LA CAUSA
THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

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TITLE PAGE

FOREWORD

> "To be a pariah is to be left alone to see things your own way as truthfully as you can. Not because you're brighter than anybody else is—or your own truth is so valuable. But because, like a painter or a writer or an artist, all you have to contribute is the purification of your own vision, and add that to the sum total of other visions."—I.F. Stone

In 1965, nearly 190 years after the American Revolution began, the political, social, and economic dreams penned in our Declaration of Independence and later articulated in the Bill of Rights, became the primeval ooze for another revolution—one that would change both the face of California and the nation's rural life.

Ever since California was admitted into the Union in 1850, this rural revolution had been in the making, for agriculture in the Golden State had always been controlled by big business. By 1965, agribusiness, i.e., farming, trucking, canning, and marketing, had become the state's leading industry, with a farm income alone of over $3.8 billion.

It had achieved that enviable position through cheap, federally subsidized water, fertile soil, good climate, vast amounts of acreage under cultivation, an ample workforce, untold misery, physical deprivation, violence, political intrigue, foreign exploitation, and economic blackmail.

The plight of farmworkers was already rather well known, whether they were in California, Texas, Mississippi, or Florida. In the previous 30 years, the country's social conscience had been repeatedly pricked by their condition, but seldom had the outrage of the general public been channeled into constructive or remedial activism.

Carey McWilliams' exhaustive study in *Factories in the Field* and John Steinbeck's immortalization of the Joad family in *The Grapes of Wrath* were published in the 1930s, followed by John Beecher's explicit poetry in the 1940s.

Edward R. Murrow used a new medium—television—to shock an apathetic nation on the day after Thanksgiving, 1960, with his unprecedented documentary, "Harvest of Shame." Later came Truman Moore's valuable insights in *The Slaves We Rent* and Ernesto Galarza's *Merchants of Labor*, which once again awakened the public to the indignities suffered by the workers who provided the nation with its rich bounty of food.

On September 8, 1965, in Delano, California, all this, plus the determination of the farmworkers themselves to achieve human dignity, physical well-being, and the right to

organize, was mobilized into the type of action that workers, employers, and the general public understand: a strike and boycott !

To hear Delano's mayor and the city's businessmen in 1965 argue, the least likely place for a farmworker revolution to begin was in their city, situated 135 miles north of Los Angeles, in the marrow of the San Joaquin Valley—the world's richest farm land—and located at the southern end of the state's 400-mile-long rural slum.

Its mayor, Clifford Leader, described Delano as a "miniature United Nations of the Valley."

"There really are fewer racial problems in Delano than in most areas," he noted. "Why, the chairman of our school board and the president of our Lions Club is Dr. James Nagatani, who is also a dentist and a Japanese American. The chairman of Delano's planning council is Frank Herrera, a Mexican American, who also serves on the City Council. The Kiwanis Club has a Negro member, and Vincent Zaragoza, a Mexican American, received the biggest vote of any man ever to run for City Council."

For the city's clergy, Delano was "the cradle of Christianity in the Valley." Seeking a land route from lower California to Monterey in 1776, the Franciscan missionary Padre Francisco Garces came across a dying Yokut Indian boy and baptized him.

Almost a century later, President U.S. Grant's Secretary of the Interior, Columbus Delano, deeded a town site 16 miles southwest of the riverbank where Father Garces had baptized the *muchachito* to the Contract and Finance Corp. Taking the surname of the secretary of the interior, the tiny community became an early sheep-trading center and later a wheat shipping point. On April 13, 1915, the city was incorporated.

For the majority of farmworkers, however, Delano was just another California agricultural community with wages, working conditions, police harassment, and social acceptance no better or no worse than any other area of the state.

But soon after the initial walkout by the Filipino Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) on September 6, the predominantly Mexican-American National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), led by Cesar Chavez, joined the strikers. They immediately began to attract national attention in their bold effort to initiate a socio-agricultural revolution, despite the fact that many saw it at the outset as simply one among many historical attempts by the state's farmworkers to win for themselves higher wages and legal protections that were being taken for granted by the rest of the nation's workers.

Their strike, however, was set against California's unique background as a state. Its now rich agricultural area never experienced the small homestead farms that flourished in the Midwest throughout the 19th century, for before California came into the Union in 1850,

most of its land—east of the Coast Range and west to the Sierra Nevada and north of Sacramento to the Tehachapi Mountains at its southern end—had been taken.

Through bribery and conniving, documented in standard historical accounts of the Southwest, nearly 800 Americans acquired over eight million acres of land from the Mexican government—the infamous Mexican land grants—between 1836 and 1846. In the process, every type of scheme imaginable, legal and illegal, was used to claim these grants. The combination of such schemes and the vast tracts of land already occupied by the railroads had stamped it as private property to many early settlers.

It was a German immigrant butcher, Henry Miller, who arrived in San Francisco in 1847 with $6 in his pocket, who could later boast to riding by horseback from Mexico to the California/Oregon border, spending every night on one of his own ranches. In acquiring property approximately the size of Belgium, Miller used such methods as hitching a team of horses to a wagon with a boat on it, dragging it across desirable land, and then claiming the territory as "swamp land." Swamp land at the time was defined as land that could be "transversed" by a boat, and was open to claim for a price considerably well below that of regular land prices.

