs was more than they can afford. (The bill was later passed by the legislature but vetoed by Gov. Deukmejian at the request of wealthy agribusiness interests.)

"But the growers may soon pay more dearly for their sins than they ever imagined! Today the growers are like a punch-drunk old boxer who doesn't know he's past his prime. The times are changing. The political and social environment has changed. The chickens are coming home to roost and the time to account for past sins is approaching.



"Declaring war on the pesticide poisoning of farm workers, consumers, and the nation's food supply."



Dolores Huerta, UFW first vice-president (center, behind her children Ricardo and Maria), leads one of three marches to Delano on the 20th anniversary of the 1965 Grape Strike.

"Declaring War"

"On the 20th anniversary of the Delano Grape Strike, we are declaring war on the pesticide poisoning of farm workers, consumers, and the nation's food supply. Two decades ago the first grape boycott fought for human dignity and basic economic rights. Today the grape boycott fights to protect farm workers and their children from pesticide poisoning.

"We will achieve victory in this new battle by forging a noble nationwide alliance of farm workers and consumers. We will go to the American people and tell them the truth: 'Your food is being poisoned!'

"The message of the new grape boycott is that consumers can protect themselves by boycotting grapes. And that boycott will force growers to bargain in good faith for contracts which protect us from the fearful perils of pesticide.

"This war on pesticides will be a reality in deed as well as pronouncement. We have already mailed hundreds of thousands of letters to consumers in New York City asking them to boycott grapes because of the poison threat. Pesticides will now become the focus of grape boycott activities throughout North America.

"There is really no choice to be made. There is no decision to debate. There is nothing more important to us than our health and the lives of our children. And there is nothing more important that we share in common with the consumers of America than the safety of the nation's food supply which we both depend upon.

"With this weapon in our nonviolent arsenal -- and with the unbounded support our cause continues to enjoy from the American people -- we shall win in the end!"



Picture courtesy of Wide World Photos.

Some of the bodies of the more than 2,000 killed by a poisonous gas leak at the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal, India last year.

Union Carbide Pushes Aldicarb Use on Grapes

Union Carbide doesn't know when to quit. It's attempting to get the insecticide aldicarb – of watermelon poisoning notoriety last July -- approved for use on California grapes.

The international chemical corporation was responsible for the world's worst industrial accident late last year when more than 2,000 people died and thousands more were injured near its pesticide plant in Bhopal, India.

A similar leak of a poisonous gas earlier this year threatened the lives of thousands of residents in Institute, West Virginia, who live near a Union Carbide chemical plant there.

Union Carbide's most toxic insecticide, aldicarb, has contaminated well water from Smith River, California to Long Island, New York.

The same insecticide, sold under the brand name Timek, was responsible for poisoning hundreds of consumers in the western U.S. and Canada last July when they ate aldicarb-contaminated watermelons.

Now Union Carbide has asked California for permission to expand the use of aldicarb to grapes.

"Just what grape workers and consumers need -- more pesticides on grapes," said Dr. Marion Moses, director of the Farm Workers' California clinics and a leading specialist on environmental disease.

Presently aldicarb is registered for use on potatoes, beets, beans, and cotton -- but not on grapes and watermelons. And for good reason.

Grapes, like watermelons, are

eaten raw. Aldicarb is made only in granules which are incorporated into the soil and then taken up by the roots and distributed through the plant to kill attacking insects. That explains why, as one state official stated, the pesticide remains in the fruit and why raw fruit is more likely to poison consumers than produce that is processed or cooked before it is placed on the dinner table.

Lawrie Mott, biochemist at the San Francisco office of the Natural Resources Defense Council, recently wrote: "Consumers have to recognize that the price they pay for cosmetically perfect fruits and vegetables is liberal doses of pesticide. Why did the watermelon growers use aldicarb? Perhaps only because it makes melons bigger and juicier?"

Union Carbide, in asking for per-

mission to sell aldicarb to California grape growers, is apparently banking on the belief that they are just as eager as watermelon producers to use any insecticide that will make their grapes bigger and juicier.

