



Canadian Paperworkers Union CLC

Suite 320, 1010 St. Catherine Street West, Montreal, Quebec, (514) 871-9350

June 6, 1975

Neville Hamilton

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
TO THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Stephen Roberson
Montreal Boycott Director
United Farm Workers of America
1196 Alexandre de Sève
Montreal, Quebec

Dear Brother Stephen:

The following is a portfolio of newspaper clippings which were generated by the recent visit to Montreal by United Farm Workers President Cesar Chavez.

They include the following:

From the Montreal Gazette of Saturday, May 31, an article based on Friday's news conference.

From the Montréal Matin of Saturday, May 31, an article and photo emanating from the news conference of Friday.

From Le Jour of Saturday, May 31, an article and photo emanating from Friday's news conference.

From Le Devoir of Saturday, May 31, a photo emanating from Friday's news conference.

From The Gazette of Monday, June 2, a photo of the march and rally on Saturday.

From Le Jour of Monday, June 2, two articles and a photo based on our interview at Le Jour (one of these articles appeared on page 1 with a turn to page 3 for the second article).

... cont'd

From Le Devoir of Tuesday, June 3, editorial page comment based on our interview with a representative of the newspaper.

From The Gazette of Tuesday, June 3, an article and cartoon based on an interview with a representative of the newspaper (this was a full page break-page spread).

From The Gazette of Tuesday, June 3, a lead editorial.

From The Gazette of Tuesday, June 3, a Canadian Press story from Vancouver based on a statement from the Teamsters in connection with Brother Chavez' proposed meeting with Labour Minister John Munro.

From The Gazette of Wednesday, June 4, a Canadian Press story from Ottawa based on Brother Chavez' visit to Ottawa and his meeting with parliamentarians.

In addition, we got the following coverage on the electronic media:

News reports on regular newscasts of CJAD on Friday, May 30.

News reports on Radio Centre Ville (in Spanish) on Friday and Saturday, May 30 and 31.

On CBC Radio (CBM) a 20-minute interview with Wayne Grigsby on "Sounds Unlikely", Friday May 30.

A taped interview for re-broadcast by the CBC's International Service (in Spanish) directed to Mexico.

CBC television interview (CBMT-TV) with Laurier Lapierre on his talk show "Midnight". This interview will be re-broadcast over other CBC television outlets across Canada at a later date.

On CFCF-TV, an interview filmed at the rally on Saturday, which was telecast Saturday, May 31.

... cont'd

Stephen Roberson
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June 6, 1975

It may be that we have missed some items that were published or broadcast or telecast, but to the best of our knowledge at this time, this is the extent of our exposure.

Fraternally yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Neville Hamilton", written in a cursive style.

Neville Hamilton

NH/scd
opeiu:57

Enc.

Gazette, Saturday, 31/5/75

Chavez to lead march past in Dominion store protest

By BILL KOKESCH
of The Gazette

An injunction against the United Farm Workers Union (UFW), effectively eliminating the right of members to picket Dominion Stores Ltd. outlets here, was granted yesterday as union president Cesar Chavez sought support in Montreal for a UFW grape and lettuce boycott.

The boycott, aimed at forcing settlement of a two-year-old strike against California and Arizona growers, involves California grapes and iceberg lettuce sold at Dominion's 70 Montreal-area supermarkets. Other chains here have agreed not to stock the produce.

Dominion was granted the injunction by Superior Court Judge John A. Nolan as the union made plans for a demonstration at noon today at the chain's local headquarters on Cote des Neiges Rd.

Two pickets killed

In the wake of the court decision, the UFW vowed last night to expand the campaign against Dominion by asking shoppers to boycott the store, not just the grapes and lettuce.

"If Dominion Stores agreed today to boycott, then the strike would be over tomorrow. That's how important Montreal is," Chavez told a group of labor leaders here yesterday.

Noting Montreal is North America's fifth largest grape market, he said Dominion and Jewel Tea of Chicago "are the last two major chains not to agree to the boycott, and if they did the growers would be on their knees."

The UFW began the boycott in 1973, after two strikers were killed on picket lines in California during a dispute over alleged "sweetheart" contracts between growers and the Teamsters Union.

Prayer breakfast

Chavez, whose union saw as a landmark a bill just passed by the California legislature assuring secret-ballot union certification votes, is in Montreal on a tour sponsored by the Canadian Labor Congress.

At a morning prayer breakfast with leaders of Montreal's Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious communities yesterday, Chavez was presented with a 1006-page petition signed by area clergy and denouncing Dominion's use of the injunction to "stifle the farm worker's right to free speech in the boycott."

Last night, the union premiered its documentary film, "Fighting for Our Lives," at a fund-raising event at the Loyola Campus of Concordia University.

The march past Dominion headquarters today will begin at college St. Jean Brebeuf on Cote St. Catherine Rd.

Appui des religieux au groupe de Chavez

Montréal-Matin, Samedi, le 31 mai 1975

par André CHARRON

Si la chaîne d'alimentation Dominion veut continuer de vendre des raisins et des choux de la Californie, elle devra alors compter les religieux parmi ses adversaires!

M. César Chavez, président du syndicat des travailleurs agricoles unis, a reçu cette assurance hier, au moment où il arrivait à Montréal pour promouvoir la campagne de boycottage entreprise voilà près de deux ans contre Dominion. Au-delà de 1,000 religieux québécois, appartenant à différents cultes, ont en effet signé une pétition demandant aux citoyens du Québec de ne pas acheter les raisins et la laitue vendus par la puissante chaîne.

La visite de M. Chavez survient quelques heures avant que le tribunal se prononce sur la demande, par Dominion, de l'émission d'une injonction interdisant le piquetage devant ses magasins. L'on se souviendra, à cet effet, que des groupes avaient par le passé demandé aux clients de Dominion de ne pas acheter les raisins californiens.

Pour mieux sensibiliser la population québécoise, M. Chavez participera ce midi à une manifestation qui se déroulera devant le siège social des magasins Dominion, à Montréal.

● Pour un équilibre

Si la maison Dominion, qui demeure la seule chaîne au Québec à vendre ces produits américains, décidait elle aussi de les boycotter, "le problème serait alors réglé demain matin", de commenter M. Chavez. Un prêtre devait ajouter que "si Dominion donnait son appui, ça changerait la balance du pouvoir".

