

# City awaits arrival of union marchers

## Actor looks forward to marching in Watsonville

By MICHAEL MERRILL  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — There will be several celebrities in town Sunday, coming to lend their names and support to the United Farm Workers' march. Emmy Award winning actor David Clennon plans to among the expected 20,000 marchers.

Clennon had already appeared in several television shows and movies, including "Being There" with Peter Sellers, when his role in the hit series, "thirtysomething" made him instantly recognizable. After winning an Emmy for his work on another critically acclaimed show, "Dream on," Clennon said he found a way to capitalize on his fame to support those less fortunate than himself.

He's no stranger to protest movements, Clennon said, calling himself an activist all his adult life.

"I have supported the farm workers for years, and I met Cesar Chavez a couple of months before he died," Clennon said. "I have been involved in human rights organizations going back the the Vietnam War.

"I've had a good career," Clennon said in a telephone interview Friday. "And I feel it gives me some freedom to support people who have a harder time of it in life. If my presence will help focus attention on this very important struggle, I am grateful for the opportunity."

Clennon, who began his career not on the stage, but in his grandfather's farm fields in central Illinois, says he knows how hard farm work is.

"I was a seed corn detassler and worked on several farms," Clennon said. "I was able to stand up while I worked and it was still difficult. I can hardly imagine what is must be like to work bent over all day."

According to Clennon, one thing that farm work and acting have in common is that neither is secure.

"I have heard that life in the strawberry fields is very difficult," Clennon said. "They go without clean drinking water, suffer from a lack of sanitation and receive no medical insurance and no pension for people to survive in old age."

One reason Clennon agreed to march Sunday is so he can learn about the condition of the workers

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Tarmo Hannula

**City employee Jerry Carry loads his truck with traffic barricades Friday afternoon at the municipal storage yard in preparation for the UFW march on Sunday. Officials hope the barricades will help maintain an orderly march along several downtown streets.**

## Insurer objects to UFW 'propaganda'

By MICHAEL MERRILL  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — Tony Bruscia is vice president of Golden State Commercial and Agricultural Services in Watsonville. His company sells insurance to many local strawberry farmers and he says he knows what goes on in his clients' fields.

"I've walked those fields," Bruscia said. "We provide safety training to the workers and provide their insurance."

So when Bruscia received a letter from the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, requesting a do-

nation of \$25 or more, he wondered just who were these farmers that were described in the letter. The letter is vague regarding persons and places but not about alleged incidents.

The letter, signed by UFW President Arturo S. Rodriguez, described conditions on "a farm" in Watsonville. "... One strawberry picker is forced to work in fields recently sprayed with toxic chemicals," it reads. "His ugly hands — oozing pus — show the poisons are already affecting his body," Rodriguez wrote.

The letter continues, "At the same farm, many work-

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## Heavy post-march union recruitment planned

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — While most of the AFL-CIO/United Farm Workers marchers plan to leave town Sunday night, at least a hundred organizers will stick around to kick recruitment in to high gear, union representatives say.

"It's our chance to really move," and capture the post-rally excitement, union organizer Maria Naranjo said Friday. Naranjo is a Service Employees Union repre-

sentative who is visiting Watsonville from Washington D.C.

On Sunday, an estimated 20,000 people will march through downtown Watsonville in support of local strawberry workers and attend a rally at Watsonville High School's Geiser Field.

"After carrying off the march, we'll have a hundred folks coming in from around the country" to help sign up new UFW members, Naranjo said. Union officials

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## Most businesses along Main Street to be open

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The majority of Main Street businesses will have the welcome mat out this Sunday, as an expected 20,000 people march in support of the AFL-CIO/United Farm Workers efforts to unionize local strawberry workers.

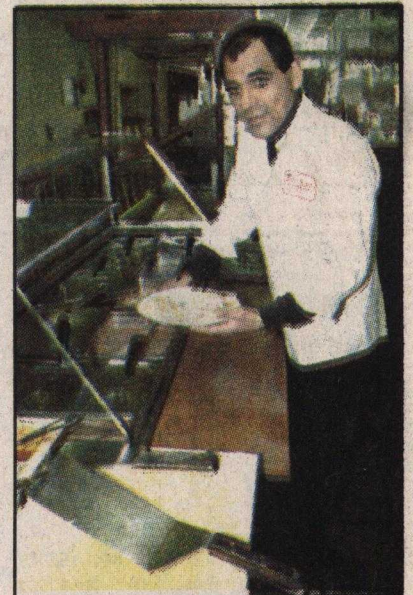
With a sprinkling of red UFW signs in downtown

shop windows, the marchers will pass by the open front doors of major retailers like Gottschalks, Woolworth, Centro Discount Mall, and Plaza Vigil shops, all scheduled to be open their regular business hours on Sunday.

