

Martin Jankowski :

You Say You Want Facts

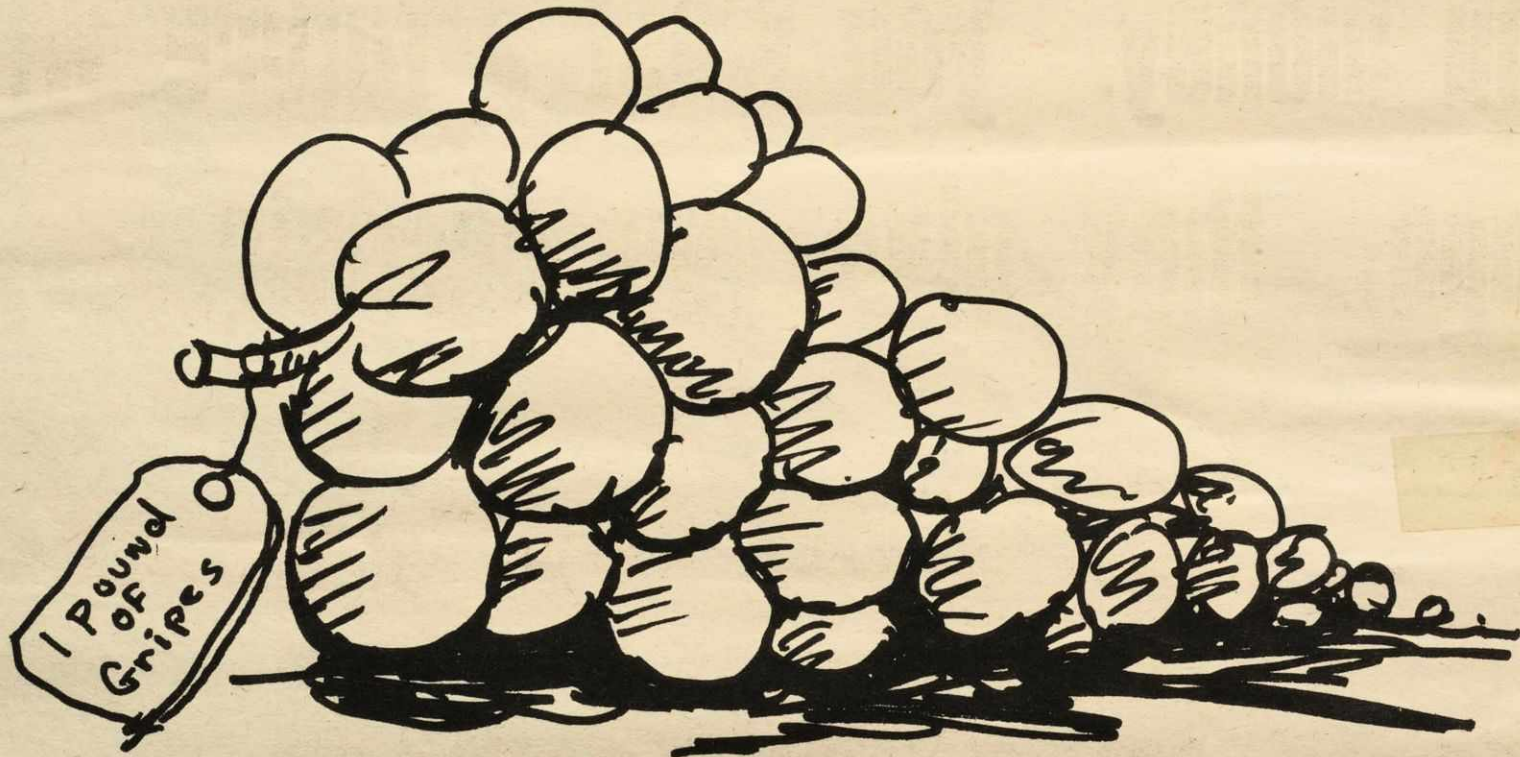
In a letter to the editor (Oct. 3, 1969), Mr. Christopher Vale accused me of not substantiating my position with facts and consequently of playing on people's emotions. This article is therefore in response to this accusation.

First, the letter stated that the average North American grape picker earns \$9,000 per family per year. This is an absurd figure for this is almost three times the average wage for all workers in the United States and agricultural labour is the lowest paid occupation in the country... However, let us look more closely at the grape pickers' wage. Workers' wages are between \$1.40 and \$1.50 an hour (California Department of Employment: weekly Farm Labour Report, 881a, no. 1191 no. 1193, no. 1195) and this is during peak harvest. The

infectious diseases than the rest of the nation? (U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare; U.S. Senate Vol. 114, no. 169 of Congressional Record). This, for Mr. Vale's benefit, is what I mean by treating people like animals.

