

Chavez Asks Lettuce-Boycott Support

By ELEANOR BLAU

Cesar Chavez, organizer of a grape boycott that won union recognition for pickers in California, said yesterday that his latest boycott — against non-union iceberg lettuce — was meeting “tremendous opposition.”

Speaking at the Riverside Church, at Riverside Drive and 122d Street, Mr. Chavez appealed for support for 7,200 field workers who struck lettuce growers in California's Salinas Valley late last summer in a fight for employer recognition of the United Farm Workers Union. He asked both for support of the boycott and for letters to Senators and Representatives in Congress.

Mr. Chavez addressed 2,000 worshipers at the service and then answered questions in a discussion session at the church.

He is scheduled to appear in a Salinas court Friday to show cause why he should not be held in contempt for failing to stop the boycott. The court has issued injunctions against the boycott as well as against mass picketing.

Asked what might result from Friday's decision, he said, “Probably we'll find ourselves spending some time in jail.”

Mr. Chavez contended that the basis for the injunctions had been a false charge that a jurisdiction dispute with the

Teamsters Union was involved in the strike.

Dressed in a blue plaid shirt, olive slacks and work boots, Mr. Chavez, a Roman Catholic, stood in the pulpit of the interdenominational Gothic church as he urged the congregation not to buy iceberg lettuce that did not have the union label of a black Aztec eagle.

The label should appear either on the lettuce wrappings or the crate in which unwrapped lettuce was packed, he said. Mr. Chavez reported that between 20 and 25 per cent of iceberg lettuce now being sold bore such labels.

Reiterating his position of nonviolence, which he said was “truly the essence of Christ's

teaching,” Mr. Chavez told the congregation that the most potent weapon of nonviolence was the boycott. Boycotts can involve great numbers, he added, because they are relatively painless, and can be maintained by the pressure of friends who open each other's refrigerators.

Mr. Chavez said that students had been largely responsible for the success of the grape boycott and that most large church bodies eventually had given their support.

But he reported that no large church groups had endorsed the current boycott so far. “We're up against it,” he said. “The church can be of extreme help to us.”



The New York Times

Cesar Chavez speaking at Riverside Church yesterday

The New York Times

Published: November 30, 1970

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