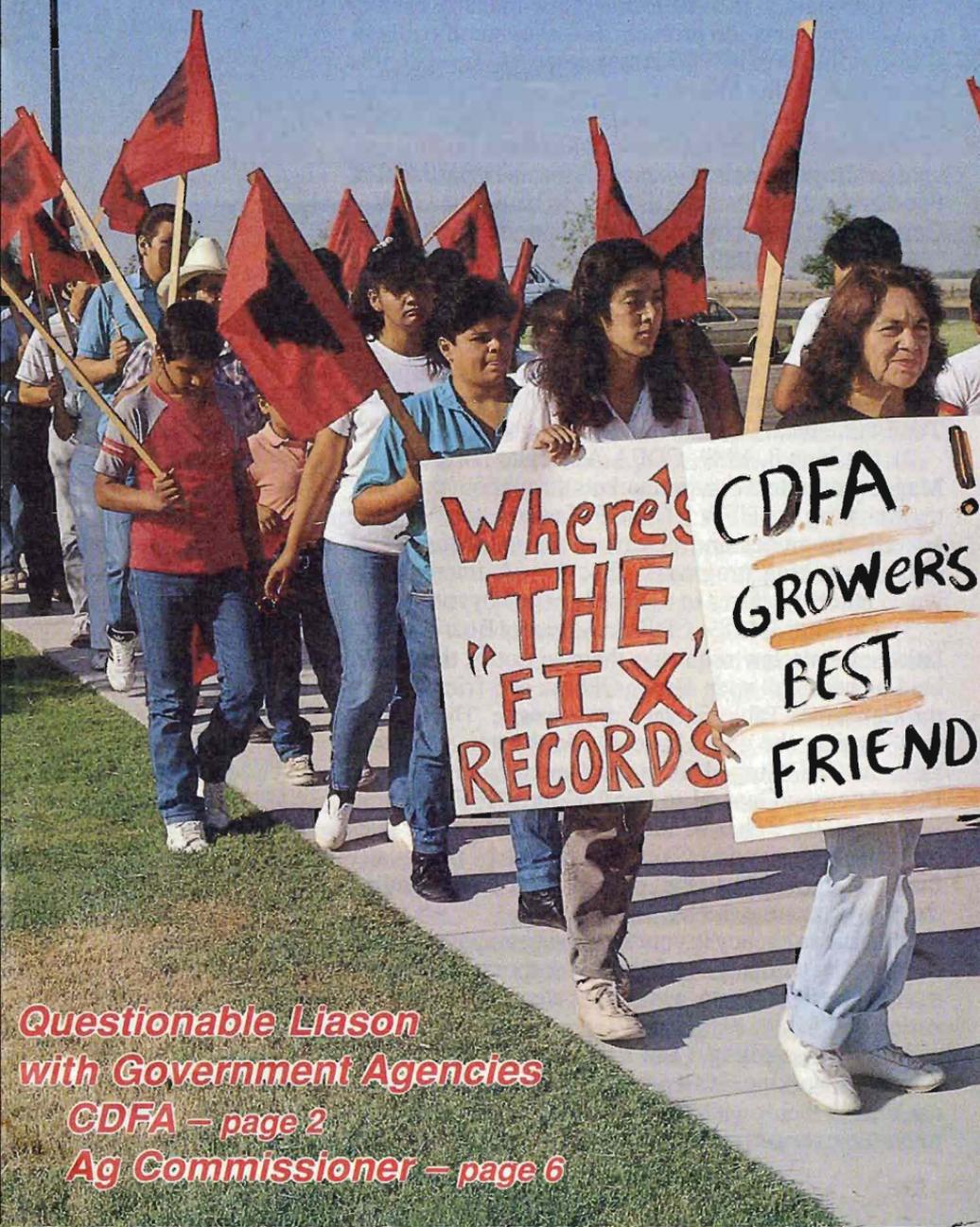


GRAPE GROWERS USE TAXPAYERS MONEY

FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by the United Farm Workers

September 1989



*Questionable Liason
with Government Agencies*

CDFA — page 2

Ag Commissioner — page 6

The Grower's Servants

The grape boycott is working. We see low prices, the willingness of many supermarkets to stop advertising grapes, and increased public support for the UFW. Unfortunately, the California grape industry refuses to solve the pesticide problem and alleviate the miserable conditions existing for farmworkers. Instead, it is desperately trying to undermine the UFW's grape boycott.

The corporate growers summoned their faithful servants in the government — the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) — to battle the UFW. Consider the following "taxpayer supported" activities:

- 1) On Jan. 7, 1989, upon the growers' request, Gary Foster, a representative from the Agricultural Commissioners office in Riverside County, traveled to a workshop held by the San Diego Ecumenical Council. He went apparently at government expense on a Saturday just to speak against the grape boycott. It was to no avail. The Ecumenical Council endorsed the boycott.

