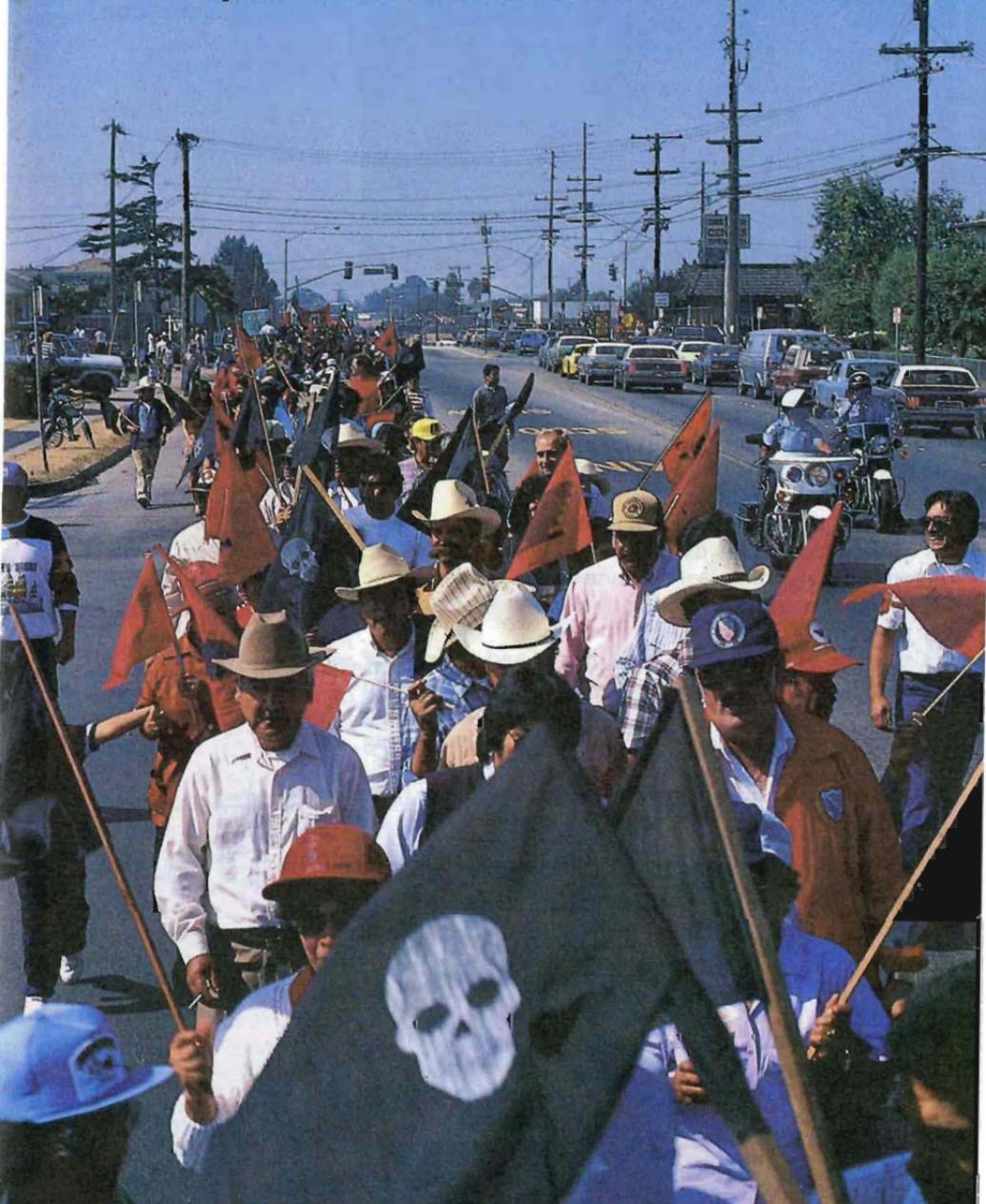


# FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by the United Farm Workers

November 1987



**FARM WORKERS MARCH  
AGAINST PESTICIDES**



## Thanks — But No Thanks!

Americans have many things to be grateful for this Thanksgiving Day, but the traditional dinner is not one of them.

