

Should Versafood continue buying California grapes?

Ever see the Gallo wine commercial?

A handsome overseer on a horse croons "Come with me to the wine countreeee" and then you see a vista of beautiful California, with smiling Mexican-Americans peacefully picking grapes, happy and contented in that best of all possible states.

It's all lies.

Since 1965, California grape workers have been on strike for the right of union recognition. Sympathy for their action has resulted in a boycott of California grapes in centres all over the continent.

But Versafood is still buying California grapes, and some of us are eating them.

In the 1930's U.S. workers won the right to organize and bargain collectively through the National Labour Relations Act. In 1968, farm workers remain excluded from this act.

The conditions that the workers are forced to live under make the justice of their cause obvious.

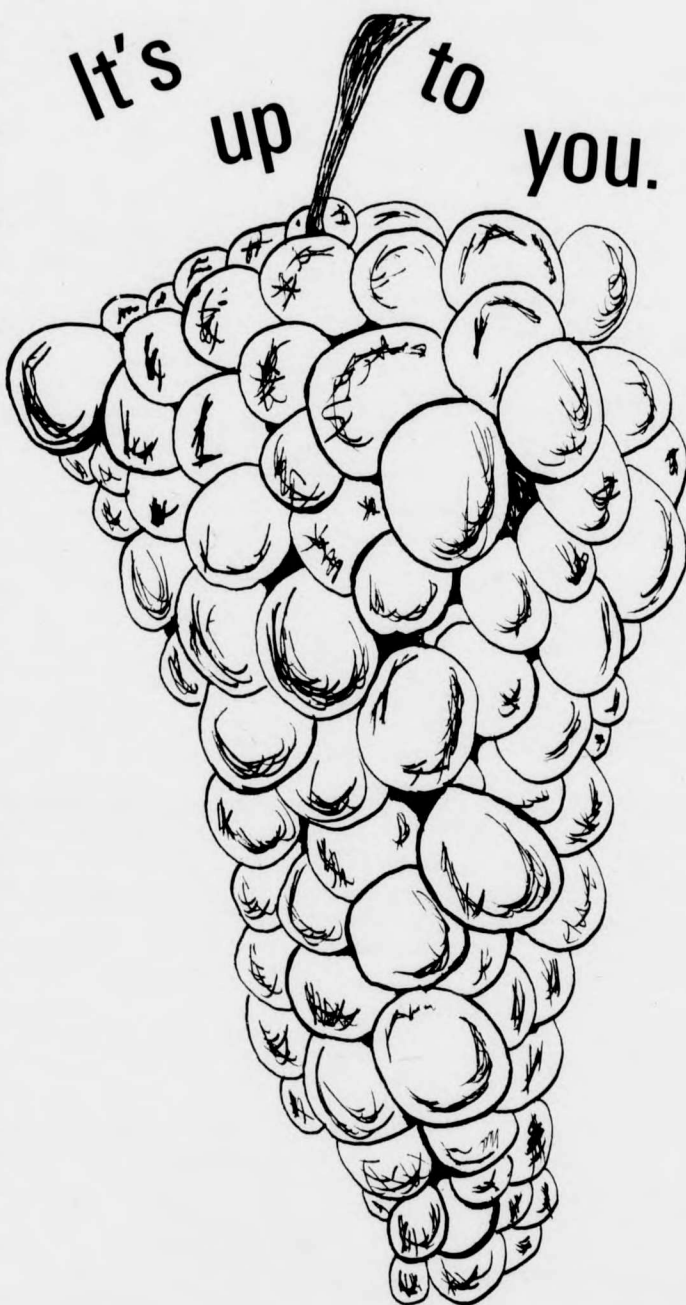
The average income of any of the 400,000 farm workers is \$2,386.00, about one half the California average. Wages range from \$1.00 per hour to \$1.40 per hour.

The grape-picker works in California's open air factories where temperatures rise to 115 degrees at harvest time and drop to freezing in the winter when he prunes the vines.

He lives in labor camps with no opportunity to buy homes or give his children regular schooling. He has been forced to accept migrancy, moving his family from place to place, because he must find work.

He has been forced to accept poverty and handouts during the off season because he doesn't know what Unemployment Insurance is. He has been forced to accept child labour out of a need to supplement his income. He has been powerless to defend himself.

Most of California's farm workers are Mexican-American, Filipino and Negro. This adds the dimension of a powerful and historic racial discrimination against Mexican-Americans which has been practised throughout California and the southwest for the last hundred years.



The farm worker is struggling against a system of racial oppression that pervades all aspects of his life.

Without the benefits of unionizing, workers will have no method of combatting the owners of the giant farms (as large as 450,000 acres) who dominate the police, courts and governments of the agricultural valleys in California.

The only effective non-violent weapon for farm workers is the boycott. The entire California grape industry has combined to break the Farm Workers Union, by hiring strikebearers and beating up strikers.

New York, Chicago, Boston and Detroit are all but closed to California grapes. But not Toronto. And Toronto is the third largest grape market in North America, next to New York and Los Angeles.

Versafood buys California grapes. Food Service director E.H. James says, "If the students tell us to stop buying them; we'll stop buying them."

J.R. Allen, who handles the administration's dealings with Versafood, said he would accept any decision on the grape boycott made by the Food Services Committee, a student-faculty-administration organ.

The committee met Monday night, but no one even mentioned grapes or the boycott.

And committee spokesman Keith Oleksiuk of Founders College says "the committee can't take action unless we hear from the students that they don't want California grapes."

Farm workers are not asking for charity or for hand-outs. They are asking for the basic right to organize and bargain collectively, shared by all other men and women. You can help by not buying California grapes until the strike is settled and settled fairly. You can help by urging the stores where you shop not to buy California grapes.

And you can help by writing the Food Services Committee, care of your college council, and asking them to have Versafood stop buying California grapes. The committee's next meeting is Jan. 20, so do it soon.

The Gallo wine man is full of it.

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