

# FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by United Farm Workers

June 1986



## Who Poisoned These Women?




California table grapes are now in your local supermarket. We need your help in getting them out of the stores -- for our sake, but also for yours. As you can see from the articles in this issue, the growers are recklessly poisoning farm workers on an almost daily basis. And they won't even talk about testing for pesticide residues that are hidden deep inside the grapes where washing cannot reach.

You can help get these tainted grapes out of the stores by talking to your local store manager. Tell him/her about the poisoning of workers and the pesticide residues inside the grapes. Demand that he/she remove the table grapes from the shelves. Do it every week until your pressure has an impact.

If your manager says the grapes are pesticide-free, insist that he put up above the grape display a formal statement to that effect. If he agrees, let us know so that we can demand a residue test of the grapes.

You are our Court of Last Resort, the court that has always insisted on justice for farm workers. Now we can work together to protect farm workers and consumers from the plague of pesticides on our food. If we join hands as a family, we can ban the deadliest poisons from the fields.

Please see your supermarket manager today and let me know about the results. 

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Food and Justice

June 1986

Magazine of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO  
La Paz, Keene, CA 93570



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**Cover picture:** Victims of pesticide poisoning at Napa Valley Vineyards. Shown are Petra Alvarez, Maria Valdez, Maria Amaya, Maria Gallygos, Angela Garcia and Maxine Swindlehurst.



Maxine Swindlehurst, one of the spraying victims, believes she was intentionally poisoned.

## Grape Workers Believe They Were Deliberately Poisoned

One day, not too long ago, a crop duster named Stephen T. Wilder flew a helicopter loaded with sulfur over the fields of Napa Valley Vineyards in Napa, California.

There were farm workers in many of the fields but Wilder only seemed interested in six pro-union workers. All six were women. Four of these women were working when Wilder flew toward them. He sprayed the women five and six times, each time dousing them with sulfur. Wilder then skipped several fields and approached an area where two other women were working. He sprayed both of these women and flew off.

Sulfur is used as a pesticide to kill fungus and insects on plants. It has a twenty-four hour restriction. This means that workers are not supposed to be in the fields for at least twenty-four hours after the chemical has been sprayed. Wilder should have been aware of both the re-entry restriction and the presence of workers. He has been a crop duster for ten years.

After the spraying, one of the workers went to the site where the helicopter had landed and took the label that described the pesticide with which she and the others had been sprayed. The label reads in part: "Do not apply this product in such a manner as to



Stephen Wilder, owner and sole pilot of North Coast Helicopters, repeatedly sprayed six women farm workers last month.

directly or through drift expose workers or other persons."

Many of the workers believe that Wilder was ordered to spray them by a Napa Valley Vineyard official. the women who were sprayed -- Petra Alvarez, Maria Valdez, Maria Amaya, Maria Gallygos, Angela Garcia and Maxine Swindlehurst -- are all members of the United Farm Workers.

Petra is the union representative and a member of the committee which has been trying to negotiate a contract with Napa Valley Vineyards for the past five months. Maria Valdez is the president of the negotiating committee, and Maria Amaya is the secretary.

Petra has worked for the company for thirteen years. She believes she was singled out by Wilder and the company. "The guy who sprayed us knew what he was doing," Petra said.

"He should have his license taken away."

She added, "I was singled out because I am a union representative, and they (company officials) do not like people who speak up for their rights. They want to make us give up."

Maria Valdez shares Petra's conviction. "It's because we are members of the committee. The company is putting pressure on us right now," she said. Maria is also convinced that the crop duster intentionally sprayed her and the others. Maria was sprayed six times with the pesticide. She said, "We were drenched with the yellow chemical. (The crop duster) was flying so low, so it would have been impossible for him not to see us. He saw us, and he did it on purpose."

Maxine, another spraying victim, also believes she was deliberately tar-

geted. Maxine has worked for Napa Valley Vineyards for over ten years. "It didn't make any sense because he (Wilder) sprayed just where I worked. When I was sprayed I was sitting in one of the rows so I thought he must not have seen me. I covered my nose. But then I saw it (the helicopter) coming back."

Maxine does not believe the spraying could have been an accident. "If he's qualified to fly that helicopter, he should be qualified to know not to spray people," she said. "There were fields with other workers, and they were not sprayed. For some reason the company just wants to get rid of us."

