

## CONFUSION IN SACRAMENTO

## REAGAN HEDGES ON ANTI-STRIKE LAW

SACRAMENTO, January 10-- California Governor Ronald Reagan and his top farm advisors contradicted each other repeatedly during the first week of January on the question of farm labor legislation, leaving behind confusion and uncertainty as to what their real plans were. And as the State Legislature got deeper into the session, it seemed doubtful that any farm labor legislation would even come to a vote, let alone reach the Governor's desk for signature.

The Governor and his grower friends want to do something to counter the increasingly effective boycott of California grapes, launched by the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, but the Governor and his friends seemed unsure whether to try to fight the boycott and the Union with new, anti-Union legislation, or whether to continue with the traditional means of busting unions, with cops, court injunctions, economic pressure on the local workers, and importation of scabs from Mexico.

Reagan stated in his annual State of the State message. "It is my intention to seek and support legislation in the area of farm labor-management relations." He further stated, "Agriculture...is still our state's Number 1 industry... It is to be expected that we should lead the way in agricultural labor relations policies. If we don't, we may soon be forced to march to yet another federal drum beat."

According to reports from Sacramento, Reagan seemed to be contemplating some kind of legislation to outlaw strikes during the harvest. Such a law would have the same effect for farm workers as a bill prohibiting auto workers' strikes during working hours. Some growers are calling for legislation simply to outlaw any boycott of agricultural products, without any exceptions.

Reagan and some "liberal" agri-

cultural experts contemplated, as a sop to the workers, an elaborate collective bargaining clause providing for rigged representational elections. Because of the nature of a migratory and seasonal labor force, time limits and eligibility requirements, which a law could easily rig against farm workers, are the key to guaranteeing fair elections.



Some growers seem to favor a law allowing elections which would also include long delays between the petitioning for an election and the actual vote, during which time the grower could fire union sympathizers and hire anti-union workers or hire easily intimidated green carders from Mexico. Growers have also suggested that any new legislation include "cooling off" periods, during which the grower could complete his harvest and send his workers back to Texas or Mexico. Any of these delaying tactics could enable the grower to postpone indefinitely bargaining with the Union, even after the Union won an election.

By January 10, Reagan seemed to have dropped plans for pushing such legislation, and his advisor Earl Coke assured the grower-dominated State Board of Agriculture that Reagan had no present intention of presenting or endorsing any farm labor legislation. Coke said, in direct contradiction to Reagan's T.V. speech, that the Governor would prefer legislation at the national level. Reagan will definitely not present any farm-labor bills this session, Coke said.

Alan Grant, President of the Cali-

fornia Farm Bureau Federation and Chairman of the State Board of Agriculture, said that the Farm Bureau is still working on legislative proposals relating to farm labor. These will probably be straight union-busting proposals, since Grant has become a major spokesman for the most rabidly anti-Union and reactionary growers in the state.

While Reagan and his grower friends proposed and then denied proposing legislation on the subject, State Senator Walter Stiern, a moderate Democrat representing Kern County, announced that he was ending his own efforts to introduce legislation on collective bargaining for farm workers. Stiern's bill would have set up procedures for union representation elections, which local growers have been u-

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