

GRAPE ISSUE STIRS BERKELEY CRISIS

Students Call for a Strike in Support of Boycott

Special to The New York Times

BERKELEY, Calif., Oct. 19—The University of California finds itself in the midst of another potentially explosive controversy, the California table grape boycott.

Already there have been a couple of campus rallies, one sit-in, 11 arrests and a call for a student strike.

The Mexican-American Students Confederation says it is just getting warmed up.

The crisis began last week when Charles Hitch, president of the university, sent letters to the chancellors of all nine university campuses instructing them they could stop ordering grapes for university dining facilities only if there was not sufficient demand for them, so as to make continued service uneconomical.

Neutral on Boycott

He said the university would not take any position on the boycott by Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers Organizing Committee against California table grape growers.

Mr. Hitch's letter was in reply to an action Oct. 4 by the Berkeley campus purchasing agent's office banning table grapes in the cafeteria and residence hall dining rooms. Spokesmen said the action was taken in response to student requests.

Eleven members of the Mexican-American Students Confederation, including three women, were arrested last Monday night after a sit-in at Mr. Hitch's office to protest the letter. The women were released the following day. The men, except for Manuel Delgado, leader of the student group, who had to post \$700 bail, were freed without bond later in the week after abandoning plans for a hunger strike in jail. All 11 will appear in Municipal Court here again on Thursday to plead to charges of trespassing and illegal assembly.

Demands Reiterated

The arrests led to two rallies at which Mexican-American students reiterated the demands given to Mr. Hitch the night of the sit-in: That the university not buy table grapes, that it offer scholarships to children of agricultural workers, that it increase to 10 per cent from 4 per cent the rate of "special admissions" for disadvantaged students and that it create a Mexican-American student center.

To back another demand that the university drop charges against those arrested, the student group Thursday called for a student strike.

Although the campus chapter has only 70 members and there are only about 100 Mexican-Americans among Berkeley's more than 27,000 students, the cry for a classroom boycott was expected to be taken up by activists already involved in the fight over Eldridge Cleaver, a leader of the Black Panthers, and his class on racism.

The controversy was further confused by an announcement that table grapes would still not be served at the Berkeley campus, which once consumed hundreds of pounds a month.

"We are continuing not to buy grapes for the residence halls and the cafeteria," Richard P. Hafner Jr., campus public affairs officer, confirmed.

"That decision is based purely on campus considerations. Several student groups have asked that we stop offering grapes, and this responds to their request. This decision does not take a position on the boycott anymore than buying grapes would."

The dean of students, Arleigh Williams, noted that Mr. Hitch had called the matter "strictly economic," and pointed out that it would be uneconomical to let grapes rot on tables because students would not eat them.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hitch came in for criticism from Mr. Chavez.

"Surely the university has a responsibility to do something about poverty, not just study it," he said in a telegram to the student confederation. "Apparently Hitch does not hold that view. These students are demonstrating in a beautiful and nonviolent way that the university should be a servant of the poor and not a tool of the growers."