The reason the company wants to get rid of the workers is probably due to their loyalty to the UFW and their determination to be protected. Their

resolution was demonstrated a week after the spraying when the workers placed large union flags at the end of the rows of grape vines in the fields where they work.

No one in the company will admit to ordering the spraying. The workers believe that Robert Egelhoff or Scott Wharton, two company managers who have a reputation among the workers for harassment, may be responsible. Petra recalled that after she was sprayed she went to the company office. She reported the incident to Wharton, and Wharton's response was "Good." Petra added, "Egelhoff was not there, and he is the one who is supposed to tell the guy who was spraying what field to spray." Egelhoff could not be reached for comment.

After the spraying, the women

Instead of investigating the spraying the day after it happened or on company time, official Debbie Swanson questions workers a week later during their lunch hour.



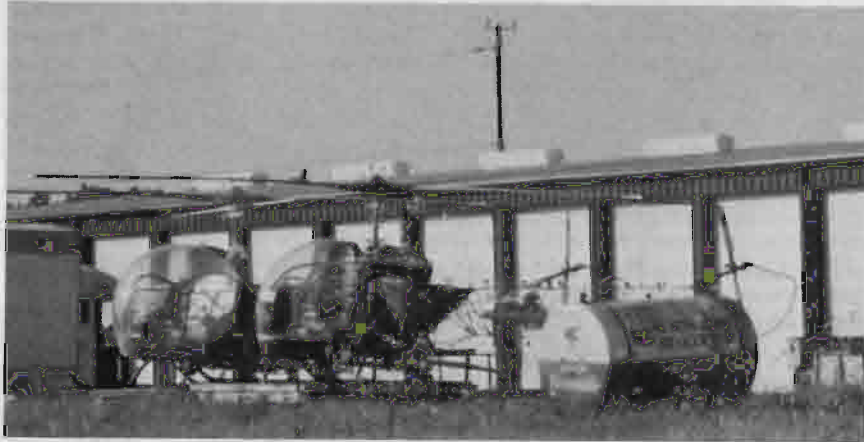
became sick. Maxine's eyes ached for days from the chemical which had been sprayed in her face. The other women suffered from nausea, headaches and dizziness.

Still, the company did not respond to the episode until a full week after it occurred. It is probably not a coincidence that the company decided to investigate the spraying the same day that they were notified that reporters from the UFW would be entering the vineyards to interview the victims. "Why didn't they ask me

"The questionnaire is just to pressure people," Petra said. "They are hoping we'll forget about the spraying."

When Swanson noticed that a union reporter was taping her interview with one of the workers, she quickly moved herself and the worker out of range of the tape recorder.

Roy Harris, a manager and company negotiator, also implied that the workers are lying about the incident. "We're still in the process of investigating," he said. "We're having



Helicopters owned by Wilder are used for crop dusting in Napa Valley.

about it the day after it happened?" Maxine asked.

The day that union reporters arrived there were two company officials questioning the workers. Debbie Swanson and Frank Villanova asked the workers questions from a form prepared by the company. Swanson told the workers, "I just want an honest opinion about what happened." Petra told Swanson that the workers have been telling the truth all along. She said she does not need to change her story to make it "honest."

trouble getting the people involved to talk candidly about it." Harris also confirmed that Wilder is the only person hired by Napa Valley Vineyards to spray the fields, implying that it could have been no one but Wilder who sprayed the women workers.

When Harris was asked to elaborate on the spraying episode he refused to comment.

The spraying incident is not the only mistreatment the workers have suffered though it is the most blatant. Petra remembers a recent day when the



Workers of Napa Valley Vineyards are loyal to the union and determined to win a fair contract.

workers were given water in the fields. The cups given to the workers to drink out of smelled of gasoline. Petra told Egelhoff this, but he said he did not smell anything.

Another episode involves the placement of bathrooms for workers in the fields. Bathrooms are supposed to be placed fairly close to the workers. After the spraying, Maxine felt ill. She told Egelhoff this and then drove "a few miles" before she found a bathroom. When she returned to the field she was suspended for three days.


Being sprayed repeatedly with the pesticide has not shaken the workers' resolution to attain a fair contract. The UFW has represented the workers at Napa Valley Vineyards since 1972. The last contract expired in December, 1985. Because of the company officials' behavior during negotiating sessions, the UFW has filed charges against the company for bargaining in bad faith.