- 2) On June 8, 1989, CDFA Associate Director Rex Magee sent letters to supermarkets throughout the country attacking the UFW. The UFW asked stores to stop advertising grapes and described the inadequacies of pesticide testing programs. The CDFA immediately wrote letters to stores to undermine the boycott.

- 3) On Aug. 3, 1989, CDFA's Advisory Board, in violation of state law requiring them to notify the UFW, held a "hearing" with Bruce Obbink and friends from the California Table Grape Commission. They "testified" against the grape boycott. At the one-sided session, the CDFA urged Governor Deukmejian to ask the U.S. Attorney General to "probe" the UFW's boycott activities. Their charge: the UFW is hurting grape sales by "falsely portraying California grapes as potentially fatal." Daniel Haley, chief deputy of CDFA, is leading the charge against the UFW.

Imagine an agency in your state using taxpayer money to carry on a campaign on behalf of corporations against a public interest group, a union, or any citizens' organization.

It is just appalling. But it is another sign that the boycott is working. It's working so well that the growers can't fight their own battles anymore — they must call upon their servants, the state agencies of California.

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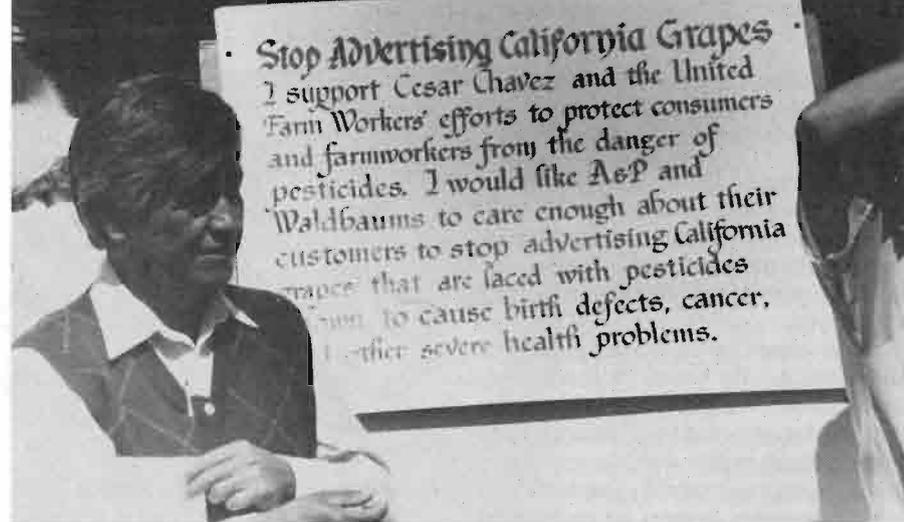
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Jocelyn Sherman

"It is our position that any supermarket which promotes, advertises and has California table grape sales is siding with the growers," Chavez warned grocers.

Q: Can You Trust Your Local Grocer? A: No PAS

We're concerned about the future of the food supply, and we're sending a message to growers that we want them to use fewer chemicals."

Surprisingly, this statement came not from the United Farm Workers nor from one of the union's usual supporters. It was Jules Rose, chairman of the Sloan's supermarket stores which pulled California table grapes from their shelves, one week out of the month who spoke out on behalf of consumers and farm workers.

Rose is one of a growing number of grocers who are finally beginning to acknowledge that there are problems with pesticides.

Not all grocers, however, are ready to make such dramatic gestures. Many continue to act as if responsibility for the food supply is the growers' alone.

The UFW wishes to commend Rose and other grocers who have assumed a responsible role in the food industry. But the UFW also wishes to call attention to some promotional schemes the growers use in order to get around the growing problem of chemical farming.

One such gimmick is the grower-provided label "no detected pesticide residue." Some grocers have placed labels like this on grape displays. Many consumers, reading this claim, would thus assume that the grapes contain no pesticides. Yet, the chance of any single bunch of grapes being tested for pesticide residues is about one in 198 million.

Such deceptive advertising makes grocers as culpable as growers. Peddling a product that is unsafe for consumption is certainly as questionable as producing that product. In a recent interview with *Grocery Marketing* magazine, Cesar Chavez, UFW President, said, "Grocers have to make up their minds that they can't be fronting for the [agricultural] industry. Grocers are being the bagmen for the growers."

In the same issue of *Grocery Marketing*, Ollie Bieniemy, editor and publisher of the magazine, called Chavez's accusation "a bit harsh, but on the mark." In an editorial, Bieniemy writes, "Ensuring that the product brought into the store is safe and that it leaves the store is the grocer's

responsibility, like it or not. Those who are unwilling to accept it may find themselves staring at empty registers."