Les producteurs agricoles de la Californie seraient alors obligés de négocier d'égal à égal avec les 250,000 travailleurs impliqués. En ce sens, l'appui du Québec est très utile puisque le tiers de la production de raisins californiens est vendu ici.

D'autre part, que cet appui soit demandé par des religieux québécois, dont certains sont évêques, démontre une volonté commune des Eglises de se prononcer sur les problèmes sociaux.

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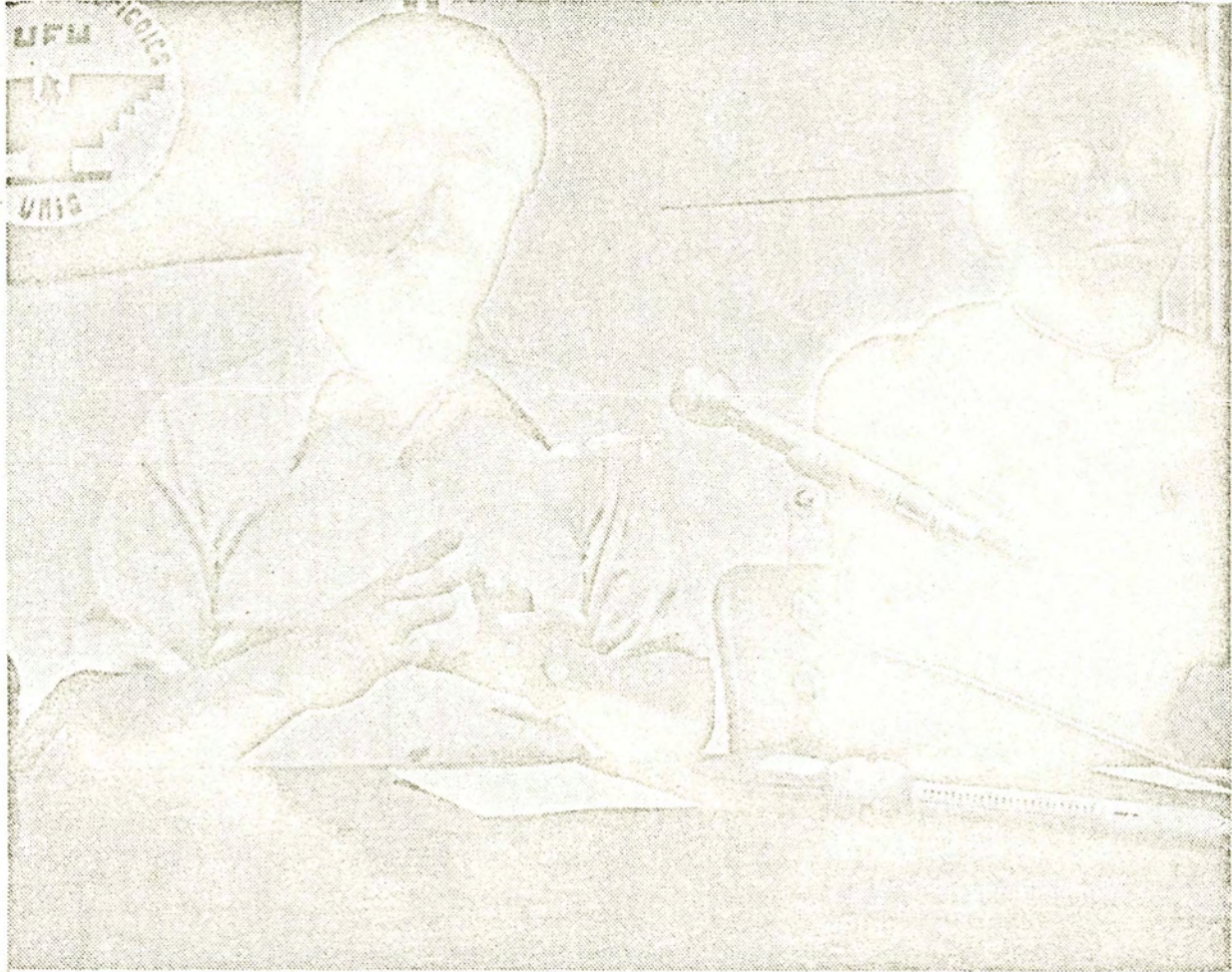


Photo Montréal-Matin — M.-A. BEAUDIN

César Chavez n'est plus seul à combattre la chaîne d'alimentation Dominion. Les religieux du Québec, dont le frère Robert Gaudet (à droite sur la photo), sont derrière lui.



(photo Claire Beaugrand-Champagne)

César Chavez a l'appui des chefs religieux de Montréal

César Chavez, le célèbre leader "chicano" du Syndicat des travailleurs agricoles unis des Etats-Unis, est arrivé à Montréal, hier, pour promouvoir la campagne de boycottage de la laitue et des raisins de Californie. Il a d'abord rencontré les chefs religieux de Montréal, à la salle paroissiale de la Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde. Ceux-ci ont alors émis une déclaration de solidarité assez spéciale. Le communiqué, signé notamment par le vicaire général du diocèse de Montréal, Jean-Marie Lafontaine, et l'évêque de Saint-Jean, Gérard-Marie Coderre, dénonce "la tentative des magasins Dominion d'étouffer la voix libre des travailleurs agricoles. En demandant une injonction empêchant les comités de soutien de piqueter ses magasins et de parler aux clients, la chaîne Dominion se fait complice des corporations agricoles qui cherchent à détruire le syndicat et à ramener les ouvriers à la servitude des temps passés". Aujourd'hui, à midi, M. Chavez participe à une manifestation qui partira du collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, chemin de la Côte Sainte-Catherine, pour se rendre au siège social des Magasins Dominion, 6825 Côte-des-Neiges.

Le Jour, samedi le 31 mai 1975



Cesar Chavez, le président des Travailleurs agricoles unis de la Californie, a rencontré les chefs religieux de la région métropolitaine hier à Montréal afin de promouvoir la campagne de boycottage des raisins et de la laitue de Californie. M. Chavez effectue présentement une tournée à travers le Canada. Il quitte Montréal demain.

(Photo Alain Renaud)



Gazette, Michael Dugas

They marched to honor Cesar

With United Farm Workers' president Cesar Chavez included among the marchers, some 600 Montreal-area supporters of the California grape and lettuce boycott head west on Cote St. Catherine Saturday toward the Quebec headquarters of Dominion

Stores Ltd. Dominion remains the only area food chain that has not agreed to honor the boycott, resulting from the use of non-union labor in the fields. The protesters marched past Dominion's main office on Cote des Neiges Rd.