As one reviewer of *Factories in the Field* pointed out:

"Small wonder that California now has a unique land-ethic like none other in the 50 states. The children wonder why Proposition 14 (the state's 1964 act repealing its fair housing statutes) was made law by the people. It was never doubted for a moment. How could it be denied by a people who have built their entire state's economy from the very day of the state's inception on an ethic which enables the man with the deed (no matter how it was obtained) to use the state courts, state and federal officials, and governors and the U.S. Congress to gain his wishes."

As Chinese "coolie labor" was freed by the completion of the transcontinental railroad, land owners in California saw the opportunity to utilize this readily available workforce for their own purposes. It was the beginning of the foreign labor market, which became a historical hallmark of agriculture in the state, for the Chinese were soon followed by the Japanese, the Hindus, the Armenians, the Filipinos, and the Mexicans.

Examining such past efforts to organize and seek just contracts, better wages, and working conditions, it is easy to see why these farmworkers have been consistently characterized as lazy, troublesome, and inefficient by their fearful employers in a desperate effort to discredit them. When these tactics have failed, the alternative has been to initiate violence so as to drive the "agitators off the land." Thus, California has rightfully earned the reputation as the originator and home of vigilantism. As McWilliams reminds us, "The tranquility of a rural California is a myth."

Beginning in 1951 and extending to the end of 1964, efforts by farmworkers to organize became severely impeded by the bracero program—growers bringing Mexican nationals into the country for periods of 30 days to three years to harvest the crops under the guise of a "wartime emergency" workforce. During the late 1950s, in excess of 400,000 braceros were admitted to the U.S., and as many as 292,000 were employed in the fields at the harvesting season's peak. The largest bracero-using state during this period was California.

However, on January 1, 1965, this form of a guaranteed slave labor workforce was abolished by the U.S. Congress when it refused to extend Public Law 78. Nowhere have the political machinations and social evils of this infamous program been more carefully recorded than in Galarza's *Merchants of Labor*.

The end of the program, however, did not discourage California growers from the frame of mind that the state and the federal government should provide them with an abundant labor force. At the time of the Delano strike, California's Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown , the state's junior U.S. Senator George Murphy, and the University of California were still wed to the idea of this grower demand.

This came as little surprise, for California's largest growers have historically been creatures of the banks, and those financial institutions exercised their financial power over the majority of the state's agricultural industry. Through such banks—primarily Bank of America and Wells Fargo Bank—the control of credit affecting family farming has been frequently exercised.

One can judge how this power manifested itself in a mid-1960s Census of Agriculture study, which showed that six percent of the farms in the state owned nearly 28 million acres, or 76% of the land, while at the same time nearly the same percentage of farms accounted for 60% of all hired labor expenditures.

These same large growers also dominated city and country governments, various boards and state agricultural advisory committees, and public agencies that originally had been established to serve and protect the farmworker.

The State Advisory Committee to the Farm Placement Service was the State Board of Agriculture, which had represented grower interests in California for many years. In 1965, the chairman of the state board—Jesse W. Tapp, an agricultural economist—served as chairman of the Bank of America's board of directors. Three board members and the vice president of that same bank also sat on the board of directors for the DiGiorgio Corp., the state's largest grower.

Farmworkers who sought enforcement of the provisions of the Sugar Act usually were faced with seeking help from the local county's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service board (ASCS), which was often composed of the county's major sugar beet growers.

One of the most oft-repeated arguments put forth by those opposed to the farmworkers' Delano struggle was that if its primary aims of the right to organize and bargain collectively were realized, the already meager ranks of small farmers in California would be further diminished. A 1965 report on "The Migratory Farm Labor Problem in the United States" made by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor rebutted such arguments.

"Only the nation's largest farms would be affected by the extension of the National Labor Relations Board Act (NLRB) to agriculture. Under current jurisdictional standards of the NLRB, *the act would generally have no effect on the more than 97% of all farmers* whose interstate shipments amount to less than $50,000 a year." [Emphasis added.]

Yet remarks by Al Guilin, formerly of the Farm Labor Service, and Mitch Mulas, president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, were typical of the employer-employee relationships that existed in the agricultural community at the time.

"I feel," Guilin observed, "that the workers should be given just as much attention as fertilization, purchasing, or insect control."

Mulas added, "Agriculture has been and is being used as a 'relief' to society in the welfare field. The public must realize that if agriculture is expected to do as much for labor as other industries, there will be many more on welfare which the public will have to pay for."

One observer would call the Delano walkout an "accumulative strike," for it was more than just the debt of history coming due and the winning of collective bargaining rights, decent wages, and working conditions. It quickly became a grassroots effort by farmworkers to destroy that something-less-than-human image held by so many of their peers and to replace that attitude by achieving first-class citizenship. In the midst of that evolutionary process, the Delano unions also provided an example to all other agricultural laborers in America that revolutionary changes can be accomplished through unity.

Ralph Duncan, a state labor conciliator in Fresno, in viewing this "revolution," believed that the growers in their analysis of the strike were overlooking its import, which he called "the most significant to ever hit the key farm areas."

"The forces which will admit farmworkers to the 'American way of life' have been set in motion. This is the beginning of an evolutionary process that will bring farmworkers—long struggling for mere survival—the relative affluence of other workers," he said.

These workers, Duncan added, are becoming increasingly aware of the affluence about them and will "continue to rebel" in efforts to get the ordinary consumer goods available to their fellow citizens.

Obviously, the California agricultural business community and its allied industries did not view the Delano strike in these terms.

