

# Consumers need to educate themselves

By RALPH NADER

Consumers who spend hundreds of hours a year earning money to pay for their food purchases will not spend ten hours a year learning about what foods to buy and what foods to avoid. Yet consumers are complaining strenuously about rising food prices, inadequate nutrition, suspicious fillers and additives and agribusiness deals such as the Russian grain deal and its immense inflationary consequences.

Just what is it about our formal and informal educational systems that pay so little attention to such an enormously important subject?

The problem is not just with elementary, high school and college curricula. Medical schools have relegated the study of nutrition to a very minor part of their courses for students. Television and radio convey information which worsen diets with their stress on advertisements promoting foods with high sugar or fat content heavily colored with artificial dyes.

The costs of such popular ignorance about food—its price, quality, distribution, subsidy and monopoly control—are enormous. Overseas, mass starvation of millions is coming closer to reality. Too many poor Americans are afflicted with hunger or severe malnutrition. The family farm has been rapidly disappearing with giant corporations taking greater control of food production, processing and distribution. As medical researchers probe deeper into the sources of diseases, the tracks are leading more and

more to diets and the kind of foods which are consumed.

There is no doubt that more people are awakening to the need to educate themselves about food and food policies and then become involved in shaping those policies. Families from Massachusetts to California are joining to form food cooperatives to improve their purchasing power. There is even a paperback out describing how to form such cooperatives.

To accelerate this growing food price and quality consciousness, the non-profit Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is spearheading a national day for action on the food crisis to take place all over the country on Food Day, April 17, 1975. Backed by a prestigious advisory board of scientists, including Harvard nutritionist Jean Mayer and Nobel Laureate George Wald, CSPI is working with student, consumer, environmental, church, poverty and other groups to organize teach-in and action programs in hundreds of communities.

Dr. Michael Jacobson, author of the popular "Nutrition Scoreboard" and CSPI coordinator for Food Day, believes that April 17th "can be a watershed in understanding the food crisis, in increasing competition and responsibility in the food industry, in improving the nation's eating habits, in aiding millions of people overseas, and in eliminating hunger in the U.S." He views Food Day as not so much "a solitary event as the most visible part of

continuing activities."

CSPI has ten full-time people working to make Food Day a continuing success. From their offices at 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Room 206, Washington, D.C., 20036, consumers can receive free materials which will help them organize Food Day activities and action programs in their area. Included in the packet, for example, is the Terrible Ten foods which CSPI believes epitomizes "everything that is wrong with the food supply."

In early March, a "food action handbook" will be released full of suggestions for community activities.

What CSPI is really calling for is a dramatic change in consumer lifestyles which will reduce the price of food, improve the quality of food to avoid diet-related diseases and sharpen the moral consciousness of Americans to respond to the problem of world famine.

People, by personal and political actions, can help solve these serious problems and help themselves live better. If they don't, then the giant food corporations and their compliant government agencies will continue along the path which has already led to the multiple food crisis.

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## 'Lettuce trial' defendants ask for student support

By BERT KNORR and TOM DONOBAN

On Wednesday and Thursday of this week there will be a series of trials in student court growing out of various activities related to the ongoing effort to get non-UFW lettuce off campus.

The Wednesday hearing will deal with a number of alleged violations stemming from a rally and demonstration on on Dec. 11 in support of the farmworkers and the EMU boycott. Several individuals active in the boycott have been charged with such misdeeds as tumultuous behavior, malicious destruction of University property, disorderly conduct and interference with University activities. What this means in plain English is that the accused are supposed to have kept their speaker system on too loud during the rally, and spilled scab lettuce on the EMU floor after that rally (much like the scab tea that was thrown into Boston harbor over two hundred years ago).

The maximum penalty for these indiscretions is expulsion from the University. The trial was set for Wednesday after an earlier attempt to railroad the case through student court on the last day of fall classes, with than 24-hours notice, was aborted because of a backlog of other unrelated cases.