Cesar Chavez:

They got money, we got time

Every state in this union us migrants has been,
And we'll work in this fight and we'll fight till we win.

—Woody Guthrie, Pastures of Plenty

By ROBERT S. NEAL
of The Gazette

That song was written in the early 1940s to dramatize the plight of California's migrant workers. Another 20 years passed before a movement developed to attempt to overcome their plight.

The man at the head of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) seems an unlikely leader of a social movement. Small and wiry, straight black hair coerced into a perfect part along the left ridge of his brown head. Deep eyes that sparkle when he laughs.

The hand offered in greeting has lost the callouses of two decades in the fields; the small hand seems hardly strong enough to have twisted thousands of bunches of grapes from their vines. But his dress is the habit of the fields—brown chino pants, blue checkered shirt, white socks, crepe soul brown ankle boots.

He is said to be uncomfortable in fancier clothes and jittery in large cities but Cesar Chavez was relaxed during an 80 minute interview here Saturday.

Chavez had cause to relax: On Thursday the California General Assembly passed by 64 to 10 a bill enabling all farm workers to vote for a union to represent them or for no union. The law, which takes effect Aug. 28, could be Chavez' greatest triumph since he began organizing the UFW in 1962. And it could be the end of the two year struggle with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters for the right to represent 250,000 farm workers.

Victory or no, Chavez isn't relaxing the strike against California growers of iceberg lettuce and table and wine grapes. And he isn't easing the boycott of their products in supermarkets across the continent and in Europe and Latin America.

"Between now and then (Aug. 28) the boycott will stay on because if we win the election then we've got to negotiate and write a contract.

"So we want to keep the pressure on so that if we win and when we win, we'll be able to negotiate a contract for the workers. If we win the elections and we can't get contracts, the boycott will stay on until we do.

"But if we do get a contract, of course, the moment the contract's signed, we'll call off the boycott."

Until the boycott ends, Chavez and his supporters urge consumers to avoid iceberg lettuce. But how do you give up iceberg lettuce? The UFW says substitute other types of lettuce,

"If you move away from iceberg, you hurt the industry. The industry can't substitute other things for iceberg. We were worried that when we get all the people to eat romaine, well, they'd plant romaine.

"But they can't because those other lettuces don't last as long. The advantage of iceberg is that it has lasting power and it's easier to pack: it's round so you can pack it. Romaine is harder to grow and takes longer. Iceberg grows in all weather."

Dig the beets from your ground, pick the grapes from your vine,

To place on your table the light sparkling wine.

"You know there are growers in Delano (Calif.) who sell 100 per cent of their grapes in Canada for winemaking, especially in Toronto and Montreal. And because of the boycott, grape concentrate has become cheaper than grapes for winemaking."

The boycott of grapes in Canada has focused on Dominion Stores Ltd., the only large Montreal chain that has refused to keep off its shelves the grapes that will start coming in soon with the May harvest in California. Much of Chavez' time in Montreal—centred on the first Canadian showing of Fighting For Our Lives, a documentary film about the 1973 strike that arose with the dispute with the teamsters—was given to organizing and demonstrating against Dominion.

The effort against Dominion was set back with a Superior Court injunction Friday prohibiting UFW backers from taking the boycott within 100 feet of any Dominion property. About 600 marchers Saturday protested Dominion's refusal to keep grapes off its shelves.

A Chavez aide believes Dominion's position is linked to its corporate ownership. Dominion is owned by Argus Corporation of Toronto which owns Massey Ferguson, a farm machinery manufacturer dependant on growers for its income.

"Or they're just stubborn," Chavez adds.

Chavez and the growers disagree on the boycott's effect. But last month as California Governor Jerry Brown was acting as mediator among UFW, Teamsters and the growers, 35 agribusiness leaders in Brown's office applauded Chavez' voice on the telephone accepting the compromises that led to enactment of the farm labor law.

"Brown wanted the law and he began to push for it and the boycott helped," Chavez said here. "The growers were fed up with the boycott and they were fed up with the teamsters. One of the growers told Jerry, 'You know we're going to have a rough time with you guys (UFW), we know how sticky you are but after about three or four years, after we get the rough spots off, we'll be able to live with you like other growers are living with you now."

"Besides, the teamsters don't represent the workers and they don't know what the hell's going on in the fields, they don't know what's happening."

Chavez' UFW charged that growers who signed contracts with the union in 1967 and 1970 brought the teamsters in during 1973 negotiations and signed contracts with the teamsters to represent farm workers, illegal contracts because the teamsters weren't invited in by the workers. One poll by a church group showed about a seven to one preference among workers for the UFW over the teamsters.

Sitting on a sofa in the living room of a Montreal labor leader, Chavez dominates with his clear but soft voice a roomful of people coming, going, sitting, listening. His hands lead him into his statements, his voice sometimes trails off leaving a thought unsaid but understood. Twice in 80 minutes he gets up and paces briefly then returns to the sofa. He takes his breakfast during the interview—a cup of tea with two spoonfuls of honey, rejecting all offers for a meal of more substance.

He talks about the dreams of farm workers.

"They're just like any other workers; they wanna have a little security. I think their big dream is to have security in their jobs.

"We go nuts if somebody gets fired; somebody gets fired, to us that's the death penalty. We poll his fellow workers and if they say the firing was unjust, we'll go through everything, we'll get him back one way or the other. We'll raise holy hell with the employer until he puts the man back on."

So for many agricultural workers it isn't necessary to move around looking for work unless cheaper workers are brought in to underbid the resident laborers. That's what has happened for years through the institution of the labor contractors, who provide growers with an agreed on number of workers. The contractor collects a fee from the grower and usually from the worker. As merchants of labor, they constantly bid down the price of farm work.

"We can replace them almost any time," Chavez says of the contractors. "In grapes they have jillions of labor contractors, small guys. A guy will start out as a worker and after, say, two or three seasons, the employer will say, 'Look if you bring me 10 or 15 workers, I'll give you a commission. That makes him a contractor. So all over there are guys with 10 workers, 15, 25; some people are bosses with six workers.