The venerable and influential *California Farmer* aptly summed up that community's feelings by describing it as "a vicious and amoral organization campaign, spearheaded by extremist elements of the way-out left. This effort has been cloaked in the robe of respectability by the participation of clergymen who are seemingly misguided, misinformed, or unbelievably gullible."

Contrary to what the *California Farmer* and its readers may have liked to believe, the influence of "clergymen" was anything but misguided, misinformed, or "unbelievably gullible." The influence, manner, and form with which individual clergymen and later their church bodies manifested themselves in the Delano strike was indeed an exemplary manifestation of carrying the Gospels and beliefs of the churches and synagogues into fields of plenty.

As a freelance journalist writing specifically for *The National Catholic Reporter*, Religious News Service, and a variety of progressive religious magazines and newspapers, I was privy to tracking this manifestation in the early years of the Delano strike, and, in that process, I came to admire both the leadership of the UFW and those members of the clergy who stood with them through the strike. Of course, I was accused of not being an objective reporter, a charge I cannot deny. However, throughout my coverage, I believe, I acted fairly, checking the facts where they were available from all the involved parties.

Those facts were not always easy to come by, so while I take full responsibility for how those facts were presented then and here, I am also quite conscious that there is a good measure of material that did not appear in my articles, and for that I strongly recommend that the reader peruse Jacques Levy's *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (W.W. Norton & Co., New York: 1975) for a uniquely candid look at the strike by those individuals who made farm labor history.

Much of what has been written about the inception of the farmworkers movement in the 20th century and the birth of the UFW has relegated the role of the clergy and the religious communities to that of an adjunct to their revolution and not to its proper place as a moving spirit.

This contribution, recounting I.F. Stone's words earlier, is but one journalist's attempt to add the purification of his own vision to the sum total of other visions in recounting the early days of how that spirit inspired a revolution that has yet to run its full course.

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Attempting to chronicle recent history—whether it be a revolution or the discovery of a new frontier— is a formidable challenge. The world has become too small, too aware of what is taking place elsewhere, to expect any single event to remain isolated and unnoticed.

It is essential, therefore, in this age of instantaneous mass communications that the journalist seek to discover as many ramifications of a story as possible while sharing his own knowledge and observations with his neighbor. To put the myriad events and occurrences of our time into proper perspective from which the historian can later hone and polish is the charge given to the investigative journalist today.

No story can be garnered from one single person or from one single source, just as no story that seeks to involve human beings in the problems of other human beings can be written with entire objectivity. While I sought as much as possible to see, hear, and experience as many of the day-to-day struggles that form the fabric of this account, I had to rely on the eyes and ears of many in the preparation of the original text and to whom I am most grateful and indebted to. They include:

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No journalist can understand the present unless the relevancy of the past has been made clear to him. It is for that reason I am forever indebted to Carey McWilliams, John Steinbeck, John Beecher, Edward R. Murrow, Truman Moore, and Ernesto Galarza.

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There were untold others who made invaluable contributions to the original version of this manuscript, but without the patience and encouragement of my family at the time, this account would have been but a lost dream.

CHAPTER ONE
"Don't Waste Any Time in Mourning. Organize"

I

An early morning tulle fog was beginning to break up, signaling another soon-to-be-hot day in California's San Joaquin Valley. As my plane's wheels touched the ground at the Bakersfield Airport and taxied to the gate, I reflected on what had brought me here this day in early October, 1965.

My odyssey had begun just a few days earlier, when I received a phone call from my friend LeRoy Chatfield, a member of the Roman Catholic Christian Brothers' order. The previous summer, he had been teaching summer school in the Bakersfield area, and several of his students were the children of the area's farmworkers. In the process he had gotten interested in a fledgling organization known as the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA).

In the three weeks prior to Chatfield's call, the NFWA had joined with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee–AFL-CIO (AWOC) in striking the table grape growers in Delano, California, a small rural town some 30 miles north of Bakersfield. Knowing of my interest and articles relating to the plight of the state's farmworkers, he thought this fledgling strike might make for a good story.

Reluctantly, I agreed to make the trip, mainly owing to the fact that strikes like these were somewhat common occurrences throughout the valley at harvest time, usually centered around wages. Eventually, a compromise would be reached and the workers would be back in the fields in a few days.

Alighting from the plane and making my way across the tarmac toward the airport's iron gate entrance, it suddenly occurred to me that I had no idea of how I was going to make my way from this airport north to Delano. As I moved closer, I spied a Chicano man somewhat small in physical stature moving toward the same gate, obviously awaiting my arrival.

As I stepped through the gate, he approached me with a smile on his face and inquired, "Mr. Krebs?" and as I nodded in the affirmative, he simply said, "I'm Cesar Chavez."

As we walked into the airport's coffee shop discussing the weather and my flight from San Francisco, the quiet charismatic personality of this man Cesar Chavez, director of the NFWA, became immediately apparent.

Sipping tea and searching for cigarettes in the pockets of his red plaid shirt and leather jacket, as I ate a quick breakfast, he began patiently to explain the three-week-old grape pickers' strike that had brought me here and nearby to Delano, California. It was one of those exceptional occasions, I was to learn, when this soft-spoken 39-year-old Mexican-American leader did any talking over a sustained period of time.

