

## AUTOMATION NEARS FOR WINE GRAPE HARVEST

TULARE, February 13 -- On display at the Farm Machinery Show in Tulare last month was a new mechanical grape harvester which manufacturers claim can remove up to 20 tons of wine grapes per hour or "replace many pickers."

At least two companies now have machines on the market. Chisholm-Ryder Co. has two types of machines and FMC Corporation has a similar machine. All sell for approximately \$25,000 or more. Machines are already widely used in the New York wine grape harvest, according to Chisholm spokesmen.

The machines are self-propelled, straddles the row of grapes and as it progresses down the row, the grape berries are removed from the vines by the shaking action of shaker arms. On some models, the arms go up and down, shaking the wires to which the vines are tied. On other models, un-rigid "tongues" or

"fingers" reach out from both sides of the machine into the vines, almost coming together in the middle. As the machine proceeds down the row, the "fingers" flap against the vines, and berries, knocking the grapes off the vines. In both cases, the grapes fall on to a series of inclined overlapping "catcher plates" and then roll down into the conveyor belts, which run the length of the harvester on either side. The "catcher plates" come together under the vines, but give way to go around the trunk of the vine, or stakes, when the machine is passing over them.

The conveyor belts carry the fruit to two short inclined conveyors, which lift the berries and drop them through a kind of vacuum cleaner apparatus which sucks out much of the leaves and twigs and debris which also fall on to the machine as it shakes the vines. Then the fruit is raised with rubber

bucket elevators which discharge them into an arm which stretches out from the machine. This last swinging conveyor arm dumps the grapes into the accompanying trucks or gondolas which move along the next row to receive the grapes and take them to the winery.

Company spokesmen are also hopeful that the machines can be adapted for harvesting raisin grapes, with the swinging conveyor arm dropping the grapes onto drying pads rather than in trucks. But the machine at present could not harvest table grapes, as most of the grapes shaken from the vine fall onto the machine singly, and many are mashed and damaged. Table grapes can't be marketed grape by grape, and damaged fruit would ruin the whole bunch unless the fruit is to be mashed or quickly dried.

Before the machines can be used, *Continued on page 14*



Grape Harvesting machine



## Nixon Eyes Farm Labor

WASHINGTON, D.C. February 11--President Richard Nixon has ordered a top level study of proposed farm labor legislation. The President instructed Secretary of Labor George P. Schultz and Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin to study the problems of agricultural labor disputes and strikes and suggest legislation to avoid or solve such problems.

Nixon specifically asked that they study the possibility of extending the Taft-Hartley provisions of the NLRA to cover farm workers. The Taft Hartley Act restricts the rights of unions and outlaws boycotts. It also allows the President to order striking workers to go back to work if he feels a strike is a "national emergency."

Though the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee has for years been calling for legislation to protect the rights of farm workers, Union spokesmen warned that Nixon's past statements indicate that he is more interested in repressing the Union and outlawing the grape boycott than in providing farm workers with legal protection to organize their union. Union Attorney Jerome Cohen noted Nixon may be hoping to invoke the Taft-Hartley amendment to obtain a Federal injunction outlawing the right to strike and boycott.

The Union has always favored a fair procedure for representational elections, but such elections should be held to prevent a strike situation. It is difficult to hold a fair election after the growers have been trying to bust the Union for the last 3 1/2 years.

Union leaders have repeatedly stated that they are willing to sit down with grower representatives to work out recognition procedures.

Cesar Chavez, director of the United Farm Workers, has in every impending strike situation called for representational elections and offered to sit down and negotiate details and procedures for such an election. In the case of the general grape strike in 1965, at Schenley, Di Giorgio, and Perelli Minetti in 1966, at Giumarra in 1967, and to the Coachella, Arvin-Lamont and Lodi growers in 1968, the Union offered to hold elections or card checks. In each of these cases, the growers refused the initial offer, and the Union was forced to launch a strike and boycott. As Chavez commented after Giumarra repeatedly refused to discuss elections prior to the strike in 1967, "Once we begin the strike, we will not offer Giumarra two bites at the same apple."

The examples of Almaden, Gallo, Franzia, Paul Masson, Christian Brothers, and Novidate Vineyards are all cases where the management arranged for elections or similar procedures, and the Union proved that it had the overwhelming support of the workers. In all these cases, the companies agreed to negotiate contracts, and no boycott or work stoppage occurred.

Jim Drake, administrative assistant to Chavez, commented, "First priority in passing legislation to bring justice to farm workers, is to solve the green card problem."