"In the first years of the contract in grapes, we couldn't understand why the growers fought so hard for the contractors. Here's what we found out:

"If you're a resident of Delano working grapes for 20 years, there's competition for your job. The contractor brings in his crew, the local people are going to tell him 'Go to hell. I have to do the winter job of pruning and tying and do all the dirty work for the hourly rate. When the piece rate work (picking grapes) comes, I want a better deal, I want to be first."

"That was the number one reason for the fight for hiring halls."

With the seniority system guaranteeing first jobs to the local members who stay home to work, migration is reduced. When contractors or growers undercut the contract (Chavez says growers sometimes do so unknowingly) by getting non-seniority workers into the fields, UFW stewards "raise holy hell with them, stop the crew, fight back."

At the height of picking neither the grower nor the worker can afford lost time due to such disputes. Chavez advocates instant arbitration: "Have a full time arbitrator so that if there's a beef in the field the arbitrator goes to the field right now and gets it worked out.

"We have it have in one ranch and it's working perfectly." He tells of a Delano grower who laid off UFW members and the next day brought in 80 other workers at a lower wage rate. The arbitrator was called in under the terms of the contract and ordered a full day's pay for 80 UFW members let go to make room for the 80 illegal immigrants.

California, Arizona, we make all your crops,
Then it's up north to Oregon to gather your hops.

Reducing the travel of farm workers also reduces the need for migrant camps, which Chavez calls "company housing of the worst sort." Starting with John Steinbeck's brutal novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, public awareness of farm workers' circumstances has been focused on the migrant labor camps.

Yet, Chavez says, eliminating the camps may be impossible because seasonal peaks in agriculture mean some workers will always have to travel to meet labor demands. "No other union has the problem we have as severely as we have it," he says.

Chavez, when the new law takes effect and the UFW starts negotiating new contracts, says the union will have

three priority demands the growers must meet. "Messing around with the hiring, not contributing to the welfare fund and messing around with safety measures have to be" prohibited in the contract.

If he wins these demands, the UFW may have established itself among industrial trade unions. After 13 years organizing and striking and boycotting and, once, going on a fast to dramatize to members his insistence on nonviolence, has Chavez ever considered abandoning nonviolence?

"No. Just consider the pragmatic side, let alone the philosophical. One of the pressures of nonviolence we discovered after a while is that it's so single minded. We don't spend time or money defending ourselves from criminal charges. We spend all our time fighting the good battle.

"For instance, the union has spent very little defending me or other union leaders; other groups get caught in all these

problems. It becomes a big 'Free Cesar' movement so you spend two years freeing me but what happens to the organizing drive? Then also when the other side commits violence against us, we document it. Fighting For Our Lives started out as documentation of teamster and police actions against us.

"Nonviolence puts us on the offensive immediately and it gives us concentration. We don't have to worry about defending people. All the charges are dropped eventually so we've got time to just do nothing but fight."

Time to fight. At one point in the film, Chavez tells teamster organizers: "We can be here 10 years, 30, five." Time has been Chavez' chief ally, his most potent weapon.

"We got time; they got money. That was the biggest lesson I learned early in the game. I told the workers, 'Look, we can win with time.' People tend to be impatient but one thing we've been able to show our people is that patience really pays off.

"Today they understand by experience that time is our best friend. 'Oh yeah, it'll take time but we'll win.' So you never get yourself into this demoralizing spiral (of impatience) that can be so disastrous.

"Dolores (Huerta, UFW vice president) and I did years of research. We read everything that was written about strikes in California; we must have talked to 1,000 people who were involved in strikes. We began to see some real patterns. So when we started organizing workers we had an idea what the patterns were and we were trying to fight against them and, by gosh, most of the time we were right.

"For instance, we found out that in the strikes from 1913 to 1960 never was there an organizing drive before a strike. The workers would just get fed up and walk out on strike and the unions would rush to support 'em and it was like walking on thin ice.

"We said no. In the beginning we said OK, no strikes. This union doesn't strike until we're ready: We did an awful lot of organizing, just patient organizing and educating."

When on strike, the lesson of time was applied again. "We learned that a strike is a seven day fever. It rises then it's gone after seven days. Our theory was to find a way to make it rise a second time and not go down."

With the new California law, Chavez and the UFW look forward to a farm worker who lives in his own home—his seniority can be used as collateral to buy a house—most of the year instead of living on the road, which means his children can go to school, the same school, all year. The worker will be paid a wage Chavez says will be "three or four times" the 85 and 90 cents an hour he was paid in the early days of the UFW. The farm worker will work a standard work week.

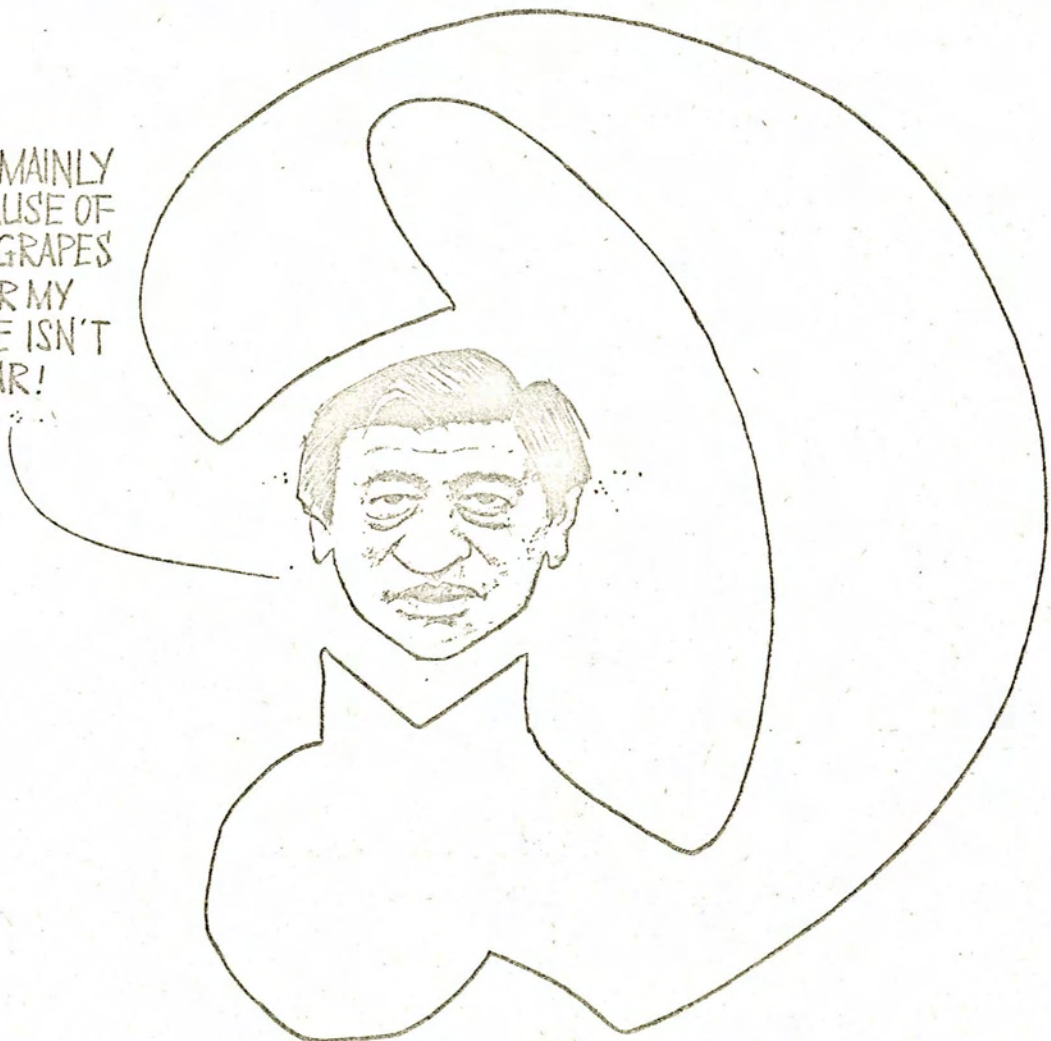
Some of the workers are celebrating the law while Chavez is in Canada pushing the boycott.