Ironically, the festive family banquet, so central to the holiday, has become more threatening than tasty, more poisonous than palatable.

For farm workers who harvest the food and consumers who dine on it, the danger is real. Farm workers are threatened by contact with poisonous pesticides in the fields and consumers by eating their residues at the dinner table.

Our story of the grape harvest halted and the rash of recent pesticide poisonings (see page six) is just one more example of the constant peril farm workers are exposed to. They'll offer no thanks for that on this Thanksgiving Day.

And when families across the country begin their Thanksgiving dinners with a prayer, they will offer no thanks that, as the National Academy of Sciences reported in May, cancer-causing pesticides are used extensively on even the most basic foods such as tomatoes, potatoes, apples — and grapes, the highly but falsely touted "natural snack."

Just a few weeks ago, an executive for a leading western supermarket chain told growers at a convention in Texas, "If consumers find out how we pump produce with chemicals . . ."

We are busy in our current table grape boycott doing exactly that — helping you "find out" about some of the most dangerous pesticides "pumped" on table grapes. We want them banned from our fields and your food. It's at least a good start.

This Thanksgiving, tell California grape growers you have "found out" — and are fed up.

Say "No thanks" to grapes.

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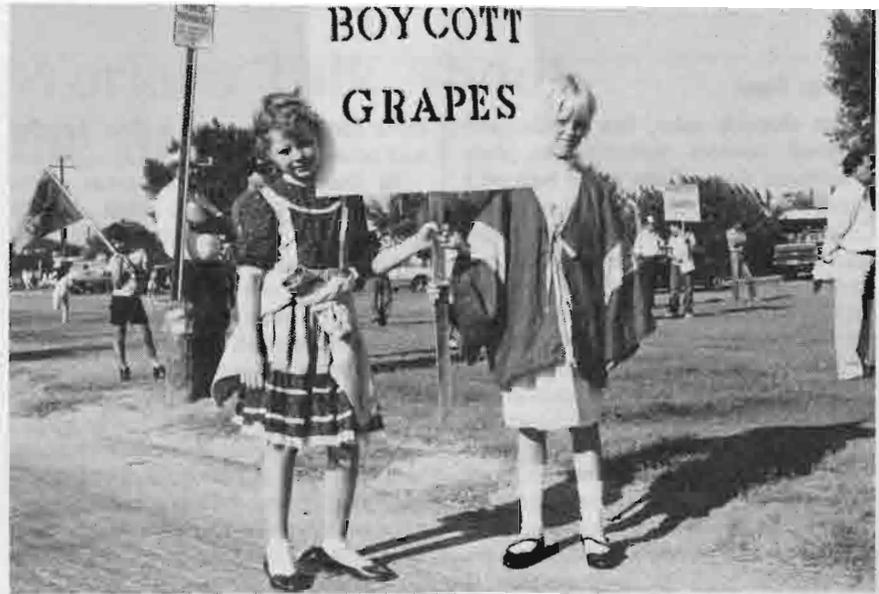
Paul Chavez

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**BOYCOTT  
GRAPES**



*Now even grape growers are showing signs they have gotten the boycott message.*

## Grape Growers Getting the Message

In recent weeks, California table grape growers have been as busy as squirrels frantically searching for nuts to store away for the winter.

But growers were frantically searching not for more to store but for more space to store it in. All available cold storage was already bulging with grapes nobody wanted to buy.

"Most growers offer a long list of reasons why prices and sales are down, everything from bad weather to increased out-of-state competition to fickle consumers and to God only knows what else," said farm labor leader Cesar Chavez. "But there's another reason they're not quite ready to admit — the boycott."

Earlier this year, the opening table grape season in the Coachella Valley in southern California turned out to be the worst growers could remember: prices plummeted, sales were down, coolers were jammed with grapes that weren't

selling no matter how much growers reduced the price per box.

When the harvest later moved north to the San Joaquin Valley, the situation remained relatively the same. According to a Federal-State Market News Service report, a total of 10 million boxes were in storage as of August 31. That was an increase of 15 percent over a year ago and 12 percent over two years ago.

