

# "THE OTHER CALIFORNIA"

"What is a movement? It is the idea that someday the farm worker will be respected. It is the idea that someday he will earn a living wage. It is when the silent hopes of many people begin to become a real part of life". (El Malcriado, "The Voice of the Farm Worker" )

There is an "other California," a world of poverty and suffering which lies just beyond the freeways and suburbs. It is the world of farm labor, low wages, grueling work, decrepit housing, illiteracy, and innumerable dangers. Despite rich productivity of California agriculture, thousands of Mexican-Americans, Filipinos, Negroes, and poor whites still work twelve hour days in temperatures over a hundred degrees for the equivalent wages that most Americans make in one hour. Women and children work along side their men for the barest subsistence income. Jobs are seasonal, security rare, and the hazards so real that the Industrial Welfare Commission in 1961 reported that 500 children are maimed in farm accidents every year. Although it has been over thirty years since Steinbeck wrote his famous Grapes of Wrath, the two million Americans who work the fields are still powerless over their own lives, without representation in our legislatures or voice in our press. In contrast, the farm growers have one of the most powerful lobbies in the state and effective influence on local courts and law enforcement agencies.

But as the civil rights movement organized the demands of Negroes against racism and economic injustice, so too have the farmworkers begun to challenge the condition of their poverty. In the last two weeks over two thousand workers have left their jobs in strike against the grape growers of the Delano area in north Kern and southern Tulare counties. Organized by the Farm Workers Association and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO), the grape workers who represent two thirds of the total harvest force have made the simple demand of \$1.40 an hour opposed to the present \$1.25. Grape picking is hard, arduous work and the rest of the growers in the Tulare area are already paying their employees the demanded \$1.40. But the response of the Delano growers has been eviction, brutality, intimidation, and the importation of strikebreakers (paid up to \$3.00 an hour).

The Delano strike is more than a fight over wages. It is a struggle to determine if farm labor has the right of organization for a decent, human life. "For nearly all people there is a thing that is more important than money. It is a thing called dignity or self-respect or honor." (El Malcriado, the farm workers' newspaper)

The farm workers who are striking are without housing, food, or money. Gas, water, and electricity has been turned off in 3 camps, and people bringing food have been denied entry. The Department of Employment has sent investigators, but investigation does not bring food with it.

This is the most critical time in the grape season. Picking of table grapes lasts only two more weeks. This is why immediate support for the strikers is so vital. Their bargaining strength lasts only while the growers need them to pick the crops. After the table grape season is finished, months must pass before the growers can again be made to feel pressure that will induce them to negotiate.

YOU CAN HELP. YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW. The needs are money and food (sacks of beans, flour, rice, canned food, baby food, etc.)

Send money to:  
Cesar Chavez  
National Farm Workers Association  
Box 894  
Delano, California

For further information call:  
Students for a Democratic Society  
702 W. 27th St.  
L.A. 7  
748-9045

There will be a table on campus where the goods will be collected.

Those interested in a continuing, long-range program on the farm workers' situation please contact Students for a Democratic Society at 748-9045.

\*\*\*\*\*

A rally on the farm workers' strike will be held in Hyde Park, Wednesday, October 6, at noon.

\*\*\*\*\*