"Next s.o.b. gets in my way, I run over." Truck drivers are notorious for idle threats, but this one, on the waterfront here, sounded as if he really meant it. Burly and unshaven, he jumped from his truck, slammed the cab door, and furiously thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his sheepskin jacket. He pounded his foot. "Move, dammit! Move!"

Fifteen weary men and women stared back. The 15 of them, swarthy farm workers and long-haired young activists, began singing "We Shall Overcome," then switched to Spanish: "Nosotros venceremos . . . Nosotros venceremos . . ." They waved crimson and black picket signs at the driver; they leaned, defiant if not calm, against the front bumper of his truck. But they would not move, not

Dick Meister is labor editor of The San Francisco Chronicle.

"Don't buy grapes!" goes the cry that has marked the transformation of a California farm workers' strike into a civil-rights issue, a quasi-religious cause and a nationwide boycott.
'There's no turning back now,' says Cesar Chavez leader of the grape strikers

'La Huelga' Becomes 'La Causa'

By DICK MEISTER

Delano, Calif., the nondescript valley town of 12,000 inhabitants where grape pickers, most of them Mexican-Americans, called The Strike — La Huelga — in September, 1965. But Kathy Murguia and thousands of others—students, clergymen, politicians—have made the cry an essential part of the same struggle: the most successful effort yet in 50 years and more of futile efforts to organize farm workers and win them collective bargaining rights.

The development has been remarkable and swift. What started just a little more than three years ago as a barely noticed local strike quickly became a compelling social movement that has drawn together such diverse elements as the old left and the new, young activists and old-line union men, civil-rights organizations, religious groups and big industrial unions. This fall, it evolved into a national boycott as well — and a major political issue argued by Presidential candidates.

As remarkable as the movement is the man who has led it all—a uniquely gifted, truly charismatic figure named Cesar Chavez.

Ask a striker or boycott supporter why it happened and you’re likely to draw an incredulous stare — and an angry question in return (“You ever try raising four kids on $1.50 an hour?”). Grape growers and their allies have different responses, often couched in language, not surprisingly, like that used by urban employers during the equally turbulent organizing drives by industrial unions in the nineteen-thirties. The growers, fearful of losing an almost unique upper hand in labor relations, will tell you it’s primarily a move by “union bosses, radicals” and all manner of “outside agitators” to force their employes into something they neither want nor need. The

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harsh fact, nevertheless, is that vineyard workers share the plight of farm workers generally — working and living conditions that, in the words of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Migra- tion. U.S. Representatives must be rec- ognized for what they are: "national disgrace." Most farm workers live, at best, in sterile, prisoner-like conditions and, at worst, in intolerable and subhuman, in rural slums, and have little voice in community affairs. Nor do they have much say on the job, where they may work 14 to 16 hours a day, 12 hours a day, and seven days a week, often lacking such simple amenities as toilets and clean drinking water.

California's vineyard workers always have been better off than most farm workers. Their generally prevailing base wage of $1.50 an hour is higher, but for $1.25 and on, some days, individuals can make two or even three times as much through piece rates. On the vineyards — generally 15 cents to 25 cents — for every box of grapes picked. Growers repeatedly point to these wages and the fact that vineyard workers are less migratory than most, and note that they have insurance benefits and are covered by state housing, safety and sanitation statutes. In some cases, by minimum-wage laws.

ET the vineyard workers also average far less on a yearly basis than the $2,000 poverty-level figure (some- where between $2,000 and $2,300, according to union figures) that is intended to cover more than six months of work in any year, and are rare indeed if they can afford to keep their children from joining them on the vineyards. They are denied overtime pay, paid holidays, vacations, sick leaves, pensions and unemployment insurance benefits generally are denied them, and those few laws that are supposed to provide them some rudimentary protections are not closely enforced. Practi- cally none of them are enforced; they can be fired at any time, for any reason.

In brief, says a strike leader: "The work is back-breaking, it is temporary, and it still leaves us almost at the bot- tom, standing ahead only of even more destitute farm workers of other states."

Now at least some of the vineyard workers want union bargaining rights — the weapon
that has been dangled before them for so long as the only way to give them a voice in their own destinies. But here, too, the law has ignored them. Under the National Labor Relations Act, most industrial employers must bargain collectively with their workers if a majority of the workers prove they want to bargain, and then must sign a contract with the workers’ union. But farm employers have managed, thanks in part to a powerful lobby, to remain exempt from the law since it was enacted in 1933.

