

# Leader of Farm Workers Says Union Faces Life or Death Fight

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FRESNO, Calif., Sept. 21—The United Farm Workers Union is facing "a life or death struggle" for survival, Cesar Chavez, its president, said today.

The union, generally credited with the first successful effort to organize agricultural workers in this country, is "back where we were in 1965 to 1970," Mr. Chavez told delegates here to the union's fourth constitutional convention.

The union began fighting for "la causa" — economic justice for Chicano and other field workers — in 1965. After a long boycott of grapes it won contracts to represent grape harvesters in 1970.

However, when the contract expired this year the growers signed new contracts with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters instead of renegotiating with the farm workers.

California lettuce growers also signed contracts with the teamsters rather than with the U.F.W. Agricultural labor is not covered by the National Labor Relations Act and elections are not required for union representation.

Mr. Chavez in effect told his union today that it must virtually start over to win the right to represent the farm workers.

## Police Role Alleged

The strike against the grape growers this summer, he said, was "broken" by the growers and teamsters working together with the help of local policemen and other authorities. Two members of his union were murdered during the strike.

Meeting with reporters after today's sessions he said that the union had only about 10 contracts left representing some 18,000 workers in California and Florida.

Other officials of the union estimated that the number of workers under U.F.W. was even lower.

At its peak in 1972 the union had nearly 70,000 dues-paying members.

Mr. Chavez, who roused the 400 or so delegates with cries of "viva la huelga"—long live the strike—said that "the world knows that nothing will stop us from having our union."

The teamsters and growers acted "shamefully" and "stand condemned," he said.

His union, he said, is now putting its case "to the court of last resort—the American public."

It is doing so, Mr. Chavez said, by asking the American people to boycott products harvested under what Mr. Chavez called "teamster sweetheart contracts."

Mr. Chavez, a short, black-haired man, said that the boycott was now in operation in nearly 60 cities in the United States and Canada.

Products being boycotted are lettuce, table grapes and all wines produced in the Gallo, Franzia and Guild wineries. Included in the boycott of brands in these wineries are Gallo's Thunderbird, Boone's Farm and Spanada and Guild's Roma and Crestablanca.

Mr. Chavez said that he understood college students were starting to boycott these wines on a number of campuses around the country.

## 'Good Wines' Cited

Wines not being boycotted by the union, what Mr. Chavez described as "good wines," are Italian Swiss Colony, Almaden, Paul Masson, Christian Brothers, Novitiate of Los Gatos and Vio Del.

Mr. Chavez said that his union had more support for its boycott today than it did in 1970. He also said that financial contributions coming in more than made up for the decline in dues payments that resulted from the lost contracts.

Mr. Chavez seems to be counting on the boycott to win back the union's right to represent the farm workers.

However, the head of the state A.F.L.-C.I.O., John Henning, indicated during a speech to the convention today that a major hope for winning back the contracts lay in direct negotiations with the teamsters' union. George Meany, president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, has been negotiating directly with Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of the teamsters.

Mr. Chavez said that he would meet next week with Mr. Fitzsimmons or Mr. Fitzsimmons' representative. Mr. Chavez said that he would settle for an agreement giving his union the right to represent all field workers including machinery operators and giving the teamsters the right to represent canners and packagers.

Even if he had a written agreement, Mr. Chavez added, he would want a third party such as Mr. Meany to administer the agreement. "The teamsters have broken agreements before," he said.