That effort shows little apparent concern for consumers. Kern County melon growers showed the same insensitivity after state officials halted watermelon sales earlier this year. "We've got 45 million potential customers for our crops," said melon grower-shipper Albert Icardo. "About 200 people got sick. What percentage is that?"

Another grower talking with Icardo expressed similar callousness: "It (aldicarb) is not deadly. If it had killed somebody, of course you'd have to shut it down. But nobody died."

So far. 



Farm workers march past vineyards and drying grapes to protest lack of protection from pesticides.



DEUKMEJIAN APPOINTEE HITS FARM BOARD IMPARTIALITY

"Can any fair-minded person... honestly believe that the UFW has a snowball's chance in hell of getting a fair hearing before the ALRB?"

Recent personal attacks on Cesar Chavez and lobbying against the grape boycott have destroyed even the appearance of impartiality by David Stirling, Gov. Deukmejian's appointee as general counsel of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board.

In September, Stirling bitterly denounced Chavez for repeating the UFW's longstanding accusation that growers use dangerous pesticides on grapes. Commenting on Stirling's attack, *Los Angeles Times* labor writer Harry Bernstein wrote:

"This time, Stirling is not responding to an attack on the fairness or competency of his administration of the farm labor law. By denouncing Chavez's complaints about the dangers

of pesticide contamination as 'utterly contemptible...vicious...(and) callously distorted,' Stirling may have made his administration of the farm labor law more difficult than ever."

Jerome Waldie, a member of the five-person ALRB, said Stirling has now "poisoned his capacity to fairly judge charges brought to him by the union on behalf of workers." Waldie said Stirling's denunciation of Chavez on an issue unrelated to the ALRB made "ludicrous" the claim that he is simply obeying Gov. Deukmejian's command to make the board more balanced.

On October 3, Stirling travelled to Washington, D.C. at taxpayer expense to lobby United Methodist Church officials against endorsing the new grape boycott.

Methodist Bishop Leontine Kelly, who witnessed Stirling's Washington activities, said: "How can (Stirling) expect anyone to believe he is a neutral and objective prosecutor of the law after this exhibition of bias and lack of professional integrity?"

The *Times* reported that "the fury of (Stirling's) latest attacks on the union and Chavez will surely raise new questions about the credibility of Stirling's role as a neutral party in disputes between the union and growers."

An editorial in *The Watsonville Register Pajaronian* put it more bluntly: "Can any fair-minded person read (Stirling's attack on Chavez) and honestly believe that the UFW has a snowball's chance in hell of getting a fair hearing before the ALRB?"

"No. We fear that by his unpropitious shooting from the hip, Mr. Stirling has damaged, perhaps beyond repair, his credibility, and has raised serious doubts about whether his tenure should continue."

"Free and Fair" Elections

A sordid saga at the M. Caratan Inc. grape ranch near Delano is a good example of why free and fair elections are a priority of the new fresh grape boycott (see editorial, page 2).

In the 1970s, the UFW won an election at Caratan vineyards. A grower-sponsored drive to decertify or remove the UFW was later turned back.

Caratan faced certain defeat at another decertification election set for June 15, 1979.

Toward the end of the 5-7 a.m. voting period that morning Luis Caratan, company vice-president, sent company agents "Tattoo" Torrez and "Toothless" Caraballo (with a pistol in his waistband) by car to the voting site while Fermin Martinez, a Caratan foreman, transported a rowdy crew of 30 to 40 pro-company workers by bus.

At the voting site, some of the crew milled around the ballot box, pushing, shoving and shaking their fists at the six state ALRB agents and demanding that the ballots be counted immediately. Suddenly one worker threw several quick punches at a board agent guarding the ballot box. Another agent grabbed the box and was smashed in the throat. The ballot-box table was overturned and the voting booths knocked over.

A worker hit one of the agents over the head with a chair while two other agents seized the ballot box and bent over it on the floor to keep it from being stolen. Other Caratan supporters attacked them, one with a shock absorber and another with a four-foot-long metal pipe.

As the agents tried to defend themselves, a pro-company worker grabbed the ballot box and passed the

ballots out to the crew. At that point, Foreman Martinez yelled, "Okay, boys, you did it -- let's go!"

