

UFW Boycott Gains Support of Bishops

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, in their first such combined action, Friday backed a summer boycott in support of demands by Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers (UFW) for free union elections among field hands.

The bishops called for a nationwide boycott of table grapes and head lettuce until elections are held for farm laborers to determine which, if any, union they want to represent them.

The action, approved without an audible dissenting voice, came on the closing day of the week-long annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

It was the first time they had thrown their collective weight behind a particular tactic in behalf of a specific labor group's cause.

Last Resort
"There was no other avenue open," John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia, president of the bishops, told a news conference. "It was a last resort measure."

Chavez's union has been locked in a drawout struggle with growers in California and the southwestern United States and the Teamsters Union, claiming the Teamsters have signed collusive "sweetheart"

See U.S., age 12, Col. 4

U.S. Bishops Set Support For Boycott

Continued From Page 1
contracts not in the workers' best interests.

President George Meany of the AFL-CIO at the same time accused the Teamsters of renegeing on a farm labor agreement with the federation. He threatened a boycott of some California agricultural products.

Meany said the AFL-CIO would "take whatever actions are appropriate" to support Chavez's union, including consideration of a nationwide boycott. A spokesman said grapes, lettuce and other row crops would be involved.

Fitzsimmons Hit
Meany denounced President Frank Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters, who has denied that his union had an agreement with the AFL-CIO to leave organizing of California farm laborers to the Chavez union.

The boycott approved by the bishops was proposed by Bishop Joseph F. Dornelly, an auxiliary bishop of Hartford, Conn., who said "the very existence of the United Farm Workers is at stake in this struggle."

He added that Chavez's union offers the best hope of protecting the "legitimate rights of one of the most disadvantaged group of workers in the American economy."

Although Chavez's union won contracts with growers in California's Coachella Valley in 1970, the Teamsters Union obtained agreements with growers the next year, bringing a prolonged strike by Chavez's supporters.

Despite several temporary lulls in the fight, including recently aborted jurisdictional pacts, the Teamsters Union a few weeks ago renounced them to continue contracts with most major growers.

National Boycott

Archbishop Francis J. Furey of San Antonio, Tex., said the only weapon left to Chavez's union is a national consumer boycott of grapes and head lettuce.

He added that beyond the bishops taking their stand, "We've got to do something about it when we get home." He added they would face opposition from various interests, including supermarkets.

Various Catholic agencies, including a farm workers committee headed by Bishop Donnelly, have backed Chavez, but it had not previously been done by the entire body of American bishops.

"Every other method had been tried and the bishops felt there was no other option open, that there was no other recourse for the workers," Cardinal Krol said.

Groups To Picket At Finast Store

Two groups representing farm workers said Friday they plan to picket a Finast food store in West Hartford next week.

The United Farm Workers of America and the Committee of Connecticut Religious Leaders for Farm Workers said they would conduct a "protest vigil" Tuesday at 4 p.m. at the Finast store at 27 S. Main St.

The groups say they are protesting the sale of non-United Farm Worker picked grapes and lettuce.

Please complete and return this pledge to the United Farm Workers:

17 Belmont Street	1915 Park Street
Hamden, Ct 06517	Hartford, Ct 06106
288-4905	233-7234

To America's Farm Workers,

I support your non-violent struggle for justice.

I will not eat table grapes or iceberg lettuce unless I see the Aztec eagle on the wrapper.

Contact me to arrange for a film or speaker at the next meeting of my church, union, class or organization.

I enclose a donation.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

UNITED FARM WORKERS
OF AMERICA
P.O. BOX 62, KEENE, CALIF. 93531

W O M E N I N T H E F A R M W O R K E R S M O V E M E N T

AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA GOVEA, ORGANIZER FOR THE UNITED FARM WORKERS
OF AMERICA

Jessica Govea began working in the fields at the age of 5. Since 1965, she has worked full-time for the UFW, organizing in the fields, doing boycott work in Canada and Los Angeles and directing the nationwide boycott from La Paz, Union headquarters. Now 26, she is working on the boycott in Toronto

This interview was taken in the midst of the grape strike (August 1973) when thousands of women and men farm workers were on the picket lines protesting the grape growers refusal to renegotiate contracts with the UFW, AFL-CIO.

"Jessica, can you give us some background on the involvement of women in the farm workers' struggle?"

