Tommy Struggles to Live
Pesticide drift — it's uncontrollable. Nothing better symbolizes how out of control the pesticide plague is these days: chemical companies producing more and more pesticides; laboratories testing them carelessly; growers flooding their fields with them; regulatory agencies not enforcing even weak regulations; thousands of farm workers annually being poisoned and in many cases killed by them; their children dying of cancer and born with severe birth defects; townspeople drinking water contaminated by them; and consumers eating residues of them still on produce at the market.

"Pesticide drift" is the term used to describe what happens after crop-dusting airplanes and helicopters spray pesticides on crops. Even on windless days, even if pilots are careful, much of the pesticide spray drifts away from targeted fields. Add to that a careless pilot or a slight wind, and it is easy to see why pesticides can drift many miles and why only an estimated 15% of the sprays reach their target.

The other 85% engulfs school buses, falls on workers in adjacent fields, drifts down on grapes and other crops they were never authorized for, and victimizes adults and children in nearby towns.

Like pesticide drift, the pesticide plague is out of control. Since those who produce, test, authorize, use, and regulate pesticides won’t exercise control, we who are endangered by them — farm workers, townspeople, and consumers — must rise up and demand that our health and safety be considered more important than the profits of the agribusiness-chemical industry.

Tragedy Strikes Twice

I n these pages we have often related the responses of parents who discover their child has been exposed to poisonous pesticides and subsequently contracted cancer. The anguish of these parents is more than any family should have to bear.

This is what makes Jesse and Delphina Lopez' story so tragic. For this family has not only suffered the loss of a son, Gilbert, to cancer, but are now reliving the horror with their grandson, Tommy.

The Lopezes live in Fowler, the most recent California town to be declared a cancer cluster. In the November issue of Food and Justice, a story appeared about Jennifer Shepherd, a Fowler child who has leukemia. The Shepherds believe Fowler's water is contaminated with pesticides and fertilizers.

"Gilbert was a healthy child," Delphina said. "Then he became ill, and he had surgery in May 1983 to remove a brain tumor. The doctors couldn't remove it, and they said he should have chemotherapy."

Gilbert died before the treatments could begin. Tommy and his parents (Jesse Jr. and Susan) recently moved from Fowler to Fresno. Tommy was diagnosed with neuroblastoma last year when doctors found tumors on his head, neck, and kidneys. "There were more tumors," Susan said. "There were tumors all over his body."

Tommy undergoes chemotherapy every three weeks. Although the treatments have successfully eliminated much of the disease, the kidney tumor persists.

"My husband said the town water caused [Tommy's cancer]," Susan said. Tommy's grandfather, Jesse, is a retired farm worker who worked for many years in the Fowler area. He said, "Pesticides often end up in puddles on the ground. The ground is sandy, and the chemicals penetrate down."

The Lopez family has already lost one child to cancer. Now they are frightened they may lose another.

Delphina said, "We pray, and we try to think positive thoughts. We try to believe Tommy's going to make it."

Delphina Lopez, a Fowler resident, has already lost a son, and now she worries about her grandson, Tommy.
At a labor dinner in St. Paul, Cesar Chavez talks about the grape boycott. Next to Chavez are Dan Gustafson and Bernard Brommer, president and secretary-treasurer of the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

Chavez on the Boycott Road: A Tune-Up and Long Trip

It was only a little more than a year ago that farm labor leader Cesar Chavez hopped in a used ’79 Olds 88 and headed out on a month-long, 4,000 mile, 17-city, coast-to-coast boycott tour of Canada.

It was a grueling but productive trip. From one end of that magnificent country to the other, Canadian hospitality and compassion for the farm worker cause produced massive support for the table grape boycott.

