

SPECIAL EDITORIAL

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS--Hear Your Popes

Wine Making Order
Forgets the Church
Lessons of Justice

The farm workers striking for a decent living and social justice are religious people.

They have marched with the Virgin of Guadalupe to Sacramento and they have carried their cross of poverty all along these rich and green valleys.

Always they have looked to the church and the church has always answered their needs as priests and nuns joined the picket lines and pilgrimages.

FARMWORKERS WORRIED

But now farm workers are worried—and they are confused. They are wondering if they might be forced into a national boycott of Christian Brothers' products.

This Catholic order owns Mount La Salle Vineyards, which operates the Alta Vista Ranch near Reedley, California. The farm workers thought they would have an election there—but the winery so harassed and coerced the workers that the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee found it could not participate in the election.

This followed months of delay by Christian Brothers, which initially said it would recognize the union.

What confuses California's farm workers is the unfortunate discrepancy between what three illustrious popes have said about labor—and what Christian Brothers does about labor.

Pope John XXIII is beloved by the farm workers because he was a field worker before he entered the priesthood. His family still works the land near Sotto il Monte, Italy. Perhaps Christian Brothers should take time out from anti-unionism to consider what Pope John said:

PROUD OF ORIGINS

"The representative of the highest spiritual authority of the earth is glad, even boasts, of being the son of a humble but robust and honest laborer."

Pope John was also fond of quoting St. Peter from the Acts of the Apostles: "I have neither gold nor silver, but what I have I give to you."

Yet, Christian Brothers wine brings the order much silver and gold, but it is still unwilling not only to give its workers their rightful share of the wealth, but even to discuss such sharing with the union.

Pope John, however, was never reluctant to discuss wages and conditions with workers—even his own employees.

Noticing a thin and weary Vatican electrician, Pope John asked the man how things were going. "Badly, very badly, Your Eminence," the worker replied, telling the Pope of his constant struggle against poverty with starvation wages.

The Pope immediately ordered the wages of the Holy See workers raised by as much as 40%. Vatican officials objected, saying that the added cost of wages would hurt the Church's charitable contributions.

But Pope John replied that the charity could be reduced... "for this raise is simple justice, and justice comes before charity."

SOME READING MATTER

Speaking against the materialistic view of labor, Pope Paul also said:

"Far different is the view of the Church... The dignity of labor, the work of man, is a thing worthy of infinite esteem, great consideration, and unbounded respect... The secret consists of confronting labor according to the spirit of Jesus, of transforming it into a daily prayer."

Pope Paul VI also has shown the Christian Brothers the way to brotherhood. In a question which might well be addressed to the wine-making order, he asked, "Have you ever heard of *Rerum Novarum* or *Mater et Magistra*? The Popes have never been foreign to the problems of labor." He was speaking of noted Papal encyclicals.

POPE BACKS UNIONS

One of the most emphatic pontiffs was Pope Leo XIII, who noted:

"It is beyond doubt that it is just to seek aid if an employer places unjust burdens upon the workers, or degrades them with conditions which are repugnant to their dignity as human beings... If a man fails, he should be helped up by another man."

Then, in what could be a direct reproach to the wine-making Catholic brotherhood, Pope Leo said:

"Therefore, it is desirable that associations of workers multiply and become more effective."

What could be plainer? Why can't Christian Brothers see the issues as three popes themselves have seen them?

Until Christian Brothers do see it that way, the spirit of the gentle man from Sotto il Monte will not rest. His soul weeps for his fellow laborers of the land.

RIGHT: Rank and file clergy march with our strike for freedom



OPPOSITE PAGE: The farmworkers carry a heavy cross of poverty



POPE LEO XIII: "Everyone's first duty is to protect the workers from the greed of speculators who use human beings as instruments to provide themselves with money."