According to Humberto Gomez, crop manager of the union's grape and

tree fruit division, the company has offered "unacceptable proposals." These proposals call for drastically reduced wages, weakened seniority policies and a reduction in the company's responsibility to recognize the union.

Still the workers are fighting for decent wages and working conditions. "Some people don't think much of farm workers," Maxine explained. "But I take pride in my work because I support my kids with my wages. I'm not on welfare. And we have to fight for a contract now."

The pilot who sprayed the workers does not have the same economic concerns. He earned \$60,000 last year for 350 hours of flying time. "You can make some real big bucks if you are in the right place at the right time in the right job," Wilder said. Still, he maintains that money is not his sole incentive. He said, "Pilots are like cowboys. They do it because they love it."

How much Wilder was paid to spray the workers at Napa Valley Vineyards is not known. 



Cesar Chavez addresses thousands of students and supporters at UCLA's Cinco de Mayo festivities.

## Grape Boycott Gains More Support

### Kansas City Endorses

"Everything's up to date in Kansas City" -- especially the latest on the grape boycott. Farm labor leader Cesar Chavez made sure of that during a three-day visit in May.

Opening a jam-packed schedule of meetings, speeches and interviews was a breakfast meeting with officials of the Greater Kansas City Labor Council, headed by Ed Drake, president, and Harry Spring, secretary-treasurer. "We have stood side by side with farm workers in their struggle for many

years, and we always will," Drake told Chavez. "We are proud to endorse your new table grape boycott."

At a press conference following the breakfast meeting, Kansas City (MO) Mayor Richard Berkley issued a proclamation of welcome to Chavez. Leaders of various organizations signed an enlarged "Wrath of Grapes" pledge card. Endorsing the boycott were Bishop John B. Sullivan of the Diocese of Kansas City; Bill Waris, representing the Jackson County Legi-

## THE WRATH OF GRAPES FILM

**GIVE ME AN  
EVENING OF  
YOUR LIFE  
AND  
TOGETHER WE  
CAN BRING A  
DAY OF HOPE  
TO  
PESTICIDE  
VICTIMS**



Cesar Chavez

La Paz, Keene, CA 93570

Dear Friend,

Now I am reaching out to you for help, because consumers and farm workers must stand together as one family if we are to be heard.

I am writing to you about our new film, **The Wrath of Grapes**. I believe that once you've seen it, you'll want to show it to your friends.

The new film depicts the plight of California farm workers exposed to deadly pesticides through stories of themselves and their children.

You will see a moving, sad and frightening film of pesticide victims afflicted with cancer.

You will be brought to your feet with anger and concern over the birth defects.

No matter who you are . . . it's your health that is endangered by the same residues that poison farm workers and their families.

Please contact me soon by sending in the enclosed tear-off card. And don't forget — **BOYCOTT TABLE GRAPES!**

Yours in Friendship,

Cesar Chavez  
President  
United Farm Workers of America

**NOW IS THE TIME FOR US ALL TO STAND AS  
A FAMILY AND DEMAND A RESPONSE IN  
THE NAME OF DECENCY!**

Add your voice to our **Demands of Decency** as we call for:

- A ban on dangerous pesticides
- A joint UFW-Grape Grower residue testing program of table grapes
- Free and fair elections for farm workers

**PROMOTE THE WRATH OF  
GRAPES FILM**

Dear Cesar Chavez,

Please send me more information on the new **Wrath of Grapes** film and how I can show it to my friends.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



# TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE

This is a battle that none of us can afford to lose because it is a fight for the future of America. It is a fight we can win with commitment and money. And it is a fight everyone can join.

*Your stamp saves  
the farm workers  
the money* →

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POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

Cesar Chavez  
P.O. Box 62  
Keene, CA 93531-9989



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IN THE  
UNITED STATES



and weak and poorly enforced pesticide regulations threaten farm workers and consumers."

After his speech, Chavez introduced a new UFW boycott film entitled "The Wrath of Grapes." It focuses on the pesticide plague endangering farm workers, people living in towns surrounded by heavily poisoned agricultural fields, and consumers who ingest pesticide residues on grapes and other produce. The film is narrated by actor Mike Farrell.

New Mexico Gov. Toney Anaya, addressing the same conference in the afternoon, pledged his support of the grape boycott.

## UCLA

Returning to California, Chavez received an enthusiastic reception at the University of California (Los Angeles) during a celebration of Cinco de Mayo (Fifth of May), a national holiday in Mexico and a day of cultural pride for Chicanos. The university-wide program was under the sponsorship of M.E.Ch.A., a Chicano student organization.

