

# Big Vineyards Ready to Talk to Union

By **ROBERT A. WRIGHT**

Special to The New York Times

DELANO, Calif., July 12 — Cesar Chavez's five-year campaign to organize farm workers took a major step forward last week when the big vineyards indicated for the first time that they were interested in negotiating union contracts.

Mostly small growers have to date signed contracts with the Farm Workers Organizing Committee of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The first contracts were signed April 1 with three small vineyards in the Coachella Valley to the south. In recent weeks, however as the harvest has moved north, the pace has accelerated, with three to four vineyards a week signing contracts. The union now has contracts with 25 per cent of the California table grape industry.

On Friday, a solid front of the larger vineyards against recognition of the union was broken. Philip J. Feick Jr., president of the Western Employers Council, announced that a majority of the growers were prepared to negotiate with the union.

Mr. Feick, who said that his council represented growers accounting for more than 50 per cent of California's 78,000 acres in table grapes, indicated the vineyards would forego union representation elections.

Such elections had been an obstacle in bringing the two sides together. Growers had charged that Mr. Chavez's union did not speak for the majority of farm workers.

## Reagan Made Proposal

Two weeks ago, the growers had accepted a proposal by Gov. Ronald Reagan that the state conciliation service supervise secret ballot elections among the workers to see if they wanted to affiliate with the Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

Union officials rejected the proposal, declaring that it was "too late for elections." They said that they had been rebuffed in their calls for elections in the beginning of their organizing drive, and that Governor Reagan's plan then could

have averted strikes and the union's boycott against nonunion grapes.

Mr. Chavez said on Friday, "We want to make it emphatically clear that the union has absolutely no confidence or trust in Reagan or the conciliation service."

The union's boycott against nonunion grapes, Mr. Chavez said in an interview, has been highly effective and the chief cause of recent successes in signing up growers. "They're coming to us now," he said.

In bed with a chronic back ailment, the diminutive Mr. Chavez spoke before the growers' announcement. While indicating pleasure with the progress made by the union, he indicated that it had a long way to go to meet its goals. "The big battle from now on will be here in Delano," where the largest growers are situated, he said.

Mr. Chavez said that there had been a division among the union's leaders over continuing the boycott of nonunion grapes while promoting the sale of

grapes with the union label. Some feared that the partial boycott would confuse consumers and depress the grape market.

But the decision to continue the boycott turned out to be highly successful, Mr. Chavez said. In addition, a premium for union label grapes of 25 cents to \$1 a box developed, other union officials said.

Mr. Chavez said that it might take well into next year to sign up the big Delano growers.

Mr. Feick said that, at the urging of Louis Gilbert, state conciliator, the Western Employers Council had changed its position on insisting on elections. The growers will seek the aid of the State Conciliation Service as mediator, Mr. Feick said.

As to mediators, Mr. Chavez said that he would prefer the good offices of the Committee of Catholic Bishops. An ad hoc committee of bishops played a conciliatory role in the first and subsequent contracts and now has organized permanently.