The Canadian highways were just as good to the Olds. Good enough so that Chavez could once again tune up the same ’79 Olds 88 and set out on an even longer tour. This time the trip would take six weeks, from the middle of November until the day before Christmas, and the long boycott road would wind its way up, down, and through the mountains, valleys, and deserts and in and out of the major cities of 10 western states: Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Minnesota Tune-Up

But first there was another kind of tune-up. Just before the start of the tour of the western states, Chavez spent a week in Minnesota overcoming blizzards and subzero weather in Duluth to leaflet at a supermarket, meet with unionists at a labor dinner, and address a capacity audience at the College of St. Scholastica. (This was followed by a brief visit to Thunder Bay, Ontario. See page 10.)

In Minneapolis, Chavez spoke at the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, and in St. Paul addressed a labor dinner attended by Governor Rudy Perpich, Mayor George Latimer, AFL-CIO President Dan Gustafson, and Minneapolis Central Labor Council President John R. Lindahl. His Twin City appearance was followed by a visit to St. Cloud and a speech at the nearby College of St. Benedict.

“The warmth of the response of the people in Minnesota,” Chavez said, “more than made up for the blizzard and frigid temperatures we experienced. They are upset that we have to be back on another grape boycott — especially upset over how pesticides are poisoning farm workers and their own food supply.”

Nevada

After returning to UFW headquarters in California to catch his breath for a whole day, Chavez started right out on the six-week tour of the western states, accompanied by driver Mike Ybarra and secretary Cecilia Ruiz. The first stop was Las Vegas, where a jam-packed schedule definitely left no time for stage shows or one-armed bandits. Instead, Chavez held a press conference, attended fundraisers at the Charlie Waterman residence and St. Christopher’s Church, participated in a community media meeting at the Culinary Workers Union Hall, spoke at a labor luncheon at the Riviera Hotel, and then addressed students and faculty at the University of Nevada.

Utah

The first major event in the following visit to Salt Lake City was a press conference at which Ed Mayne, president of the 65,000-member Utah AFL-CIO, and political leaders and heads of community organizations proclaimed their support of the boycott.

In addition, Chavez held a series of interviews with the local media, attended receptions and fundraisers at the Elbert After returning to UFW headquarters residence and Our Lady of Guadalupe in California to catch his breath for a whole day, Chavez started right out on the six-week tour of the western states, accompanied by driver Mike Ybarra and secretary Cecilia Ruiz. The first stop was Las Vegas, where a jam-packed schedule definitely left no time for stage shows or one-armed bandits. Instead, Chavez held a press conference, attended fundraisers at the Charlie Waterman residence and St. Christopher's Church, participated in a community media meeting at the Culinary Workers Union Hall, spoke at a labor luncheon at the Riviera Hotel, and then addressed students and faculty at the University of Nevada.

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Chavez' next stop was Idaho, where As Food and Justice went to press for he participated in several events in Boise and Caldwell. In Boise, his visit started with a labor breakfast at the Owyhee Plaza Hotel, where he was welcomed by Jim Kerns, president of Idaho State AFL-CIO, and other state labor leaders. After a mid-morning press conference, Chavez was the guest speaker at a meeting of small farmers belonging to the Idaho Rural Council.

In Caldwell, at a meeting with farm workers coordinated by Humberto I. Fuentes and the Idaho Migrant Council, Chavez not only promoted the grape boycott but also answered many questions about local migrant problems and the new immigration law. The same night, he presented "The Wrath of Grapes" film and spoke at the College of Idaho.

"The Best Gift"

As Food and Justice went to press for an early December deadline, Chavez left Idaho and set out for Eugene and Portland in Oregon and the rest of his trip to Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.

At a reception after the College of Idaho engagement, a faculty member asked Chavez if he'd make it home in time to open his Christmas gifts. "Yes, by a day," he said. "But the truth is, I've been opening Christmas gifts ever since we started this trip. Every time people tell me they won't buy table grapes or give us money to keep the boycott going, that's the best Christmas gift I could hope for."

Bishop William K. Weigand of the Diocese of Salt Lake City shows his support of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers.

