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The Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, Inc. softball tournament scheduled for July 4, 5 and 6 is cancelled, due to lack of participation.



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United Farmworkers Ask Public to Boycott Grapes, Again

by Bob Lothian
Paul Kerchum was 19 and a student at Arizona State University in Tucson in 1968 when he stopped at a Safeway store being picketed by supporters of the United Farmworkers Union (UFW).

He talked with the picketers, and was so impressed with them, he said, that he joined the picketing and spent the next 1½ years as a volunteer with the UFW national grape boycott.

The boycott went on for several years until the UFW finally won union recognition from California growers. Now, nearly 20 years later, Kerchum is once again helping with a UFW grape boycott.

"The union is fighting for its existence" this time, said Kerchum. Portland coordinator of the United Farmworkers Support Committee.

The UFW is asking the public to boycott California table grapes once again, Kerchum said, to force growers to honor union contracts and follow pesticide regulations.

"There is a definite move by the growers toward union busting," according to Kerchum.

Ballot boxes have disappeared in union recognition elections, and UFW organizers have been harassed by goons hired by the growers, he said.

In addition, Kerchum continued, grower dependence on pesticides is causing grave health problems for field workers. According to the UFW publication, "Food and Justice," 300,000 farmworkers a year are being poisoned. Kerchum cited several cases of farmworkers who died after using pesticides on the job.

"There are workers that are dying... and they're dying so that growers can continue making their profits," Kerchum said.

The Farmworkers Support Committee is asking consumers in the Portland area to determine if grapes are union or non-union before buying. If they are union, the box holding them will show the black Aztec eagle insignia of the United Farmworkers. Customers can also ask store attendants if no box is visible, Kerchum said. Non-union grapes should be boycotted, he said.

"As far as the summer goes, most if not all of the grapes we will be getting will be from California," and a good percentage will be non-union, Kerchum said.

The support committee has already secured an agreement with Food From Food cooperative in Northwest Portland to stop carrying the grapes, he said. Nature's, in Northeast Portland, has said it supports the idea behind the boycott but will continue to carry the grapes.

Five canvassers from the anti-nuclear group New Clear Vision are going door-to-door nightly to speak to residents about the boycott, Kerchum said. A letter will be sent to larger grocery chains in the area asking them to honor the boycott and stop carrying non-union grapes, he added. Depending on the response to the letter, picketing at Portland stores could begin early this summer.

The UFW hopes to cut grape sales by 7%, enough to scare the growers into negotiations, according to Kerchum.

"The growers are banking on the American people not being as interested in social justice in the 80s as they were in the 60s," he said. "The

UFW is banking that they are." Kerchum, canvas coordinator with New Clear Vision, said the support committee is part of a coalition that includes New Clear Vision, SAVE, an

anti-abortion group, and Mexican Americans for Social Justice.

"It's a group of people that want to put forward a consistent ethic of life," he said.

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