Grocers Are Liable

In an open letter sent to supermarket chain presidents in late spring, Chavez outlined the reasons for the grape boycott and the reasons the UFW believes grapes are unsafe.

In the letter Chavez warned grocers of their liability. He wrote, "It is our position that any supermarket which promotes, advertises and has California table grape sales is siding with the growers... and accepting any liability that follows."

Chavez urges grocers to respond to consumers' and environmentalists' demands to pull California table grapes from their stores. If grocers are unwilling to do this, Chavez suggests that they at least agree to *no promotions, no advertisements, and no sales* of grapes as a way to minimize their liability.

No Promotions, No Ads, No Sales: No PAS.

The farm workers urge specific guidelines for grocers to follow. These are:

No Promotion:

-No End-Of-The-Counter Displays Of Grapes

-No Middle-Of-The-Aisle Display Of Grapes

-No Displays Of Grapes Anywhere In The Store (Normal on-line grape displays are the only displays which the UFW will not oppose)

-No Tags On Grape Bunches

-No Grape Promotional Literature Of Any Kind

No Advertising:

-No Electronic, Print, Or Outdoor Advertising Of Grapes

No Sales:

-No Sale Specials On California Table Grapes.

Grocers should follow these guidelines. The "No PAS" guidelines will make grocers more responsible and allow them to distance themselves from growers.

Obviously these measures will increase grocer awareness and responsibility. Where a product is placed in a supermarket and how it is displayed have a significant impact on sales. One study, for instance, found that an increase in display size by 50 percent boosted grape sales by 16 percent.

The UFW feels that the "No PAS" measures would reduce grape sales by as much as 60%.

There are favorable results of the "No PAS" guidelines, as the action of the Sloan's chain demonstrates.

Consumers Must Join Fight

Chavez maintains that consumers have joined the UFW to demand that grocers act responsibly. "Growers won't listen to consumers because they don't deal with them directly," Chavez told *Grocery Marketing*. "We all have to look through the false arguments the industry is handing out. Grocers have to meet their social responsibilities. I don't think they can escape them very long."

Chavez has urged consumers to demand that stores cease carrying California table grapes altogether, and now he is asking that consumers repeat this demand. If supermarket personnel refuse to remove the grapes, Chavez said, then consumers should urge grocers to stop promoting, advertising, and offering sales on grapes.

But some grocers may claim that they are not responsible for pesticides on grapes because they must rely on government agencies to test the fruit. This claim is bogus. "The observation that grocers aren't scientists is a valid one, but they need to be at least as informed as their customers on issues such as pesticide pollution," Bienenmy wrote.

The letter Chavez wrote to supermarket presidents goes a long way in providing this information to grocers. In the letter, Chavez explains the inadequacies of testing for pesticides on grapes.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has the job of



This farm worker knows that the only thing fresh about these grapes is its deceptive tag — "Grapes Have Been Treated With Sulfites To Ensure 'Freshness & Quality'" — another grower gimmick designed to fool the public.

testing grapes for pesticide residues. The UFW points out that CDFA is not a federal agency; it is a California state agency prone to the political pressures that the wealthy grape industry exerts for its own benefit. CDFA's history of monitoring table grapes for pesticides is riddled with inconsistency (see for example, p. 15). CDFA's testing procedures are shoddy at best. Of the nine million 22-pound boxes of table grapes harvested in the Coachella Valley in 1989, CDFA is expected to test no more than 31 one-pound samples.

So far CDFA has claimed that it has found no pesticides. "None detected," CDFA said. But residues *were* detected. CDFA maintains that these residues are below the Environmental Protection Agency's tolerance levels. The use of the

words "none detected" by CDFA is clearly misleading.

If CDFA were to find pesticides exceeding the tolerance levels, or if the agency discovered the illegal use of a pesticide, it would still do little or nothing about the problem (see, for example, article, p. 6). CDFA does not enforce state pesticide laws. Instead, the agency subcontracts that responsibility.

Given the CDFA's limited testing procedures and the fact that it has no enforcement authority, it is little wonder that growers confidentially spray grapes with whatever suits them.

In his letter, Chavez wrote, "Growers use technical pesticide application jargon to claim certain pesticides are not sprayed on grapes while at the same time they are purchasing the chemicals they claim they are not using. When herbicides are sprayed on the weeds underneath the grape vines, the growers claim such chemicals

are not sprayed on the grapes." This claim is obviously silly.

There is no way to know how many grapes in the vicinity receive accidental spraying. And there is the additional problem of the herbicide entering the vine through the root, thus contaminating the entire plant.

