

## SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE - 1970

### VICTORY IN DELANO

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Delano, Kern county

They began arriving early in the morning, brilliant red banners in hand, awaiting the word they had strained for almost five years to hear.

As the more than 200 farm workers waited, they sang: "Nosotros venceremos, nosotros venceremos... we shall overcome, we shall overcome..."

And their leader, Cesar Chavez, confirmed it. He signed before their eyes a labor contract with John Guimarra, the world's largest grape grower, and confirmed that the Delano grape strike was over. Won.

The AFL-CIO United Farm Workers had contracts now, Chavez said, that will grant up to 10,000 workers minimum pay of \$1.80 an hour plus 20 cents for each box of grapes picked this year.

This is in contrast to the \$1.10 an hour before the strike and \$1.65 most recently. The basic wage will go up to \$1.95 next year and to \$2.05 in 1972.

Another 12 cents an hour will go into health and welfare benefits. Jobs will be assigned through the union's hiring hall. Join union-grower committees will regulate pesticide use. A formal grievance procedure will be set up. And strikes will be prohibited during the life of the three-year agreements.

Chavez said contracts had been negotiated with the 26 major growers in Kern and Tulare county vineyards, centered here, during the past two weeks. These vineyards grow half of the State's grapes and are about to begin their harvest.

Growers at the festive announcement rites acknowledged that it was the grape boycott, called in 1968 after the three-year-old strike bogged down, that was most responsible for the contract.

Chavez said the nationwide boycott will continue against grapes of the 25 per cent of California grape growers who have not yet signed with his union.

Most observers expect the holdouts to sign shortly, however.

The Organizing Committee announced "all-out war" Tuesday to overturn contracts signed this week by Teamster Union organizers and majorities of the Salinas and Santa Maria Valley vegetable growers.

“The Teamsters don’t represent the workers,” Chavez insisted. “We do.”

Chavez, suddenly seeming surprisingly small, wore an elaborate white Filipino wedding shirt. His followers shouted “vivas,” but Chavez held down his head and fought back tears as the workers cheered again, and still again.

The growers present smiled in response to cheers from workers who once booed very loudly and called them names.

John Guimarra Jr., the young spokesman for the growers, said, “We’re starting a new relationship here.”

He called the agreement “a mutual victory for both of us.” If the union lives up to its “fantastic responsibility,” he said, it will improve the lot of growers and workers and lead to farm unionization elsewhere.

And the consumer?

Guimarra predicted that grape prices will go “a little higher” because of unionization, but he said he assumed the public would pay the price for “social justice.”

Larry Itliong, the organizing committee’s assistant director and leader of the Filipino workers who started the battle by striking vineyards here in September, 1965, spoke, too. So did Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Connelly of Hartford, Conn., the chairman of a committee of Roman Catholic bishops which arranged the union-grower peace talks.

But it was Chavez’ day.

He told the assemblage how events “truly proved” that non-violence still could work in this society. He praised the myriad strike and boycott supporters and the vineyard strikers “who lost all their worldly possessions in the struggle, but who “found themselves.”

Then Chavez assured the growers that “We have reacted the foundation of what I think will be a good relationship... we were surprised to find that they did not have horns and they were surprised, I’m sure, to find out we don’t have tails.”

Whatever Chavez might have said next was lost when a photographer shouted for him to shake hands with young Guimarra. He did, and the audience broke into noisy, joyous applause. It was then that Cesar Chavez granted himself a luxury of a smile.