A few downtown business operators, however, are upset about the march, and say they will have to close Sunday. "Our customers say they don't want to come downtown — and a lot say they are leaving town," said Bob Zlendich, owner of the Miramar restaurant.

Ace Hardware and Van's Shoes also are scheduled to be closed. "We can't be open — no way, because our customers won't be able to come to town," said Jim Van Lanen, owner of Van's shoes. "It's a catastrophe, the first time since 1930 we've been closed on a Sunday."

Main Street jewelers, however, plan to be open. "We are worried about (the amount of people), but



Tarmo Hannula

**Jaime Santana, manager of the Rico Pollo on Main Street, said he will be open during the AFL-CIO/United Farm Workers march and hopes for brisk business.**

we need to be open," said Jose Zamora, store manager of Don Robertos Jewelers. "We're just going to be alert."

Plaza Jewelers also is scheduled to be open, a saleswoman there said.

A host of downtown restaurants are hoping for increased sales. "We

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## Labor's biggest names to address Geiser Field rally

STAFF REPORT

WATSONVILLE — At least nine high-profile labor and civil rights leaders will be addressing what is expected to be a packed house at Watsonville High School's Geiser Field Sunday at 1 p.m.

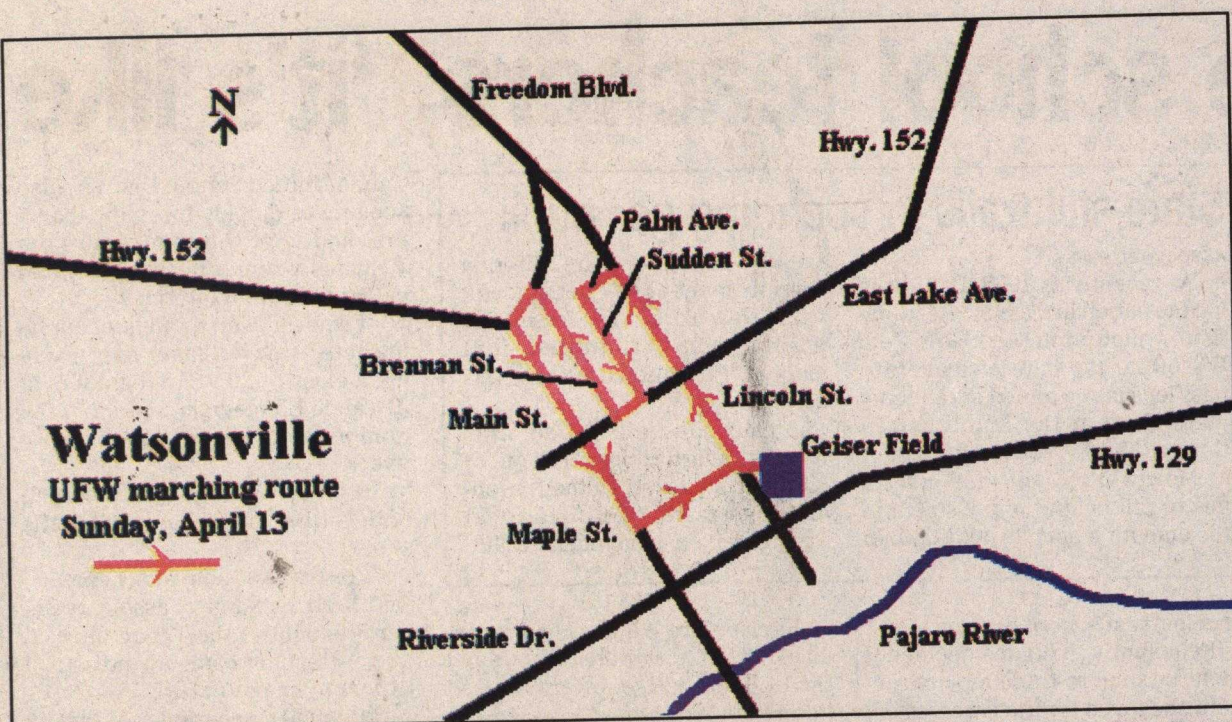
The United Farm Workers organizing drive for Central Coast strawberry workers will be capped by a rally featuring many pro-union orators.

