

# Growers Spurn Negotiations on Poisons

DELAND, January 16 — A special meeting of 250 boycott organizers and community leaders from all over California has been scheduled for Saturday, January 25, to consider escalation of the boycott and concern over the use of economic poisons in the vineyards.

The meeting was called after grape growers refused to reply to a recent letter sent out by Cesar Chavez to the Southern Central Farmers Commission, the California Grape and Tree F League, and the Desert Grape League.

Chavez's letter, calling once again for negotiations with the growers to avoid escalation of the boycott during the coming season, said,

"There is one critical issue of such overriding importance that it demands immediate attention, even if other labor relations problems have to wait. I mean the harmful effects of spraying grapes with pesticides, or economic poisons, as they are called. We have recently become more aware of this problem through an increasing number of cases coming into our clinic."

"We will not tolerate the systematic poisoning of our people. Even if we cannot get together on other problems, we will be damned—and we should be—if we will permit human beings to sustain permanent damage to their health from economic poisons."

Chavez said Union representatives would be willing to meet with the growers on the sole issue of pesticides, even if the growers are "not prepared to begin full-scale collective bargaining at present."

Growers, however, did not reply to the letter.

Chavez told EL MALCRIADO there was no intention on the part of the Union to abandon its drive for collective bargaining agreements with California's table grape growers, but that Union officials were unanimous in their belief that the question of economic poisons

used in the vineyards was the most dangerous problem faced by farm workers.

"The increasing number of children reporting to our clinic after having eaten table grapes in the fields where their parents were



Five-year-old picker lies in a pool after suffering severe attack of dysentery.

National Child Labor Committee

working frightens all of us," Chavez said.

"The dangers of chemical pesticides to those who cultivate and consume grapes must be faced."

Chavez said he had hoped talks on the subject of the poisons might lead to further negotiations on other questions of importance but that the refusal of the growers to answer the letter meant the Union had no choice but to prepare for a third season of active boycott organization.

He said he had called the January 25 meeting to consider the escalation of the boycott and the con-

cern of the Union about the dangerous chemicals used on table grapes.

UFWOC General Counsel Jerome Cohen recently was denied access to public records on the use of the poisons by the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner.

UFWOC researchers have also been denied access to public State records on the use of pesticides in Fresno, Tulare and Riverside counties.

Research on the use of the poisons has shown that many of the chemicals used for insect and disease control in the vineyards were similar to those developed by Nazi Germany for extermination of humans.

"There is talk at both federal and state levels of farm labor legislation. If we cannot agree on wages, hours and working conditions--at the very minimum even talk about the most important issue of all, which is the protection of human life from the dangers of economic poisons--then how can we ever agree on legislation? What alternatives do you have? You won't be able to break our Union or stop our boycott. So if you won't negotiate with us, the only route open to you will be repressive legislation which the American people will not accept," the letter concluded.

## Court Hearing on Poisons

DELAND, December 31-- Court hearings on the dangers of pesticides will be held in Bakersfield on January 29 by Judge Walter Osborn of the Superior Court as part of a suit filed by UFWOC attorneys in which the Union demands its right to see the public records kept by the Kern County Agricultural Commission on pesticides.

UFWOC Attorney Jerome Cohen tried unsuccessfully to see these  
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