In Delano in late August, at the midway point of the table grape harvest in that area, prices continued to remain below what growers consider the break-even point.

In mid-September, "The Packer," a grower publication, said growers of the Thompson Seedless variety "reportedly have been surprised the market has not traded higher in recent weeks." The magazine also said "sluggish movement at attempted higher prices may have contributed to the larger inventories" in storage.

## Strange Signs

But sluggish sales, low prices, and jammed coolers weren't the only thumbs-up signs of the grape boycott's impact. Bruce Obbink, president of the California Table Grape Commission, armed with a sizable advertising increase from \$6.5 to \$7.3 million for 1987, in July embarked on a three-month media tour to promote California's pesticide-riddled "natural snack." With mysterious logic, Obbink told reporters at the start of the tour that the UFW boycott is "faltering" — so "now's the time to hit the road." By that strange reasoning, if he thought the boycott was hurting growers, he apparently would remain in California, keep a low profile, and save money by cutting the huge advertising budget.

But there were even stranger signs that the grape boycott is affecting grower behavior. This year, grape growers have demonstrated a sense of compassion for the poor and needy that was not evident in past years when prices were good. In recent weeks, they have distributed tons of free grapes to charitable organiza-

tions feeding the poor in Los Angeles and other cities.

In Delano and Fresno areas, farm workers reported that high quality grapes they would normally box for supermarkets were being tossed into big gondolas for sale to wineries. "They're trying to salvage at least some profits from a bad season," said Ben Maddock, UFW crops division manager. Grape growers have also shown an unusual desire to convert luscious table grapes into raisins instead of selling them to retailers. And grower publications indicate that grape growers are showing greater interest in foreign markets than ever before.

## Meanwhile . . .

UFW volunteers kept up a concentrated telephone campaign to distribute free "Wrath of Grapes" videos to get the grape boycott message out to everyone.

Even grape growers were admitting in every way but verbally that they, too, were finally getting the message. ♡

*This season table grape growers had to divert even their high-quality grapes to less profitable wine and raisin production.*



# Workers Talk About the Boycott

**Manuel T. Garza**, 60, McFarland. "I've been a farm worker ever since 1948 and worked in Texas and California. And I've been with Cesar Chavez and the UFW from the beginning. I've been through boycotts before and I know the suffering we have to go through before we win. It's like being a boxer. You have to absorb a few punches but when the KO comes, it'll be the growers on the canvas, not us. All we have to do is stick together. Right now we're fighting for grape workers; tomorrow it might be for lettuce workers. We know that's the only way we can win. And we will win — no matter how long or how much suffering it takes."



**Esequiel Velez**, 45, Coachella. "I have worked in vineyards at the Freedman company for 13 years. We were the last to lose our contract. We've suffered a lot since we started the grape boycott but it's worth it. Soon it will be the growers' turn to suffer. They had a terrible harvest this season because the boycott is working. They didn't think it would — but many good Americans are boycotting grapes and helping us get back what the growers and politicians stole from us. It might take a little more time before the growers lose enough money to make them treat us right again. When that day comes — no matter how long it takes — it will be a good victory."



**Salvador Mendoza**, 39, Napa Valley. "I have been a farm worker for 15 years, 12 with the UFW. I know what it was like to work without a contract. It was miserable. So all the extra short-term sacrifices we have to make during this boycott are worth it in the long run. The suffering during a boycott at least has some meaning — it's for a better life for ourselves and our children. The growers have never given us a single thing without a boycott — good drinking water, toilets, better wages — and I doubt if they ever will. They're too greedy. They're rich and we're poor and that's the way they want to keep it. That's not right. We only want what we deserve. And we'll stick together until we get it." ♡





*Striking farm workers protest pesticide poisoning and contract problems at H.P. Metzler.*

## Farm Workers Poisoned; Grape Harvest Halted

The poisoning of more than 125 farm workers at four different California ranches and the halt of grape harvesting at three of them in late August and early September again provided stark evidence of how hopelessly out of control the pesticide plague has become.

"Chemical companies, growers, and pesticide sprayers are making a killing, financially and literally," said farm worker leader Cesar Chavez, seething with anger in the wake of the poisonings that occurred shortly before the big march against pesticides in Salinas on September 20 (see page 8).