Chavez goes on to suggest that grocers demand product liability insurance from growers to protect both themselves and consumers.

In the end, however, it will be consumers who will have to force grocers to take the steps necessary to force the grape industry to stop using dangerous pesticides - pesticides which injure and maim farm workers and their children and which pose a dangerous threat to all of us. ❖



More than 300 farm workers and consumers protest the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner's refusal to release public information on pesticide use by growers.

For the Records

On July 24th, UFW members led by President Cesar Chavez picketed the office of the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner in Bakersfield, California, calling attention to the commissioner's steadfast refusal to comply with the law and release information about pesticides.

The UFW sent written requests to both Kern and Tulare County Commissioners on June 5th. Under the California Public Records Act, the commissioners had ten days to provide the requested information.

The commissioners act as agents for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), monitoring pesticides according to CDFA guidelines. They are paid by CDFA for these services.

In the present case, the commissioners also appear to be following the usual CDFA practice of hiding the ugly truth about the pesticide abuses of growers.

The UFW asked the commissioners for the following information about pesticide use by grape ranchers:

- 1) Poisoning Reports (reports of workers who have been poisoned by pesticides)
- 2) Use Reports (what pesticides growers used, when and how they used them)
- 3) Permits (yearly restricted pesticide permits issued to the growers)
- 4) Residue Sample Sheets (reports of laboratory tested produce)
- 5) Reports of Violations (reports of growers violating pesticide laws)

The commissioners provided the UFW

with some permits but claimed that Use Reports for the last months were incomplete. Without the Use Reports, the UFW can't tell whether growers are honoring their permits.

Both commissioners released limited Residue Sample Sheets — limited, they said, because lab work was incomplete.

On July 24th, the UFW sent a letter to Jim Wells, Director of CDFA, demanding that the Ag commissioners obey the law and release all the information. This letter, plus the public picketing of the Kern commissioner, brought about the release of the suddenly complete Use Reports.

Poisoning Reports will apparently be released — after the commissioners black out some information. The commissioners say the Poisoning Reports are medical documents and must therefore be edited to protect individual privacy. But these are public documents, and the commissioners are “doctoring” the reports illegally.

Asked by a *Bakersfield Californian* reporter about the Reports of Violations, the deputy commissioner of Kern County said the UFW had only requested them the day of the picketing — an obvious lie.

“The public has a right to know,” said Cesar Chavez. “Workers must be informed about the dangers they face every day. And consumers have to have the truth about the poisons that are threatening the food supply. The commissioners and CDFA are helping the growers hide the facts.”



“The CDFA has contrived a cover up with their slap-on-the- wrist solution” to a grower's illegal use of the pesticide “fix,” Dolores Huerta said at a recent press conference. Irv Hershenbaum, UFW Boycott staff, also attended the conference.

Another Quick Fix

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has again rescued a law-breaking grape grower.

Supposedly acting in the interest of consumers, CDFA in mid-July placed a 24-hour quarantine on table grapes leaving the Sandrini Bros. ranch in Delano, California. The grapes were apparently sprayed with the chemical 4-CPA, more commonly known as “Fix”.

Fix is not registered for use on grapes. Spraying grapes with Fix is illegal.

So the CDFA quarantine is a sham. Each truckload of “Fixed” grapes is held for one day, tested for various chemicals, then released — sent off to market with the official blessing of CDFA.

Calling for a permanent quarantine on the Sandrini grapes, United Farm Workers First Vice-President Dolores Huerta dismissed the CDFA action, describing it as a “slap-on-the-wrist solution” for Sandrini's violation.

“Once again CDFA reveals that its mission is to cover-up the constant violations of growers who illegally use pesticides,” Huerta said. “CDFA has no intention of protecting either consumers or farmworkers from toxic chemicals.”

Fix is a chemical cousin of Agent Orange, the infamous cancer-causing defoliant used in Vietnam. Growers like Fix because it artificially enlarges grapes and causes them to cling, or “fix,” to the stems.

But Fix isn't legal, so growers resort to

various deceitful practices when procuring, storing, and applying the chemical. In 1988, *California Farmer* reported occurrences of smuggling, shady payments (Fix purchased while grower billed for another pesticide), switched containers, destruction of labelling, and night-spraying.

CDFA is probably aware of most of this Fix-related activity but chooses to disregard the obvious illegalities. Instead, CDFA coddles the growers, meting out meaningless punishments such as the 24-hour quarantine.

In 1986, CDFA agreed to out-of-court settlements with three Fix-using growers in the Delano area. The growers paid what amounted to small fines. This was a clear go-ahead signal from CDFA to California growers. “Pay us a little for our trouble,” CDFA seemed to say, “but meanwhile make millions behind our backs.” Eager to play the game with the growers, CDFA kept all three incidents from leaking into the daily papers.

