



The New York Times (by Barton Silverman)

Union-picked grapes at Balducci's in Greenwich Village

Union-Label Grapes Get A Mixed Reception Here

By RICHARD PHALON

Boxes of California table grapes bearing the safe passage stamp of the Farmworker's A.F.L.-C.I.O. union label—a black Aztec eagle inset in a white circle against the background of a red flag—are making their first appearance here to what seems to be a mixed reception.

In many instances, they are the first California grapes to show up on the stands since the United Farmworkers Organizing Committee headed by Cesar Chavez started a national boycott two years ago.

The boycott, reinforced by volunteer picket lines of sympathetic consumers, convinced many supermarket chains and fruit stores that the trouble of handling non-union grapes wasn't worth the price they had to pay.

The first trickle of union-picked grapes—the flow is still small—began to move into the city about two weeks ago at the beginning of a

shipping season in which seven California growers representing about 4 per cent of the industry signed labor contracts.

A spot check of a dozen stores here yesterday showed that the boycott still very much on the minds of some housewives who were unaware that some growers had signed. It also showed that some housewives were still not buying grapes—not for any particular philosophical reasons, but because the price wasn't right.

Thus, the manager of an A. & P. supermarket who did not want his store identified said the emotional content of the boycott was very much evident in the sharp tones of several women who asked him why he was selling California grapes.

"We showed them the label on the box," he said, "and explained that some growers had settled. Some of these ladies just didn't know what had happened."

The manager of H. C. Bohack supermarket had much the same experience yesterday, but somewhat more difficulty in making his position clear.

He said he had removed a sign advertising the season's "first" California seedless grapes from his window when a "lady complained," but added that he had "no authority" to take the grapes off the shelf.

The grapes were packed in plastic one-pound portions carrying no indication that they had been union-picked. Other supermarkets visited yesterday were displaying their fruit in wooden cases that gave potential buyers a clear view of the black Aztec emblem.

"We want that thing out in the open where people can really see it," another supermarket manager said. "I don't want any picket lines around my store."

The Bohack manager said his plastic-packed grapes were indeed picked by union labor, but conceded he might have trouble convincing militants that was the case unless there was a union emblem around somewhere to prove it. He said he would talk to higher executives in the chain.

Most of the talk about grapes yesterday was price. The spotcheck showed a range of 49 cents (at Bohack) to \$1.39 in a small, exquisitely arranged specialty shop on Madison Avenue.

Joseph Doria, manager of Balducci's Produce, which caters to the high social conscience of Greenwich Village and up until three weeks ago hadn't stocked a California grape in two years, said the union-picked products were going "pretty well."

Mr. Doria said that he was selling about 20 boxes a week. But he noted that the price, 89 cents a pound, was "pretty high." At 59 cents a pound, he said, "I could sell a lot more than 20 boxes."

A woman shopper at the produce counter in a Grand Union supermarket agreed. "I'm not buying," she said. "But it's not politics with me; it's price."