

REUTHER PLEDGES COAST STRIKE AID

Offers \$5,000 a Month to
Help Vineyard Workers

By **LAWRENCE E. DAVIES**

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DELANO, Calif., Dec. 16—

Walter Reuther promised striking vineyard workers in the southern San Joaquin Valley today a contribution of \$5,000 a month for "as long as it takes to win this strike."

The president of the United Auto Workers and head of the Industrial Union Department of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations said the money, "subject to review," would come from those two sources.

"Viva Reuther," shouted a crowd on a downtown Delano street as the vice president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. made his commitment. The crowd was composed largely of workers of Mexican, Philippine and Puerto Rican descent.

"You're going to win this strike" Mr. Reuther declared, "and we are going to stay with you till you do."

Urges All to Join

Mr. Reuther was flanked by leaders of two cooperating unions as he made his statement. He had just visited a vineyard and asked a group of grapevine pruners why they were still working.

Most of them said they needed the money to pay for homes and meet other commitments. He urged them to join the strike, now three and a half months old.

On Sept. 8 the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. called a strike of grape pickers in the 400-square mile grape-growing district of which Delano is the center. Eight days later the strike was joined by the National Farm Workers Association, an independent body composed largely of Mexican-American families.

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. Committee, headed by C. Al Green, has been at work for years trying to organize California farmworkers. Mr. Reuther's United Auto Workers has poured foodstuffs and more than \$10,000 cash in collections from employes of aerospace and other plants into the Delano grape strike.

The Mexican-American association is directed by Cesar Chavez, an Arizona-born, black-haired, 38-year-old who was instrumental in its founding in 1962. In his conduct of the strike, first during the grape picking season and now in the pruning period that runs generally into February, he has had the aid of the California Migrant Ministry.

Representatives of the Congress of Racial Equality, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party and other civil rights groups have participated. The local ministerial association has abstained and has been critical of clergymen from outside.

Grape growers, many of whom are Yugoslav-Americans who grubbed the land and planted their own vines in the last quarter century, have refused to negotiate with either of the cooperating unions.

"And we won't sit down with either of them because we don't want them and the workers don't want them," declared Jack Pandol, whose forebears grew grapes in Yugoslavia and who, with two brothers, operates 1,600 acres of vineyards.

"These are phonies," Mr. Pandol said. "They are not true workers' representatives because of elements that have been associated with them. All these do-gooders come out here and make demands. They come from areas like New York that pay less while we're supposed to be starving these people."

In a cluttered, cement-floored building at the edge of this valley town of 1,300 people, Mr. Chavez, a father of eight, said his association of some 2,000 families who pay dues of \$3.50 a month was demanding a base wage of \$1.40 an hour plus 25 cents incentive pay per box of grapes during the harvest season.

He said the usual wage rate this season was \$1.20 to \$1.25 plus 10 cents a box incentive pay. The pruning rate last season, he said, was \$1.15 to \$1.20 and sometimes up to \$1.25 an hour. The association is asking \$1.40.

His association has also demanded improved working conditions "and, above all, a signed contract between growers and union."

Union spokesmen told stories of low wages and of shots being fired at strikers and of threats being made in employer quarters. Growers replied that they were paying more than the unions were demanding, and they offered similar stories of threats and warning shots in which they were allegedly on the receiving end.

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