That, in essence, is why the pickets are in front of the supermarkets. If the law will not make grape growers bargain, the pickets and their supporters hope they can, by shutting off sales of the growers’ produce.

The pickets were not at the markets at the beginning, three years ago. They were lining back-country roads, outside the vineyards that sprawl over the 400 square miles where most of the country’s grapes are grown, hidden from urban concern in the heartland of California’s $4-billion-a-year farm industry. Although Mexican-Americans dominate the work force in the vineyards, as they do throughout California agriculture, it was another minority group that called the strike—a band of Filipinos under the banner of the UFW, previously ineffective Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee. Within eight days, they were joined by the Mexican-Americans’ independent National Farm Workers Association, and it immediately became certain that this was not to be a standard organizing attempt. Chavez, the brilliant, virtually self-educated leader of the Mexican-American group, would try it differently.

A glance makes clear this is a union leader seen but rarely in California’s valleys: a stocky, sad-eyed, disarmingly soft-spoken man, shining black hair trailing over the edge of a face brushed with traces of Indian ancestry, a man who talks of militance in calm, measured tones, a soft trace of Mexico in the quiet voice; an incredibly patient man who hides great strategic talent behind shy smiles and an attitude of utter candor; a devout Roman Catholic.

Growers call Chavez “a dumb Mex...a revolutionary political opportunist Trotskyite.” But to his followers he is a messiah who inspires utter devotion. “Here was Cesar,” recalls an eloquent but typical enthusiast, “burning with a patient fire, poor like us, dark like us. (Continued on Page 90)
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talking quietly, moving people to talk about their problems, attacking the little problems first, and suggesting, always suggesting—never more than that—solutions that seemed attainable. We didn’t know it until we met him, but he was the leader we had been waiting for.”

Chavez, starting out as a migratory worker from Yuma, Ariz., in the late nineteen-thirties, has been through what they have been through—in the vineyards, cotton fields and fruit orchards of Arizona and California—for most of his 41 years. He has seen the Anglo organizers

 LEADER—Chavez at the California State Capitol in March, 1966, after leading a 26-day, 300-mile trek to march of grape strikers from Delano to Sacramento.

come and go, the A.F.L. and C.I.O. men who have promised so much for so long, and he has learned from their failures.

Ten years with Saul Alinsky’s Community Services Organization, first as an organizer in California’s valley towns, then as national director at its Los Angeles headquarters, taught Chavez other valuable lessons about organizing his fellow Mexican-Americans. He does not march among them preaching the virtues of Samuel Gompers and trying to organize them as if they were so many A.F.L. members—marchers to build from within—to let his people organize themselves, in

their own way. “Grass roots with a vengeance,” Chavez calls it.

To be successful, his union once was to become “a new kind of operation with no heart” that promised merely the negotiation of better wages, hours and working conditions in return for the payment of dues. Farm workers had had enough of that kind of unionism. Their union would have to teach them the unified, self-directed action that outsiders never had taught. As Chavez says, they’d have to learn to do everything for themselves, “from the most mundane office work to the most sophisticated bargaining”—and their union would have to offer “programs which guarantee a new life.”

I t was slow going. Chavez, after resigning from the Community Services Organization in anger over what he saw as its lack of concern for the farm worker, settled in Delano in the early sixties with his wife, Helen, and their eight children. For three years preceding the strike, and while working in the vineyards himself, he patiently gathered a core of vineyard workers and their families into his association—more properly a combination community organization and civil-rights group, rather than a union. They formed their own credit union, where they could borrow the money they always seemed to need, and banded together to buy tires for their battered autos and to get other necessities at discount prices they could afford.

“I thought it would be four years, maybe five, before we’d be ready for a strike,” says Chavez, “and I was really scared we might go too soon and get crushed.” The A.F.L.-C.I.O. group jumped the gun. It had won a 15-cents-an-hour increase in the then-prevailing base wage of $1.25 from nearby growers during the early phase of the 1965 harvest season and, when its members moved into the Delano area vineyards, the de-mobilation came to a sudden end. They got it, that would have been that. But growers, fearful, they said, of weakening the incentive of pickers to go all-out for piece-rate bonuses, were adamant; they would not even discuss the demand.

