

EDITORIAL



Testing Grapes for Residues

B ecause California table grape growers have heatedly denied our contention that the pesticides they use in harvesting grapes are a health threat to consumers as well as farm workers, we publicly invited them to participate in a joint program of residue testing of table grapes in stores (see *Food and Justice*, August 1986, page two).

The conditions we proposed were few: that the tests be a random sampling at the supermarket level, that the grapes be tested at an independent laboratory, that the results be made public, and that grape growers share the expenses of testing with us.

It was our belief that grape growers would gladly accept this offer if they had nothing to hide, if they really were convinced that their grapes contained no pesticide residues, and if their product was indeed no health threat to American consumers. However, we also promised that we would do the testing by ourselves if they refused to participate.

Since we have had no response from grape growers—other than more diatribes and personal attacks against us—we are presently proceeding with our own plans to test table grapes for pesticide residues. We are consulting with independent laboratory personnel and doctors who specialize in environmental disease to help us develop a set of procedures that will insure that the residue testing is objective and accurate.

In another article in this issue (see page six), there is more information on our planned residue-testing program. We hope you, our supporters, will read it and help us carry out this program in your city in the near future. Volume 4, Number 3

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Felipe Franco with his mother, Ramona. Ramona said she was told the pesticides in the grape fields were harmless "medicine."

The Hardest Lesson

Pelipe Franco looks forward to going to school each morning. He is a bright six-year-old boy who is quickly learning to read and write. He is even learning to operate a computer. These lessons are minor, however, compared to what the future has in store for Felipe. Some day, he will have to learn to be more independent — a formidable task for a child born without arms or legs.

Felipe's mother, Ramona, is a former farm worker who labored in the grape fields near Delano, California until her eighth month of pregnancy. During that time she was exposed to captan, a chemical known to cause birth defects and one of the pesticides the UFW wants banned as part of its grape boycott.

"Pesticides were sprayed at night when the workers were not in the fields," Ramona said. "But every morning when I began working I could smell the chemicals, and I could see them on the grape leaves."

Ramona was told what many farm

workers are told by foremen and growers. She was assured that the pesticides all around her were safe; she was told they were harmless "medicine" for the plants.

"I never knew the chemicals were toxic substances. No one ever told me they were dangerous. I believed them when they said it was medicine," Ramona said.

It was not until her seventh month that Ramona suspected something was wrong. At that time she went to the doctor because "the baby hardly moved." The doctor, however, convinced her that she was healthy and her unborn child was normal.

"It was not until he was born that anyone told me something was wrong with my baby," she said. "The doctor told me then that Felipe was abnormal — that he was born without arms or legs."

Felipe was born in Bakersfield, but soon after was taken with his mother to Los Angeles to see specialists. "The doc-



Returning from school, Felipe Franco is met by his aunt, Anna Maria.

tors there asked me about my history. I told them I was a farm worker, and I worked in the grape fields," Ramona said. After the interview, specialists told her she had been exposed to pesticides and these chemicals were responsible for Felipe's deformity.

Ramona has since filed a lawsuit against seven companies which manufacture pesticides she believes she was exposed to while working in the fields. The trial may begin later this year.

If Ramona wins the suit she will, no doubt, use the award to fund the special care Felipe requires. This year, he began attending kindergarten at the North Kern County School for Cerebral Palsy (a grade school for the handicapped) in Wasco. There, his teacher reported that Felipe is doing well. John Bohan, coordinator of the program for the physically handicapped at the school, said, "Felipe is doing super now. We put him in an electric wheelchair, and he adapted to it very quickly."

The chair allows Felipe some mobility, and he obviously enjoys his ability to move around without being carried. Felipe has also been equipped with a special machine which allows him to write and another which feeds him.

He also receives constant attention

from his family. "Everyone helps take care of Felipe," Ramona said. Her other children, Sandra and Guillermo, and her own sisters lavish Felipe with love. Ramona noted, "We all help each other, and the other children treat Felipe as if he were a normal child."

Currently, Felipe is living with his grandmother while Ramona cares for her younger children in a small rented house. Sandra and Guillermo were both born after Ramona quit working in the grape fields, and both are healthy.

Ramona said that while the sadness she felt when she discovered her child was handicapped has subsided, her anger persists. "I am angry at the growers and at those who spray pesticides without consideration for the people who must work in the fields — without consideration for the terrible consequences which can occur from the chemicals."

