

IAA SPEAKER GIVES "INSIDE" ON GRAPE STRIKE

A story unparalleled by any other in the history of our fruit industry, captured undivided attention at IAA's meeting. It's called "The Great Grape Hoax"

FOR more than two hours, John G. Giumarra, Jr., held his audience breathless at the 74th annual convention of International Apple Association held in Philadelphia last month. Giumarra recounted the incredible story of how the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, in a vain effort to unionize grape field workers in Delano, Calif., manufactured a make-believe strike, and then sold The Great Grape Hoax to the Government and to the American public.

Giumarra knows because he is one of about 30 Delano grape growers pitted against the AFL-CIO. The future of the area's 5000 to 7000 field workers—as well as that for all of agriculture—is at stake.

The "strike" in California vineyards began in 1965. Giumarra believes the union realized it would need the support of civil rights and church groups in order to gain unionization "recognition" and for the effort to gain momentum. In addition, the union used John Steinbeck's famous book, *Grapes of Wrath*, in its publicity against the grape growers.

Thus, in 1965, the union brought in civil rights workers, "beatniks," and students who picketed the vineyards, said Giumarra. He added that some of these outsiders took jobs in the fields and, after a day or two of employment, walked out—declaring they were on strike.

Union Concentrates on One Grower

Thwarted in its efforts to organize all of Delano's farm workers, the union decided to concentrate on one vineyard. Its target was Giumarra. However, the union failed to realize that there are 11 Giumarra families involved with the vineyards. And family resources were mustered for the fight. John Giumarra, Jr., a recent law school graduate, was called from his law practice to return to Delano to lead the family's legal battle against the union.

In August, 1967, the union began picketing Giumarra vineyards. It restrained workers from entering the fields, threatened workers who persisted in crossing the picket lines to get to work, and harassed workers by following some to their homes.

Giumarra reported that there was considerable property loss. Fifteen

trucks and buses were damaged by Molotov cocktails. Water pumps costing as much as \$10,000 each were destroyed. Wires supporting the grapevines were cut. Roofing nails were spread to cause flat tires and it was necessary to employ two men full time just to repair the tires. A packing shed mysteriously burned down.

Poisonous propaganda was spread by the union to the extent that a seventh-grade teacher in a Catholic school in Detroit taught her 12-year-old students that workers in Delano were getting only 20 cents per hour. Letters from school children prompted by this misinformation were filled with hate. One 12-year-old wrote Giumarra, "You should stab yourself."

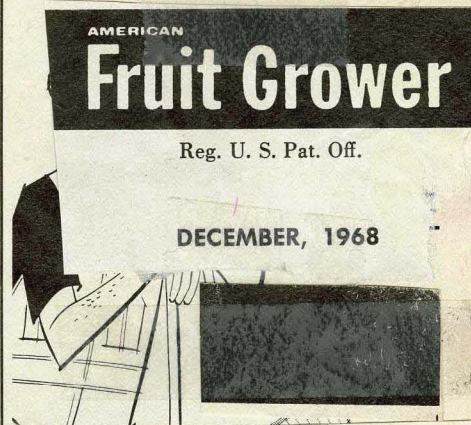
Wild Accusation Has No Founding

In accordance with California law, portable restrooms and washrooms are provided for Giumarra's 2000 field workers. Plenty of ice water is available to ease their thirst. However, a nun at an eastern church accused Giumarra of providing only one drinking cup for use by all 2000 workers. A wild accusation like this is typical of the exaggerations broadcast by the union in order to discredit growers, said Giumarra. In fact, in 1967, workers in Giumarra vineyards used 1.4 million paper cups.

Giumarra said that the 30 grape growers in Delano pay a basic wage of \$1.50 per hour and a bonus to field hands of 20 cents per box, which raises the per hour rate from \$2.10 to \$2.50. In addition to the basic wage rate and bonus, growers provide free transportation to the field and, for those without homes in the area, the growers provide food and shelter at reasonable cost.

Yet, the union has the majority of the U. S. and some foreign countries believing that California's farm workers are the poorest, least cared-for lot to ever walk the earth. Why? One reason, said Giumarra, is that the farm workers in Delano make more wages than some unionized help such as retail store clerks. And, therefore, can afford to pay union dues. Also, workers in the Delano area are, essentially, permanent residents—not migrants as the union claims—and thus are more susceptible to control.

Because the workers are not co-
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operating with the union, another tactic was tried: Hurt the grower by boycotting fresh table grapes. This, too, is failing.

Solution? "Prepare and Prevent"

Giumarra stated that growers are fighting the union because they cannot be subjected to the threat of a strike at harvesttime. Also, if unionization succeeds in Delano, then it will spread to producers of other crops in other parts of the country. The cost-price squeeze and the obtaining of credit from banks would be adversely affected. Unionization would force marginal farmers out of business. The prize, should the unions be successful in organizing all agricultural workers, is a potential \$100 million in annual union dues.

Giumarra outlined this course of action for growers who may face a situation similar to his: 1) meet with other growers and raise money; 2) retain an expert in labor law who can stop unions from engaging in illegal activity; 3) hire a man to co-ordinate efforts against the unions; 4) form a statewide group in order to bring pressure to bear to keep markets open; and 5) post security guards to prevent damage to equipment and buildings.

Giumarra suggested that a long-range program to meet the threat of unionization should include raising the minimum wage for agriculture. The present rate of \$1.15 per hour is just too low and adds fuel to the claims of those who say that growers are taking unfair advantage of workers. Since most agricultural work is seasonal, Giumarra suggests consideration of an unemployment insurance program for workers financed by Government and partially by deductions from wages.

And, finally, Giumarra recommended a farm labor act to give workers the right to collective bargaining and, at the same time, to protect growers from strikes at harvesttime—perhaps by providing cooling-off periods and other devices to protect growers from strikes which will ruin crops.

Such a farm labor act could also prohibit boycotts against what the farmers produce.