

KQED/TV NEWSROOM SCRIPT – 1973

UFW'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

By Dick Meister

The United Farm Workers Union began a fight for survival today in the sweltering vineyards around Delano, where the union began its existence just eight years ago, under the charismatic leadership of Cesar Chavez.

The union finally established itself in 1970 by winning contracts from the men who own the 29 vineyards here. But those contracts expired this morning and, like virtually all the other growers elsewhere who had signed contracts with the fledgling union, the growers here have refused to renew them.

The main reason for this is, in a word, Teamsters. For the Teamsters Union has offered growers the tempting alternative of signing contracts which are far less demanding than those of Chavez' union.

This new fight against the Delano grape growers has begun just as the fight began against them at the start in 1965.

Chanting, flag-waving pickets descended on the vineyards – more than 1000 in all, beginning at 5 a.m. to demand that the workers who might be left join the strike – la huelga – although there are relatively few workers at this period, the bare beginning of the harvest season.

Between the pickets and the vines stood dozens of openly hostile sheriff's deputies from Kern and Tulare counties, highway patrolmen and growers.

Those on both sides of the line seemed convinced, however, that the decisive battle of this war will be waged in the supermarket. That's where the farm workers won the big battle in 1970, by persuading consumers to boycott the grapes produced by these growers. And that's how they will try to win this time.

For while the pickets are marching noisily in Delano, committees in San Francisco and 44 other cities across the country are quietly preparing the machinery for another grape boycott.

The union also has been trying to line up the outside support which was essential in the previous victory. Chavez is flying off to Chicago tonight, in fact, to talk with George Meany and other officers of the AFL-CIO, which already has contributed more than \$1.5 million to the farm workers' current fight – and which is still trying to persuade the Teamsters to withdraw from the fields.