Felipe, however, feels neither sadness nor anger. Instead, he harbors a hope which only a child could harbor. Ramona said that Felipe wants to be able to grow arms and legs in the future. "He believes he will have his limbs someday," she said. "His great dream is to be able to move around, to walk, to take care of himself."

Another Pesticide Planned for Grapes

I f the Union Carbide Corporation has its way, American consumers can expect California table grapes to be harvested with yet another pesticide — aldicarb (Temik), the most toxic on the market today.

Union Carbide began testing aldicarb on grapes in California in 1984. Now it has been learned that, of the three vineyard plots tested, two in the San Joaquin Valley showed ground water pollution, and the third in northern California showed deep soil contamination.

There have also been other cases of aldicarb contamination of ground water in California, Florida, New York, and Wisconsin.

The most notorious crisis, however, occurred on July 4, 1985, when more than 1,000 people in the western U.S. and Canada became ill after eating contaminated watermelons on which three growers had illegally used aldicarb.

An alarming report by the federal Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, after a review of that watermelon crisis, said aldicarb sulfoxide residues, like those found in the poisoned watermelons, may be harmful to health in such small doses that they cannot even be detected.

Even more alarming was a study reported last year by Dr. Michael Fiore. His research on the people of a southern Wisconsin town showed subtle changes in the immune systems of residents who drank water containing residues of aldicarb. Commenting on his preliminary findings, Fiore said, "When you have an environmental agent that appears to affect our immune system, it raises a red flag."

In spite of all these adverse findings, Mary Ann Ford, Union Carbide public affairs manager, said, "We are still investigating the feasibility of using aldicarb on grapes." Ford also said the sale last December of Union Carbide's agrichemical business to Rhone-Poulenc in France for \$575 million has had no impact on current plans.

Consumers and their children may be exposed to yet another dangerous pesticide.





Scientific procedures are being developed to test table grapes for pesticide residues.

Pesticide-Residue **Testing to Begin**

T t has been several months since UFW President Cesar Chavez publicly invited California table grape growers to participate in a joint project to test grapes, already in supermarkets, for pesticide residues (see editorial, page 22).

But growers apparently don't want to "put up or shut up."

It is now clear that they do not intend to accept the invitation. And from their continued howls of protest and accusations against the UFW, it is even clearer that they do not intend to shut up, either.

They continue their anti-testing posture in spite of recent findings by the U.S. General Accounting Office that the UFW is not crying wolf for proclaiming the threat of pesticide residues on grapes and other foods, U.S.-grown and imported. (See last month's issue of Food and Justice for extensive coverage of the GAO's indictment of the Environmental

Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration for failing to protect consumers from pesticide residues.)

Objective Procedures

"The testing will be a sampling plan scientifically designed so that representative samples from supermarkets in selective cities throughout the U.S. will be tested," said Dr. Marion Moses, director of farm worker clinics and a specialist in environmental disease.

To insure objectivity and accuracy, Moses said a set of "chain-of-custody" procedures will be followed. This is a protocol of explicit instructions for selecting and submitting the grapes, receiving and analyzing them at the laboratory, keeping secret where the sample came from, and making certain the residues are from those pesticides actually sprayed on grapes in the field and not from some other source.

One Less Child

R uben and Dora Roungers and healthy young parents. They and their five children reside in the home where Ruben was raised in McFarland, California. Although McFarland is a cancer cluster, the Rodriguezes have never had any health problems.

Until last fall. In November, Dora, who had no difficulties with her previous pregnancies, had her sixth child die in her womb. She was nine months pregnant.

Ruben and Dora, unable to understand the death, examined changes which occurred between the time of the stillbirth and the birth of their youngest child three years ago. The Rodriguezes are convinced that Ruben's change in jobs contributed to the loss of their baby. Two years ago, Ruben became a pesticide applicator at Sandrini, a table grape company in Delano.

"I learned later that the chemicals I worked with were very dangerous." Ruben said. "I worked with parathion, captan, paraquat and sodium arsenite."

Ruben maintains that he was never adequately protected from the pesticides. He said, "Often I worked with no protective clothing at all. Once in a while

I was given gloves or paper overalls which were already soiled with pesticides."

Dora claims she came in daily contact with pesticides when she washed her husband's work clothes. Both Dora and Ruben began experiencing frequent headaches.

Still, the Rodriguezes did not suspect that their child was in danger. Dora said, "The doctor said that while he could not prove the death was from pesticides, he could not prove it wasn't either. He said the baby died because his lungs did not open."

