

# Peace in the Fields and Vineyards

There may be no more welcome truce in 1977 than the one achieved by the United Farm Workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Burlingame, Calif., the other day. The agreement not only settles jurisdictional issues between the two unions; it ends one of the ugliest battles inside organized labor within recent memory, and it even does a little something for the tattered image of the teamsters' union.

In the 1960's, after long and costly battles with California growers, the farm workers' union, under leadership of Cesar Chavez, began to achieve recognition as bargaining agent and to build sufficient strength to deliver services to its impoverished members. About seven years ago, the teamsters moved in and tried to muscle the farm workers out of their dearly won gains—by contracts first with lettuce growers, which the California Supreme Court struck down as collusive, and then with grape growers. As the battle heated up, A.F.L.-C.I.O. President Meany weighed in with angry words against the teamsters and with well over a million dollars for the farm workers' war chest.

There has been considerable speculation about why the teamsters attempted such an unlikely enterprise as organizing Chicano farm workers. It was charged that the growers had put the teamsters up to the campaign in order to get "sweetheart" contracts. Another charge was that the teamsters were paying off a political debt to former President Nixon by helping out the growers, who

had in the past been among his influential supporters.

But by June of 1976, Mr. Nixon was out of the White House. Jerry Brown was in the Governor's chair in Sacramento, and the Labor and Justice Departments were moving in on the teamsters' Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas Pension Fund. Governor Brown got a Farm Labor Relations Act on the California statute books, paving the way for supervised elections.

The elections started in August and by November, 25 ranches previously represented by the teamsters had voted to be represented by the farm workers' union, while the teamsters had failed to win a single one of the farm worker ranches. Ray Schoessling, the secretary-treasurer of the teamsters' union, toted up the score: His union had spent \$10 million or so in the raids on the farm workers' union and had little to show for it other than bad publicity and a string of election losses. He and others decided that it was time to settle.

The agreement seems eminently reasonable. The United Farm Workers will recruit among workers whose employers' principal activity is farming. The teamsters can recruit among agricultural workers if the principal activity is something other than farming. The main beneficiaries of the agreement are the workers. The funds previously used to wage war now can be spent to help them. Cesar Chavez is jubilant, and Frank Fitzsimmons should also be pleased. The teamsters' eyes aren't quite as black as they used to be.

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