

Consumers' Rights Committee Is Formed

Formation of a national Consumers' Rights Committee "dedicated to solving the problem of product boycotts and interference with the free flow of food to the American consumer" was announced in Washington recently, by Michigan State Senator N. Lorraine Beebe at a news conference held with U.S. Senator George Murphy of California.

Senator Beebe, R-Dearborn,

is assistant majority leader of the Michigan State Senate and chairman of the new committee which also will support national collective bargaining legislation for farm workers

Speaking from a prepared statement at the office of Senator Murphy, who announced recently that he will sponsor such legislation in the Congress, Senator Beebe said the committee would have two major purposes:

"First, to enlist grass roots support, in all 50 states, for legislation which will give the na-

tion's farm workers the right to organize and bargain collectively, if they wish, while at the same time protecting the paramount rights of 200 million American consumers.

"Second, to work with individuals and organizations concerned about the growing national threat to the consumers' right to decide for themselves what they wish to buy or not to buy in the marketplace."

Referring to boycott efforts involving California table grapes, the Michigan legislator said that these activities "have

been especially intense in the Detroit and Wayne County, Michigan area because of the support given the grape boycott by Walter Reuther."

Sen. Beebe said that food product boycotts arising out of labor-management problems in the field "cannot be permitted to continue if our free consumer economy is to survive."

"The fair and proper solution is national legislation such as the concept proposed by Senator Murphy and supported by members of labor unions, as well as agricultural and consumer groups and concerned citizens throughout the country"

Sen. Beebe, who made a first hand inspection of California table grape areas early this month, said that she found that "the picture of a migratory labor force presented by John Steinbeck in his 'Grapes of Wrath' more than three decades ago has no application to working and living conditions in California grape fields today."

"The vast majority of vineyard workers are not migrants," Sen Beebe declared "Wages, while not high, are the highest for farm workers anywhere in the United States. Housing for those workers who do not live permanently in the area range from average to excellent on the larger farms"

In addition, said the Michigan lawmaker, "the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and its leader, Cesar Chavez, have little support in the fields"

Senator Beebe added that the workers she met in California "expressed resentment over what they considered the false image given them by Mr. Reuther, Mr. Chavez and other boycott organizers and supporters"

She said she hoped that public officials and others "who have found it politically expedient to endorse the grape boycott will also travel to the California vineyard country, with open minds and open eyes, to see the facts as they are"

Shultz Proposes More Farm Jobs For Youth

Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz has proposed an amendment to the agricultural hazardous-occupations order that would allow 14- and 15 year-old vocational-agricultural students to drive farm tractors and to operate other machinery.

The proposal amendment would permit the hiring of these students only after they complete formal training programs in the safe use of this equipment and where employers provide constant safety supervision on the job. The programs would be conducted by certified vocational-agriculture instructors experienced in the safe operation of tractors and farm machinery.

The agricultural order prohibits the employment of youth under 16 years of age in certain particularly hazardous farm occupations.

Persons interested in the adoption or modification of the amendment have until May 30th to present by mail pertinent written data, views, or argument to the Director of the Bureau of Labor Standards, U S Department of Labor, 400 First Street, N W, Washington, D C 20210. The proposed amendment appeared in the April 30th Federal Register.

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