

UNION SEES A GAIN IN CHAVEZ JAILING

But Leaders Also Express Concern for His Health

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SALINAS, Calif., Dec. 5— Leaders of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee are convinced that the jailing of Cesar Chavez will aid their national boycott of lettuce that does not bear the union's label.

"The boycott organizers are raring to go," said one official. "They want blood."

Mr. Chavez, director of the organizing committee, was imprisoned here yesterday for disobeying an injunction to end the boycott. He was given an indefinite sentence, and will remain in jail until he calls off the boycott or is freed on a writ of habeas corpus.

Concern for Chavez

Union leaders were concerned, however, about the health and safety of Mr. Chavez, a frail man with a history of back trouble. He has never been imprisoned before for activities connected with the union, the first successful attempt to organize farm workers in this country.

Last night, union members set up a 24-hour vigil in a parking lot across the street from the Monterey County Jail. One farm worker, 57-year-old Modesto Negrete, said that he would fast "for the health of Cesar Chavez." Asked why he had decided to fast, Mr. Negrete pulled a Bible from his frayed blue jacket and said, "God has chosen me."

Mr. Negrete's act symbolized the zeal that has marked the farm workers' movement since its beginning five years ago in Delano, Calif. "What the growers don't understand," a local newsman said, "is that these people are not going to give up."

Difficult Campaign

But the union's campaign to organize the workers here in the Salinas Valley has not been easy.

Last summer, after the union finally won its long battle to unionize the state's grape industry, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters announced that it had signed up 100 growers in the Salinas Valley, which is known as the "salad bowl" of the nation.

The farm workers union maintained that the teamsters had offered "sweetheart" contracts that paid insufficient wages and gave the workers little "dignity or power." In August, Mr. Chavez called a strike.

Three major growers dropped the teamsters and signed with Mr. Chavez, but the rest stood firm. On Sept. 14, the growers still allied with the teamsters won a judgment in Superior Court here that Mr. Chavez's strike was illegal because it involved a jurisdictional dispute between the unions.

Boycott of Lettuce

The farm workers have learned that agricultural strikes are difficult to win. When their strike was outlawed, they turned their attention to a nationwide boycott of iceberg lettuce that did not bear the union's red and black label. On Oct. 8, an injunction was issued against the boycott, and it was that order that Mr. Chavez has disobeyed.

The boycott against lettuce has been somewhat different than the boycott against table grapes, which became a popular national cause in its last years. Rather than concentrating on broad consumer resistance, the boycotters have focused their attacks on the wholesalers and retailers who handle the lettuce.

"We know where all the lettuce goes," said one boycott strategist, "and when a truck leaves a supplier who handles nonunion lettuce, it arrives at the store complete with pickets."

Premium Price

Since union lettuce accounts for only about 18 per cent of the crops, the demand for it exceeds the supply, and union growers have been receiving a premium price.

A new wrinkle was introduced this week when the union disclosed that Bud Antle Inc., the valley's largest non-union grower, has close corporate ties with the Dow Chemical Corporation, which manufactures napalm.

The boycott organizers are considering a consumer campaign against Saran Wrap, one of Dow's commercial products, to increase the pressure on Bud Antle. Supporters of the union have picketed Dow offices in several dozen cities.

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