According to one of its own brochures, CDFA pledges that when an illegal pesticide is found, “investigators track it back to the source. If the crop is still in the field, harvest is prohibited.” In the Sandrini case, CDFA has abdicated these responsibilities.

There is no investigation at the Sandrini ranch. The grapes are picked and, after a silly day's wait, they travel on to the supermarkets.



Esther Trujillo cooks for her family in their "home" while children (from left to right) Miguel, Oliva and Reina look on.

While the Rich Get Richer

It is still dark when Angel Trujillo awakens in a field near Arvin, California. He rises quickly, then awakens his two sons, eight-year-old Nacho and six-year-old Miguel, who have also slept under the vines. The three then walk quietly to the edge of the field, where Angel's wife Esther and their two teenage daughters, Oliva and Reina, are sleeping in an old gray van.

Angel knocks on the van. The women awaken, unlock the doors, and soon the family drives away — before the sun rises, before anyone has seen them.

In little more than an hour the Trujillos will return to the field. Angel, Esther, and the two girls will work the vines while the boys sit out the day in the van.

In the meantime, Esther prepares breakfast, cooking on a kerosene stove that sits near the van's engine. They eat at a public park where there is water. They would sleep in the park, but the police come by each night to chase them, and others like them, away.

"This is our worst year," says Esther, who with her husband has worked the California fields since 1970. The Trujillos harvest grapes, almonds, tomatoes,

chilis, garlic, and olives. Originally from Avenal, the Trujillos now call Sacramento home, but they could be found near Gilroy, or Delano, Tulare, Fresno, Stockton — anywhere in the San Joaquin Valley.

"We are migrant workers," Esther says. "We go wherever there is work."

There are thousands more farm workers who, like the Trujillos, are finding conditions increasingly difficult. Growers want more profits, so they are paying their workers less and less. Many growers have closed their camps, forcing workers like the Trujillos to sleep and bathe wherever they can.

"This year the money we make is not enough to provide for our family," Esther says. "We earn less than in previous years, but we work harder because the growers and the foremans pressure us constantly to work harder — always work harder."

"Right now we are not even earning minimum wage. We are making about \$1.50 an hour."

"It's not fair," she continues, "that after all the hard work we cannot even afford a place to sleep, bathe, and cook."

The Trujillos often bathe in the public restrooms in the park. But sometimes this is impossible because there are so many others wanting to do the same.

"Many times we have to bathe in the irrigation channels by the fields," says Esther. "We know they are filled with pesticides, but we can't live without removing the dirt of our daily work."

Esther knows the dangers of pesticides. In 1978, after pruning grapevines, she had to be carried off the field because her body had gone numb and she couldn't move her arms or legs. She spent nearly three months in a hospital, where she was told it was the pesticides that had affected the fluid in her spine. When released from the hospital, Esther was still unable to walk and had to use a wheelchair.

"It took quite a while for me to recuperate," she says. "I still walk abnormally."

This is the life of the working homeless: laboring nine or ten hours in the hot sun for about \$15; washing in a drainage ditch or, if they are lucky, in a public restroom; eating out of cans in makeshift kitchens; sleeping in cars, under vines, anywhere they can; worrying about food and shelter, about their health and pesticides, about the future.

"The only hope," says Esther, "is that someday we could be a member of the UFW and work under a contract to obtain better living and working conditions."

Conditions in the California fields have been deteriorating for some years, and newspapers like *The Bakersfield Californian* and *The San Diego Union* have recently begun to focus attention on the gruesome reality of farm work in the 80's. Reporters are showing that families like Trujillos are to be found everywhere crops are growing, experiencing hardships even worse than those John Steinbeck recorded fifty years ago in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

"Everyone talks about progress —" Angel says, "— progress and the economy, and everyone getting richer. Farm workers don't see this. They don't see any progress. Things are getting worse, not better."

After breakfast, the Trujillos drive to the field.

Angel, Esther, and the two girls go to work. Later, tired and dirty, they will have to find a place to wash, a place to park the van and eat.

Then, after dark, the Trujillos will once again return to the field where, hidden from the world, they will rest. ▼



Hundreds of farm workers sleep under the grape vines in California. Though they work all day, the farm workers do not earn enough for shelter.

BOYCOTT BOOMING



Jocelyn Sherman

New York City store owners agree to stop advertising grapes and the city council declares "grape boycott week." From left to right are John Catsimatidis, Chairman of Red Apple and Gristedes Supermarkets (at podium); Andrew Stein, President of NYC council; Bob McEntee, Executive Director 1707; Ted Jacobson, Secretary of NY Central Labor Council; Ruth Messinger, NYC Councilwoman; Arch Deacon Michael Kendall; Jules Rose, CEO Sloans Stores; and Cesar Chavez.

