Leader of Farm Workers Says
Union Faces Life or Death Fight

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FRESNO, Calif., Sept. 21—The United Farm Workers Union is facing "a life or death struggle" for survival, Cesar Chavez, its president, said today.

The union, generally credited with the first successful effort to organize agricultural workers in this country, is "back where we were in 1965 to 1970," Mr. Chavez told delegates here to the union's fourth constitutional convention.

The union began fighting for "la causa" — economic justice for Chicanos and other field workers — in 1965. After a long boycott of grapes it won contracts to represent grape harvesters in 1970. However, when the contract expired this year the growers signed new contracts with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters instead of renegotiating with the farm workers.

California lettuce growers also signed contracts with the teamsters rather than with the U.F.W. Agricultural labor is not covered by the National Labor Relations Act and elections are not required for union representation.

Mr. Chavez in effect told his union today that it must virtually start over to win the right to represent the farm workers.

Police Role Alleged

The strike against the grape growers this summer, he said, was "broken" by the growers and teamsters working together with the help of local policemen and other authorities. As many as 70 of his union were murdered during the strike.

Meeting with reporters after today's sessions he said that the union had only about 10 contracts left representing some 18,000 workers in California and Florida.

Other officials of the union estimated that the number of workers under U.F.W. was even lower.

At its peak in 1972 the union had nearly 70,000 dues-paying members.

Mr. Chavez, who roused the 500 or so delegates with cries of "viva la huelga!"—long live the strike—said that the workers "knows that nothing will stop us as from having our union."

The teamsters and growers acted "shamefully" and "stand condemned," he said.

His union, he said, is now putting its case "to the court of last resort—the American public."

It is doing so, Mr. Chavez said, by asking the American people to boycott products har
ded under the new contracts. He called the "teammster sweetheart contracts."

Mr. Chavez, a short, black-haired man, said that the boycott was now in operation in nearly 60 cities in the United States and Canada.

Products being boycotted are lettuce, table grapes and all wines produced in the Gallo, Franzia and Guild wineries. Included in the boycott of brands in these wineries are Gallo's Thunderbird, Boone's Farm, Spain and Guild's Roma and Crestabianca.

Mr. Chavez said that he understood college students were starting to boycott these wines on several of its campuses around the country.

'Good Wines' Cited

Wines not being boycotted by the union, what Mr. Chavez described as "good wines," are Italian Swiss Colony, Almaden, Port and Mataro Brothers, Noviato di Los Gatos and Vio Del.

Mr. Chavez said that his union had more support for its boycott than it did in 1970. He also said that financial contributions coming in more than made up for the decline in dues payments that resulted from the lost contracts.

Mr. Chavez seems to be counting on the boycott to win back the union's right to represent the farm workers.

However, the head of the state A.F.L.-C.I.O., John Hennig, indicated during a speech to the convention today that a majority of the teamsters' union, which had to settle the contracts in direct negotiations with the teamsters' union, would not back the contracts by the right to boycott the growers and the right to administer the agreement. "The teamsters have broken agreements before," he said.