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### REVOLUTION IN THE VINEYARDS

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Cesar Chavez neither looks nor sounds like the leader of a revolution. But revolutionary he is – the man who brought California's farm laborers to the verge of gaining the unionization which they and their fellow workers in other states have so long sought as a way out of poverty and second-class citizenship.

Today, Cesar Chavez will lead hundreds of farm workers and sympathizers to the broad steps of the State Capitol here, after a dramatic, 25-day pilgrimage from Delano, Calif., 300 miles away.

The marchers – most, like Mr. Chavez, Roman Catholic – will hold religious services. Then they will demand from state officials and legislators the legal protection – collective bargaining rights, a minimum wage and the like – long since granted to most non-farm workers.

The odds may be against them, but it would be difficult to convince the marchers that they won't get the laws they seek. For a good reason. After what they have done so far, anything seems possible.

It was seven months ago that Mr. Chavez led the 2,000 men and women in the National Farm Workers Association out on strike against the grape growers in California's fertile vineyard region, 140 miles north of Los Angeles.

Only seven months, yet, the strike has drawn nationwide attention and the active support of the country's top union, civil rights and church leaders.

Just last week, this persuasive combination helped Mr. Chavez' group win one of the most significant farm union victories ever: Formal recognition as the sole bargaining agent for the field workers of a major corporation – Schenley Industries, the second biggest of the 33 struck grape-growing firms.

The largest firm, Di Giorgio Corp., came through the next day with a proposal that was much less satisfactory to the union. Mr. Chavez raised objections to Di Giorgio's call for a no-strike clause in advance of a contract recognizing the union and for arbitration of unresolved issues.

But Di Giorgio's offer indicated that more victories like that with Schenley are in sight. These are victories only dreamed of by the Wobblies who stormed across California's fields just before and after World War I, the Communists who followed the ISS, and the AFL and CIO organizers from the cities who came after.

Even the growers, bitterly antagonistic to Mr. Chavez, acknowledge this prospect privately – and concede, too, that union victory in California will mean eventual victory on farms elsewhere.

But why? The times seem right for it, of course. This is the day of the civil rights movement, of the war on poverty.

There's far more to it than that, however. Put most simply, it's that 38-year-old Cesar Chavez grasped the essential fact that if something was to be done, it would have to be done differently. Carefully, he put together, not a union, but a community organization.

For three years, he gathered the Mexican-Americans in Delano, the little town in the heart of the vineyard area, into a closely-knit group.

“Anglo” banks might be leery of farm workers, but the Farm Workers Association had a credit union from which they could borrow the money so often needed to tide them over. Members also found that by banding together, they could pool their resources and buy the things they needed at discount prices – tires for their battered autos, for instance.

The vineyard workers learned, in short, what the outside union organizers had never been able to teach them. They learned the lesson of unity and they practice it daily in the affairs of their own association.

After three years, they began asking the inevitable: If unity brought them cheaper automobile tires, why not better wages and working conditions as well? The strike soon became as inevitable as the question.

The strikers' self-confidence was outstripped only by their devotion to Mr. Chavez, who had worked tirelessly to build that confidence – for \$50 a week before the strike, for virtually nothing now.

“Cesar? He never makes big promises to us,” a striker explained. “He tells us how tough it is, that it's going to take a long time – a hard time. But we know we can do it. He showed us.

Mr. Chavez, a slight trace of Mexico in his voice, explains that “something had to be done to change the situation – to overcome the injustices against my people – and I knew that organization is the key to change. Someone simply had to do the organizing.”