In the days and months to come, watching him listen calmly to his associates and an endless string of farmworkers with their day-to-day problems, I began to realize that this gentle ability to listen, sometimes for many weary hours at a time, had enabled Chavez and the NFWA to become the dominant force in the state's farm labor movement.

Born on March 31, 1927, in Yuma, Arizona, Cesar Estrada Chavez was the second child and first son of Librado and Juan Chavez.

"My father was born in Mexico, but I was born on my grandfather's 160 acres, which was very rich land just off the Colorado River. He had been one of the first settlers in Yuma in 1889. My grandfather was illiterate, but he became a citizen. I tend to think that some over-zealous politician made him a citizen just so he could vote," Chavez said.

It was from his grandmother, the only member of the family at that time who was not illiterate, that Chavez was taught his Catholic faith. His loyalty to both his faith and the Church, which came in his early years, remained with him throughout his life and exerted a profound influence on his life and his work.

For the Chavez family, the Depression brought increased taxes and decreased crop prices. Water bills went unpaid and eventually the farm was foreclosed. Following the crops from the Imperial Valley to Sacramento, the entire family moved to California as the 10-year-old Cesar, his two brothers, and two sisters worked with their parents in the fields.

He recalled, "Those early years when we first came to California were rough. We were really green, and whenever a labor contractor told us something, we fell for it hook, line, and sinker. I remember the first year we ended up in the fall picking wine grapes. There were very few bunches on the vines, and we were the only family working in the field. But we were too green to wonder why we were the only ones. After the first week of work, my father asked the contractor for his pay.

"'I can't pay you yet because I haven't been paid by the winery,' the contractor told my father. But we were broke, with absolutely nothing to eat, so the contractor finally gave us $20 and said we'd get a big check later when the winery paid him.

"We worked for seven weeks like that, and each payday the contractor said he couldn't pay us because the winery hadn't paid him yet. At the end of the seventh week, we went to the

contractor's house and it was empty—he owed us for seven weeks' pay, and we haven't seen him to this day."

"We were desperate," Chavez continued. "We ran into another labor contractor in Fresno. 'There is lots of money in cotton near Mendotta,' he told us. It was late November by now and it was cold and raining almost every day. Because of the rain there was almost no work at all.

"That winter of 1938, I had to walk to school barefoot through the mud, we were so poor. There was a school and an annex. The Mexican-American kids went to the annex—it was just another name for a segregated school. After school we fished in the canal and cut wild mustard greens—otherwise we would have starved. Everyone left the camp we were living in, but we had no money for transportation. When everyone else left, they shut off the lights, so we sat around in the dark."

Chavez also recalled, "We finally got a few dollars from some relatives in Arizona and bought enough gas for our old Studebaker to get us to Los Angeles. Our car broke down in L.A., and my mother sold crocheting on the street to raise money for enough gas to get us to Brawley. We lived three days in our car in Brawley before we could find a house that we could afford to rent.

"The next winter, we were stranded in Oxnard and had to spend the winter in a tent. We were the only people there living in a tent and everyone ridiculed us. We went to bed at dusk because there was no light. My mother and father got up at 5:30 in the morning to go pick peas. It cost 70 cents to go to the fields and back, and some days they did not even make enough for their transportation."

Chavez told how he and his brother Richard bought some clothes when they were young. "Every day we would look for cigarette packages, and we would make a huge ball of tinfoil that weighed 18 pounds. Then we sold it to a Mexican junk dealer for enough money to buy a pair of tennis shoes and two sweatshirts.

"We finally learned the ropes. We learned where the crops were and when they needed workers, and we learned little tricks like living under bridges and things like that. Once we'd learned the ropes, we began helping other green families like we had been, so they wouldn't have it as rough as we did."

In the seventh grade, after attending between 30 and 40 schools, Cesar ended his formal education so he could devote more time to helping his family. While "picking everything under the sun except pockets," he became an avid reader, borrowing whatever he could from the local public libraries.

He soon developed an admiration and devotion for St. Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of scholars.

Also enjoying books on Mexican-American history and autobiographies, the young Chavez would become fascinated by the biblical accounts of St. Paul the Apostle.

"He must have been a terrific organizer," Chavez observed, "as he would go and talk with people right in their homes, sit there with them and be one of them."

As a child Chavez recognized the good that could be accomplished by farmworkers organized and working for better wages and working conditions.

Living in San Jose, California in 1939, he remembers his father and uncle becoming members of a union that the old Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had begun forming in the dried fruit industry.

"Sometimes the men would meet at our house, and I remember seeing their picket signs and hearing them talk. They had a strike, and my father and my uncle picketed at night. It made a deep impression on me. But of course, they lost the strike and that was the end of the union. But from that time on, my father joined every new agricultural union that came along—often he was the first one to join—and when I was 19 I joined the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU). But it didn't have any more success than any of the other farmworker unions.

"When I was 19, I was picking cotton in Corcoran. A car with a loudspeaker came around. The speakers were saying, 'Stop working! You're not making a living! Come downtown to a rally instead!' My brother and I left, with many others. Seven thousand cotton pickers gathered in a little park in the center of Corcoran. There was a platform, and a union leader got up and started talking to all the workers about 'the cause.' I would have died right then if someone had told me how and why to die for our cause. But no one did.

"There was a crisis, and a mob, but there was no organization, and nothing came of it all. A week later, everyone was back to planting cotton in the same fields at the same low wages. It was dramatic. People came together. Then it was over. That won't organize farmworkers."