"And who are the victims of these profit-hungry parasites and inept authorities charged with controlling them?" Chavez asked. "We are — farm workers, people in rural towns, and consumers. We've got to do something fast before they kill us all."

The worst of the poisonings occurred on September 5 at one of the two citrus

and table grape ranches of the huge H. P. Metzler farms in the San Joaquin Valley. Two crews totaling 45 workers became sick after working in fields sprayed with Methomyl, a pesticide sold under the brand name Lannate. Thirty-seven workers had to be taken to the hospital for treatment and tests.

The poisonings triggered a walkout that turned into a full-blown strike of nearly 350 workers at both ranches. Workers were angry over arbitrary wage cuts and other contract problems as well as more pesticide poisonings going back several months. Dolores Huerta, UFW first vice-president and striker coordinator, said, "It's been an ongoing thing at Metzler — workers have been continuously sprayed and poisoned."

Jerry Prieto, deputy agricultural commissioner for Fresno County, who admitted his office is supposed to be investigating a series of pesticide illnesses at Metzler going back to April, dismissed them as "nothing serious."

### Grape Harvesting Halted

About the same time as the Metzler poisoning, three other crews of farm workers were poisoned in incidents that even Prieto would not have been callous enough to brush off as "nothing serious." In fact, they were serious enough for state officials to halt harvesting of nearly 3,000 acres of grapes at 50 vineyards in 12 counties in central and northern California.

Even more serious, Jim Wells, pesticide enforcement chief of the state Department of Food and Agriculture, said he believed the harvest had already been 50 to 60 percent completed before the ban was put into effect.

Approximately 80 workers in three separate crews in Madera and Fresno counties suffered nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, headaches and lowered levels of a blood enzyme called cholinesterase. At least 14 workers had to be hospitalized.

The poisonings were caused by Zolone, the brand name for Phosalone, an insecticide used to kill bugs. It is manufactured by Rhone-Poulenc, the

French corporation that purchased the agrichemical business from Union Carbide late last year for \$575 million.

The September 9 ban on grape and raisin harvesting lasted only a couple days. Authorities permitted work to resume if grapes were to be harvested mechanically for wine or if workers were given protective clothing to wear.

But one grower is known to have ignored even those relatively mild requirements. Andy Jacobi, who owns a vineyard near Dinuba, ordered his crews back into the fields before the ban was lifted. Wells said he would ask Tulare County prosecutors to file criminal charges against Jacobi.

"Jacobi is just one example of many growers who think more of their crops than of their workers," Chavez said. "And if they're willing to endanger the health of their own workers — human beings they have contact with every day — you can imagine how unconcerned they would be about consumers they never have to face."

*UFW First Vice-President Dolores Huerta: "... workers have been continuously sprayed and poisoned."*



# Thousands March Against Pesticides

Approximately 8,000 farm workers in the Salinas Valley, the pesticide-drenched "Salad Bowl of the Nation," converged on a big elementary school playground in Salinas on Sunday, September 20, for an early morning mass, a four-hour march, and an emotionally charged rally following the march.

Farm labor leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta — and farm workers themselves, in strongly worded resolutions and impassioned seconding speeches — condemned the excessive use of pesticides and other grower and labor contractor abuses.

Only a few days before the march, a series of pesticide poisonings (see page six) underscored the urgency of the day's focus on the growing number of poisonings and deaths among farm workers and their children, residents of rural towns, and consumers from growers' unrestrained use of pesticides.

*Thousands of farm workers protest pesticide poisoning and the increasing lawlessness of growers and labor contractors.*



## Mass and March

At the opening mass concelebrated by several area priests, farm workers heard homilist Padre Luis Olivares of Los Angeles urge them to stand together and vigorously but nonviolently exercise their God-given right to resist their abusers. And he urged growers to resist, too — to resist the temptation to treat farm workers as profit-making tools instead of human beings with a right to respect and just treatment.