At this point, known speakers will be:

UFW President Arturo Rodriguez and Secretary-Treasurer Dolores Huerta; the top three AFL-CIO officeholders, President John Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and

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Graphic by Scott David Brennan

The United Farm Workers' 2.3-mile march is planned to begin at 11 a.m. on Sunday at Geiser Field. The march will head north on Lincoln Street to Palm Avenue, west on Palm Avenue to Sudden Street, north on Sudden Street to East Lake Avenue, west on East Lake Avenue to Brennan Street, north on Brennan to Freedom Boulevard, south on Freedom to Main Street, south on Main Street to Maple Street, and east on Maple Street to Geiser Field. The marchers will then converge again at the high school field for a rally until 3 p.m. In all, 32 streets in the downtown will be barricaded from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., including almost every intersection one block outside the marching route.

## CLENNON

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firsthand. "This will be my first visit to Watsonville. I always feel that when I talk about a struggle, it's important to see the environment they are working in," he said.

Clennon said he has never talked with a local strawberry grower, but that he has heard about farmers who plowed their crops under rather than hire union workers.

"I don't see the small farmers as the villains in this," Clennon said. "I am just responding to the intolerable conditions. If the price of having strawberries is forcing people

into these conditions, I would rather do without them."

The use of pesticides in another reason for Clennon's determination to help bring about change in the agricultural business. "Farm labor is difficult enough, but the fact that workers are being exposed to pesticides makes it worse. That's probably my greatest concern, that people are being poisoned in the fields."

"This is the greatest country in the world," Clennon said. "I don't know what they (the farmers) are up against, but if we have people who have been doing the same job for 20 years and they are still living in abject poverty, there is something wrong with the system."

## BUSINESSES

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hope to have good business — I think it'll help a little bit," said Jaime Santana, manager of Rico Pollo Mexican food on Main Street, speaking of the march. But he said he hasn't stocked up any extra provisions. "We'll see what happens."

Downtown restaurants might get an extra boost from the police, who say they will evict any rogue vendors setting up concessions on sidewalks. "We want the march to move smoothly" without sidewalk stands slowing it down, said Watsonville police Chief Terry Medina.

Laura Garcia, supervisor at the Kings Garden Chinese restaurant, said she is expecting a busy day. But then, "We normally have a big crowd on Sundays," she said.

Jalisco's and Fox Pizza Factory also will be open and Fox Theater will be showing films as usual, managers there say.

St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 721 Main St., will have Masses on its regular Sunday schedule.

The Presbyterian United Church of Watsonville, 112 East Beach St., which is inside the marching route, will be closed Sunday. The congregation plans to have its regular 10 a.m. service at Westview Presbyterian Church on 118 First St.

## LETTER

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ers haven't been paid for work done months ago. On payday, they literally must beg for their paychecks to a supervisor who yells, 'Get out of here ... I'll pay you when I feel like paying you!'"

Further on, Rodriguez' letter describes a 15-year-old boy with "small, filthy hands, hardened by the hot sun. Even now it hurts to think of another child sacrificed to the fields."

The UFW solicitation concludes by saying that "a contract means a farm worker can point the finger at his abuser without fear of being fired or beaten. It means another strawberry worker doesn't have to harvest a poisoned field. It means a family can make a living wage. It means another boy doesn't have to give up his dreams to slavery in the fields."

"I feel the propaganda is offensive and insulting," Bruscia said. "I've been in those fields and not one of them treats their workers like that. If they really find an atrocity like they are depicting, they should tell us who the farmer is. The workers compensation

system and OSHA would never allow these conditions."

Bruscia said his company insures at least 50 Hispanic farmers. "They are honest, hard working farmers who have worked their way up, and their reputation is being creamed."

Bruscia noted that the union is pushing for health insurance for strawberry workers. He said that would benefit his insurance business, but that it would make no sense for either the growers or workers.

"... It is not what the workers want or need," he said. "Many are illegal and can't use it and many qualify for MediCal already. What they want and need is higher wages. The union needs to work with the farmers, help them become more successful so they can afford to pay the workers more."

When asked Friday to comment on the contents of the Rodriguez-signed letter, UFW spokeswoman Jocelyn Sherman requested a copy of the letter be faxed to her. She said Rodriguez was in the office at the time and that he wished to review it before replying.

No response was received, and subsequent phone calls to the office were not returned later Friday.