Coretta Scott King, Mayor Young Endorse Boycott; UFW to Receive 1987 King Award

The endorsements of the UFW table grape boycott by Coretta Scott King and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young were impressive signs of support found by UFW First Vice-President Dolores Huerta during a four-day visit to Georgia in late October.

"I am delighted with your visit and am pleased to give you our endorsement of your boycott," Huerta was told by King, president of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

Mayor Andrew Young also announced his boycott support. "Until corporate and other officials begin acting responsibly about the rights of farm workers and the use of pesticides," he said, "we've got to stop eating grapes."

King Center Award to UFW

In early November, Coretta Scott King announced that the UFW had been named to receive the Center's "1987 Labor Responsibility Award" for championing the rights of workers against "some of the most powerful forces in our nation" and for continuing to "embrace the nonviolent tradition and spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr."

UFW President Cesar Chavez will accept the award at a ceremony in Atlanta on January 16. The event is part of a weeklong celebration leading up to the national holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 19.
Santa Claus (George Altomare of the American Federation of Teachers) joins a picket line in front of an A&P store in New York City. Behind Santa are Marc Rubin, a UFW supporter (near left), and Dave Dyson, union label director at the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (far left).

“La Clausa” in the Big Apple:
Merry Christmas — Boycott Grapes!

What farm labor leader Cesar Chavez started in New York at the end of October, Santa Claus continued in December.

With a big rally in front of a Greenwich Village A&P, Chavez launched a boycott against the huge A&P supermarket chain for refusing to take contaminated California table grapes off its shelves. And before Christmas, shoppers in front of targeted A&P stores were surprised to hear Santa Claus shouting “Boycott A&P” and “Boycott Poison Grapes” between “Ho Ho Ho” and “Merry Christmas!”

(Santa Claus was expertly disguised as George Altomare of American Federation of Teachers, reported Arturo Rodriguez, director of the Mid-Atlantic Boycott office in New York.)

A less flamboyant but equally generous Santa was Jan Pierce, international vice-president of the Communication Workers of America. Along with the traditional holiday greetings, Pierce sent each of the 150 CWA locals a video cassette of the boycott film, “The Wrath of Grapes.”

Rodriguez said the film effectively informs people why the UFW is boycotting grapes again: “Viewers are stunned when they actually see what growers are doing to farm workers — and how the excessive use of pesticides is poisoning the nation’s food supply.”

More than 200 New York groups have scheduled the film for showing in the near future. “That, plus Pierce’s gifts to his 150 CWA locals, was a wonderful holiday gift for farm workers, too,” Rodriguez said.

Jan Pierce, international vice-president of the Communication Workers of America.

Massachusetts Governor, Labor Convention Boost Boycott in New England

Two recent events in Massachusetts gave good impetus to the UFW grape boycott, reported Roberto de la Cruz, New England boycott director. They were the Massachusetts State AFL-CIO Labor Council Convention in Boston and a visit of UFW President Cesar Chavez to Harvard University in Cambridge.

During the four-day AFL-CIO convention, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, one of the first governors to endorse the grape boycott, renewed his boycott support during his address. Then he added in flawless Spanish: “Es un placer poder ayudarles.”

De la Cruz on visits to all the major central labor councils to show the boycott film, “The Wrath of Grapes,” and promote the boycott.

A heartwarming moment during the convention occurred when Osborn presented then-Congressional candidate Joseph Kennedy, son of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, with a “Viva Kennedy” button the UFW produced for Sen. Kennedy during his presidential campaign in 1968.

Chavez at Harvard

Shortly after the convention, Chavez visited Harvard University to address a pesticide forum sponsored by the Harvard Public School of Health. He showed the film to the participants and spoke on the dangers of pesticide abuse.

“The response was terrific,” De la Cruz said. “Most people signed boycott pledge cards, and many of them asked to have the film scheduled for more classes and groups.”

Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis with Boycott Director Roberto de la Cruz (left) and Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Arthur Osborn (right). Both Dukakis and Osborn have endorsed the grape boycott.
Chavez Leads Picketers in Thunder Bay; New Boycott Group in Sault Ste. Marie

November 8 was a bitterly cold day in Thunder Bay, but it didn't prevent a large contingent of labor, religious, political, and peace activists from joining farm labor leader Cesar Chavez on a grape boycott picket line during his brief visit.

Braving icy, subzero winds, the picketers kept warm with a brisk marching pace and enthusiastic chants of "Boycott Grapes!" and "Boycott Pesticides!"

Among those who marched with Chavez were Ontario Federation of Labour Vice-President Frank Mazur of the Grain Handlers Union; Thunder Bay Labour Council President Cec Makowski; New Democratic Party (NDP) Federal Members of Parliament Ian Angus, Ernie Epp, and John Terry; and Ontario NDP Member of Provincial Parliament Jim Foulds.

After the picket line, the supporters were deeply moved by a presentation of the film, "The Wrath of Grapes." Later, Chavez met with Bishop John Omara, who also viewed the film and renewed his pledge of support for the boycott.

David Martinez, boycott director in Ontario, reported excellent media publicity for the boycott during Chavez' visit. "And we got a special plug," he said, "when Sharon, Lois, and Bram — Canada's top performers of children's songs — promoted the boycott during a concert in Thunder Bay the same day."

Sault Ste. Marie Committee

Recently Martinez met with a group of activists in Sault Ste. Marie to help them set up a UFW support committee. Terry and Mary Jean Ross hosted the group to see the film and make plans. Dan Sweezy will head this newest Canadian UFW support group.

UFW Mourns Loss of Long-Time Friend

Farm workers are among the thousands of people in Michigan and the nation who are mourning the sudden death of Sam Fishman, 62, president of the Michigan State AFL-CIO, who suffered a fatal heart attack on November 27.

Fishman, a leader in the United Auto Workers before becoming president of the Michigan AFL-CIO, has always had farm workers close to his heart, manifesting a tradition begun with Walter Reuther and continued by succeeding UAW presidents, including current UAW President Owen Bieber. Fishman wholeheartedly believed in the rightness and effectiveness of the boycott as a powerful nonviolent tool for farm workers to gain their rights.

UFW President Cesar Chavez, learning of Fishman's death while in the midst of a boycott tour of the western states, said, "Sam Fishman was a faithful friend of farm workers, a friend we could go back to time after time for help. He never let us down. We're really going to miss him."

"It was only a little more than a year ago," said Arturo Mendoza, director of the Michigan-Ohio Boycott, "that Fishman invited Cesar Chavez to speak to the executive council of the Michigan State AFL-CIO and was instrumental in getting a unanimous endorsement of the grape boycott."

Private Jewish burial services for Fishman's family were held in Washington, D.C., but about two weeks later a public memorial service was held in Detroit at the Local 600 UAW Hall. Among those who attended were Governor James Blanchard, National AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, National Democratic Party Chairman Paul G. Kirk, Jr., and UAW President Owen Bieber.
An Illusive Victory

A California table grape grower is going to jail.

Dudley "Bud" Steele is to become the first grower to be jailed for violating California's farm labor law.

Is this a victory for farm workers? Sort of.

Steele is the owner of Tex-Cal Land Management, Inc. of Delano, California. The 7,000 acre ranch used to employ between 500 and 600 workers. The workers had signed a union contract with Tex-Cal in 1979.

Despite a legal obligation to adhere to this contract, in 1982 Steele cut wages of workers to or below minimum wage level. He also refused to hire union workers, despite an injunction by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) ordering him to do so.

On December 4, a superior court judge upheld a previous sentence against Steele and his labor manager, David Caravantes. The judge ordered the two to serve 180 days in prison and pay combined fines of $220,000.