Chavez reminded UCLA students-- as well as community members also invited to the celebration -- that they are all descendants of immigrants who at one time or other needed help to survive and succeed. "No one wants to live in poverty or without human dignity and freedom," he said. "Farm workers are just like everyone else. They simply seek their rights as humans. And when those rights are denied, they use whatever nonviolent means are needed to win them. That's what our table grape boycott is all about. We need your help to convince growers and Gov. Deukmejian that they can't rob farm workers of their rights. Decent people like you won't let them!"

slature (county supervisors); members of the Kansas City (MO) City Council; and representatives of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

The next day, after the city council of Kansas City, Kansas also officially endorsed the grape boycott, Mayor Jack Reardon issued a proclamation of welcome honoring Chavez at the opening of the Hispanic Leadership Conference. Chavez, the keynote speaker, outlined the reasons for renewing the table grape boycott:

"The same forces that kept California farm workers enslaved for 100 years are again thriving under the present Deukmejian Administration. The farm labor law of 1975 is in shambles, free and fair elections are impossible, growers ignore the requirement to bargain in good faith,



Farm workers protest the weak charges brought against George Azuma for his involvement in the death of Juan Chabolla.

## Huerta Leads Protest of Misdemeanor Charges in Farm Worker Death

"This is just another case of a grower and pesticide dealer practically getting away with murder," said Dolores Huerta, first vice-president of the United Farm Workers of America, as she spoke to farm workers and media in front of the El Cajon, California Municipal Court on May 7.


Huerta and picketing farm workers had gathered at the courthouse to protest the arraignment of pesticide dealer George Azuma on misdemeanor charges for his involvement in the death of farm worker Juan Chabolla on August 5, 1985.

Chabolla, 32, was ordered to begin working in a tomato field at Mirada Farms (San Diego County) only an hour after it had been sprayed with the deadly pesticide, Monitor. After complaining of the fumes, he collapsed a few hours later.

Fred Hatashita, owner of Mirada Farms, drove Chabolla 45 miles across the border to a Tijuana clinic instead of taking him to a nearby hospital for emergency treatment. Chabolla was dead on arrival.

No charges were filed against Hatashita, and Azuma was cited for six violations of pesticide safety regulations requiring workers to be kept out of a field 24 hours after it has been sprayed with a Category I (highly toxic) pesticide. If convicted, Azuma would face only a maximum sentence of \$1,000 and six months in jail for each violation.

Minnie Ybarra, director of the farm worker service center who cared for the poverty-stricken Chabolla family after Juan's death, was incensed over the charges. "A young farm worker is dead, his wife Soledad and their four little children are left in poverty, and the D.A. calls it a misdemeanor," she said.

"Since farm workers are nothing more than animals to most growers, I don't know why Hatashita just didn't put a bullet in Juan's head to put him out of his misery. Dragging him across the border half dead and half alive wasn't a bit more compassionate." 

## PESTICIDES

### Poisoned Fruit Should Be Recalled

LoBue Brothers, Inc. of Lindsay, California recently harvested a crop of oranges and sent them to be prepared for sale in the nation's markets. This fruit was treated with Omite CR, a pesticide used to kill mites. This same pesticide poisoned over 300 farm workers who picked the oranges. "LoBue Brothers is shipping the contaminated fruit to the unsuspecting American consumer," Cesar Chavez, United Farm Workers president, said of the company's act.

At a demonstration held in front of the LoBue Bros. plant on May 15, Chavez demanded that the oranges produced by the company be recalled.

The problems with the fruit began April 27. At that time, two workers reported chemical burns around their necks. An official from the company called Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner, Clyde Churchill, to report the cases. Churchill's response was to tell the growers to call again if there were any new cases. In the following weeks, hundreds of additional workers came forward with the same injuries.

Churchill was asked if it is standard procedure to deputize growers to perform the agricultural department's duties. "If some violation has been done or if it's a life and death

Victims of pesticide poisoning gather in front of LoBue Bros. in Lindsay, California. More than 300 workers of LoBue suffered from chemical burns.







Simon Baca, one of the LoBue Bros. workers, displays the severe burns he received on his stomach, chest and neck.

situation, we'll automatically go out (to the fields)," he said.

Churchill further claimed that the type of injury suffered by the workers is "so common" that it does not merit investigation unless a doctor says so-- a company doctor.