New York's City Council and Five Supermarket Chains Endorse the Boycott

The Grape Boycott continues to receive widespread and enthusiastic support all over the United States and Canada.

In a dramatic press conference the New York City Council endorsed the grape boycott and proclaimed Grape Boycott Week – July 3-9 – on the steps of City Hall. Standing with City Council President Andrew Stein and Manhattan Borough President Dave Dinkins; was brother Cesar Chavez, Courtney Kennedy-Ruhe, daughter of the late Sen. Robert Kennedy, and executives from Red Apple, Gristedes, Federation of Co-op, Mandell and Sloan's supermarket chains that represent a total of 126 stores.

The event was widely publicized in the news media and on a huge electronic billboard in Times Square, created by Los Angeles artist, Barbara Carrasco, displayed messages throughout July concerning the perils of pesticides.

"We are concerned about the future of the food supply and we are sending out a message to growers that we want them to use fewer chemicals," said Jules Rose, chairman of Sloan's.

However, despite increasing public concern about pesticides, California grape

growers increased their use of pesticides on grapes from 6.97 million pounds in 1985 to 10.1 million pounds in 1987. They also spend millions of dollars to convince consumers that grapes, "the natural snack," treated with pesticides are safe.

"The American people don't want to be poisoned," said John Catsimatidis, Chairman of Red Apple and Gristedes.

Chavez responded, "Their decision to temporarily remove California Table Grapes from the shelves of their grocery stores and to stop all promotions and advertising of grapes for the entire year took a lot of courage. We know that this act has placed them under a lot of pressure from the grape industry. We applaud these retailers whose concern for the health and safety of consumers and farm workers is stronger than the pressure against them." The events in New York City are a big blow to the grape growers since the New York City area is the largest metropolitan area for grape sales in the United States.

Cesar Joins Striking Coal Miners

In a show of solidarity with the striking coal miners brother Cesar joined 5,000 United Mine Workers, who held a 4th of July sympathy rally for the 1,900 members locked in a four-month strike against

the Pittston Coal Group. "The best place to spend the Fourth of July is here — because the struggle for freedom continues. You have always been there when we needed you, and today we are here with you. Your struggle is our struggle, and your victory will be our victory," said Chavez.

Toronto Calls for Ban on Grapes Cites Toxic Pesticide Dangers

The Toronto City Council called on all retailers, distributors, importers, and consumers to voluntarily abstain from purchasing grapes from California, Chile, and other grape-producing countries. The Council cited increasing evidence that pesticides used on grapes endanger the lives of farm workers, their families, and consumers, especially children.

The City Council's decision marks the most far-reaching action taken to date by any major city in North America in the matter of protecting consumers from the possible dangers of pesticide tolerance levels on fruits and vegetables. The City Solicitor has a right-to-know law which would require anyone selling fruits and vegetables to show the origin of the product.

The City Council published its decree in Toronto's three major metropolitan newspapers on Monday, June 12, 1989 and sent copies to all major Canadian cities of its decision to urge importers, retailers, and consumers not to buy grapes from California, Chile, or other grape-producing countries. California exports 15 per cent of its grape crop to Canada.

The Toronto City Council's decree supports the position of the United Farm Workers of America whose five-year international boycott of California table grapes demands protection for workers and consumers from toxic pesticides. The UFW singled out California table grapes



David Smitley

Gord Wilson (seated), President of the Ontario Federation of Labour and James Clancy (at podium), President of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, pay tribute to Cesar Chavez (center) in Toronto.

because more pesticides are used on grapes than on any other fruit or vegetable grown in the state of California, and more farm workers are poisoned in grapes than in any other crop.

The Toronto City Council declared June 11-17, 1989 as "Grape Boycott Week" and flew the UFW flag over City Hall that week, showing their concern for the increasing number of pesticide poisoning incidents among California farm workers.

The Toronto Board of Health called on consumers and retailers to boycott grapes from California, and after completing the "Fast for Life" chain by Council members Jack Layton, Martin Silva, Rob Maxwell and Marilyn Churley, the City Council drafted the right-to-know law forcing merchants to identify the country of origin of all fruits and vegetables sold in Toronto.

A Canadian Testimonial Dinner for Cesar Chavez

As a symbol of solidarity of the people of Canada with the farm workers of California, a tribute to brother Cesar was organized by many labor, religious and political leaders and was sponsored by Shirley G. E. Carr (CLC), Gord Wilson (OFL), Jeff Rose (CUPE), John Fryer (NUPGE), Daryl Bean (PSAC), Bob



Ontario Steel Workers rally in support of the grape boycott. John Martin, President of USWA 1005, speaks to the press.