"During the 50's when I was about 5 yrs. old, Cesar Chavez came to our house trying to interest people in changing the way the community was working. We were living in a poor barrio in Bakersfield and there were a lot of problems, like police brutality, voter registration and the need for pensions for green carders. But noone was dealing with the problems.

"When Cesar came to the house, he talked not only to my father, but to all of us; he talked to my mother and to the kids, in a way that we could all understand... And as more and more people in the Bakersfield area got involved, Cesar called the first meeting of the Community Service Organization* and insisted that the whole family come to the meeting-- not just the men, but the women and children as well.

"Was it unusual for the whole family to be involved rather than just the men?"

"Very unusual. Most of the people that were involved in the U.S.O were at that time called Mexican-American, of course we're now called Chicano but the cultural thing is that the mother stays home and she cooks, and she washes the clothes and she irons the clothes and she feeds the family and that's her role. That's always been the role. So this was revolutionary. There was some resentment on part of some of the men but they reluctantly brought their wives and kids with them and were later very happy that they had done this. Back in those early days, the women started a volunteer service center which is like what we now have in the union-- the National Farm Workers' Service Center. It was all done by Mexican-American women who took turns taking care of each others children so the others could go with someone to the welfare department for to workmen's compensation or what have you. That was where I first saw the involvement of poor women in a movement.

"In 1962, when the union started, it was even more necessary for the whole family to be involved, because in the work, the whole family was involved. Men, women and children all worked together in the fields. Having a union where just the men participated would have never succeeded. When farm workers were organizing in Delano in 1962, once again Cesar placed great emphasis on involving the families by having them come to the meetings.

They were very noisy meetings because the kids ran around. But there was a real spirit of family that developed out of that and IT HAS BEEN THAT SPIRIT OF FAMILY THAT I PERSONALLY BELIEVE HAS KEPT US GOING AND HAS HELPED US THRU A LOT OF VERY DIFFICULT TIMES AND DIFFICULT STRUGGLES.

*A self-help organization of chicanos based in the urban areas of the Southwest. Cesar Chavez organized for the C.S.O. during the '50s.

"you've got to understand that in the farm worker community, more than the urban Chicano community, the male/female roles are strictly defined, isn't it of the fact that everyone works in the fields together."

"It wasn't even a year into the strike that the Teatro Campesino came to the farm worker's meeting one night and showed the film, Salt of the Earth. None of us knew what the film was about. None of us had even heard of it. But the reactions were incredible. When the film was over and the lights were on, you could see this magic strength, kind of magic happiness coming from the women. Realizing that they could really be a meaningful part of the struggle. And not just in the role of cooking or standing beside their men on the picket line, but of being their own people, of being leaders, of going to jail. And the men had a very strange reaction too. They were very baffled by the film. I'm sure there were some arguments when people got home that night..."

"From then on, I could see the change in the picket line. You could see the change in attitudes...of men and women toward each other, treating each other more as equals and more as working companions."

"This still continues in the Union. If a woman is willing to do something, wants to do it, she can do it. There's no definition of something being a man's job or something being a woman's job. Of course, some of the women are restricted, because they have children and can't travel around a lot, or can't be away from home for three or four days at a time. But sometimes an adjustment can be made where someone else will take care of the children. There are some farm worker women with children who are willing to go out and do organizing in a field area for a week or two weeks or a month. The opportunity is there if we want to take it. There's that freedom within the Union movement."

"What kind of treatment do farm worker women face in the fields when there is no contract?"

"The conditions are deplorable anyway you cut it, before the contract. For instance, there is no drinking water, no toilets in the fields...and that there's no toilets in the fields is a real problem, especially for the women. You have to go really far away, and even then you're out in the open vineyards if we're talking about grapes. It's a very big embarrassment. Some people end up with internal problems, physical problems, because of going through the whole day without taking care of their bodily needs. I started working in the fields when I was 5 and worked summers until I was about 16. It was always a great source of embarrassment. I would just wait 'til I got home. Consequently I have a physical problem."

"Then there's the abuse that women have to take from the foremen under the labor contractor system--the obscene suggestions. In fact, in some cases women have to comply with the demands of the foreman in order to keep their jobs. Many times the women are with their husbands and their children and the husbands have to stand there and listen while these suggestions are made or while these proposals are made;..and not be able to do anything about it. Because if they do, they lose their jobs. And if they lose their jobs, they also get blackballed in the area. You just can't get work. It's a matter of eating. It really comes down to the question of whether you eat or not."