Churchill should know how common the problem is. The county he is in charge of has the highest number of farm workers suffering injuries from pesticide exposure in the state.

The growers claim that they are not responsible for the poisonings. In a press release issued by the company, Fred LoBue is quoted as saying, "While we are concerned about our own workers, the manufacturer (Uniroyal Chemical) wants to know more about the reactions here." Dr. Marion Moses, a physician and the head of the National Farm Workers Health Group, examined and interviewed many of the LoBue Bros. workers. She said, "The California Department of Food and

Agriculture is supposed to be protecting not only farm workers but also consumers. CDFA has used farm workers as guinea pigs."

Omite CR was introduced in 1981. It was not tested by the state to determine whether the re-entry restriction (the amount of time required between the application of a pesticide and the entry of farm workers into sprayed fields) should be extended.

The re-entry restriction for Omite CR was seven days. After the poisonings, the state changed the re-entry period to 28 and then to 35 days. Because so many people were poisoned, the state has finally decided to conduct hearings on the pesticide's dangers.

The growers are blaming the poisoning on the weather. They maintain that warm weather causes Omite CR to break down at a normal rate and that the cool weather California has been experiencing lately has affected the

pesticide. Chavez responded, "Again we see workers poisoned, consumers' health threatened and the weather gets blamed."

Dr. Moses claimed, "The consumers are victimized because of the contaminated fruit that results from these types of pesticide misuse."

Chavez also believes that the health of consumers may be affected by the oranges. "We are asking LoBue to voluntarily recall the fruit that has been shipped out, and if he refuses, we are demanding that Berryhill (director of the CDFA) obtain a court order to quarantine the fruit," he said.

The health of the farm workers who picked the fruit may be affected for the rest of their lives. Simon Baca, 22, is one of the workers who suffered the severest burns. The burns cover his back, chest, stomach and neck. "They didn't send us to a doctor for three or four days" after the incident, Baca said. "When they did send us, the doctor told us we could go back to work. For the past few days I have been feeling very bad, but they (the company doctor and officials) told us to continue working."

Another worker who received chemical burns, David Navarrete, said the company doctors treating the workers did not know what they were doing. He said they talked to each other and discussed their uncertainty about what to prescribe for the workers' burns. Finally, the doctor gave the workers an ointment. Navarrete said the ointment was ineffective, and he sought medical help on his own.

The doctor who treated the workers is Willard Christiansen. He is paid by Uniroyal, the manufacturer of Omite CR. It is not surprising that Christiansen is predicting a full recovery for the workers.

Chavez and Dr. Moses explained to the workers that once the skin is



LoBue Bros. workers picket their employer for exposing them to dangerous pesticides.

compromised by this type of burn, the chance of the injury recurring is good. Chavez said, "Once you get skin poisoning, you'll always have it. It never goes away."

Churchill argues that the oranges sent to consumers are not dangerous. Candy Hislip knows differently. She works at Tri-Citrus, the company responsible for washing and waxing the fruit grown by LoBue Bros. "I would not eat that fruit," Candy said. "It smelled worse than cat piss."

Hislip said that after working with the fruit, she and her fellow workers felt ill. "It made my eyes cry, my nose run, and the smell made my stomach turn. The lady working next to me had to sit down," Hislip said. She added, "I wouldn't buy it (the fruit). It smelled lousy, and nobody knows what's going to happen with that fruit."

# The UFW and Deukmejian

It's my opinion that the major stumbling block of the United Farm Workers, and organized labor in California, is Governor George Deukmejian, whose anti-labor appointees to key state boards are constantly undermining us.

Due to this hostile political climate in Sacramento, the UFW has not been able to get the growers to bargain in good faith, allow for free and fair elections, and stop using toxic pesticides in the fields (which endanger farm workers as well as consumers).

Even though Governor Jerry Brown set up an Agricultural Relations Board during his administration to protect the rights of farm workers, Deukmejian's ARLB appointees have sabotaged the original mission of this body.

Talk about letting the "fox guard the hen house." The Duke's state labor commissioner, Lloyd Aubry, Jr., and his appointee to the ARLB, General Counsel Dave Stirling, are both well-known for their strong anti-union sentiments.