It was the famed community organizer Saul Alinsky, a man who would later play a key role in Chavez's life, who once remarked that "a movement without organization amounts to nothing more than a bowel movement."

Chavez first came to Delano in 1937, picking table grapes, and it was there that he met Helen Fabela, who, although born in Brawley, had been raised in Delano, working in the local vineyards since she was 14. Her father had served as a colonel with Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution.

Married in 1948, the Chavez's had eight children: Fernando, Sylvia, Linda, Eloise, Anna, Paul, Elizabeth, and Anthony. The four oldest children all worked in the fields.

It was while living in San Jose in 1950 and working in the nearby apricot and peach orchards that Chavez first met a priest from the Our Lady of Guadalupe mission church, who was visiting the homes of the poor people in the parish. He immediately struck up a lasting friendship with the priest, Rev. Donald McDonnell.

"He sat with us in the evening past midnight, telling us about the Church's stand on social justice and farm labor, reading often from the encyclicals of Leo XIII, in which the pontiff upheld labor unions. I would do anything to get Father to tell me about labor history. I began going to the bracero camps with him to help with the Mass, to the city jail with him to talk with the prisoners, anything to be with him so that he could tell me more about the farm labor movement," Cesar recalled.

II

No one chapter in the recent history of California agriculture crystallizes more vividly the hostility of the state's large growers and the pressures at their disposal to shape the economic, social, and spiritual life of the rural communities in which they reside, than the story of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco's Spanish Speaking Missionary Apostolate in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The Missionary Apostolate, known throughout California as the Spanish Mission Band, was officially charged with the spiritual care of braceros and domestic farmworkers.

Because of the introduction of thousands of Mexican contract workers—"braceros "—into the country's domestic farm labor market, the Spanish Mission Band's main emphasis came to be meeting the needs of these often-exploited and underpaid farmworkers.

Public Law 78—the bracero program—after passage in 1942, had been repeatedly extended by the U.S. Congress, until on December 31, 1964, the measure, originally passed as an emergency World War II wartime domestic labor shortage measure, was killed. Less than nine months later, the journey from Delano, California to the successes of the United Farm Workers (UFW) began.

Throughout the majority of those 32 years in the life of the program, for the thousands of farmworkers who fought to organize a union with the power to bargain collectively with their employers and end their involuntary servitude at the hands of corporate agribusiness, it was this Spanish Mission Band that will forever be remembered as one of their most ardent champions.

Their activist journey began during the years of World War II at St. Patrick's Seminary in Northern California. There, a small handful of Catholic seminarians learned from a course

on social justice taught by Father Joseph Munier about the great economic and labor papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (Pope Leo XIII) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pope Pius XI).

As labor union advocates Henry Anderson and Joan London, the elder daughter of the famed writer Jack London, wrote in their 1970 book, *So Shall Ye Reap*, a chronicle of Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers' movement:

"For most of the seminarians, it was a revelation to learn that 'workingmen's associations' were held by the most authoritative teachings of the Church to be consonant with Natural law; hence, workers had not only a right to join unions but a moral duty.

"It was also a revelation to learn that, on occasion, priests—such as Father Peter Yorke of nearby San Francisco around the turn of the century—had actively engaged in union organizing with the full knowledge and consent of their bishops."

Beginning with Leo XIII, all the modern popes have stressed the need for economic and social reform where human beings suffer from inequality and slavery. Writing in 1891 in *Rerum Novarum,* Leo XIII prophetically warned:

"When work-people have recourse to a strike, it is frequently because the hours are too long, or the work too hard, or because they consider their wages insufficient. The grave inconvenience of this not uncommon occurrence should be obviated by public remedial measures; for such paralysis of labor not only affects the masters and their work-people, but is extremely injurious to trade, and the general interests of the public; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder are generally not far off, and thus it frequently happens that the public peace is threatened.

"The laws should be beforehand, and prevent these troubles from arising; they should lend their influence and authority to the removal in good time of the causes which lead to conflicts between masters and those who they employ."

Later, in *Mater et Magistra,* Pope John XXIII reminded Christians that:

"If the organization and structure of economic life be such that the human dignity of workers is compromised, or their sense of responsibility is weakened, or their freedom of action is removed, then we judge such an economic order to be unjust, even though it produces a vast amount of Goods whose distribution conforms to the norms of justice and equality."

During their days at St. Patrick's, five of these seminarians conducted "a seminar within a seminary." It was Fathers Donald McDonnell, Thomas McCullough, John Garcia, Ronald Burke, and John Ralph Duggan who not only taught themselves Spanish, but late at night, after finishing their seminary studies, would discuss contemporary developments within the

Church—foremost the fledgling Catholic Worker movement in New York City, inspired by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day.

There was no talk of a "new breed," Anderson and London note, nor of "new priests," for they considered themselves totally loyal to the traditional Church and its teachings. "Their studies convinced them that that loyalty required, among other things, a devotion to social justice," they wrote.

As Duggan later reflected to Joan Johnson, a reporter for *The Monitor*, the official paper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, there was a dire need within the Church for a realistic approach to "the socio-economic problems of people as they are."

He believed that the Church could be "much stronger in the work of training leaders—persons who would have a strong Christian viewpoint on social problems and because of that viewpoint feel compelled to become involved in solving these problems."

"Leaders do appear on the scene," he added, "thanks be to God, but often this is more a credit to them as individuals than to training programs. And while Catholics have emerged as leaders in the business and medical fields, for example, few have been involved in the socio-political scene, particularly in relationship to the poor."