With that, the pro-company workers ran to the bus, yelling and shouting. Martinez drove off, his clenched fist raised in triumph. With him went some of the ballots, while "Tattoo" Torres and "Toothless" Caraballo drove away with the rest. The ballots were never seen again.

An ALRB judge ruled in 1980 that Caratan was responsible for both the decertification drive and the balloting violence. Caratan's appeals of the guilty verdict were finally rejected by the State Supreme Court in 1984. But workers at Caratan still have no contract. Illegally fired workers have not been reinstated and no repayment of lost wages has been made. 



NEW POLL GOOD NEWS FOR GRAPE BOYCOTT

Results of Mervyn Field's respected California Poll reveal that 42% of the public support the new grape boycott, 40% are opposed, and 18% have no opinion.

"Boycotts work when they enjoy 5% support; they're devastating at 10%," said Arturo Rodriguez, general manager of the grape boycott.

The poll also showed that Cesar Chavez is recognized by 85% of the people; 52% have a favorable opinion

of him compared to 33% unfavorable. Even 33% of Republicans polled have a favorable opinion of the UFW president.

Other signs of success are decreases in the price of grapes. Grapes at 39¢ a pound are common. "Specials" in some areas are as low as 29¢ and 19¢ a pound. The California Table Grape Commission acknowledged that cold storage facilities are bulging with unsold grapes.



The UFW's Arturo Rodriguez reports many more endorsements for the grape boycott since the first list of endorsers was last published.

A. Philip Randolph Institute
AFSCME, Local 971, Boulder, Montana
Ahavat Shalom
American Postal Workers Union,
Washington, DC
Arlington Street Church, Social Action
Committee, Boston
Assemblyman Richard Alatorre, Northeast
Los Angeles
Austin City Council
Berkeley Mayor Eugene "Gus" Newport
and the Berkeley City Council
Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and the
Chicago City Council
Brothers for Christian Community, Maryland
Catholic Worker Community, Los Angeles
Central Labor Council, Durham,
North Carolina
Church Women United, Illinois
Coalition for Economic Survival
Durham, North Carolina Voters Alliance
Rep. Don Edwards, California
Flint, Michigan Mayor James A. Sharp, Jr.
and City Council
GAIU, Local 3B, San Francisco
Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Center City
Region, Archdiocese of Detroit
Bishop Joseph Imesch, Diocese of Joliet,
Illinois
IUE (International), Washington, DC
IUE, Local 981, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Jewish Community Relations Council, Boston

Lansing, Michigan Mayor Terry McKane
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
M.E.C.H.A. Sacramento State University
Migrant Ministry Committee, North Carolina
Council of Churches
National Organization of Women, Durham,
North Carolina
Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, Local 1-5,
Martinez, California
Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, Local
1-895, Oxnard, California
Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, Catholic Diocese
of Las Cruces, New Mexico
Bishop Placido Rodriguez, CMF, Catholic
Archdiocese of Chicago
Rural Advancement Fund/National
Sharecroppers Fund
San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros
Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt and
Santa Cruz City Council
Sisters of Charity, Executive Council, New York
Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton and Toronto
City Council
Travis County (Texas) Commissioners
Triangle Friends of the Farm Workers,
North Carolina
War Resisters League, Southeast Region
Rep. Henry Waxman, California
Wisconsin Student Association, Madison
Women's International League for Peace
and Freedom, Durham



Dr. Marion Moses

Parathion & Phosdrin

Dr. Marion Moses' "Deadly Dozen" Pesticide Series

Some years ago, a farm worker in Fresno county picking peaches sprayed with parathion six weeks earlier was hospitalized with pesticide poisoning and died seven days later. Ninety-three other workers in the same crew became seriously ill in what was one of the biggest and most severe poisonings of field harvesters in California.

Parathion, the pesticide responsible for that worker's death, is a member of a highly toxic class of compounds called organophosphates. Their insecticidal properties were discovered by German scientists doing research on nerve gas during World War II.

Parathion and another highly toxic organophosphate, Phosdrin, have together been responsible for the great majority of deaths and serious poisonings from pesticides among farm workers in California.