Despite the inconclusive medical evidence, the Rodriguezes remain convinced that pesticides caused the stillbirth. "We should get rid of the dangerous pesticides," Dora said. "We should ban them because they not only affect our lives, they affect everyone. I will not eat grapes because I know what is sprayed on the fruit."

Ruben, who has since quit his job at Sandrini, added, "If I had known that something like this could happen, I would not have been spraying. I would rather lose my job than my child."

Dora and Ruben Rodriguez with three of their children (from left to right), Dolores, Rene and Diana.





Picketing New Dominion in Toronto are (from left to right) Michael Lyons, president of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto; Bob White, president of the Canadian Auto Workers; Leo Gerard, director of District 6, United Steelworkers of America; Cesar Chavez; and Bob Rae, member of the Provincial Parliament and leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party. Behind is Fred Upshaw, vice-president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Canadian Store Boycott Begins

esar Chavez, UFW staff and 500 UFW supporters on February 7 revved up the Canadian boycott of California table grapes and the boycott of stores that carry them with a picket line in front of an A&P-owned New Dominion store in Toronto.

The picket line, comprised of trade unionists, seminarians, nuns, peace activists, feminists and community leaders, kicked off a nationwide boycott of this store, one of Canada's largest and one that refuses to remove grapes from its shelves.

Michael Lyons, president of the Metropolitan Toronto Labour Council; Julie Griffin, the executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL); Fred Upshaw, vice-president of the Ontario Public Service Employees; and Jack Layton, Toronto Ward 6 Metro Councillor, all addressed

the picketers about the importance of the store boycott to the UFW's cause and to the labor movement.

Before targeting A&P's New Dominion, the UFW's Canadian boycott director, David Martinez, contacted company officials and asked them to honor the boycott. They refused, and then the UFW and Canadian labor organized the picket line to demonstrate boycott support.

Before Chavez spoke, the crowd welcomed him with a standing ovation. On the picket line, Leo Gerard, District 6 director of the Canadian United Steelworkers, and Bob White, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, held UFW flags and boycott signs.

"What happens with Canadian consumers will be very important to the success of the boycott," said Chavez. "Only when consumers tell growers they won't buy contaminated grapes will the growers stop using pesticides."

Gord Wilson and Sean O'Flynn of the OFL, and Nancy Riche, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, hosted Chavez for the Toronto visit, which included a meeting with labor leaders Gerard Docquier of the Steelworkers and Don Collins of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, among others, to explain the UFW's social marketing strategy.

Chavez gave detailed accounts of several marketing campaigns, including the 1983 Lucky store boycott that succeeded when 11 percent of that store's customers shopped elsewhere. Chavez also described the UFW's successful direct mail campaign produced for eight southern California United Food and Commerical Workers locals against Ralph's stores which were trying to kick out the union.

"Cesar's presentation was fascinating," said Michael Lewis of the Steelworkers. Bill Howes of the Communication Workers said he took notes furiously during the presentation. Both Lewis and Howes are staunch UFW supporters and proponents of modern high-tech approaches to waging labor struggles.

Other unions and groups supporting the UFW in Canada are: the Paper



Cesar Chavez promotes the grape boycott outside the Ontario Federation of Labour Building in Toronto.

Workers; the Service Employees International Union; the Energy and Chemical Workers; the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation; the Public Service Alliance of Canada; the Ontario Democratic Party; the National Union of Provincial Government Employees; and the Brotherhood of Railway, Transportation and General Workers.

Cesar Chavez addresses national and provincial leaders in Canada. From left to right are Sean O'Flynn, secretary-treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL); David Martinez, boycott director for the UFW; Gord Wilson, president of the OFL; Chavez; and Nancy Riche, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress.





California teachers rally support for the grape boycott. From left to right are Muriel Brooks, negotiator for the striking teachers; Patricia Ryan, president of the Compton Educational Association (CEA); Helen Horton, secretary of CEA; and Jean Curtis, former president of CEA.

Farm Workers Gather Support Coast to Coast

S triking teachers in the Los Angeles suburb of Compton pledged to support the California table grape boycott at their rally on February 12 because the UFW struggle parallels their own fight for better working conditions, higher pay, and respect and dignity on the job.

"The farm workers have had a long, tough fight and we appreciate that fact," said Patricia Ryan, the president of the Compton Educational Association, which has 1,200 members who have struck intermittently 14 times this past school year.