"How does the Union change working conditions for women?"

"The most important way is through the unity of the people, the unity of the workers. It's the respect the people have for the Union, because the Union is the people for each other; and the respect, consequently, whether they want to have it or not, that the supervisors and foremen have for the workers, that prevents i.e. verbal abuse and verbal suggestion from taking place."

And if they do take place, it gets taken care of immediately. Each crew had a steward, and if he or she can't take care of it, it goes on up to the ranch committee and up into the Union office, etc. There is a way of dealing with it.

"As for the sanitary conditions under Union contract--there have to be toilets in the fields, portable toilets for both men and for women. It's revolutionary. It was noticeable just how revolutionary it was when the growers in Coachella signed contracts with the Teamsters this summer and those johns got pulled out. It was very noticeable how important that had been to people, and how unfeeling the growers are -- they just can't accept that the farm workers are human beings.

"How are women involved in the present strike?"

"We just finished the strike in Coachella. The involvement of the women was incredible. THE MEN THEMSELVES WERE SAYING THAT THE WOMEN WERE THE GUTSIEST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE PICKET LINES. THEY'RE NOT AFRAID AT ALL. When the Teamster goons were in the fields in Coachella, the women were the ones who would run into the fields to talk to the workers. They'd get chased around by Teamsters with sticks and clubs in their hands trying to beat them, but they were totally fearless. Some of them were the victims of beating by the Teamsters.

"On the very first day of the Coachella strike, a 19 year old woman striker was hit in the face. The Teamsters drove by in a car and threw some brass knuckles at her and seriously damaged her eye. She went to the hospital and had her eye patched up and insisted on going back to the picket line. And she stayed on that line every day. She never left the line. It's an incredible courage.

"Last January we went to the Teamster headquarters in Burlingame to show that we didn't want the Teamsters in the fields. There were 450 women and children demanding to see Einar Mohn*, demanding to speak with him. There was Einar Mohn*, writing behind his desk. He wouldn't come out and talk to these women. And they weren't throwing rocks or doing anything violent. They were singing and chanting and praying and seeing their strength and seeing the power they had.

"Now the strike has moved into the Arvin-Lamont area, into Fresno and Delano, into Salinas and Santa Maria. It's not a question of men and women anymore, it's strikers. I was talking with one of the women who was arrested in Fresno and detained in jail for close to five days. She said the treatment was horrible. They weren't given anything, not even food the first day. Having seen "Salt of the Earth", they raised all kinds of hell, banging on the bars and yelling and demanding food and blankets. There was a pregnant woman in there who had asthma and they wouldn't let her medicine in. There were other women who were in need of medication for different illnesses, one for a skin disease as a result of pesticides. Even though the doctor went with them, they wouldn't allow her medicine in. But they hung in there. They wouldn't leave unless all of them could leave.

*Einar Mohn was Director of the Western Conference of Teamsters.

"At one point they were told they would be released if they would sign affidavits saying they wouldn't be on the picket lines anymore and wouldn't participate in farm worker activities. And they said, "Uhm, uhh. Hell no. We won't sign!" The authorities even threatened that if the women didn't sign, they would take their children into detention. For many had their children at home. They were being taken care of, of course."

"How are children taken care of when their parents are in jail?"

"Farm worker communities are very tight, like Parlier, for example. The families of those that didn't go to jail brought in the kids of those that did. It's sort of an extended family...that's the whole beauty of it.

"EVEN THOUGH

WE ARE AT A VERY CRITICAL STAGE**A STAGE WHEN IT WILL BE DETERMINED WHETHER WE KEEP OUR UNION OR NOT, I'VE NEVER SEEN A STRONGER SPIRIT. MAYBE IN A WAY THE TWO GO HAND IN HAND. PEOPLE KNOW IT'S A LIFE OR

DEATH STRUGGLE AND THEY

ARE PUTTING EVERYTHING THEY HAVE INTO IT."

BOYCOTT GRAPES!

BOYCOTT NON-UFW LETTUCE

BOYCOTT GALLO

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or

527-5067

or write To The United Farm Workers
1915 Park St.
Hartford, Conn.

*****Tear off and send in to the U.F.W. to show your support.

Name _____

Address _____

I pledge to boycott the following:

_____ grapes

_____ non-UFW lettuce

_____ Gallo wine
