

United States Catholic Conference, Committee
on Social Development and World Peace.-
Resolution on farm... ADV1374

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Resolution on
**FARM LABOR
DISPUTE**

Committee on Social
Development and
World Peace

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**UNITED STATES
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

May 23, 1973

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FARM LABOR DISPUTE

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and World Peace**

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Vatican II stated in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (par. 68):

Among the basic rights of the human person is to be numbered the right of freely founding unions for working people. These should be able truly to represent them and to contribute to the organizing of economic life in the right way. Included is the right of freely taking part in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal.

The social injustices which plague the nation's agricultural workers, and particularly the migrants, are well established. Major legislative efforts, federal and state, will be required to provide to agricultural workers the minimum labor standards now provided for most industrial workers. Real and lasting progress toward full participa-

tion in the American society can come, however, only when agricultural workers effectively organize their own trade union.

For these reasons we have been heartened by the successes of the United Farm Workers Union, AFL-CIO. In the last three years contracts, particularly in California, have indicated that unions of the workers' choice have a chance of taking root in the fields where much of the nation's food is grown.

The UFWU progress has been hampered by the lack of the legal protections which were enjoyed by the great industrial unions when they were beginning in the 1930's. However, there has been progress. Some of the California grower-employers have come to realize that a stable labor-management relationship can be built on collective bargaining.

Today, crashing destructively into these early hopeful developments has come the raid on the small and struggling United Farm Workers Union by leaders of the nation's largest union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Making a common effort with the Teamsters, many growers in the table grape industry in California, who have had contracts with the UFWU for the past three years, have in recent weeks signed contracts with the Teamsters. Cynically, this raiding has come just a few months after the Supreme Court in California, in a 6-1 decision, found that the now-disputed lettuce contracts were executed through collusion of the lettuce growers and the Teamsters without any consultation with the workers.

This type of conduct on the part of the Teamsters is in violation of all canons of trade union ethics. The President of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, has termed it "positively disgraceful" and "union busting," the last the most derogatory term in the trade union lexicon.

In these circumstances, we call on the Teamsters Union and the growers to accept the request of the United Farm Workers Union to agree to a secret ballot, impartially supervised election to determine which union the farm workers prefer. The Committee on Social Development and World Peace of the United States Catholic Conference agrees with the bishops of California that the right of farm workers to organize and join a legitimate organization of their own choosing is the "dominant moral issue" in this dispute.

Until and unless justice and peace can be restored to the fields of California, we support and endorse the boycott of table grapes and iceberg (head) lettuce. We urge the purchase of table grapes and lettuce only if they clearly carry the Aztec black eagle label of the United Farm Workers Union, AFL-CIO. We urge men of good will to support this position in the name of social justice.

Adopted by the Committee on Social Development and World Peace of the United States Catholic Conference on May 23, 1973.

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