

Here to Spur Boycott of Lettuce, Farm Workers Urge: Remember the Grape

By JEAN HEWITT

A straggling group of field workers from California's Salinas Valley walked up Broadway from 68th Street one day earlier this week, waving homemade flags and stopping in supermarkets to tell store managers about the boycott against nonunion, solid-head lettuce.

The Mexican and Puerto Rican workers, most of whom were seeing New York for the first time, were the vanguard of a group of 30 farm workers expected to arrive here by the weekend to spread the word about the nationwide boycott.

The boycott, similar to the earlier one against table grapes, was called last month by Cesar Chavez, leader of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

The one-mile tour along

Upper Broadway was led by young members of the New York boycott committee formed to help the union, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

"Who are they?" asked Mrs. Anthony Hyde, who was shopping in the Key Food Store at 72d Street when the delegation walked in.

"We're the people you helped in the grape strike," 16-year-old Gordon Victor told her. "Now we're asking you to buy only union lettuce."

"I didn't buy the grapes, so I won't buy the lettuce," Mrs. Hyde answered as she pushed her shopping cart past the store's produce department.

Meanwhile, Julie Greenfield, 19, a dropout from

New York University, talked with the produce manager, Harry Roche.

"Eagle Eye? I've got those," Mr. Roche said as he checked the list of union grower labels. "Pasco and Gold Star, too."

The three brands plus Nunes Brothers, Blue Chip, Eagle, King Pin, King City, Favor, Hawk Eye and Queen's T appear on boxes of iceberg lettuce grown by Inter Harvest, a subsidiary of United Fruit Corporation. Inter Harvest, the nation's largest lettuce grower, is the only grower to have signed a contract with the union.

There were no shipping cartons visible in the store, so Miss Greenfield persuaded Mr. Roche to take her into the store's cooler to check. She found the union's black Aztec eagle label on every case. Before the workers continued on to other markets, they were shown how to fill out a store-visit record form.

Inter Harvest also markets Chiquita and Amigo lettuce, and the union label will be on the individual overwraps of these brands by mid-October, according to Harold Bradshaw, general manager of Inter Harvest in Salinas.

The New York boycott committee, directed by James Drake, administrative assistant to Mr. Chavez, has 20 full-time local volunteers, including Miss Greenfield and Mr. Victor. The committee is seeking a total of 100 workers to cover the metropolitan area.

Boycott to Spread

Similar boycotts are currently being organized in more than 20 other major cities.

"We will talk to labor unions, church groups and others who helped us in the grape boycott," Mr. Drake said. His headquarters are temporarily located in a plush apartment on Central Park West with a balcony overlooking the park. Farm workers cut and sew the red flags with black eagle motifs while others plot boycott strategy.

"You just walk in and say, 'I'm from the United Farm Workers,'" a 17-year-old volunteer, Joanne Jaulus, told Larry Izaquirre, 18. "Remind them of the grape strike," she suggested, the braces on her teeth showing as she spoke. "Tell them we won and then tell them about the lettuce boycott."

Larry, his brother, Michael, 20, and their parents, Hilario and Leonor Izaquirre, all are field workers from Salinas, and took part in the orientation tour.

Language No Problem

Mr. and Mrs. Izaquirre, who do not speak English, will work in Spanish neighborhoods in Queens, where the entire family and a fellow worker, Maria Jesus Sanchez, are staying.

John McCarthy, store manager of the A. & P. at Broadway and 68th Street, was another to be confronted by Miss Greenfield. He glanced down the list of labels, then promised: "I'll pass it along to my company." Miss Greenfield asked him to check the boxes in the cooler for union labels.

"Ever heard of Black Jack brand?" he asked. He was told that it was a nonunion Western lettuce.

The Inter Harvest contract with Mr. Chavez's union calls for a minimum wage, calculated roughly on a base wage plus the amount of lettuce picked per hour, that comes to about \$2.15 an hour. The old contract, with the International Brotherhood of Team-

sters, had given workers about \$1.85.

The Teamsters had signed contracts with 200 California growers during the summer covering field workers. Mr. Chavez called the agreement a "stab in the back," contending that the field workers came under his union's jurisdiction, a right won during a five-year battle to organize workers in the California grape industry.

When Mr. Chavez first objected, the Teamsters agreed to transfer their contracts to his union, but then backed down. The growers also resisted the transfer, saying they preferred to deal with the Teamster union.

'Salad Bowl' Area

The farm workers struck the lettuce growers in the Salinas Valley on Aug. 24. The valley is sometimes referred to as the nation's "salad bowl" because it produces about 70 per cent of the solid-head, or iceberg, lettuce grown in the country.

Most of the valley's 6,000 field workers stayed out and farmers were forced to use schoolboys and families to harvest their crops. The present harvest in the valley will last until early November and then will move on to farms in Arizona and Texas.

The United Farm Workers are presently carrying on talks with other major producers.

Mr. Drake, Mr. Chavez's aide here, said that the new contract with Inter Harvest also provides for contributions to the Robert F. Kennedy Health Plan (a joint trust fund), a general development fund and better working conditions.

With the dispute increasing lettuce prices across the nation, he estimated that the settlement itself would add only one cent to a head of lettuce.



The New York Times Studio (by Bill Allen)

Miss Julie Greenfield, right, goes over a list of lettuce brands carrying union label with Harry Roche, produce manager at a Key Food Store. Farm workers are here to press boycott of nonunion lettuce.