The strike was on and, once on, one by one. Nine times the strikers demanded far more than just higher base pay. They would settle for nothing less than the whole range of union rights: double pay, and anything else, would have to be negotiated by their own repre-
it's just an idea of Chavez and all those bleeding hearts. I think maybe the Communists got something to do with it, too."

THE "bleeding hearts" persisted, nonetheless. Led by the Northern California Council of Churches, a Protestant group which adopted the strike as the main activity of its Migrant Ministry, they set up a series of mini-strike areas in the strike area, ground out tons of propaganda, and personally pleaded with non-strikers and others to join what they presented as a " Crusade to end "La Huella" into "La Causa."

They solicited contributions all over the state; spoke at universities, rallies, church affairs, political gatherings and union meetings; petitioned legislators, and inspired lesser versions of their movement among farm workers and their allies in several other states. They demonstrated at the metropolitan headquarters of the farmers in the Valley, the fruit markets that sold their grapes and grape products. They braved the threats of growers and armed guards who descended on their picketers outside the vineyards; hundreds of them, clergymen included, eagerly went to jail to test stringent picketing regulations drawn up by unsympathetic local officials.

Just six months after the strike began, they gathered, in March, 1966, nearly 10,000 strong, before the steps of the State Capitol in Sacramento, to demand "a new social order for the farm worker." Their plea met with farmers who had marched in a dramatic 25-day pilgrimage north from Delano, planting the seeds of their movement all along the 300-mile route. That was perhaps the most dramatic of the outsiders' activities, but it was not the last; they have continued the other activities, and much else, to this day, without a noticeable slackening of pace.

It has often been self-serving, ineffectual, or organized work the outsiders have performed; the wild distortions, and sometimes outright lies of the single-minded, naive, uninformed and inexperienced partisans among them are hard to be maddening. So can their imprudent, empty, expensive, organization of men of organized labor who try to bring some method to it all. (I love these people," remarked a top San Francisco union official. "But, God, they're like a bunch of hippies sometimes. They come bouncing down to a warehouse full of people and tell us, 'Quit unloading those scab grapes!' Hello, why
don't they tell us these things in advance? We could arrange something.

"But, if not already well underway, there's evidence that their activities have been absolutely essential; they have kept the effort from dying as so many farm organizing efforts before had done, in face of public attention and support.

DURING this second phase, big labor's first serious notice came from Walter Reuther, who is challenging the way the streets of Delano and outside the vineyards in a demonstration that made growers recognize they had been in the minority that this would be a stand-

ard, quickly abandoned farm strike. His United Auto Work-

ers union, Reuther told reassuring farm workers, would con-

tribute at least $5,000 a month "for as long as it takes to win this strike." That was just three weeks ago. In 1955, seven months later, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. -- doggedly re-

luctant to put more than token financing into what had been a losing cause ever since its lead was broken, and hesitant over the unorthodox ways of the Mexican-Americans -- never-

theless chartered Chavez's group as the United Farm Workers Organizing Commit-
tee, merged its own organizing committee into it, and made Chavez its effec-

tive leader, William Kircher, the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s strapping, bull-

doglike director of organization, was dispatched to Dela-

no on an almost full-time basis, backed by a monthly budget of $10,000 at the mini-

mum (not counting the $3.50 a month in the form of a salary), getting sporadically from what it claims now to be 17,000 members throughout the country, and outside contribu-

tions of more than $250,000 a year.

Yet the growers have re-

tained the upper hand; they have their own effective allies within the state's business, financial and political hierar-

chies. However unprecedented, the concrete gains of the farm workers have been relatively slight: 11 contracts or union-recognition agree-

ments from the 100 or so unions covering only a few thousand of Cali-

fornia's 300,000 farm workers; and, because of strike pres-

sures, an increase of about 25 cents an hour in the base pay of most vineyard workers.

The pay of those under con-

tact has gone up considerably more, to a base guarantee of $3.50 an hour, re-

turning what the union says is an average of more than $3 an hour including piece-rate bonuses. "This contract also provides some of the first employer-paid holidays, vaca-

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tions, pensions and health-care services in the history of farm labor and, among other things, require growers to provide a nonprofit housing, field toilets, drinking water and tools.