Another Deukmejian appointee and anti-laborite is Clare Berryhill, director of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. After taking this job, he immediately announced he planned to ease the regulations regarding the control and use of chemical pesticides in the state. Berryhill is a San Joaquin Valley farmer/businessman with a conservative voting record as a state legislator. He lobbied against major provisions of SB 950, a measure carried by Senator Nick Petris

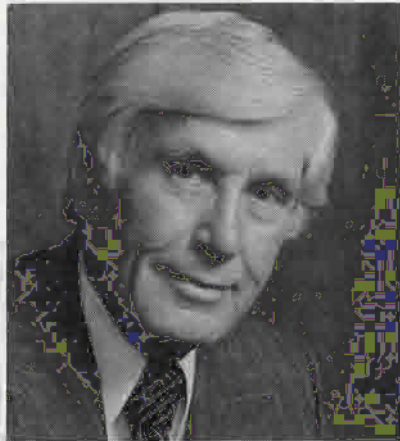


Photo by Elison-Alexandre

William R. Robertson

of Oakland and backed by major medical and environmental groups. It would require the CDFA to fill data gaps where the department has inadequate health and safety information on pesticides being used in California.

The Governor vetoed SB 370 also -- "The Occupational Disease Identification Program." Further, he cut out of the budget pro-labor programs such as additional worker's compensation judges needed to clear the litigation backlog and speedup benefits for injured workers. And he vetoed funding for the ALRB to complete processing of back-pay cases involving millions of dollars owed to thousands of farm workers.

Since the 1960s, the UFW has helped thousands of farm workers win protection from toxic pesticides as well as many other benefits. But that progress is being destroyed because today corporate growers and chemical producers thoroughly dominate the administration of state government.

*William R. Robertson is the Executive-Secretary Treasurer of the L.A. County Federation of Labor AFL-CIO.*

# FROM OUR READERS



Dear Mr. Chavez:

I am engaged in teaching at the Department of Economics, Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan. I am doing a special study of agricultural economics and have much interest in the structural change of American agriculture, the farm worker movement, and unionism.

I have heard about the UFW's long fight to improve and stabilize the working conditions of farm workers. Recently I learned about your magazine, "Food and Justice." I would like very much to receive it on a regular basis.

Professor Katsumi Kita  
Tokyo, Japan

Dear Mr. Cesar Chavez:

I am writing you these few lines to let you know that I am one of those grape workers who now have lung cancer. I believe it comes from when I worked down in the Coachella Valley fields thinning and picking grapes. We were sprayed with some pesticide.

We would be working and then told to move over just one or two rows. As soon as the spray tractor passed, we had to go back in the vines to work. We were dripping wet with the chemicals.

Last year, after working 17 years, I was told I have lung cancer. I have gotten radiation therapy, hoping and praying I will live a little longer for the sake of my children. I am only 48 years old.

May the Lord help you with your work.

Oralia Rodriguez Valencia  
Corona, California

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Received your magazine again today. I have been boycotting table grapes ever since getting a letter from Mr. Chavez last year. I will continue to do so. Let's hope I can help make a difference!

Thelma Wamble  
Tucson, Arizona

Dear Cesar Chavez:

As a nurse and mother, I'm concerned about the health of people and the earth, both now and for the future of the children. We have been boycotting table grapes and will continue to do so.

Patricia Marjavi  
San Francisco, CA

Dear Cesar Chavez:

Thank you for using your new grape boycott to draw attention not only to the poisoning of farm workers but also to the poisoning of grapes and land and water. Maybe this could be the turning point in causing people to realize the disastrous effects the greed of growers has on the food and health of the whole country.

God bless you and grant you success!  
Mary J. O'Donnell  
Schoharie, New York

Dear Friends at "Food and Justice":

For the past year I have looked forward to the issues of "Food and Justice." Each issue has raised my consciousness and increased my actions in support of your important cause. Be assured of my prayers for the wonderful work the UFW and your magazine do for the freedom of the oppressed.

Ruma Perez, Dir. Centro Cultural  
Cornelius, Oregon

Dear Cesar Chavez:

As a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and as a senior citizen, I support your just struggle and your table grape boycott. Living on a fixed income, I find it hard to contribute more generously than I do, but I will keep contributing as much as I can.

With best wishes for your success, I remain yours in the struggle.

Max Shlafrock  
Florida Sr. Citizens  
Hallandale, Florida

GAINESVILLE FL 32603  
723 NW 19 ST  
SAMUEL B. TRICKEY  
01

At a storage place in Del.  
California, pesticides are  
holed and left in the open,  
polluting the community's air.