March to Sacramento

Creator: Gladwell Hill  
Date: April 17, 1966  
Published in: The New York Times  
Source type: Newspaper Article (Edited)

Introduction: This New York Times article describes César Chávez and the UFW’s march from the fields in Delano to California’s capital in Sacramento. The march drew the attention of reporters and media outlets from across the country.

Nothing is so irresistible, it has been said, as an idea whose time has come. It appears that the time is now at hand for an epochal development in the history of American labor: the unionization of farmworkers.

Down the sun-baked San Joaquin Valley, veterans of a 25-day, 300-mile protest march on the capital at Sacramento returned last week to the vineyards.

Nominally, the 200 marchers had been striking grape pickers, campaigning for a $1.40-an-hour minimum wage and other benefits.

Realistically, however, their achievement was as dramatists. Constituting only a tiny splinter of the 300,000 workers needed to cultivate and harvest California’s $3.7-billion annual farm production, they had managed to draw nationwide attention and support for a cause that had made little headway for a century: improvement of the lot of seasonal farmworkers.

At Sacramento, thousands of sympathizers from civil rights, religious and other groups had joined the orderly rally on the Capitol lawn that came as the climax of an eight-month work stoppage at Delano. Even before the marchers had reached Sacramento, a succession of big agricultural employers, who have traditionally looked down on discussions with workers, began indicating willingness to negotiate with the two union groups involved.

This signaled a turning of the economic tide and the beginning of a new era.
California Grape Boycott

Creator: United Farm Workers Organizing Committee
Date: 1968
Source type: Flyer (Edited)

Introduction: United Farm Workers supporters handed out flyers to shoppers at California grocery stores during the grape boycott. The UFW began a national boycott of table grapes in 1968.

YOUR GROCER PROMOTES POVERTY BY SELLING CALIFORNIA GRAPES

In an effort to secure rights that most Americans have long enjoyed, farmworkers in California have been on strike for three years, seeking simple justice and dignity which they cannot obtain through other means.

The Farm Workers are asking for recognition of their Union, for decent wages, and for an end to degrading working conditions. They took such basic steps as to picket with violence and terror tactics, and by running down workers with their trucks.

Illegal recruitment of alien strike-breakers from Mexico has made it impossible to win justice for the workers. The Farm Workers are forced to bring their cause to YOU, the Consumers of this City.

YOU CAN HELP:
1. Refuse to shop in stores that sell California grapes.
2. Urge others to support this boycott.
3. Let your grocer know that you will not shop in stores that handle products of farm sweatshops.

BOYCOTT STORES THAT SELL CALIFORNIA GRAPES

UNITED FARM WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, AFL-CIO
182 - 21st Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. Telephone 499-5612

Phone Contacts: Manhattan 726-9373, Bronx 669-0610; Nassau-Suffolk 316-332 8399

YOUR GROCER PROMOTES POVERTY BY SELLING CALIFORNIA GRAPES

Grape growers have responded to these simple demands by refusing to negotiate with the Union. They have answered peaceful picketing with violence and terror tactics, and by running down workers with their trucks.

LEGAL ENFORCEMENT OF STRIKE BREAKERS FROM MEXICO HAS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO WIN JUSTICE FOR THE WORKERS. THE FARM WORKERS ARE FORCED TO BRING THEIR CAUSE TO YOU, THE CONSUMERS OF THIS CITY.
Chávez and the Church

Creator: César Chávez
Date: 1970
Source type: Essay (Edited)

Introduction: Chávez frequently gave speeches and wrote about his experiences in the farmworkers' movement in order to increase awareness about it. In this essay, published in a book about Mexican-American politics and culture, he describes the importance of forming an alliance with certain members of the Catholic Church.

In Delano the church has been involved with the poor in a unique way which should stand as a symbol to other communities. Of course, when we refer to the Church we should define the word a little. We mean the whole Church, the Church as an ecumenical body spread around the world, and not just its particular form in a local parish. It is a powerful moral and spiritual force which cannot be ignored by any movement.

Furthermore, it is an organization with tremendous wealth. Since the Church is to be the servant to the poor, it is our fault if that wealth is not channeled to help the poor in our world.

In a small way we have been able, in the Delano strike, to work together with the Church and use its moral and economic power to pressure those who want to maintain the status quo and keep the farmworkers in virtual enslavement.

Some years ago, we began to realize the powerful effect which the Church can have on the conscience of the opposition. In scattered instances, in San Jose, Sacramento, Oakland, Los Angeles and other places, priests would speak out loudly and clearly against specific instances of opposition, and in some cases, stand with the people who were being hurt.