Then, led by a mariachi band and Chavez and other farm worker leaders, the throng wound its way through the streets of Salinas for four hours, waving red-and-white UFW flags, brightly colored grape boycott banners, and contrasting somber black flags with white skulls symbolizing the deadly pesticide peril.

Throughout the march, the sounds of the mariachi music gave way to repeated roars of "Viva la Union," "Viva



*Workers pass resolution extending benefits to thousands of non-union farm workers who have lost their jobs since Gov. Deukmejian took office in 1983.*

Chavez," "Boycott Grapes" and other slogans condemning pesticide poisoning and grower and labor contractor abuses.

## Rally

Chavez opened the rally with a ringing denunciation of the combined grower-governor effort to return California farm workers to living and working conditions that existed from the 1850s to the passage of the farm labor law in 1975.

"Growers and labor contractors in this valley, with the help of a governor who winks at their crimes, have again robbed you and your families of your rights," he said. "They cut your wages, take away your benefits, fire you for wanting to vote for the union, make a mockery of bargaining with you, force you to work in fields poisoned with pesticides, and fatten themselves with more and more profits while you have to scratch for a living."

Chavez vowed to continue the struggle without letup. "No matter how badly the odds are stacked against us, no matter how vicious and powerful our enemies are, we'll keep on marching and striking and boycotting and appealing to decent Americans for support until we

bring growers back to the bargaining table and force them to restore all your benefits and rights."

## Resolutions

Four microphones strategically placed throughout the large playground provided farm workers the opportunity to offer their opinions and second four resolutions presented for consideration. The emotional personal stories from worker after worker on the pesticide peril put tragic human faces on the staggering statistic that 300,000 farm workers are poisoned by pesticides in this country every year. They demanded, as the resolution states, "that growers stop using all pesticides that cause cancer or in any way threaten the lives of farm workers, residents of rural communities, and consumers."

Two other resolutions condemned grower and labor contractor abuses, and the last one was an invitation to the thousands of workers fired unjustly — the majority since Gov. Deukmejian took office in 1983 — to become associate UFW members and become eligible for many benefits either free or at low cost.

## Chinese Coolies — 1988 Version

If K.K. Soo and U.S. agribusiness have their way, in March the first wave of thousands of Chinese farm workers will arrive in the U.S. to relieve an agricultural labor shortage that UFW leader Dolores Huerta says does not exist.

Soo, president of the New York-based Chinese Agricultural Manpower Center, said he had a contract with the Chinese Government to recruit peasants under guidelines prepared by the U.S. Labor Department. "It's just a modern version of the Chinese coolies brought here a hundred years ago to provide cheap labor to build our railroads and then slave in the fields after the railroads were built," said Dolores Huerta, first UFW vice-president.

Cheon Fung, manager of the new project, offered a chilling explanation for importing Chinese farm workers: "We are just meeting the needs



of the market, like importing chemicals or slippers."

Huerta vehemently denied that such a need exists. "Ever since the new immigration bill was passed, growers have been trying to create a scare to ensure cheap labor," she said. "There's a shortage, all right. Of slaves. But not of workers who no longer will tolerate long hours and poor pay, miserable conditions, or slow deaths from chronic exposure to toxic pesticides — but there's no shortage of skilled farm workers who just want to be paid decent wages and treated like dignified human beings."

Soo and Fung denied that Chinese peasants will be exploited today as they were a century ago. "Those Chinese were mostly illegal immigrants and were poorly paid. This is a legal program where the workers' wages, food, and living conditions will be supervised by the U.S. Government."

Huerta took little comfort from that. She pointed out that the Government also supervised the discredited Bracero Program implemented to alleviate the labor shortage during World War II. "The Bracero Program was supervised by the Government, but that didn't prevent growers from committing horrible abuses against legally imported Mexican workers," she said. "The Chinese will get the same treatment."

Under the Soo-Fung plan, the modern Chinese coolies will be allowed to work in the U.S. for a 10-month period and then must return home. Fung said growers will be expected to pay transportation costs.

Skilled U.S. farm workers under contract will lose their jobs, growers will get more profits from cheap labor, and the Chinese peasants will get 10 months at hard labor, a so-long-it's-been-good-to-use-you, and a magnanimous free ticket home.