"You should see what's happening. They've been having a fiesta out there. I came by Coachella last Sunday and the moment I got there suddenly there were 200 people there just jumping up with joy— carrot workers, date workers, citrus workers—and they would come say, 'Does the law apply to us, can we have a union?' And we said 'Sure.' They were mighty happy."

With the law, the workers may become, as Chavez says, "just like any other worker."

It's a mighty mighty rough row that my poor hands have hoed.

My poor feet have travelled one hot dusty road.



IT'S MAINLY
BECAUSE OF
THE GRAPES
.....OR MY
NAME ISN'T
CESAR!

MATHER '75

Tuesday, June 3, 1975

The Gazette

Boycott gets results

Things are finally looking up for Cesar Chavez, in Montreal last weekend to press his indefatigable campaign on behalf of California farm workers. Last week the California legislature passed a bill that essentially gives farm labor in that state the rights enjoyed by industrial workers in other sections of the country.

The bill is an important victory for Mr. Chavez, his followers, and the people of California, for it will bring some order and justice into an area where both have been conspicuously absent. But the victory does not end the war, and it is now more important than ever for Mr. Chavez's supporters to continue their boycott of California grapes and iceberg lettuce until the issue is brought to conclusion.

A decisive battle seems to be shaping up at the time of the fall harvest. That is when the secret-ballot elections will be held, to insure maximum participation. Elections will be held only on petition of the workers, and no

union can begin negotiating a contract until it is certified. The elections should settle the issue of union legitimacy and help reduce the sweetheart contracts of the sort negotiated by growers and Teamsters to freeze out the United Farm Workers.

The UFW still has the big job of winning the elections and negotiating contracts. Only then will it be in a position to call off the boycotts.

Canada is important to the UFW because Montreal and Toronto are two of the five largest North American markets for California grapes and lettuce. But most large stores—Dominion is the exception—are going along and not even stocking California grapes. As for the iceberg lettuce, surely it is among the world's easiest items not to buy. It is a product developed solely for producers' convenience, and it tastes like cardboard. A future problem may be who will eat it after the boycott is over.

Chavez visit angers union

VANCOUVER— (CP) —The Teamsters Union sent a telegram yesterday to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau protesting Labor Minister John Munro's plan to officially greet Cesar Chavez, spokesman for the United Farm Workers union, at the beginning of an eastern Canada speaking tour.

If Munro goes ahead with the greeting at the Parliament buildings today with MPs from other parties "we expect to follow with a demand he (Munro) be removed as minister of labor," said Senator Ed Lawson, a Teamsters official.

The Teamsters are in dispute with the United Farm Workers regarding representation of California agricultural field workers.

The Montreal Gazette

Tuesday, June 3, 1975

Cesar Chavez déclare au JOUR: Sans l'entêtement de Dominion, la cause des "Chicanos" serait gagnée

par Paule Beaugrand-
Champagne

Les marchés Dominion sont maintenant les seuls, sur 1200 entreprises d'alimentation à Montréal, à refuser de boycotter les raisins et la laitue de la Californie. S'ils acceptaient, la cause des ouvriers agricoles de cet Etat américain serait gagnée comme elle l'a été en 1970. C'est Dominion qui maintient ouvert le marché canadien pour les employeurs des ranchs dont les ouvriers se battent, depuis près de 25 ans, pour leur reconnaissance syndicale.

"Dominion achète les raisins rouges de la vallée de Coachella, située au coeur du désert à 130 milles au sud de Los Angeles; ces raisins se vendent surtout au Canada. Si Dominion ne maintenait pas son attitude agressive à l'égard de notre syndicat, le marché du raisin serait fermé et les industriels agricoles vaincu."

C'est ce que nous déclarait hier, lors d'une entrevue au JOUR, le président des United Farm Workers of America, Cesar Chavez, actuellement en tournée au Canada pour une

dizaine de jours. Il est venu défendre auprès des Canadiens la cause des milliers de travailleurs des ranchs agricoles de la Californie, du Texas, de la Floride, de l'Arizona et de la Caroline du Nord, entre autres.

Samedi, M. Chavez a participé à Côte-des-Neiges à une manifestation silencieuse devant les bureaux de Dominion, dont le siège social est en Ontario. Le silence des 800 à 1000 participants a, paraît-il, fortement impressionné les policiers qui ne sont pas intervenus malgré

le fait que Dominion ait obtenu une injonction interdisant tout piquetage ou manifestation à moins de 100 pieds de ses propriétés.

Montréal est la cinquième ville en Amérique du Nord (après trois villes américaines et Toronto) qui achète le plus de raisins de la Californie. En 1970, les ouvriers agricoles de cet Etat ont gagné la signature d'une convention collective grâce au succès du boycottage canadien de leurs produits. La présente bataille dure depuis 1973.