White (CAW), Cliff Evans (UFCW), and E. Gerard Docquier (USWA). The June 17 tribute to Cesar brought together hundreds of labor, religious, elected officials, peace activists, environmentalists and many, many other concerned citizens came from all over Canada, some as far as 3,000 miles away. This special event marked the first time Canadians honored Cesar with a testimonial dinner in tribute to his example of selfless leadership.

Elsewhere in Canada, the Winnipeg/Manitoba Federation of Labour conducted a survey and tested grapes in eight stores. The results showed positive for "nerve gas"-type pesticides in all the stores.

Southern California Steps-Up Boycott

A landmark event in the long struggle against the grape growers took place in the Los Angeles area the week of June 12-18 when the powerful grocery supermarket chain, The Von's Cos., Inc. decided to halt grape sales in a significant number of stores. The El Monte-based supermarket chain was responding to an issue that is close to many of its Hispanic customers and chose not to sell any grapes at all in those areas that have a predominantly Hispanic population. In addition the Von's Co., Inc. will not have any promotion whatsoever for grapes be it on radio/TV, newspapers and or points of

sales displays. This is a major step at a major supermarket chain and marks a milestone in the struggle against the grape growers and the use of pesticides in food waged by the courageous farmworkers of the UFW.

Another supermarket chain that has taken steps towards forcing the grape growers to stop using pesticides is Ralph's/Giant Stores, which have decided not to have any promotion

of grapes and also to ban small displays that attract customers towards the sinister fruit. The decision of these companies to take the aforementioned steps is the result of vigorous action taken by the boycott organizers in the area, conducting a tireless petition drive that gathered thousands of signatures in petitions against such supermarkets as Von's, Ralph's and Lucky's.

Cesar and Dolores are Honored by the Labor Movement and the National Fast is Passed on to Jane Fonda in L.A.

The people of Los Angeles and their leaders gave Cesar Chavez a beautiful birthday party and paid tribute to the "Indestructible Spirit of the Farm Workers." The first event was a tribute to Cesar and Dolores Huerta in a testimonial dinner sponsored by the most important unions of the labor movement in Los Angeles and was a major fund-raiser for the much needed grape boycott against the growers and their continued use of poisonous pesticides. Among the many organizations that made the testimonial dinner a great success was the California Federation of Labor and Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, UAW, IAM, CWA, HERE, and other unions.

A very important press conference started things off with Cesar making his first public appearance since his 36-day-water-only fast. The testimonial dinner

followed the press conference which was hosted superbly by the longtime friend of the UFW and a pillar of the labor movement in his own right, Bruce Lee, leader of the United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers. In an atmosphere of brotherhood and solidarity, labor leaders such as Jack Henning, Executive Secretary of the California Federation of Labor, Gwen Newton, Vice-President of the Office & Professional Employees, among many others related reminiscences, anecdotes and other stories of the labor movement and of the valiant struggle of the UFW.

The second event, which was attended by labor and celebrities such as Martin Sheen, Linda Ronstadt, Luis and Daniel Valdez, Julie Carmen and Lou Diamond Phillips, joined the Mexican American Political Association, (MAPA), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and other organizations gave support and honor to Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and the UFW. In a dramatic show of solidarity and support during the dinner, the National Fast for Life was passed on by Dolores Huerta to Academy Award winning actress Jane Fonda, who fasted to underline the need for all of us to help in this boycott against the growers who continue to put profits above the safety and health of people.

In another show of solidarity, the California Teachers Association took up the National Fast for Life beginning with President Ed Folger and Professor Larry Perales. The National Fast for Life undertaken by the teachers association was launched in a special presentation by Martin Sheen.

In San Diego an impressive testimo-



Jane Fonda, Peter Fonda and Cesar Chavez at a tribute to Cesar and Dolores Huerta held in Los Angeles.

nial dinner honoring Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta: was supported by most of the progressive political and community leaders. Among them were the Mexican American Political Association, Chicano Democratic Association, The San Diego Harvey Milk Democratic Club, National Lawyers Guild, Alliance for Survival, and many more. Among the prominent politicians who participated directly in this event were Congressman Jim Bates, Assemblyman Pete Chacon, Councilmen Bob Filner and Wes Pratt. Also present were many community leaders like the Dinner Chairman Father Ricardo Brown of the Catholic Diocese of San Diego, Joseph Francis of the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council AFL-CIO and Nick Hernandez, President of Latin American Council for Labor Advancement and many others.

