

# A.F.L.-C.I.O. BACKS CHAVEZ BOYCOTT

## Meany Urges Union Protest on Grapes and Lettuce

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 16—

George Meany, declaring that "the plight of farm workers is of vital importance to the entire labor movement," acted today to mobilize the nationwide network of A.F.L.-C.I.O. unions to support the boycott of grapes and lettuce organized by the United Farm Workers of America.

In a letter to each of the federation's 900 state and local bodies, which have 13.5-million union members, Mr. Meany, president of the Federation, gave instructions for carrying the boycott message to the public through systematic picketing and distribution of handbills.

For Cesar Chavez and his farm workers union, which has been locked in a jurisdictional battle with the powerful International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the support of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations could mean the difference between success or failure.

### Loss in Members

The farm workers union has been conducting its own national boycott for more than a year, but it has been stripped of all but a handful of dues-paying members as most grape and lettuce growers in California signed contracts with the teamsters.

Mr. Chavez and his supporters believe that a successful boycott would force the growers to sign a contract again with the United Farm Workers. A.F.L.-C.I.O. support was largely responsible for a recent successful boycott against the Farah Manufacturing Company, which makes trousers.

In his letter to the state and local officers of the federation, Mr. Meany asserted that "the success or failure of the U.F.W. to win economic and social justice for farm workers will be heavily influenced by the energy and dedication with which the trade union movement pursues the boycott campaign."

Mr. Meany added that "experience has proved that the best method for getting a boycott message across to the public is by picketing and hand-billing at retail stores selling the products in question."

### Limited Action Asked

He stressed, however, that customers should only be asked not to buy grapes and lettuce. They should not be asked to boycott other products at stores that carry the two products, he said.

Mr. Chavez's insistence that stores carrying grapes and lettuce by boycotted had blocked A.F.L.-C.I.O. endorsement of the boycott until now because other federation affiliates, such as the retail clerks union, would have been adversely affected. The federation sanctioned the boycott after Mr. Chavez dropped his insistence on the boycott of stores and agreed to limit it to the two products.

In his letter, Mr. Meany advised federation officials that they could urge managers of retail stores "to make the business judgment" to stop purchasing grapes and lettuce not picked by the United Farm Workers.

### Coercion Barred

However, Mr. Meany wrote, A.F.L.-C.I.O. members are "forbidden" to request a total boycott of retail stores or to "undertake any form of physical interference with consumers, employes or delivery men or otherwise engage in any obstruction or disturbances." Picketing, he said, must be "peaceful."

Mr. Meany also issued a statement today replying to a letter sent to him last week by Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of the teamsters union, urging that there be no violence in the vineyards during this year's harvest.

In reply, Mr. Meany said that "last year's violence in the California fields resulted solely and simply because the teamsters imported goons. The farmworkers," he said, "were the victims of brutality last year, not the perpetrators."