"When Cesar Chavez came to our rally last week and offered his support, we felt very fortunate," said Ryan, a teacher for 28 years. "We have endorsed the grape boycott because we disdain the indiscriminate use of pesticides, and we are committed to the cause of justice for workers everywhere."

Chicago/St. Louis

In late January, St. Louis labor

leaders hosted UFW Second Vice-President Frank Ortiz from the Midwest boycott office for two days of meetings.

Among those union locals and groups supporting the UFW and the grape boycott were the International Brother-hood of Electrical Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Black Coalition of Trade Unionists, the St. Louis Labor Council and the United Auto Workers.

Mid-Atlantic States

In Atlantic City this past month 500 delegates to a New Jersey State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference passed a resolution supporting the grape boycott.

In their resolution, the delegates vowed to inform all state AFL-CIO members and consumers about the anti-union tactics of growers and the dangers posed by pesticides. They will also contact grocery store owners and urge them to remove table grapes from their shelves.

Deukmejian Takes Giant Step Backward

T o California Gov. George Deukmejian, forward is backward.

Shortly after taking office in 1983, Deukmejian's budget cuts and appointees left the historic 1975 state farm labor law in shambles and pushed farm workers back into the 1850s — back under the thumb of growers whose huge campaign contributions guaranteed his election.

Then, in his 1987 budget, Deukmejian abolished Cal/OSHA, a state workersafety agency certified by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). "I view this as a giant step backward in public health," said Dr. John Peters, professor of occupational health at the University of Southern California.

Deukmejian's expressed reason for axing Cal/OSHA was fiscal responsibility. The move would save \$8 million in





Gov. George Deukmejian

1987-88. But that was too much to swallow even for groups that normally would have been pleased with Deukmejian's action. Said Allen Nacenski, manager of operational health and safety at TRW, Inc., one of southern California's biggest aerospace companies: "The mere balancing of a budget is not the way to decide [the future of] a program whose goal it is to save lives."

Critics decried Deukmejian's action because, they accurately pointed out, Cal/OSHA has stricter regulations and better enforcement than federal OSHA. But that doesn't say much. It was just last month — 14 years after farm workers first filed suit and only after a federal appeals court ordered it done in 30 days — that federal OSHA finally got around to drafting requirements for growers to provide farm workers with drinking water and toilets in the fields.

So "better" is only relative. After all, it was only a year and a half ago that Cal/OSHA itself tried to restore the "limited" use of the backbreaking short-handled hoe — which the California Supreme Court banned in 1975.

Inerts: The Hidden Danger

The U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report to Congress last April called "Pesticides: EPA's Formidable Task to Assess and Regulate Their Risks." Part of that report was a chapter on "inerts," those innocuous sounding but often dangerous ingredients that make pesticides easier to use.

Inerts, used as solvents, thickeners and propellants, can occur as residue on food and can poison workers who come into contact with them through pesticides. Inerts, which can range from everyday substances like water, salt or sugar to highly toxic chemicals like dioxane and formaldehyde, are largely unregulated and are not monitored by the Food and Drug Administration in its food-testing program. Inerts can cause cancer, leukemia and birth defects as well as kidney, liver and nervous system damage.

The GAO said the following in its report: very little toxicological data is available on inerts; food-use inerts are

exempt from EPA tolerances because previously they were not considered harmful; 55 food-use inerts are of immediate toxicological concern to the EPA, 51 have suspected toxicities, and 800 to 900 have unknown toxicities; and finally, the secrecy surrounding inerts limits the EPA's ability to regulate them.

"Regulators have entirely overlooked inerts," said Lawrie Mott, staff scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council in San Francisco, "and trade secrecy claims by manufacturers are ludicrous because competitors can easily analyze a pesticide for its components. Secrecy is a foil that chemical companies use to conceal the fact that inerts pose a very real risk to humans."

Mott also said that the California Department of Food and Agriculture has done nothing about inerts. Ironically, California claims to be on the forefront of pesticide regulation that supposedly protects the health of workers and consumers.

Farm workers are exposed daily to pesticides containing inert ingredients. The U.S. government recently found that these ingredients are largely unregulated and may be dangerous.





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Pesticides: No Protection



Lawrie Mott

By Lawrie Mott

E ach year approximately 2.7 billion pounds of pesticides are used in the United States. As a consequence, pesticides may be found wherever we live and work — in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. The former director of the federal government's program to regulate pesticides called these chemicals the number one health risk because all Americans are exposed to them.