It was to those poor—"the little people—the last to be hired and the first to be fired" as Duggan described them—that the Spanish Mission Band dedicated their lives as priests, pastors, activists, and friends.

After ordination in 1947, the priests were assigned different parishes in the San Francisco Archdiocese. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Decato, California was given that name when Duggan became administrator in August, 1950. The parish ledger was signed over to him on January 29, 1951. He resided at the parish house in Niles for a few weeks and then moved to establish residence at the rear of the church.

It was also at this time that Duggan had a significant encounter with a middle-aged respected California poet by the name of William Everson, who later described the occasion of their meeting.

"In the spring of 1950 my Guggenheim Fellowship ran out, and I found myself on Skid Row. I had two choices open to me: I could enter a religious order or go back to my job [janitoring at UC Berkeley]. I approached the Benedictines and then the Franciscans, but nothing jelled with either of them.

"From their point of view, I was too new a Catholic—before undertaking religious life, the Church prefers a two-year interim after Baptism. From my point of view, the men I spoke with gave me no satisfaction as to the role of the poet in their version of the monastic life.

Then I met a priest named Ralph Duggan who sent me down to a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality newly opened in West Oakland. I remained there fourteen months."

It was from there that Everson became a Dominican oblate (Brother Antoninus) and in the ensuing years would go on to establish himself as America's finest religious poet of the 20th century.

On June 3, 1950, though, responding to increasing numbers and needs of the area's Spanish-speaking minority, Fathers McDonnell, McCullough, Garcia, and Duggan were withdrawn from their parish assignments and were formulated into the Spanish Mission Band.

In the ensuing years, they would offer mission services to the large and scattered settlements of Spanish-speaking groups who lived "outside the functional scope of the established parishes," which included the isolated, often inhumane, camps provided to the Mexican farmworkers by their employers.

As Father McDonnell expressed it:

"We bring them in as peons, encourage men to remain away from their families for months at a time, expose them to moral dangers they've never known in many cases, make it hard for them to get to Mass, and then toss them back whenever it pleases us. This is how to sell 'the American way' to the rest of the world ?"

Recognizing that not only must the bracero program be terminated if workers were to achieve fair wages and working conditions, the activities of the Mission Band, specifically those of McDonnell and McCullough, who were quickly labeled "troublemakers" since they were outspokenly advocating immediate farm unionization, raised the ire of corporate agribusiness.

The ensuing controversies surrounding the Mission Band's organizing efforts eventually led to its downfall in 1961 through a combination of California chancery office political machinations and their hierarchies surrendering to implied economic sanctions against the Church by some of its more wealthy Catholic grower members.

McCullough, McDonnell, and Norman Smith, an organizer for AWOC, for example, appeared before a student forum at the Jesuit University of San Francisco to argue the case for farm labor organization. After the forum, two students wrote angry letters to the school paper protesting the participation of priests in a pro-farm labor bloc.

The California Farm Bureau, already angry over the priests' activities, used the protest letters in press releases all over California and the nation, making it appear that there was some sort of great opposition to organizing activities within the Catholic Church, when in fact the opposition was only two Catholic university students.

On January 5, 1961, McDonald and McCullough spoke to a farmworker rally in El Centro, California, principal city in the rich Imperial Valley and adjacent to the Mexican border.

Formulating plans to stage a one-day work stoppage the following day, prior to a possible general strike in the surrounding lettuce fields, the workers heard the two priests explain to them their rights, including the "moral right to organize" as outlined by Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI in their modern papal encyclicals.

At the conclusion of the evening meeting, the priests led the workers in singing "Glory, glory, hallelujah, for the union makes us strong." The following morning, the two priests flew back to Northern California in their small private plane. The priests' appearance at the meeting, however, initiated a whole series of events, which, coupled with grower resentment and hierarchical politics, led to the downfall of the Spanish Mission Band.

Bishop Charles Buddy of San Diego denounced McDonald's and McCullough's presence, calling it "unauthorized trespassing." Both priests, however, had, previous to their appearance in El Centro, called upon Bishop Buddy in the San Diego Chancery Office. After chatting with them, the bishop gave his permission for them to attend the El Centro meeting. Buddy then suggested that the priests join his secretary for lunch and afterwards conferred his blessing on them as they left his office.

Father McCullough later explained that Bishop Buddy's criticism of their action might have stemmed from false reports about the meeting. "We did not appear as the Bishop's official representatives, but we did have his permission to attend the meeting."

After the priests' January 5 appearance in El Centro, an "observer" who had been sent to the meeting by local growers reported to his priest friend, Rev. Joseph Di Cristina, that "two men disguised as Catholic priests claiming to have the permission of Bishop Buddy" had spoken to the workers. Di Cristina, a wealthy and influential priest from El Centro, sometimes called the "dean of the Valley priests," publicly condemned McCullough and McDonald for "entering the diocese without permission."

In the *Imperial Valley News-Press* on January 8, Di Cristina was quoted as saying, "When I heard of the demonstration and the participation by these priests, I contacted the Bishop and asked whether he had authorized it. His answer was that he was quite upset by their action, that I should reprimand them severely and ask them to leave the diocese."

