FOCUS IS SHIFTED IN GRAPE STRIKE

Pressure Against Growers Is Exerted in Boycott

By PETER BART
SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

Los Angeles, Feb. 18 - Two trudging, tired workers trudged past the entrance to a busy market in Los Angeles. A woman paused and asked, "Are you picketing the store?"

A picketer replied, "It's not the store. We're picketing for the grape pickers movement."

"What movement?" the woman asked, but the picket was already on his way.

What the picket described as "the movement" started six months ago as a minor strike for higher wages in the grape vineyards of Central California. It has since burgeoned into a major union struggle, involving farm workers, churchmen, and civic groups, and has drawn the support of many leading citizens.

The strike has caused much local unrest, with incidents of violence, and has attracted the attention of church leaders and civic groups throughout the country.

The strike was called by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), which has recruited about 200,000 workers in the state.

The average annual family income of the seasonal farm workers in California is estimated at about $2,500.

"No one wants to be killed by the newspapers for being a union leader," one labor leader said.

"The grape workers have never been anything more than token support," one labor leader said.

To Mr. Hartmire and the other participating ministers, the grape strike was less a labor dispute than a social movement. The farmers want to be represented by the striking union.

Published: February 20, 1966
Copyright © The New York Times