

# Talks Stalled on Poison Use

## Chavez Speaks Out on Negotiations

DELANO, July 15 -- Negotiations between the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and a group of eleven grape growers broke down today over the issue of pesticide regulation, according to UFWOC Director Cesar Chavez in an exclusive interview with EL MALCRIADO today.

The grape growers ordered a recess in the negotiation talks so that they could study the UFWOC's pesticide regulation proposals. But instead of resuming the talks, the growers held a press conference and with a blast at the Union, torpedoed the talks.

Chavez pointed out that, in addition to refusing to allow any regulation of the use of their pesticides, the growers are proposing a clause for the contract which would read, "the Union agrees that it will not embark on any program which will in any way harm the industry to which the employer is a member."

"They are trying to muzzle us, pure and simple," Chavez said. "That clause would prevent us from lobbying in Sacramento or Washington for better laws on the regulation of pesticides, or even safety and sanitation laws. If they think that, once we sign a contract, we are going to become docile little lap-dogs, they're crazy." Chavez stated flatly that if non-union grape growers continue to use dangerous pesticides, the Union will continue to publicize the fact, even if it "harms" the industry. "We're concerned about harm done to people, much more than harm done to an industry," he stated. "Who do they think they are, thinking they can muzzle us on a crucial issue such as this."

"On the question of pesticides, we quite frankly don't want to compromise when the health and safety

of the workers are at stake," Chavez stated. "Some pesticides, like DDT, are poisoning the fruit, poisoning the water, poisoning the fish and birds and humans who come in contact with them. They should be outlawed. Other chemicals should be used only with extreme caution."

Chavez pointed out that California has proposed banning DDT in 1971. "If it is dangerous to people's health in 1971, it is dangerous today," he stated.

On the question of "abiding by state and federal laws," Chavez pointed out that not only are such laws notoriously lax, but that there has been an active conspiracy between state officials, growers, and pesticide applicators to prevent the Union from finding out what exactly is being sprayed and whether growers are really abiding by the laws.

"For over a year now, Kern County growers and officials have refused to reveal to us public records on what pesticides are being used in what fields, on what crops, at what stage during the growing cycle," Chavez stated. "Just what are they trying to hide?" Chavez pointed out that the State Attorney General's office is entering into a law suit on the side of UFWOC, demanding that County Agriculture Commissioners reveal this public information to the public.

"Over 1000 people, mostly farm workers, are injured and poisoned every year in California alone from misuse of pesticides," Chavez noted. "We want protection from this in our contracts. We don't care what the state laws say, or whether the growers are legally 'innocent' of breaking any laws or regulations, but we'll be damned if we will stand by and watch the systematic



UFWOC Director Cesar Chavez

## BLACKMAIL!

LOS ANGELES, July 15--A group of 11 grape growers broke off negotiations with the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee today in what appeared to be a power play designed to force the Union to give up its demands for the regulation of chemical pesticides on ranches under Union contract.

Union spokesmen called the action "attempted blackmail, an attempt to muzzle us on the dangers of pesticides." "But we're not going to be intimidated. We're going to continue to bring the truth to the public about these poisons," stated UFWOC attorney Jerry Cohen.

The growers ordered a recess in the talks last Friday, July 4, "To study the Union's proposals" on the pesticide question. The Union had proposed a clause which would have banned the use of DDT and certain other poisons. The contract clause would have specified procedures for applying and using other chemicals, and would have provided protection to workers coming in direct contact with the poisons, and consumers endangered by residues on the fruit.

Growers had proposed a clause which would have bound them to