The organophosphates kill insects and humans by the same mechanism. They inhibit an enzyme called cholinesterase, which is very important for proper functioning of the nervous system. They are readily and rapidly absorbed through the skin and for this reason are among the most dangerous chemicals to which farm workers are exposed.

While many deaths and serious poisonings have occurred among applicators, workers whose only contact with these pesticides is from residues on crops they are picking are also at high risk of poisoning. There have been approximately 1,000 reported cases of reentry or residue illness among field workers in California from 1949 to 1983. About 75% were due to parathion or Phosdrin.

Parathion is especially dangerous since it breaks down to a compound that is even more toxic: paraoxon. Paraoxon can be formed on leaf surfaces under certain atmospheric conditions. Parathion and paraoxon are also very unpredictable in their decay and degradation, especially if used with other pesticides. For this reason, workers have continued to be poisoned with this pesticide even when the legal reentry time has been observed.

Phosdrin can be rapidly fatal and workers who suffer reentry poisoning from this chemical become ill within 20 minutes to an hour after exposure to its residues on crops.

On October 10, 1985 a crew of 45 lettuce harvesters in Monterey County were poisoned with Phosdrin that had drifted from almost a mile away where a broccoli field had been sprayed with the deadly pesticide. The workers suffered nausea, vomiting, headaches, and weakness, and were taken to a local hospital emergency room.



Growers should place signs in their fields warning that they have been sprayed with dangerous pesticides.

Most pesticide reentry poisoning, however, goes unrecognized and unreported. Doctors do not know or refuse to consider that a farm worker's illness might be pesticide related. Workers deny illness because they need to work or because they justifiably fear they will lose their jobs if they complain or ask for medical care. And we do not know what the long-term effects of chronic low-level poisoning are in the workers.

It has been adequately demonstrated that parathion and Phosdrin are too poisonous to be used safely in agriculture. There is no justifiable reason to keep these two members of the "Deadly Dozen" in use when they put workers under such risk of acute illness, death, or possible chronic long-term effects on their health. Safer alternatives are available for both chemicals.

Farm Worker Deaths

A 16-year-old boy worked for a day applying Phosdrin to 12 acres of strawberries. He became nauseated, vomited, and had difficulty breathing.

He died the next morning despite medical care. The employer's permit to use Phosdrin had expired and twice the amount of the pesticide specified on the label was in the container.

A 31-year-old farm worker was found dead in a field. He had mixed parathion spray that morning and had applied it most of the day. He was working alone, and about mid-afternoon was found stretched over his rig still wearing his respirator.

A 28-year-old worker was working alone at night spraying parathion and Phosdrin. He poured the Phosdrin manually. According to evidence found later, he drove a quarter of a mile, tumbled out of the truck, and landed in a ditch. He was found dead by his employer the next morning.

A 28-year-old farm worker sprayed peach trees with parathion all day. The next day he sprayed for three and one-half hours and then became acutely ill and was hospitalized with parathion poisoning. He died seven days later of complicating bronchopneumonia.



HOPING...

Farm worker children don't know anything about labor laws, governors, growers, intimidation, unfair elections -- or a father fired for wanting the UFW to help him protect them.

But like all children, they know what to hope for: nice clothes to dress up in, something good to eat when they are hungry, a house with beds and a toilet, and a lot of neighbor kids to play with.

Here's how you can help them realize their hopes:

- Don't buy or eat California fresh grapes* unless they are clearly labeled with the UFW eagle.
- Urge your organization to endorse the boycott and send the UFW a copy of the endorsement.
- Send a mailing list of the members of your organization. We want to contact the millions of good people who have supported our boycotts in the past.

*except the 3% of grapes produced under UFW contract

Please tear off and return to:

Cesar Chavez, La Paz, CA 93570

Dear Cesar Chavez:

- I pledge to boycott California fresh grapes that do not carry the eagle emblem.
- Enclosed is a copy of my group's endorsement of the fresh grape boycott.
- Enclosed are the addresses of members of groups who I know will join the fresh grape boycott if they are contacted.

Sincerely,

Name _____
(please print)

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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