## Justice Delayed — With a Vengeance

Justice delayed is justice denied. California farm workers have long known that reality if not the phrase itself. But just to make sure they really understand, four months ago the California Supreme Court, freshly packed with three new appointees of Gov. George Deukmejian, drove the point home again — with landmark vengeance.

Before the new ruling issued on August 4, a farm worker could wait from four to seven years for a grower to exhaust appeals on a decision of guilt by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board. Then he could wait another four to seven years for the grower to appeal how much the worker had coming in back wages.

Now the court is allowing a grower to appeal the ALRB enforcement order between the decision and payment phases — which adds another delay of four to seven years. Now a worker could conceivably wait up to 20 or 21 years before a grower would finally have to

comply.

The new decision involved one of the most vicious growers in California's anti-farm worker history: Delano grape grower Dudley M. "Bud" Steele, owner of Tex-Cal, Inc. On November 24, 1982, before newly elected Gov. George Deukmejian got a chance to purge and repack the ALRB, the board found Steele guilty of "outrageous" violations and ordered him to rehire unjustly fired farm workers and pay them for lost wages.

Since then, 800 farm workers have been waiting for their money. Under the new court decision, they will have to wait several more years. But even then, they will never get a red cent.

Steele, who owes most of nearly \$100 million to the IRS and federal loan agencies, has already filed for bankruptcy. After all his holdings are sold, a process that will not yield near that amount, who do you think will get their money first — the U.S. government or farm workers?

*Now farm workers in California could wait up to 20 years for millions growers owe them. But these Tex-Cal workers will never get a red cent.*





Dr. Marion Moses

## UFW Plans Pesticide Testing Lab

Caesar Chavez announced recently that the United Farm Workers will set up a laboratory to test table grapes and other produce for hazardous pesticide residues.

More than two years ago, the UFW challenged California grape growers to co-sponsor independent laboratory tests for pesticide residues. In spite of their repeated claims that table grapes, promoted as "the natural snack," are free from dangerous residues, they refused to do so. "So we'll do it ourselves," Chavez said.

On August 12, Dr. Marion Moses, director of the National Farm Worker Health Group and one of the nation's leading authorities on environmental disease, reported that the major scientific equipment required for reliable testing (gas and liquid chromatographs, ion trap detector, and gas spectrometer) would cost approximately \$250,000.

Shortly after Dr. Moses' report, Chavez launched a fundraising cam-

paign in a letter to supporters. He said he hopes construction can begin this year and testing shortly after. "The cost of setting up a testing laboratory will be very small compared to the damage to public health and human lives if we allow pesticide contamination to continue," he wrote.

Dr. Moses cited last year's General Accounting Office report that the government does not test for a large number of dangerous pesticides, does not prevent contaminated food from reaching the market, and does not penalize growers who violate the law. "We can no longer pretend that the government will protect us," she said.

"Even though we shouldn't have to be doing this," Chavez said, "we welcome the chance to do something to protect the lives of millions of consumers in repayment for the help they are giving farm workers by boycotting grapes."



# EVERY YEAR MORE THAN 300,000 FARM WORKERS ARE POISONED BY THE FOOD YOU EAT.



Welcome to Death Valley.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people who labor in the fields are poisoned by toxic pesticides like those used in the cultivation of table grapes.

The fruits of their labor are birth defects, cancer, chronic illness. And death.

But the danger of pesticides isn't just to field workers. The danger sits right on your table.

You see, one third of all pesticides are known to cause

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There is only one way to know the whole story. Send for our free video cassette, "The Wrath of Grapes", and see how the farm workers have dedicated themselves to saving their lives. And yours.

What you choose to do after that is up to you. After all, we don't want to poison your mind. We just want to give you food for thought.



UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA  
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 YES! Please send me a free copy of "The Wrath of Grapes." (Available in VHS format only.)

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UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA



Rural Enos Lane drinking water is contaminated by EDB, a potent soil fumigant.

## Water, Water Everywhere . . .

But not a drop to drink for the residents of Enos Lane, a rural community on the outskirts of Bakersfield, California.