Most of the growers who have sizable contracts to grow wine grapes, and strikers hardly have touched the more numerous growers of table grapes. The California grape growers are, however, not the largest grower of all: Joseph Giumarra, whose family-owned corporation oversees 5,000 acres of vineyards spread over two California counties. As many as 3,000 workers pick 52 million to 65 million pounds of grapes every year for Giumarra, bringing the corporation a gross return of anywhere from $2 million to $7.5 million. "If Giumarra the giant signer," reasons a hopeful union organizer, "the others will be the next to go."

It is, of course, a matter of any rate, that Giumarra is, if not the leader, then certainly a grower whose views and tactics are precisely those of most growers.

Joe Giumarra, a raw-boned, slight, gray-haired man of 69, is typical of California grape growers in other ways as well. He is an immigrant, a proud, independent man who still wears a full beard and darts away in a pair of sandals. Joe Giumarra, came to Delano from Southern Europe in the early nineteen-twenties, saved frugally, bought cheap parcels of land here and there, and then hit it big when subsidized Federal funds began pouring into the area.

Strikers like to picture Joe Giumarra and his fellow growers as the monolithic, mighty, the despotic. They are, but they do seem quietly out of touch with what has been going on beyond the vineyards since 1965. A new and fluid political climate beside the Mexican-Americanians three decades ago. They often seem sincerely perplexed that anyone would suggest farm workers need—or want—anything but what the patron grants them. They didn't need a union; they merely needed a chance to work hard.

Joe Giumarra doesn't talk much to interviewers. He leaves that to his nephew, John Giumarra, Jr., a young man typical of growers only in his views. John is a clean-cut 27-year-old Stanford Law School graduate who looks like a cleancut Stanford Law School graduate. He is a pleasant, eager and articulate advocate. The words roll out rapidly, John Giumarra knows what he wants to say, and he knows exactly what he wants to say, as (Continued on Page 102)
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well as any man in the country.

"Joe, my three other uncles and my father came over from 
Sicily—it was right after the 
first world war was bad, believe 
me. The Italian Government 
needed money—foreign credit 
and that sort of thing. Confisc 
ated their vineyards. So, even 
my grandmother's wedding ring— 
really! They started a little fruit 
stand in L.A. Sold what 
they could, up and down all 
through the Depression. Then 
... Well, there's 11 Giumarra 
families around here now, all 
of them on this farm. Over 
50 people, and they all work here, 
every day. Except the 
kids, of course. They're in 
school.

CERTAINLY, they have a multimillion-dollar corpora 
tion, he says, but they're on a 
simple farmer's budget, just 
like the growers. "You're lucky to break 
even—and some years you 
can't even do that. Sure, you 
make a little money, but you 
are not by all that much." Take the 
$5 or so growers are being 
paid these days for the stand 
ard 26-pound bag of grapes. "The box alone costs 50 cents 
to 55 cents; then there's anoth 
er, say, 70 cents for the 
picker. Then you've got prop 
ter taxes, equipment, all 
sorts of growing costs. And 
the weather can kill you. It's like 
Levi Strauss and riding the 
dice—a very risky 
business. It's not easy like 
people think ...

Even so, he says, the Gium 
rarta Corporation "is willing to 
sit down with any res 
ponsible union." Chavez's 
organizer is pretty 
hopeful they won't make the grade. It's "a rebel 
oufit that doesn't represent anybody." John Giumarra 
is pretty sure that the 260 
workers need a union, anyway. 
"You have to go slow-motion 
to get less than $2.10 an hour. 
All of them are by then, 
before they live, get free trans 
portation. If they don't live 
around here, we give them a 
place to stay, too. Absolutely free." Nor is he sure the 
Giumarra Corporation can afford a union. "It's compe 
titive. There are other places 
they don't pay farm workers like us ... 

a union could drive the pay 
way out of line—the price 
also. Believe me, the consumer 
better look out." (He scoffs at 
Labor Department studies 
showing that labor costs 
amount to only 5 cents to 5 
cents of every dollar spent by 
growers, and that even 
doubling current wages would 
add perhaps 5 to 7 cents a pound 
to the price.

