

SDS Speakers Cite Delano 'Slave System'

By MAXINE ELLIOTT
Associate Editor

Four years ago this month, Cesar Chavez, then a member of Saul Alinsky's Community Services Organization in Los Angeles, quit his job and moved to Delano, Calif., to organize the farm workers.

Chavez, who was then earning about \$10,000 a year, chose Delano because he has relatives in the area who would support him when the going got tough.

For 3½ years, Chavez worked with the migrants at the grass-roots level—in offering individual services, developing a credit union, a co-op, a group insurance program, and stressing the importance of a powerful community union.

Then, in September, 1965, members of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) of the AFL-CIO, went out on strike against the growers in the area. Two weeks later, Chavez' workers joined the strike.

They've been on strike ever since.

Early in the game, before the strike against grape growers in

the San Joaquin Valley started, Chavez insisted upon the complete autonomy of his group. It's lost some of this autonomy in being forced to make alliances with AWOC, other labor unions, church, civil rights, civic and student groups in strike support work. Without a certain amount of strike support work, however, the strike probably would have failed months ago.

SDS Joins

One of the student groups which entered into strike support is Students for a Democratic Society, through its San Francisco regional office. Other SDS chapters, including the University chapter, are also providing support.

Ken Kastner, member of SDS' farm work committee, said that the main emphasis of the strike at present lies in keeping scab workers out of the fields. "The growers bring them in from Texas and promise them high wages which they pay for a day or two, and they don't tell them there's a strike," Kastner said.

But the National Farm Workers Association, the group leading the strike (NFWA has been recognized in California as the legal bargaining agent for the workers) wants more than just higher wages—they want recognition, the power to bargain.

NFWA is demanding a minimum wage of \$1.40 per hour plus 25 cents per box. Prior to the strike, growers, who got \$4 per box, were paying \$1.15 per hour and 10 cents per box.

Most of the workers live in the Delano area throughout the entire year, but few are able to work all year. The average income of workers' families is about \$2,000 yearly, and with this poverty goes the usual medical consequences—bad teeth, uncorrected eyesight, chronic respiratory diseases, and low tolerance to other diseases.

To be sure, the State of California has enacted a series of laws designed to protect the worker—laws calling for freedom of choice of employer, choice of eating at the growers' restaurant (for which a set amount is deducted from their pay) or cooking their own food, the opportunity to shop for what they want where they want it at least once a week, Workmen's Compensation, the right to elect bargaining representatives and to maintain contracts, and recourse through the United States Department of Labor.

Inoperative, Impotent

But, Kastner says, these laws are "inoperative, impotent, and unenforceable."

"Those that are there don't matter," Kastner charged, referring to the laws. "Most of them can be used against the workers to the growers' advantage."

SDS will sponsor a panel discussion on the Delano situation at 7 p.m. today in the Student Union.

Dan and Paige Knapp, members of the VISTA training staff, and Gunnar Lundberg and Greg Johnson, University students who have visited the Delano area and observed the situation, will discuss the grape strike.

"Take the small matter of where the workers eat. The grower can say, 'you either eat at my restaurant or you're out of a job.' What can a worker who makes only \$2,000 a year do about that?"

Organized in Hawaii

Kastner said he believed the Delano situation to be "the perfect example of the slave system, based almost entirely upon nationality, since most workers are Mexican or Filipino, and perpetrated with the aid of and despite the existing laws."

Kastner said the agricultural industry has long been considered

"unorganizable" but the Hawaiian pineapple industry has been successfully organized for some years. "You know how they did it?" he said. "The people in the packing houses organized, and after they organized, they refused to pack fruit picked by non-union workers."

"The teamsters have been doing the same thing very quietly in Delano," Kastner confided. "Pretty soon, I think, you'll see the same thing happening in California that happened in Hawaii."

Kastner is confident the workers will win the strike. "We've got everything going for us—everything, that is, except for the growers. And they'll have to come around sometime."

Lost Tremendously

Kastner said growers have lost "a tremendous amount" as a result of the strike. And one of the largest of them, Schenley,

Inc., producer of several table wines and a number of distilled liquors, has become the object of a nationwide boycott.

The University chapter of SDS is conducting a week of activity concerning the Delano strike this week. A table, maintained by SDS on the Student Union ter-distributes information regarding the Schenley boycott. The table will continue through Friday.

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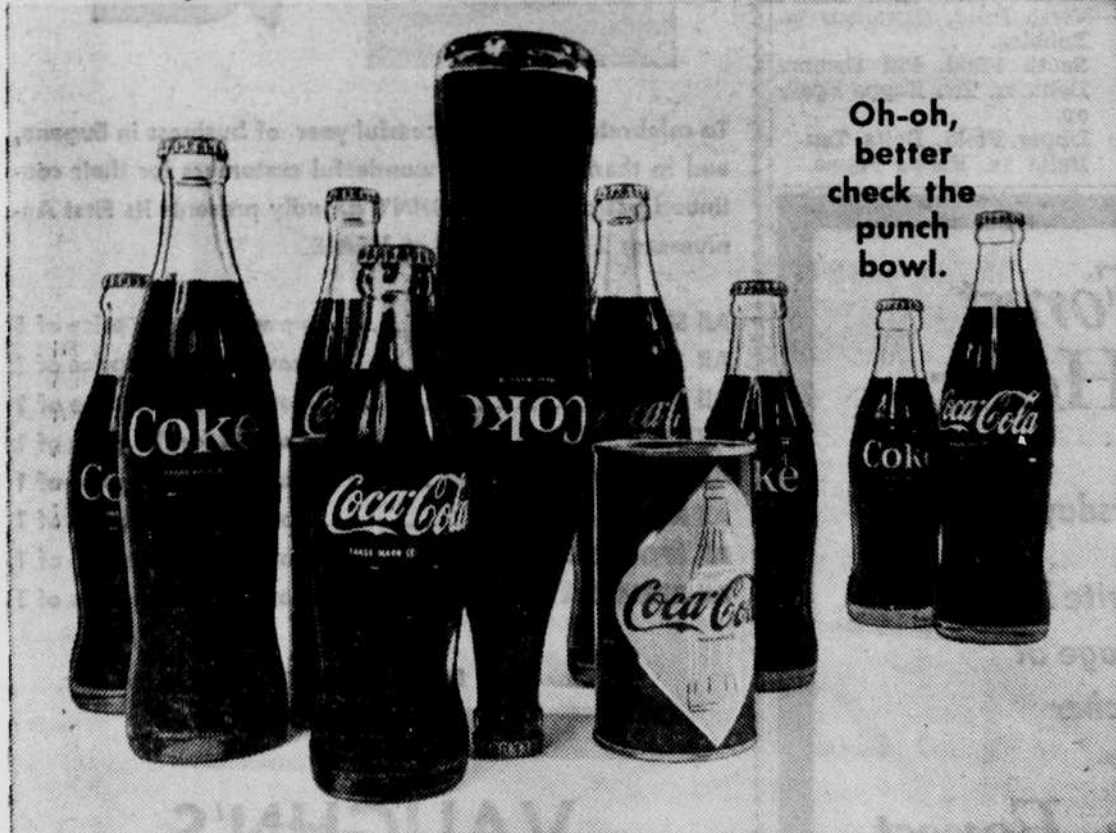
Library Contest Deadline Nears

Deadline for applications for the University personal library contests has been extended until Monday, Bernice M. Rise, contest co-ordinator, said Tuesday.

In order to enter a general or a specialized library in the contest, students must file an application of intent with Miss Rise in the Browsing Room. Duplicate lists of books in the student's library must be filed at a later date.

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