In mid-September, the public utilities officials notified more than 50 families that tests of the drinking water from June through August showed high levels of the suspected cancer-causing pesticide EDB (Ethylene Dibromide). They were warned not to cook with or drink the water.

EDB, a potent soil fumigant that has been banned for use in agriculture, was found to be above accepted state-action levels as early as June, but residents did not find out about it until nearly three months later. Chris Burger, environmental health specialist, decided it would be better to test for two more months instead of "creating alarm on the basis of one sample that could possibly be faulty."

That decision was made even though Enos Lane, like many other small rural

communities, has had problems with pesticide-laced drinking water off and on over the past decade. "The presence of pesticides in the groundwater in west Bakersfield has been known since 1978," admitted Daphne Washington, chief of the Kern County Health Department's special programs. In those tests, another dangerous agricultural pesticide, DBCP (Dibromochloropropane), was also detected.

Officials believe the most logical solution is to dig a deeper well to reach uncontaminated drinking water. They estimated the new well will cost \$40,000.

Meanwhile, residents were either buying bottled water or purchasing filters of questionable effectiveness. Peggy Wilson, whose family lives in a double-wide mobile home and uses 14 five-gallon bottles a month, said, "It doesn't make me too happy to be paying \$90 a month for bottled water besides our regular monthly water bill for washing and bathing."



Mr. Jack Rosenthal  
Editorial Page Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Jay Mazur

A recent New York Times article ("California Labor Panel a Target of Farm Union," July 16, 1987) documents the dramatic turnaround by California's Agricultural Labor Relations Board. Created to afford farm workers the right to collective bargaining enjoyed by most private sector workers in this country, the board now rejects most farm worker complaints and has openly shifted to support for the growers.

The board's general counsel, David Stirling, is quoted as saying, "Growers are taking better care of their workers than they did in the past, and one reason they're doing it is they don't want to deal with Mr. Chavez." There may be a kernel of truth here: certainly, whatever gains have been made by farm workers in California are due to the efforts of the United Farm Workers Union.

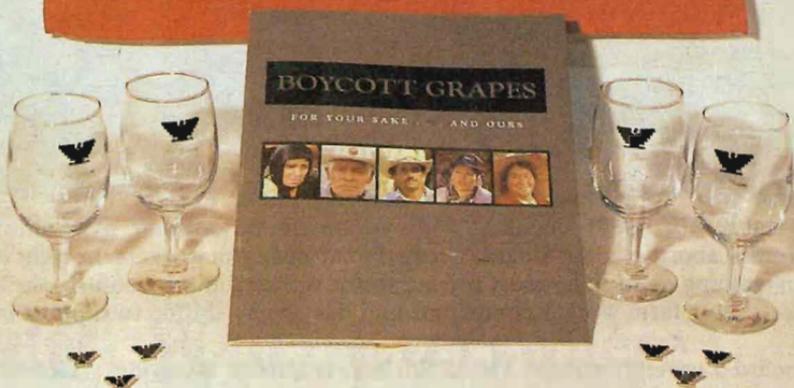
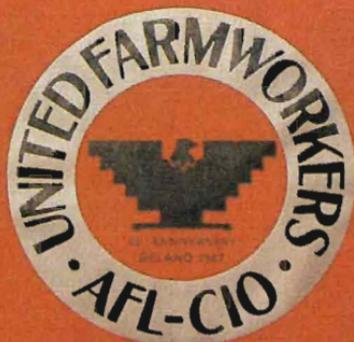
However, the fact is that the ALRB was begun, not because of Cesar Chavez' political influence, but in response to public outrage over the shamefully exploitative practices of California growers. Even if these abuses have been mitigated in part and in some places, the working conditions of farm workers today remain a national disgrace.

The current grape boycott was begun to alert the public about the most appalling of these abuses: the use of deadly pesticides which threatens the health of farm workers as well as of rural communities and of consumers of grapes throughout the country.

The grape boycott is already having an impact, as the wholesale price of grapes has fallen to its lowest level in years. The boycott will continue until the growers stop their callous indifference to the health of their workers and of the public.

Sincerely,

Jay Mazur  
President  
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union  
1710 Broadway, New York, NY 10019



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