For many Americans, our food may be the primary source of long-term, lowlevel exposure to pesticides. However, the farm workers who produce our food may be at greater risk because they come in routine contact with larger amounts of these chemicals. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, farm workers have the highest rate of toxic chemical injuries among occupational groups in the nation. In California, pesticides are the major single cause of occupational illness. Yet it is estimated that only one percent of the pesticide poisonings of farm workers is reported.

Farm workers have the highest rate of toxic chemical injuries among occupational groups.

The problems posed by pesticides cannot be solved overnight. Alternative methods to produce food without chemicals exist; growers need to be convinced that consumers would support their efforts to produce food without pesticides. This would also mean safer working conditions for farm workers. In the long run, the government needs to support research to develop methods to control pests without chemicals and encourage the nation's farmers to use them.

During the inevitable transition away from chemical pesticides, consumers must play an active role. Concerned citizens can make the government do a better job of protecting the public — consumers and workers alike — from the hazards of pesticides and can send a clear message to growers and food suppliers that food should be grown without pesticides.

(Lawrie Mott is the senior scientist at Natural Resources Defense Council, San Francisco, California.)

YOUR LETTERS

I'm writing to express my deepest concern for all of the poor people who work in the fields and struggle. You see, I was once one of these people, so I must help you spread the word. I will do everything in my power to support your cause.

I know that you will be remembered for generations to come. God bless you.

Rafael Martinez San Jose, CA

I feel that you are doing a worthy job. I love grapes, but I do not buy them. The last grapes that I bought made me ill. If the grape growers do not clean up their pesticide spraying I will never eat another grape.

Your cause is very important to me and a lot of other people.

Addie Taylor San Francisco, CA

I bring the message of the boycott and deadly pesticides to all my friends and to the people in the supermarkets. I stop at the grape display and tell people who are buying grapes not to. I show them the pictures of the children getting cancer because they are close to the fields where pesticides are used.

At one market, the manager came over to tell me it was illegal to say things that are not true. The people gathered around to hear him. I showed them the booklet [Food and Justice] and told the manager, "I bet you wouldn't eat these grapes." Whereupon, he picked up a cluster and started eating.

Then I yelled out, "Look, he not only eats poisoned grapes but filthy grapes too which haven't been washed." Everyone laughed, and no one bought grapes.

Henry Tellsen Los Angeles During the last boycott, I visited my family in Czechoslavakia from where I originally came 55 years ago. One of my relatives placed a big platter with grapes on the table as we were sitting around, and inadvertently I exclaimed, "Oh, grapes!" My relatives were astounded when I told them I didn't eat grapes. So I explained to them about the boycott, and they were quite impressed.

On my last visit with my family in Czechoslovakia, I related again about the boycott. But I did not have to explain because they understood.

Milada Marsalka New Haven, CT

We would like to help you in your fight with the rich growers. We think of all of you and are happy to hear of any successes. We pray you will all be blessed with better health and better working conditions. God bless all farm workers.

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Gourlay
Asheville, NC

Dear Cesar,

I have followed your career for years. Each night I pray that God keeps you safe from our enemies. Millions of workers all over the world are inspired and take courage to fight on and on.

Dorothy Nealy Vancouver, British Columbia

I would like to contribute to the grape boycott and the education of the consumers on the dangers of the use of pesticides on our food. I consider the use of poisonous pesticides a tragedy and a crime against the public and our environment.

> Victor Romero Westminster, CA





Welcome to Death Valley.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people who labor in the fields are poisoned by toxic pesticides like those used in the cultivation of table grapes.

The fruits of their labor are birth defects, cancer, chronic illness. And death.

But the danger of pesticides isn't just to field workers. The danger sits right on your table.

You see, one third of all pesticides are known to cause cancer. And some of them won't even wash off under your kitchen tap. Which means that

you could unwittingly be poisoning yourself or your family with every table grape you eat.

There is only one way to know the whole story. Send for our free video cassette, "The Wrath of Grapes", and see how the farm workers have dedicated themselves to saving their lives. And yours.

What you choose to do after that is up to you. After all, we don't want to poison your mind. We just want to give you food for thought.



UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA P.O. Box 62 Keene, CA 93570 YES! Please

□YES! Please send me a free copy of "The Wrath of Grapes." (Available in VHS format only.)

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