The Thursday hearing concerns the Jan. 8 occupation of the EMU room vacated by the main desk. Boycotters had taken the room to sustain the alternative food operation in the face of the cold and snow which

threatened to grind the boycott to a halt on the EMU terrace. The EMU Board subsequently upheld the right of the UFW Solidarity Committee to use the room for boycott activities. The charges brought in student court by "conduct coordinator" Steven Barnes have effectively circumvented the authority of the board, and provoked it to admonish Barnes to "keep hands off." Barnes has also charged two campus organizations in an effort to curb their political activities.

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These trials must be seen in the context of the history of the UFW struggle on campus, and the clear design of the administration to suppress this struggle and all political activity which challenges its authority. The boycott of the EMU was initiated last spring, after the thousands of student signatures on petitions calling for a ban on non-UFW produce, and the overwhelming mandate of 71 per cent of those voting in a student referendum were callously ignored by President Clark and Vice-President Bogen. Even the initial stages of the boycott met with attempts to destroy it by using the student court to discipline boycott activists. These efforts failed dismally as case after case failed to produce a conviction, and student supporters packed the hearings,

indignant because of their obvious political nature.

This year the administration had decided to "speak softly" and hide its "big stick", as the boycott of the food service was allowed continue with minor bureaucratic harassment in hopes that UFW support would weaken as the boycott continued. The present flurry of indictments marks a return to overt repression on the part of the administration. Why has the administration gone to such lengths to keep scab lettuce on campus and defend its strike-breaking policy? Whose interests are being served? Certainly not the expressed interests of University students. Certainly not the interests of the farmworkers and other oppressed people. Certainly not the interests of the working people and taxpayers of the state of Oregon.

Clark maintains that he is simply a bureaucrat doing his job, responsible to the State Board of Higher Education. The State System has its largest shareholdings in Safeway (over \$140,000), one of the biggest agribusiness operations and exploiters of farm labor in the country. State Board members include two lumber tycoons, four corporate lawyers, a former PR man for Portland General Electric, and a couple of Republican party hacks. Not a single Chicano or worker are among its eleven members. How can this board be representative of the working people of the state of Oregon? How can it adequately uphold the interests of the

farmworkers? How can the University's policy of "neutrality" be anything but a mask for the corporate interests that it really represents?

Since it must defend those interests, the administration is forced to resort to the repressive apparatus of the student court to curb the militant actions of students that inevitably result when student opinion is ignored. Clark and his obedient underlings like Barnes are trying to isolate the most politically active students, and eliminate this "handful of troublemakers" from the University community. In this way they attempt to portray the present lettuce controversy as a conflict among the students themselves, rather than between the students, who have no real power with the existing University structure, and the administration, which determined to keep the University from taking a principled political position in support of the workers who put the food on our table.

Clark & Co., and the big corporate interests that they serve, are frantically trying to prevent the revival of a politically conscious student movement. The propaganda of the mass media, which depicted the anti-war movement as a failure, and now talk incessantly of the apathy of the students and the "cooling of the campuses", have tended to obscure the real strength and power that were inherent in the student movement of the sixties. The present CIA revelations aptly demonstrate the extent to which the government, bent on continuing its unpopular imperialist war, feared and dreaded that movement. The current economic crisis provides the real possibility for unity between students and Third World and other working people, on a scale that did not exist during the sixties. We must begin by uniting to fight—to get scab lettuce off campus, to support student rights, and to defend those who are coming under attack for their involvement in this struggle. The Wednesday (3:15 p.m.) and Thursday (2:15) hearings in the EMU will be open, and they will each be preceded by a short rally. A big turnout on those days will be a big step forward in building unity among the progressive students on campus, and getting the administration to take us seriously.

This column was written by Bert Knorr and Tom Donovan on behalf of the United Farmworkers Solidarity Committee. Knorr is a graduate student in history. Donovan is a freshman in education.



'PLEASE COOPERATE . . . I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE!'