



THE
LETTUCE
STORY

THE LETTUCE STORY

FACTS — NOT FICTION

The American public has been asked to boycott lettuce. The belief is that this will help lettuce "pickers" gain adequate wages, better living conditions and union representation. This is not true. Many of those supporting the boycott are misinformed about the western lettuce industry.

The following are facts the boycott organizers are NOT telling the American public:

LETTUCE — ALREADY UNIONIZED

California produces most of the nation's lettuce and 90% of the lettuce "pickers" in California are already covered by union contracts — 75% by the Teamsters Union and 15% by Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers National Union. Lettuce is one of the very few agricultural commodities that is unionized. The Teamsters Union signed its first lettuce field labor contract in 1961. The United Farm Workers Union signed its first one in 1970.

WAGES — HIGH IN LETTUCE

Lettuce harvest workers are well paid by any reasonable standard, averaging over \$200.00 per week. This work is available every week of the year in California.

DISPUTE — TWO UNIONS

The current controversy is actually a jurisdictional dispute between two unions. The Teamsters, in fact, call it a "raid" on their membership. The United Farm Workers Union refuses to recognize any farm labor contracts other than its own. It is demanding a monopoly in agricultural unionization and with it, control of the nation's food supply.

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\$6.44 AN HOUR—\$213.80 A WEEK

Western lettuce "pickers" are among the highest paid farm workers in the world. A recent survey of payroll figures, covering areas producing 75% of the nation's summer lettuce, illustrates this point. The survey covered over half of the California lettuce harvest workers, from the start of the 1972 season. These workers were paid 40.5 cents for harvesting a box of 24 heads.

INDUSTRY AVERAGES SHOW

LETTUCE HARVESTERS EARN

\$ 6.44 PER HOUR

\$213.80 PER WEEK

LETTUCE HARVESTERS WORK

6.6 HOURS PER DAY

33.2 HOURS PER WEEK

YEAR AROUND EMPLOYMENT

The workers in the survey earned an average of \$2,980.00 per man in the first 14 weeks of the summer season. Lettuce is harvested 52 weeks of the year in the various growing areas of California. A lettuce harvest worker who takes advantage of the work offered him can earn over \$10,000.00 a year.

Compare this with the claim that the "poor" lettuce worker earns "only \$1,600 to \$2,400 per year."

The survey figures are not estimates based on some "national average," nor on some "committee report." These are actual figures obtained from payroll records and reports prepared under the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service, and the California and Federal Wage and Hour Commissions. They are subject to audit and verification at any time.

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ELECTIONS — THE ANSWER

This controversy points out the great need for farm labor legislation that is fair to both the workers and the farmers while the public is assured of an uninterrupted supply of food at reasonable prices. Presently agriculture and farm labor unions are exempt from most federal and state labor relations laws.

Agricultural workers should have the same legal protections as workers in other industries with the right to organize and bargain collectively. They should have the right to responsible union representation of their own choosing — by a secret ballot — or no union, if they so elect.

LEGISLATION — NOT BOYCOTTS

Farm labor relations legislation must provide workers with a secret ballot election and outlaw the use of the secondary boycott in agriculture, as it is in other industries. Farmers, workers and unions alike should all be bound by labor practice regulations — comparable to those of the National Labor Relations Act — while recognizing the perishability of farm products.

The United Farm Workers Union has consistently opposed all state and federal farm labor relations legislation. This agricultural labor union is exempt from most of the laws that regulate other labor organizations — this MUST be changed. Federal legislation is the obvious answer, but in some cases, local needs call for interim state legislation.

90% of California Lettuce Is Unionized • • • 75% TEAMSTERS — 15% UFWU

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HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

- 1946—Teamsters unionized produce truck drivers.
- 1961—Teamsters signed first lettuce field labor contract.
- 1970—July—Teamsters signed additional lettuce contracts.
- 1970—August—United Farm Workers National Union attempted California lettuce strike.
- 1970—September — UFWU strike failed—lettuce boycott begun.
- 1971—UFWU called moratorium on lettuce boycott.
- 1971—Chavez opposed all state and federal legislation that would give workers secret ballot elections.
- 1972—June—Arizona followed Kansas and Idaho — passed state legislation giving farm workers secret union ballot — Chavez fasted in protest.
- 1972—July—Democratic National Convention and same candidates misled into making lettuce boycott a political issue.
- 197?—What will Chavez boycott next? Citrus? Cantaloupes? Tomatoes? Corn? Beef? Potatoes?

A SECONDARY BOYCOTT IS —

- A last ditch effort used by labor organizers when workers refuse to support the union.
- An attempt to use the support of misinformed well wishers thousands of miles away to force the will of union leaders onto farm workers and farmers.
- An unfair labor practice in industries covered by the National Labor Relations Act.

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OFFICIALS SAY:

**RONALD REAGAN, Governor
State of California**

"It is completely dishonest to refer to California lettuce as non-union."

**C. B. CHRISTENSEN, Director
California Department of Agriculture**

"Lettuce warkers in California during 1972 are making hourly earnings ranging from \$5.70 to \$7.41 per hour on a piece work basis."

**EINAR MOHN, Director
Western Conference of Teamsters**

"We consider our contracts still valid . . . this (the lettuce boycott) is a raid on our membership by UFWOC"

**EARL BUTZ, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

"The secondary boycott should be outlawed in agriculture as it is in other industries."

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