"The hymn I led," McDonnell would later explain, "was the only one which the mixed group of field workers knew how to sing together. Perhaps it is an insight into the farm labor union today that such a storm of protest is raised at the singing of the emancipation hymn of the 'Union of the United States' 100 years ago. Could it be that the economic and social problems which provoked the Civil War have not yet been resolved ?"

"They didn't belong in this diocese," Bishop Buddy later charged, "and their trespassing started a lot of trouble. These things are regulated by Canon Law. Our diocesan policy in the farm labor and bracero disputes is hands-off except in spiritual matters."

In a January 9 press release, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC) Region of California office replied:

"Bishop Buddy is certainly right in rejecting the allegation of the Imperial Valley press that Fathers McCullough and McDonnell were his official delegates sent to represent him, as though Bishop Buddy had been personally invited to attend a local meeting or as though this were a purely local problem."

The statement went on to point out that the whole U.S. industrial agricultural system was fundamentally in question and that the Church had already established official agencies to help the respective parties work together and implement the social teachings of the Church.

"THE CHURCH IS NOT DIVIDED. The Church officially teaches that there should be organized in each industry both employer associations and workers unions so that both groups may work together for the common good. The National AFL-CIO is recognized as a legitimate trade union movement. The United Packinghouse Workers and AWOC has been assigned the duty of organizing the hired farmworkers of the United States, beginning in California."

Rev. Victor Salandini, the pastor of an El Centro Spanish-speaking parish and the person who first suggested to the workers that they invite McCullough and McDonnell to speak to them, later recalled his position in the San Diego diocese as he watched AWOC attempt to organize the valley's farmworkers.

"Prudence suggested that I should remain neutral in the bitter struggle shaping up between the growers and the union. Many of the wealthy growers in the valley are Catholic, and they pride themselves on their generosity to the Church. Justice, on the other hand, dictated that I must take a stand. This I did. In the process, I found out that the social doctrines of the church are no closer to acceptance today in the Imperial Valley than they were in 1891, the year Leo XIII promulgated his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*

"When I preached sermons on the dignity of labor, the obligation of the employer to pay his workers a living wage, and the inherent right of workers to band together to obtain by collective means what they could not possibly obtain by themselves, I soon found out that the big growers and their many allies considered this sort of talk subversive. In fact, I was told to my face that it was 'socialistic.'"

On January 16, a strike that was destined to last only three months before ending in failure began in the Imperial Valley. Salandini was transferred to another parish in the diocese.

Later, in 1965, he received his M.A. in economics from St. Louis University and later became engaged in doctrinal studies at Catholic University while serving as a National Farm Workers Association representative in Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile in San Francisco, McCullough and McDonnell were denounced by Msgr. Leo Maher (later to become the Bishop of the Santa Rosa, California diocese) in a statement that appeared in *The Monitor*.

"Their views in support of unionization of farmworkers stated in El Centro and on several occasions locally are their own and may not be taken as the official stand of the Church. The Archdiocese of San Francisco on whose Spanish Speaking Mission Band Fathers McCullough and McDonnell serve has neither favored nor opposed farm labor unionization."

Maher's displeasure with the work of the Mission Band had earlier been in evidence when he was instrumental in transferring Father John Duggan, the administrator of Our Lady of the Rosary parish in Decato, California.

Instead of sending weekly receipts from the second general Sunday mass collection to the chancery office, Duggan had been using the money for pastoral work in the parish of Mexican-American and Portuguese farmworkers. Maher, despite petitions from thousands of Duggan's parishioners and friends asking that he be allowed to stay on in Decato, arranged to have the priest sent to a San Francisco hospital, and then to a city parish.

Upon leaving Decato, Duggan was replaced by Father Ronald Burke, who had worked with the other Mission Band priests before ordination and became a member of the Band when Duggan retired from it in 1957. In 1963, while serving as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in Gilroy, a farming community of 15,000, he and a Presbyterian minister help found an Interfaith Migrant committee, which became active in behalf of the workers.

The committee, with about 75 active members, conducted a summer school for Spanish-speaking children of farmworkers, provided health clinics, showed films in Spanish on health and welfare issues, and cooperated with the Catholic Migrant mission of which Burke was also the director.

Burke and the committee's role in actively opposing the importation of braceros soon drew the vocal opposition of grower parishioners, with collections at the church dropping off 20 percent in a matter of a few weeks in November and December, 1964. In their "boycott," they also called for Burke's resignation. His term, however, as co-chairman of the committee expired on December 31, and his pastor, Rev. John T. Dwyer, directed him not to continue in another term as co-chairman.

A subsequent appeal to San Francisco's Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken by the Interfaith committee to appoint another priest to replace Burke was rejected. The prelate told the

committee in a letter that their work was in the "temporal order" and that a layman could best fulfill the post.

Pastor Dwyer sided with the growers, arguing that "most of the growers who object to the work Father Burke is doing are small farm owners. The fact that this pressure has come to light will probably do good. It will call the attention of the people to the plight of the small family farmer in addition to the poor conditions of the farm laborer."

Although John Scherrer of Pieters-Wheeler, a national seed company, would deny in a lengthy letter to the editor of the *National Catholic Reporter* an article I had written in the weekly naming him as an "initiator of the pressure group against Father Burke," he did reveal that "it is my duty and wish as a Catholic to continue to support my *parish*, which practice I have followed consistently by contributing to the Sisters of the Presentation, St. Mary's convent, to assist them in the education of the children."