The communities of San Bernardino and Riverside counties and their leaders gathered to pay homage in a testimonial dinner honoring Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Sponsors of the dinner were the Central Councils of the AFL-CIO of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, the Inland Empire Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the A. Phillip Randolph Institute. Steering the Honorary Committee were the co-chairs, George Aguilar, Hector Fabela and Jack Stowers. ▾

Are We "Safe" From The CDFA?

by Dr. Marion Moses



Dr. Marion Moses

Toxic farming is an almost universal practice in California commercial agriculture. Growers use a quarter of a billion pounds of pesticides each year, substituting toxic chemicals for more sustainable and ecologically sound practices. Many of the pesticides they use are carcinogenic (cancer-causing), teratogenic (birth-defect producing), and neurotoxic (poisonous to the brain and nerves), and can leave residues on or in food at the time of retail sale.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), responsible for supervising pesticide use by the growers, trivializes the concerns of the public, the United Farm Workers union, and environmental groups, regarding health risks from pesticide contamination of food. The CDFA claims that current laws and regulations adequately protect the public.

The CDFA bases these claims on pesticide residue testing of produce. They state that because most samples tested show no detected residues, and since

only a very small percentage exceed the legal level of pesticide residues allowed, that the food supply is safe. However, these legal levels are too high.

They are equivalent to passing a law setting the speed limit at 100 miles an hour, and then stating that since most people are not speeding, and that only a very small percentage are in violation of the law, that the limit is "safe" and the law adequate and protective.

Most of the samples tested by CDFA may show no detected residues because all pesticides used on the crop are not even tested for; nor are most of the cancer causing pesticides tested for.

Appropriate scientific studies have not been done for almost all pesticides currently on the market to determine if legal levels of pesticide residues are safe. The U.S. Congress amended the pesticide law in 1988, requiring that the chronic effects studies that are lacking be done by 1997. In the meantime, the pesticides continue to be used.

Current law allows cancer causing pesticides in the food supply, and there is no known safe level of exposure to a carcinogen. Nor does the law consider vulnerable sub-groups such as infants, children, pregnant women, and the fetus, for which current levels may be too high.

Future generations will certainly look back on the 20th century use of toxic pesticides in food production as one of the more ludicrous and dangerous practices of their ancestors. No doubt, they will find it incomprehensible that state and government agencies would allow such massive amounts of toxic chemicals with known effects on human health; with deadly effects on birds, bees, fish, and wildlife; with worldwide pollution of air, soil, and water, resulting in extensive environmental and ecological damage, to be so extensively and indiscriminately used. ▼

A Little Girl

In May 1986, Gonzalo and Ramona Ramirez took Natalie, their 11-month-old daughter, to the doctor because she had a cold. During the examination, the doctor noticed that Natalie's stomach was inflamed.

After another examination, the Ramirezes were told that Natalie had a tumor in one of her kidneys. The next day Natalie under-

went surgery, and the melon-sized tumor was removed along with the kidney.

The tumor was malignant, so Natalie underwent an eight-month chemotherapy treatment. Three months after the treatment had ended, the tragedy repeated itself: a tumor had formed in Natalie's other kidney.

This time the Ramirezes were told that their 8-year-old son, Gonzalo, Jr., would probably have to donate one of his kidneys. But Natalie again took the chemotherapy, her parents hoping she would get well again, thus sparing their son.

"We did this for four months," says Gonzalo, "and every time she went for treatment she had to be hospitalized because she couldn't withstand the high dosage. Sometimes we had to be there for twenty days with her."

The treatments worked, and for a while Natalie seemed well. Her hair grew back again, and the Ramirezes hoped the nightmare was over.

It wasn't. This year, in April, Natalie



The Ramirez family, Gonzalo, Ramona, Natalie and Gonzalo Jr.

became ill again. More chemo, more worry, waiting, hoping.

Natalie is now four years old. For most of her life she has been either sick or recovering.

She is a quiet child.

"The growers say pesticides don't have any effect on people," says Gonzalo, "but I see my daughter and my friends' children sick and dying.

"When my wife

was pregnant with Natalie, she worked in the fields for eight months for Lucas & Son. They sprayed the fields at night, and in the morning she could smell the pesticides. There were a few occasions when she was working next to a field that was being sprayed and the drift reached her and her co-workers.

"There was even a time when she was seven months pregnant that she had to be sent to the company doctor because she was in so much pain they thought she was giving birth."

Natalie's family lives in Earlimart, one of the many towns in the San Joaquin Valley devastated by chemical farming. In Earlimart, and in nearby Delano and McFarland, high rates of cancer and birth defects — and there are frequent vague "sicknesses," too — have made daily life a bitter school of survival.

"Life is very difficult here," says Ramona. "When someone hears what is happening here, they don't believe it.

"But we have to believe it — and deal with it." ▼