John Giumarra insists 
that his family's corporation actu 
lly has been a beekeeper, al 
way. He concedes that it strike
was called, but he says: "Our workers weren't willing to go on strike in favor of Chavez—that's why he called the boycott. But then, if they went on strike, they could have us at the bargaining table within a week. Our crop is perishable; it would be lost.

He voiced that argument as he stood outside the Delano High School auditorium re- ceived by several prominent California community spokesmen who were boycotting a House subcommittee that was holding another of what Chavez calls "mon-o-mania endless hearings on the vineyard dispute. Inside the auditorium, Chavez, cheered on by 600 strikers who filled the seats behind him, attacked the logic of Giumarra's argument—one most growers ut- ter and a drop of the words "strike" or "boycott."

MOST of the pickers working in Giumarra's vine- yards, he said, were the same still stricken growers. Chavez con- tended, are Mexican nationals brought here in mas- sachusetts to replace. As he described his striking members during the harvest, as part of a work force of 350,000 nationals now working at various jobs in California. The nationals—and there are indeed an unde- termined but comparatively large number in the vineyards—have been commonly called "green cards," that allow them to live and work in this country without be- coming citizens. They are sup- posed to live here perma- nently and are not supposed to replace strikers, but legally determining their residence status and what constitutes "strikebreaking" is a tricky matter. Chavez has demanded that the injunction be lifted and that the "green cards" be returned to Mexico. The Labor Department has asked a group of liberal Democratic Congressmen have made simi- lar demands of the Justice Department, but Giumarra and the other growers have held them off with assertions that their workers actually did not strike, or at least that did not strike because the pickers were not paid. Some assert as well that the "green carders" actually be- gan working for them before a strike was called.

In any case, there are Mexi- can nationals in the vineyards who, Chavez told the subcommittee, can't afford to do much for less than workers who maintain resi- dence in our country... because the cost of living elsewhere is much lower." (And who, whether working legally or not, have little affinity with a locally

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OUTSIDE the auditorium, John Giumarra Jr. showed his first real sign of anger: "It's nothing but a damn lie!" Angrily, he slammed the rear doors of the auditorium a dozen or so grape pickers huddled in the shade. The men had a hard time listening; they look as the men inside, and they, too, wore faded jeans and denim shirts; the women, chubby for the most part, wore short, thin, loose, straw sombreros, loose, baggy slacks, and faded red ker-chefs knotted around their necks. One of the men and one who decided someone should talk to the reporters: "No sir! We're working. We don't want anything to do with that damned union. Nobody does—nobody that's a real worker, anyway. Look at me—I make $2.50 an hour. Who needs a union?"

They weren't afraid; they were marching in and tell the subcommittee "the truth." Four of them did, echocating in the background. The words Giumarra was voicing rapid-fire outside the auditorium. (One woman, though, added a new element to the debate). She had heard, she told the subcommittee, that the union didn't favor children working in the fields. "How," she asked plaintively, "do they expect me to keep my 14-year-old out of trouble?)

How had the dissenters got to the auditorium? "Well," said one of them, "when he came up to us in the field and asked us, 'You want to go to the high school and tell them the truth?' He brought us here in his own trucks, too, Si, si—right over there. . . ."

It may be the easy availability of strikebreakers; it may be the retrenchment of original workers to risk what little they now have by walking off the job for an uncertain and the same marks that farm workers really do not want a union. But, whatever the reasons, orthodox strike activities, even in the unortho-

T HUS the boycott Chavez's union had used the tactic to win its first major contracts, in 1966 at the Schen- ley and DiGiorgio Corporations. Both came after na- tional boycotts against the
easily identified liqours of Schenley and canned goods of DiGiorgio (then included in S&W Fine Foods, which the company subsequently sold). As Schenley vice president James Woolsey says, it wasn't the strike that brought his corporation to the bargaining table but "a threat of serious damage to our business on a nationwide scale ... the adverse publicity generated against us."

The present boycott began last fall, with Gimarras's grapes as the sole target, at a time when farm-union organizers were at an apparent dead end. It did not improve their situation significantly, however. Then Chavez, following a superb instinct for the dramatic, and sincerely concerned that his members might turn to violence in their frustration, began a fast. It was to reaffirm, he said, a commitment to the Gandhian principles of non-violence that had guided him from the beginning.

