

OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA, AFL-CIO, REGARDING THE

BOYCOTT

At the initiative of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., an historic accord has been reached on legislation to resolve the California farm labor dispute. The United Farm Workers of America and the state's major agricultural interests took part in negotiations in the Governor's office that culminated in a compromise farm labor bill that both sides of the dispute support.

The farm workers' union compromised its original legislative position to gain a bill that guarantees farm workers the right to choose their own union representatives through secret ballot elections. A special session of the California Legislature is considering the Governor's bill and it is hoped the measure will be enacted in time for free elections this fall.

A crucial factor in convincing the growers to accept the compromise was the increasing effectiveness of the farm workers' boycott of non-UFW grapes, head lettuce, and Gallo Wine. Faced with the prospect of years of unending consumer pressure, growers were anxious for an end to the boycott. Until the law becomes effective the boycott is necessary to keep the growers honest and maintain their incentive for supporting the free election mechanism contained in the Brown bill. A continued boycott will forestall the signing of additional sweetheart contracts prior to the fall and will remind agribusiness that farm worker support in the cities remains a potent force against in-house company farm unionism.

The boycott is also vital after the law is enacted and elections are held. The National Labor Relations Act is replete with examples of employers who fought unions after recognition was gained by surface bargaining - going through the motions of negotiations while refusing to talk about the "gut issues" that must be included in viable collective bargaining agreements.

A grower may stand to lose \$200,000 through Union wage increases and other contract benefits. For considerably less money he can hire slick labor relations lawyers to forestall or even preclude the signing of a Union contract. A Union can be recognized to death and never sign a contract. The farm workers can win as many elections as we wish, but unless the workers have the economic tools to pressure growers into signing contracts, winning elections and gaining recognition under the law is meaningless.

The great industrial unions of the 1930's and 1940's were able to gain their first contracts and build their unions because they enjoyed the support of the American people through the consumer boycott. Farm workers deserve no less.

Traditionally, California growers have strongly resisted some of the farm workers' most crucial contract demands: pesticide control, grievance mechanisms, hiring halls, and union security, forced mechanization and medical plan contributions. Unless the farm workers maintain their support among consumers in North America and Western Europe, it will be very difficult to secure these benefits in contract negotiations.

You do not win the hearts and minds of growers by winning elections and gaining recognition. The growers we boycott today, Gallo and employers in the grape and lettuce industry without UFW contracts, have been rapidly anti-union in the past and there is no reason to believe a farm labor law will change their attitude. The boycott remains the farm workers' most important non-violent weapon and the surest means of finally restoring peace to the fields.

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