Cesar Chavez est un ou-

vrier agricole qui s'est lancé dans l'organisation syndicale de ses confrères en 1962; après avoir tenté d'organiser politiquement les "Chicanos" (immigrés mexicains), il s'est rendu compte que leur problème était d'abord économique et qu'il fallait vaincre leur pauvreté avant d'aborder la politique. En 1970, Chavez devenait directeur de la nouvelle union, les United Farm Workers of America; après l'affiliation à l'AFL-CIO en 1972, il en devenait le président.

Autres informations, page 3

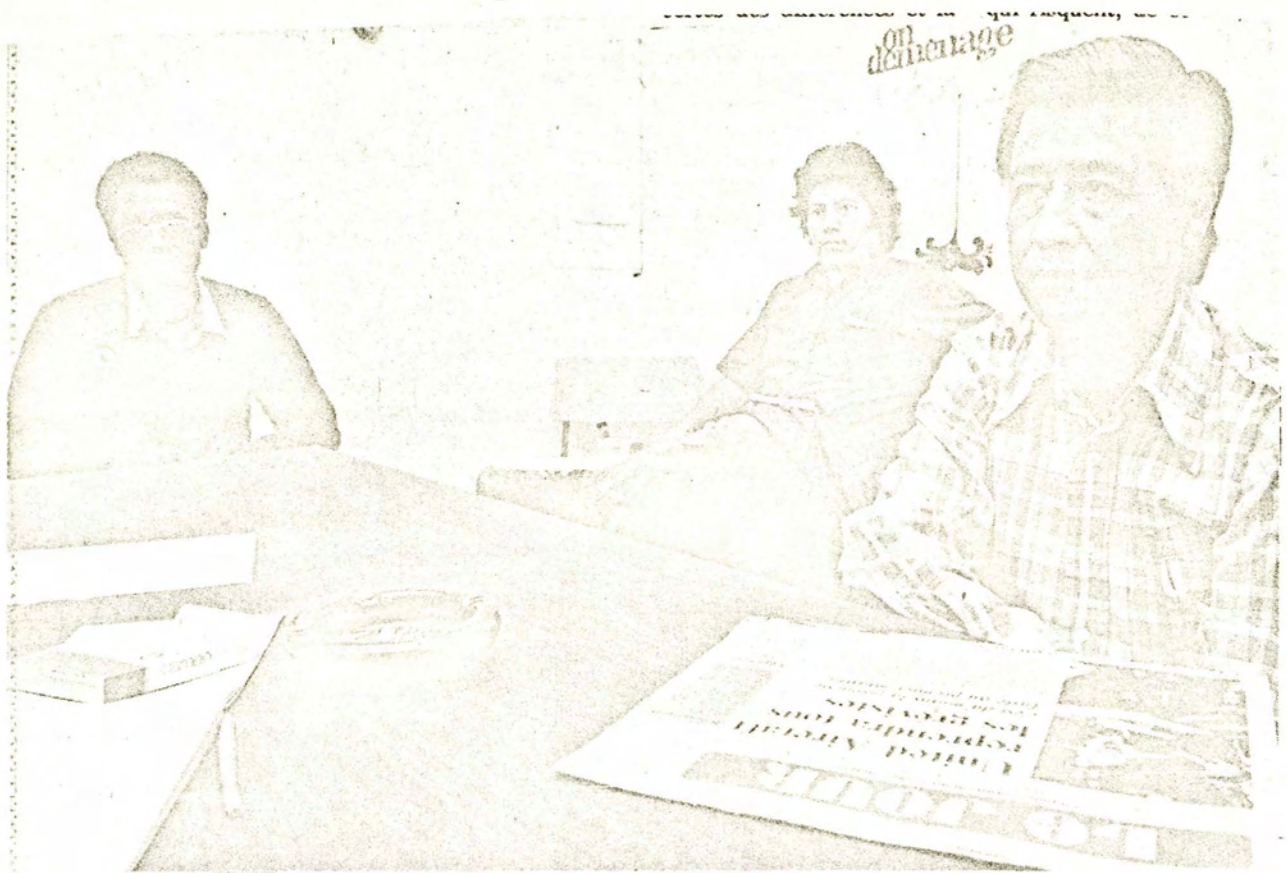


Photo Pierre Bobsclair

A droite, Cesar Chavez lors de sa visite au JOUR hier. Au fond, à gauche, un sympathisant et militant québécois, et à droite, un des confrères californiens de Chavez.

Le Jour, lundi, le 2 juin 1975

Le boycottage du raisin et de la laitue de Californie doit continuer

... même si les ouvriers agricoles ont gagné la reconnaissance syndicale

par Paule Beaugrand-Champagne

Si les industriels agricoles de la Californie sont dorénavant obligés de négocier avec le syndicat représentant leurs employés des ranchs de raisins et de laitue, ils ne sont quand même pas obligés de signer des conventions collectives avec eux. C'est pourquoi il est important que le boycottage de ces produits continue: pour faire pression encore plus avant sur ces employeurs.

L'Etat de Californie vient tout juste d'adopter une loi autorisant les employés agricoles à se syndiquer comme ils l'entendent et obligeant les employeurs à les reconnaître et à négocier avec eux.

Il y avait 24 ans que ces travailleurs — pour la plupart des Chicanos (immigrés mexicains), des Porto-Ricains et des Noirs — se battaient pour être syndicalement reconnus. Lorsque, la semaine dernière, l'Etat a adopté cette loi en précédent dans l'histoire des Etats-Unis, ils en sont restés bouche-bée. Rien n'annonçait un tel revirement.

"Je crois que les employeurs agricoles en avaient assez des grèves et des boycottages de leurs produits, nous déclarait hier Cesar Chavez, président des United Farm Workers of America (AFL-CIO), qui mène lui-même cette lutte depuis quelque 13 ans.

"Ils en avaient aussi assez des Teamsters, même si ceux-ci ont tenté de représenter nos travailleurs en parfaite entente avec ces mêmes employeurs. Ils ne s'y attendaient pas lorsqu'ils ont fait venir les Teamsters, mais depuis 15 ans, nous avons fait un assez bon travail auprès

des travailleurs pour que ceux-ci rejettent les Teamsters, cette union pourrie que l'AFL-CIO a reniée. Nos travailleurs sont parmi les plus militants des Etats-Unis. Je crois que c'est la première fois que les Teamsters connaissent une telle défaite".

