

L'EGLISE DE MONTREAL

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Grapes of Wrath

The conflict, at first view, seems little to concern us. It is happening far from us: in the south-west of the United States, farm workers struggle and strike in the vineyards and lettuce fields. So many workers' problems very near us are confrontation points which should preoccupy us more. And however, the cause of these far-off workers questions us personally.

First we consume products which are fruits of their miserable work. Montreal is the third city, after New York and Los Angeles, in the number of grape sales, the tenth city for that of a certain variety of American lettuce [Iceberg or head lettuce]. We support without really realizing it, the exploitation of which over two million labourers are victims. A certain easy food circumstance here profits by underpaid work, painfully accomplished elsewhere. That questions us.

Also we discover, in a time and in a country of very great wealth, intolerable situations affecting low-income workers to whom are refused the most elementary rights: security, safe working conditions, human consideration. Some lines sum this up further on. We are really faced with exploitation of man by man, such that we scarcely imagine in our North America of 1973. That revolts us.

Our Christian conscience rebels before the fate befalling humans that one scorns in that way. We want to tell and to bring their cause to the people in our midst, through the joint responsibility of men. The part they ask us to take by boycott measures is very little compared to the long fights that these workers conduct to accede to an essential dignity.

Our concrete gestures should translate the support that we bring to this cause.

Jean-Paul Rivet

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