There had been no serious violence in the vineyard dispute despite a spate of minor attacks and extra precautions for which union and grower forces blamed each other, but there was a danger that Chavez, emerging as a Martin Luther King of the newly aroused Mexican-American, would be supplanted by men from the Southwest who preserved a "brown power" version of the black militants' call to arms. The frustration hit its peak when the strike was extended to the nearby Coachella Valley this spring and Chavez became convinced that "some- one would hurt someone."

The pickets were removed from the Coachella area; Chavez announced that "no union movement is worth the life of one farm worker and his child or one grower and his child;" and retired to a private retreat, to fast, pray, and read the Bible and the writings of Gandhi.

After 25 days, he broke the fast in March, before 4,000 supporters at an ecumenical mass in Delano's city park. Senator Robert F. Kennedy was at Chavez's side as he slumped in a chair set up on a flatbed truck and nibbled freely at a tiny bit of bread handed him by a priest. Senator Kennedy took a portion from the same homemade loaf, then hailed Chavez as "one of the heroes of our time" and congratulated those who were "locked with Cesar in the struggle for justice for the farm worker and the struggle for justice for the Spanish-speaking Americans."

Chavez feels that by his fast he managed to turn his followers from the path which militants everywhere also seem to be skirting: "It made our nonviolent position clear; everyone can understand it now, both ourselves and our adversaries."

The ordeal eventually sent Chavez to a hospital where he lay immobilized for three weeks. Even now, he still must spend most of his time in bed, although he has resumed full direction of the union.

Chavez's fast focused national attention on Delano again, and the unbending growers of table grapes began feeling pressure. Swiftly, the California-only boycott was expanded to include the grapes of all the growers. In one way, the growers brought it on themselves, by allowing Gimarras to use their labels on some of the containers the corporation shipped to market, in an attempt to hide their refurbishment of an idea which would have been involved anyway; the union was faced with nearly insurmountable problems in trying to single out one grower among many who shipped grapes to the same stores. "It was the only way we could do it--take on the whole industry," Chavez says. "The grape itself had to become a label."

The boycott soon became the main activity of growers and their allies. By now, the vineyard picket lines have been all but abandoned. Some strikers actually have returned to work, to ease the strain on their union's treasury, and about 200 of them and their families have been sent off, un-ion salaries of $5 a week, to more than 30 cities in this country and Canada to wage probably the most extensive boycott in American labor history.

Backed by their allies' muscle and financing, strikers are demanding that markets, school cafeterias, city agencies, and other businesses and sellers of food quit handling grapes or face picketing, demonstrations and the opposition of the strikers' influential supporters. The supporters have made their own forays into many other communities, as far away as the West Coast, the Carolinas and the Midwest, and many stores have gone along with the demands.

"It was the only way--take on the whole industry."
ALLY—In December, 1965, three months after the start of the grape strike, Walter Reuther of the U.A.W. joined Chavez (left) on the picket line.

(some thousands, says Chavez, that "we can’t begin to count them"); growers "can’t count them" either, but feel Chavez is guilty of gross exaggeration — "as usual," most of them add.

Some large universities also have joined the boycott and even a few school districts. The union-oriented mayors of a half-dozen major industrial cities, including New York, have ordered municipal purchases cut off. Also, the nation’s chief religious organizations, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, have asked their millions of members to bypass grapes.

In New York, where California growers normally sell about 20 per cent of their table-grape crop, sales dropped by 90 per cent at one point this summer. Shippers were forced to put grapes in cold storage or ship them to other areas—where the resulting surplus drove prices down (some grower sources estimate the summer boycott: activities cost growers $2 million to $2.5 million).

Grape sales have picked up recently, however, and Alan Mills of the growers’ Grape and Tree Fruit League claims that, by now, the bulk of the 1968 crop has been harvested, sold to wholesalers and shipped out of the vineyard area. He acknowledges there were some problems, but insists "they were problems that were overcome." Chavez is no more precise in his estimate of the boycott’s concrete effects, although he insists that "prices are shot to hell" and that sales are down 50 per cent in major Eastern marketing areas.

It is obvious that growers are being hurt, although it is impossible to measure the specific harm. Prices are down compared with 1967 and, although the over-all volume of grape shipments actually is above last year, so is the tonnage of grapes being stored for future sale. How much of this is the result of a heavier crop this year and how much the result of the boycott can only be speculated on at this point; sales between now and February should tell the story.