Même les "scabs"

Tous les travailleurs agricoles, au travail au moment où on demandera à l'Etat de tenir un vote d'accréditation, auront droit de vote. Même les "scabs", venant du Mexique, que les industriels ont fait entrer illégalement aux Etats-Unis.

M. Chavez estime que si la demande est déposée fin août — au plus fort de la récolte — le vote au scrutin secret pour le choix d'un syndicat devrait pouvoir se tenir vers le 4 ou le 5 septembre. Les Teamsters ont déjà annoncé leur intention de déposer aussi une demande d'accréditation syndicale; le vote se tiendra donc entre eux et les United Farm Workers.

"Nous avons plus d'organiseurs que les Teamsters mais moins d'argent. La lutte sera dure et il ne nous sera pas facile de gagner, même si nous sommes à peu près certain de l'emporter", disait hier M. Chavez. Les Teamsters ont annoncé qu'ils mettraient 1000 organisateurs syndicaux dans le coup, et \$10 millions. Les United Farm Workers peuvent cependant compter sur l'aide d'organiseurs syndicaux d'autres unions américaines et même canadiennes. Plusieurs se sont déjà offerts.

Les United Farm Workers of America sont convaincus, s'ils gagnent ce vote, de pouvoir ensuite

syndiquer à peu près tous les autres ouvriers agricoles des Etats-Unis, surtout ceux qui travaillent aussi sur des ranchs de culture des raisins et de laitue. Ils n'ont pour l'instant que 280,000 membres sur une possibilité de 3,000,000, et surtout dans l'Etat de Californie, alors que de tels travailleurs se retrouvent dans au moins huit autres états américains.

Le premier gain à faire dans les conventions collectives, après le vote d'accréditation, sera la reconnaissance de l'ancienneté pour que les travailleurs "illégaux" et les "scabs" retournent chez eux et laissent la place aux travailleurs agricoles américains dont c'est le premier et le seul métier, et ce, souvent depuis trois ou quatre générations.

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cont'd

À l'école du mouvement de Chavez

Le passage de Cesar Chavez à Montréal aura marqué un sommet ici dans la campagne de boycottage du raisin et de la laitue de Californie. Depuis une douzaine d'années que les travailleurs agricoles poursuivent leur lutte avec une patience et une résolution inébranlables, malgré les coups parfois sanglants qu'ils durent essuyer, non seulement leur cause s'est acquise des appuis croissants, mais leurs méthodes en imposent à plus d'un militant de l'action syndicale et politique.

Rien n'est définitif dans ces luttes, mais les acquis récents valent d'être soulignés. En Californie même, sous diverses pressions, le gouverneur de l'Etat a dû intervenir et le compromis législatif qui a été voté en session spéciale vendredi passé marque à n'en pas douter une victoire pour les Travailleurs agricoles unis.

Les élections qui doivent avoir lieu sont ouvertes, certes, aussi bien aux militants de Chavez qu'aux organisateurs des Teamsters, que les planteurs avaient fait entrer dans les champs pour saper le mouvement mexicain.

Mais le président des TAU ne cache pas sa ferme conviction que si les élections peuvent se dérouler librement, son syndicat va l'emporter aisément sur les Teamsters. La raison en saute aux yeux: les Teamsters sont des étrangers pour ces travailleurs ruraux, principalement mexicains, qui ont dû se regrouper entre eux à tous égards, comme d'autres minorités ethniques, pour survivre dans la jungle américaine.

Mais indépendamment du conflit intersyndical qui se pose, la loi californienne est un précédent en faveur des travailleurs agricoles. Que le syndicalisme ait été reconnu si tard confirme les difficultés d'organisation dans ce milieu. Le succès remporté ne met que davantage en lumière les méthodes de Chavez.

A Montréal, cinquième marché en importance d'Amérique du Nord pour les compagnies du raisin, le succès eut été complet si les Magasins Dominion avaient accepté de se joindre au mouvement suivi par la majorité des marchands détaillants du Québec. Cette compagnie a préféré la ligne dure et le recours à l'injonction contre les piqueurs pacifiques attirés par son propre refus. Loin de briser le mouvement, cette difficulté, importante en

raison de la place prise par cette chaîne alimentaire, a donné lieu à un élargissement du cercle des appuis.

Plus de mille personnes des milieux religieux les plus divers et de plusieurs confessions ont endossé en effet la déclaration émise le mois dernier par six dirigeants spirituels du Canada invitant au boycott et déplorant l'incompréhension manifestée par Dominion. La compagnie n'avait sans doute pas envisagé une semblable tournure des événements. Il n'en tient qu'à elle de réviser sa position et de hâter le règlement californien en faisant elle aussi sentir aux planteurs que l'ancien régime ne peut plus tenir.

Entre-temps, s'il faut pour boycotter le raisin et la laitue, boycotter complètement les Magasins Dominion, nul ne devrait avoir d'hésitation à le faire.

On pouvait entretenir bien des doutes sur les chances de succès d'une campagne syndicale essentiellement fondée sur la persuasion et les manifestations non violentes. Ainsi que Chavez l'a expliqué ces jours derniers, son syndicat a mis en oeuvre divers moyens, dont la grève, l'action juridique, la persuasion d'homme à homme, qui ne sont pas négligeables même si les conditions locales s'y prêtent difficilement. Mais de tous, c'est le moyen du boycott qui s'est révélé le plus puissant.

Manifestement, l'arme de la consommation est pour ainsi dire "absolue", mais justement, c'était la plus éloignée des travailleurs mexicains de la Californie que leur culture, la distance, les conditions de vie éloignaient des grands marchés de la prospère et insouciant Amérique.