So why is this not a victory?

Saul Martinez, a UFW crop manager, explains, "Steele still owes thousands of dollars in back wages, and the workers he refused to hire are still out of their jobs.

"Also, the ALRB started prosecuting this case in 1979. That was before Deukmejian [California's governor] stacked the board with pro-grower members. I don't think we can expect the same commitment to uphold the law from the current board."

Alejandro Lopez, a ten-year employee at Tex-Cal, agrees with Saul. "There is a sentence and a fine against Steele, but where is the compensation for the workers?"

There is one minor note of ironical justice in the case. On Steele's land is an old jailhouse. It was here that workers were instructed to report to pick up their checks or to be recalled to work after layoffs. Now the Tex-Cal workers are fond of saying, "It's Steele's and Caravantes' turn to report to the jail."

Their sentences begin in March.
Absence of Evidence is not Evidence of Absence

By Marion Moses, M.D.

(The National Farm Workers Health Group, responds to a recently released county health report on McFarland, California, where there is a 400% expected rate of cancer among children and where cancer has already claimed the lives of four children. The report says there is “nothing currently present that can explain the cancer cluster.”)

The epidemiological study done by the Kern County Health Department is not adequate to determine the relationship of agricultural pesticide use to cancer in the children of McFarland. The study is highly misleading. It gives the false impression that it was only a one-of-a-kind exposure in the past when actually McFarland still is exposed to carcinogenic pesticides.

The process of “doing a study” is often used by health authorities to give the impression that something is being done about a community problem. Studies done under such circumstances are almost always inadequate in scope and design, very narrowly defined and limited, as was the case in the McFarland study.

Comparing pesticide residues in soil and water at the homes of children with cancer to those of children without cancer means something only if positive - that is, if differences - are found. Such comparisons are absolutely meaningless when negative, as they were in this study. Carcinogenic pesticides may not persist in soil or water and therefore are not there to be measured. Or the exposure may have been to a metabolic breakdown product that was not measured. Or there may be synergistic or potentiating effects from chemicals in combination that might not occur with either chemical acting alone.

The study made no recommendations about preventing current exposure to carcinogenic pesticides in the community.

County and state health authorities have failed to respond appropriately to the message of McFarland. The families of the children with cancer know that indeed nothing has been done to address their needs and concerns.

Your Letters

Every day the United Farm Workers receives letters from our readers and supporters. These letters often relay messages of support and express your concerns about the problems of pesticide abuse and the struggle of farm workers. What follows is just a small sample of the letters we have recently received.

I will not buy or eat grapes in support of the boycott. I will also inform my family and in-laws to boycott grapes. We boycotted in 1965 and 1973 when we were children, and it was a valuable lesson to learn.

May you continue your work as vehemently as you have in the past.

Elizabeth Cumpian
Chicago, IL

Enclosed is my contribution to your worthy cause. I may be small, but so is my Social Security. It is a sacrifice but not much when I consider all the sacrifices your members have made with their lives and limbs in their fight to right the wrongs of the profiteers.

John L. Stevens
Niland, CA

I am enclosing a money order for your good cause. I sincerely sympathize with the farm workers. Pesticides are also very frightening for us, consumers of California fruit.

My contribution comes from the heart.

Mrs. Joseph Closta
Springfield, MA

I support your cause and have always supported the work of Mr. Chavez. I do not purchase grapes and always let my local store manager know about the plight of farm workers.

I thank God there are still people in this world who care and have the strength and dedication to make a difference. I pledge to support the UFW and Mr. Chavez until the problems faced by farm workers are solved.

Keep up the fight.

Richard Weston
Chicago, IL 60652
Your Order Supports the Farm Workers' Cause.

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Send this form with your check or money order to:
United Farm Workers
La Paz, Keene, CA 93570

YOUR NAME & ADDR

01
SAMUEL B TRICKEY
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