One thing is clear: growers, who once talked as if Chavez’s union didn’t exist, are worried about what the California Farm Bureau Federation is calling "one of the greatest threats ever to face our state’s agriculture." They are spending thousands of dollars on a nationwide advertising and public-relations campaign that urges us to "feel better in all respects" by "buying and enjoying fresh California grapes," and are bringing their own considerable pressure to bear on food-store owners and public and church officials, in part through newspaper editorialists, chambers of commerce and other business groups.

Growers also have filed damage suits for millions of dollars against some of the industrial unions that have helped in the boycott, charging them with violating the law against secondary boycotts. Specifically, the law does not cover farm workers because of their exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act. "Our hearts are with us," noted a disgruntled picket as she watched a group of previously cooperative
Teamsters unloading grapes in front of a picket line in San Francisco the other day, "but their bread and butter is elsewhere. They don't want to be involved. The legal action has indeed made the unions cautious—especially in New York City, where they have backed off from legal challenges under pressures that made the boycott so successful there this summer.

CHAVEZ'S union nevertheless has scored a significant victory. The boycott finally has made its cause a major national issue; it has forced politicians to take sides. During this year's election campaign, Vice President Humphrey, Senator Eugene McCarthy and other liberal Democrats, all stung by the early lead of Senator Kennedy, repeatedly voiced their support of the boycott and its aim of winning the new minimum wage and longer training for farm workers. Republicans, led by Richard Nixon and Gov. Ronald Reagan of California (both long-time supporters of grape pickers' efforts (with the major exception of Senator Jacob Javits in New York),

McCarthy was the first to raise the issue when, during the primaries, he declared that the grape boycott should be supported. "I believe all of us are concerned with human dignity and determined to lift poverty from our land." Humphrey followed with a similar statement. "As more people know that the boycott is almost your only effective organizing device," he told Clinton, "you have a union more and more will support it." (Ed Muskie must not have been listening; long after his running mate had delivered that statement, Clinton was talking to a group of astounded California reporters that he hadn't even heard of the boycott.) Mr. Nixon was a little later after the national party conventions. Then he spoke out against the boycott, and at a California campaign rally glee-filly plopped grapes into his mouth.

This is a crucial development, for political action is essential if the union is to reach the Chavez goal. Like the industrial workers of the nineteen-thirties, they need the protection of the National Labor Relations Act to set up a bargaining unit of the workers they are struggling for on the picket line by simply casting a ballot in a union election or signing a union authorization card, and they need a law to protect them from "green card" strikers.
legal bargaining rights to farm workers, if only as a way to ease the pressures of the boy-
cott and demonstrations. But começing from the White House — now that Mr. Nixon has been elected—
will probably be enough to keep Congress from acting, at least in the near future.

Even Chavez's most enth-
siastic Congressional support-
ers feel this way. Representa-
tive Philip Burton of Califor-
nia concedes, for instance, "We don't have a prayer now
—not in the next Congress anyway." Chavez agrees, and feels that Mr. Nixon will
launch legal counterat-
tacks on the vineyard strikers and their boycott. "We're going to get the business,"
says Chavez. "There's no question about that."

Nevertheless, there is a def-
inite political trend in the farm crisis that is exciting and one that seems unstoppable. The election undoubtedly will slow the pace. But, although the drive to grant farm work-
ers is likely to be fraught with
by most other Americans who work for a living may be with us for a much longer time than the supporters had hoped, it apparently is here to stay. Politicians who once discussed the "farm problem" solely in terms of such cold and com-
plete a formula as "what will the big banks have to talk as well of farm workers. Chavez
does not let his dreamers do otherwise; they have brought their struggle
out from isolated vineyards and into the mainstream of American economic and
political life: they have laid a solid foundation for farm unionization, and they are not
about to quit.

"No, we don't want a law without a law we will continue to struggle," promises Cesar Chavez. Sud-
denly, the shy smile that has driven once supremely self-
sure growers to forced acquiescence creases the dark face. "They said we couldn't do what
we're doing, they didn't. Well, we're doing it, aren't we?"
The one remains sure, almost childlike, in the face of the flame that passes. "Sure, we know it will

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