The second point that was brought out in the letter to the editor was that only 3% of the grape workers wanted to be unionized. This is an absurd figure. Let us look at just one farm - that of Giurmarra Incorporated. Giurmarra is the largest and most powerful of the growers, yet in July, 1967, 80% of the workers has signed cards authorizing the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee to act as their bargaining agent; later, on August 3, 1967, 950 of the 1,000 workers Giurmarra employed left their jobs to strike. This is just one farm,

and bargain. This is official union policy and is more than fair for any small farmer (or large one, for that matter). However, one might mention here that most of the farms in the grape industry are very large. For example, 6% of California's farms occupy 75% of the land and many Delano area growers (Delano is the heart of the grape industry), other than Giurmarra, have large land holdings: Giurmarra - 12,500 acres; Bianco - 6,795; W.B. Cump - 4,908; Divizich - 5,500; Elmco Vineyards - 3,160; D.M. Stul - 4,187; Mark Zaninovich - 3,686; Milo Curatan - 2,183; Pandol & Sons - 2,288; A.N. Zaninovich - 2,283; V.B. Zaninovich - 2,157. (Statistics from Assessor's Records - Kern and Tulare Counties, Agricultural Conservation and Stabilization Service Crop and Figures, U.S. Census of Agriculture.) As one



average grape picker, who belongs to a working force of which 50% - 60% of its members are migratory, (U.S. Senate vol. 114, no. 169 of Congressional Record) works 134 days which is 7½ months out of 12. This is an indication why the average annual wage is \$2,000 for males and \$2,500 - \$3,000 for a family per year - and this is presuming an 8 hour day. (U.S. Senate vol. 114, no. 169 of Congressional Record). Even with these low wages the migrant worker goes on without help from unemployment, for he fails to qualify for unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation and disability insurance because the agricultural industry is specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act which protects workers of other industries.

In the way of housing, health and sanitation laws to protect farm workers, there have been noted 1,869 violations by the California Rural Legal Assistance Program, with over 90% of the farmers in just one county in violation of the State health laws. In another county the C.R.L.A.P. determined that 14 of the 139 farmers surveyed provided toilets for their workers and only two of fourteen in compliance with health standards. In fact, the Governor's (Calif.) Advisory Commission on Housing stated, "Fewer than twenty percent of the California farm worker families covered in our study lived in dwellings which could be considered adequate by present standards of health, safety and comfort. Sixty-three percent of the dwelling units occupied by general field workers were delapidated or deteriorated. For 33% of the dwelling units occupied by general field workers, the only toilet facilities were pit privies. 30% had no bathing facilities and 25% lacked even so basic a necessity as a kitchen sink with running water." With these kind of health conditions, is it any wonder that the migrant farm workers have 125% higher infant mortality than the rest of the nation, have 125% higher maternal mortality than the rest of the nation, have 200% higher rate of influenza and pneumonia than the rest of the nation, have 260% higher rate of tuberculosis and other

but it is the most powerful and has led the attack against the grape strike.

To pursue the point, if the workers in the field do not want Chavez and the union to bargain for them, why won't the growers allow elections to be held as the union has requested to determine if this is really true? The answer is that everywhere elections have been held, the workers have voted substantially in favor of the union. Results of the secret ballot elections (procedures and supervising body agreed to by workers and employers - if anyone would like to substantiate this claim and the following statistics, they can contact the growing company):

Delano & Borrego (DiGioRgio)		
UFWOC		530
Other union		331
No union		12
Arvin (DiGioRgio)		
UFWOC		283
Other union		0
No union		199
Delano (Goldberg)		
UFWOC		285
Other union		0
No union		38

This also, for Mr. Vale's benefit does not seem to be just 3% of the workers who support the union.

The third point I would like to clear up is that of accusing the boycott of putting the small farmers out of business. The purpose of the boycott is to get the growers to start bargaining; the union is not even asking for a contract, but just to begin bargaining. The official union stand, which has been sent numerous times to the growers, is that when each individual grower or group of growers consents to bargain, the economic boycott against that specific grower or group of growers will terminate. The union has even offered to use the boycott machinery to market the grapes of any grower or group

of growers who will sit down with his organized workers can see, this is not a small farmer's business, but, nonetheless, U.F.W.O.C. has taken steps to help the small farmer as well as the large one, if he will only begin to bargain.

Fourthly, it was mentioned by Mr. Vale that there have been "attacks on dozens of innocent, conscientious workers and fire-bombings of stores that sell California grapes" which he has labelled "criminal hooliganism." However, he has not stated any specific cases of facts, which would certainly lead one to believe that he has none to offer. Also, the statement that Chavez has used violence and prostitution in order to solicit workers to his organization is clearly a blatant, vociferous and diabolical mendacity and would certainly be refuted by anyone who has met Cesar Chavez. It appears Mr. Vale is really the one who is playing on emotions.

My critic suggests later that for further information one should contact the Edmond Burke Society of Canada. This organization is so removed from the problem and has lost so much contact with reality (which probably explains why they are an extreme "right-wing" organization), that it is no wonder they would give a dubious account of the strike. Mr. Vale also seems to be looking forward to a showdown of force between the U.F.W.O.C. (which is exhausting all legal means) and the grape growers, who are backed by the conservative and power-hungry Governor Ronald Reagan. The fact that my critic gets some innate pleasure out of trying to keep down a people who are struggling to be a productive part of the United States economy and thereby to achieve a long awaited self-dignity, indicates he has ideas of a crypto-Nazi which seems to sum up the general tone of his letter to the editor.

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