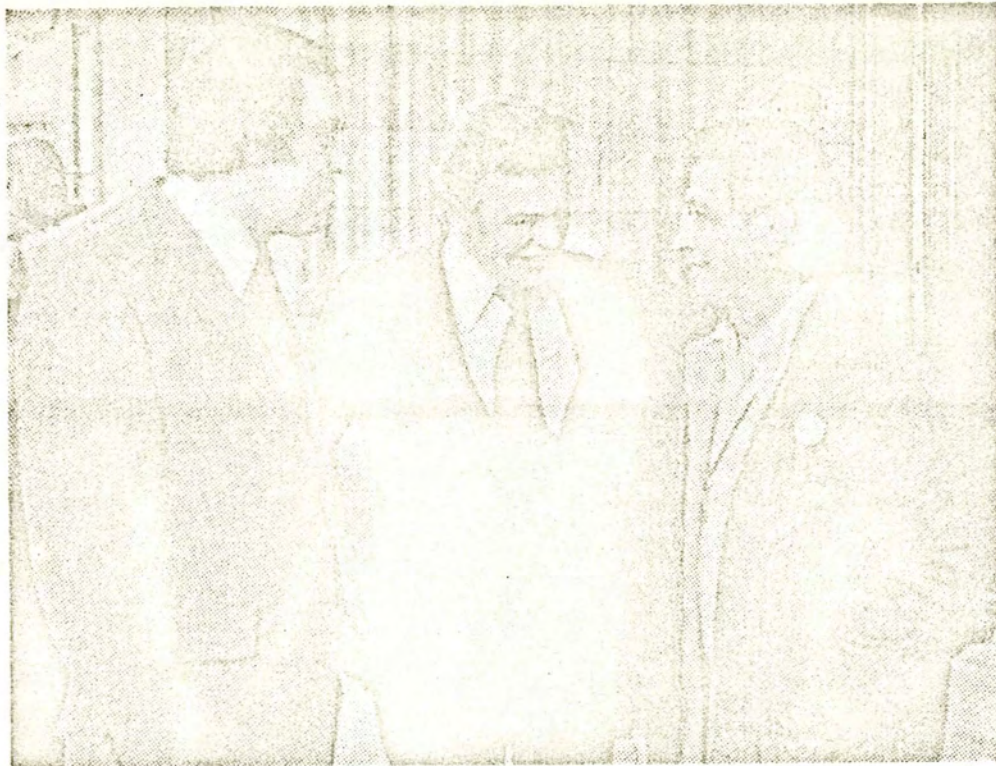
Or le succès est venu. Loin d'être éphémère il grandit avec les difficultés; et les résultats sont à la mesure de l'effort d'éducation et de persuasion qu'il a fallu déployer. Nombre de syndicats, évidemment, appuient le mouvement. Les milieux religieux, qui condamnent d'ordinaire les procédés violents sans toujours être prompts à endosser les moyens pacifiques, ont donné une réponse fort satisfaisante. Même la ménagère de la classe moyenne, qui devait être à mille lieux d'une telle cause, s'est prise de sympathie pour ces immigrants bafoués de l'Amérique contemporaine.

Inspiré par Gandhi et par les succès de Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez avoue qu'il n'avait pas non plus le choix et que la nécessité imposa aussi aux travailleurs du raisin et de la laitue le recours aux méthodes non violentes. Ce courant, on l'imagine, n'est pas majeur dans les forces qui s'affrontent en Amérique du nord. Qu'elles se déroulent aux portes des usines ou devant les tribunaux, les épreuves de force prennent le plus souvent pour acquis que les protagonistes sont seuls et solitaires dans leur lutte et que les citoyens ordinaires y sont indifférents sinon hostiles.

Ceux qui pourtant, ici comme ailleurs, ont fait l'effort d'un travail d'éducation à la solidarité ont souvent été surpris par l'ampleur et la chaleur des réponses recueillies. On parle avec raison de la passivité et de l'impuissance dans lesquelles se sentent emprisonnés les "gens ordinaires". Mais, une fois précisée un objectif valable et compréhensible à la majorité, l'on se surprend du potentiel qu'elle cache.

Pour s'astreindre à cette discipline exigeante, il fallait cependant que le mouvement des travailleurs agricoles mexicains soit davantage qu'un simple syndicalisme d'affaires. Le mouvement, explique Chavez, fait un avec ses membres. Il ne se contente pas de leur indiquer où défendre leurs droits, il va les réclamer avec eux, aux bureaux d'immigration, aux postes de police, dans les services de santé, etc. Contre la discrimination latente ou manifeste qui accueille les Chicanos comme d'autres travailleurs "de couleur", l'organisation syndicale tend naturellement à s'identifier avec les aspirations de ses membres et de leurs familles.

En appuyant pareil mouvement, l'on n'aide pas seulement un peuple de quelques millions de travailleurs agricoles à enfin obtenir justice, mais l'on puise tout autant à sa sagesse. Chavez, un brin de maligne fierté dans l'oeil, avec aussi la sereine assurance que les Chicanos ont acquis des Indiens du sud, raconte une piquante anecdote de cette reconquête en Amérique démocratique. Aux commerçants qui espèrent un effondrement de la détermination des travailleurs agricoles, le gouverneur de l'Etat adresse un amical avertissement: ils ne lâcheront pas. "Why?" demandent-ils. "You just can't beat the Vietcong". Ils comprennent et n'en demandent pas davantage. Il n'en tient qu'aux consommateurs d'ici d'inculquer la même conviction aux magasins Dominion.



UPI

United Farm Workers' Representative Cesar Chavez, right, met with federal Labor Minister John Munro and NDP leader Ed Broadbent, left, during a visit to Ottawa.

Chavez vows UFW backing for Canadian farm workers

OTTAWA — (CP) — The United Farm Workers of America (UFW) would support any attempts by Canadian agricultural workers to form unions, UFW president Cesar Chavez said yesterday.

Chavez, touring eastern Canada to publicize the UFW's boycott of California grapes and lettuce, told a news conference that such support can take the form of money from the UFW and

help in organizing a United States boycott of Canadian produce.

However, he said he was not familiar with the farm labor situation in Canada and the Canadian farm workers would have to do their own organizing.

"It would be presumptuous of us to impose ourselves on them . . . to tell them that they need a union."

Chavez' visit to Ottawa in-

cluded a lunch meeting with Labor Minister John Munro and a group of MPs and a demonstration at a local Dominion Stores Ltd. supermarket. Dominion is the chief target of the boycott in eastern Canada.

At a breakfast meeting in Hull with local clergy, Bishop Adolphe Proulx, of the Roman Catholic Hull diocese, called on his parishioners to boycott Dominion stores.

Bishop Proulx said later in an interview he was prompted to make the plea because Dominion acquired a court injunction last week in Quebec which prohibits picketing of its stores.

"Dominion stores are helping the big California growers exploit the farm workers . . . I am asking all Christians who are aware of the injustices and who want to present some solidarity with the poor farm workers . . . not to shop at Dominion."

Chavez said Munro indicated general support for the attempts to improve the farm workers' conditions.