Father Burke, later commented:

"Mr. Scherrer says he is interested in helping the family farmer. The Church is committed to family farming (read *Mater et Magistra*, Part 2 on agriculture). But American agribusiness is not. Just the opposite. And Mr. Scherrer is not a family farmer. He makes his money not in farming, but in selling seed to farmers at retail prices.

"Corporate agriculture, the vertically integrated operations in particular, have for years been shedding crocodile tears about the predicament of the family farmer, all the while doing everything possible to drive him out of business. At our state colleges the current line is that family farming is a thing of the past, that corporation farming is the only efficient way to farm. But it is efficient in fact only with the kind of government labor subsidy the bracero program provides—a cheap and docile and unlimited labor pool guaranteed not to cause trouble."

In his letter to *NCR* challenging Scherrer, Burke notes, "It is interesting to note that in Salinas till this week when the braceros were brought in again, the only strawberry grower who couldn't get more than enough domestic strawberry pickers was Salinas Strawberries Incorporated, and they couldn't mainly because it didn't fit their pattern of doing business. The basic element in the bracero program that makes it so attractive to the laissez-faire capitalist is its impersonality—and this is the element in the program that it has in common with pre-Civil War slavery—it does away with any need for concern about free human beings who may have something to say about their treatment."

Concluding, Burke observes, "This is why the Church has consistently condemned the bracero program. And the Church is quite warranted in speaking to this point, especially in an agricultural community, and in the interests of family farming, and even from the pulpit. Mr. Scherrer is the kind of man who could do much for the family farmer. He has the talent. Vatican II says he has the Christian mandate and the grace."

Later, Burke became director of the Latin American Missionary Program (LAMP), which was founded by the Band, and would go to Guatemala as a missionary, where he carried on his vision with enthusiasm before his life was threatened by the rightist government of that country. He later returned, working in a San Bruno, California parish.

Duggan moved to Tracy in the Stockton diocese in 1957. He described it as "an agricultural area with many wealthy farmers, many of whom were Catholics. In very short order, they knew where I stood as I weekly explained the demands of justice for farmworkers. They, of course, complained to the pastor, but by this time, my teeth were showing and the poor little pastor was not going to face me on that issue of justice for farmworkers.

"By the time I arrived in Tracy, I knew how to work with people and I accomplished much in a short time. There were many Mexicans on the south side and a good number of blacks. The Mexicans were ready for action, and after we discussed their needs we set to work to address them. Within a year we built a Guadalupe Center on property donated by the Honorific Society, a group intended to represent the needs of Mexicans in the United States. A good credit union followed quickly, and this was administered by some radical Anglo members of the parish."

It was at the nearby Cristo Rey Center in Tracy on a sunny fall Sunday afternoon in 1961, that this journalist was first exposed to the conditions of the men, women, and children who harvest our crops. My then-wife and I had joined another couple, Bill and Joan Abrams, in bringing some discarded books from the Oakland Catholic High School, where Bill and I were teaching, to the Cristo Rey Center, established as a social and meeting hall for workers who had spent their long days working in the nearby fields and were faced with returning to their cramped and uncomfortable housing center.

It was during that afternoon that I first met Duggan and a local couple, Maria and Andy Arellano. Husband Andy had become a labor organizer in the northern San Joaquin Valley, were the couple were instrumental in purchasing and renovating in the early 1960s, along with farmworkers in Duggan's church, the Cristo Rey Center.

We also meant Bea Brickey and Jan Sherry, who organized and effectively ran the Guadalupe Center's credit union for several years. We were also quite impressed by an expressive and articulate woman—Lisa Bowman—who had moved to California from New York state to work alongside the men and women in the California's fields and orchards and had become so concerned over what she saw and experienced that she became one of the more vocal members of the local AWOC. Living with her was her beautiful daughter Rachael

From these people and others I met that day, I got my first education in the plight of farm labor in California and America and at the same time made a vow to myself that their cause

was going to be my cause as a reporter and writer. Within a year, I was freelancing as a journalist, writing stories about agricultural laborers and their problems, one of my most important projects being the editing of a special issue on farm labor of the Franciscan Fathers' *Way: Catholic Viewpoints* monthly in early 1965 at the invitation of its managing editor Clayton C. Barbeau.

In writing an essay for that issue, Maria Arellano observed:

"I hope once the ears of our country hear the cries of our poor people, something will be done. I do feel for everyone, yes, the small farmer too. He is worse off than we are because if things don't get better he will lose his farm to the big growers. The association will get bigger. But we? We don't have nothing, so we don't lose nothing. There are many things about these people that the public doesn't know. But in these last couple of years, things have been moving , a lot of talk has been done, and I think we are still hoping."

Reflecting on his years in Tracy, Duggan observes, "All in all, we made much progress in a short time. Perhaps we were too strong, for after the Brickey's moved to the north side of Tracy where we built a second Guadalupe Center, the enemies of the poor caught up with us and I was moved to Stockton. I could do little to fight the move, so I went in peace."

Then, while serving as a priest in the Stockton diocese in 1962, Duggan became assistant executive secretary of the U.S. Bishop's Committee for Migrant Workers and the following year traveled extensively throughout the Southwest and West encouraging persons, particularly those of Spanish-speaking background, to back organizations representing them in opposing the extension of Public Law 78.

Friends of McDonnell feared the same fate as that of Duggan would befall him after the El Centro affair. They beseeched Msgr. Ivan Ilich, then director of the Center for Intercultural Formation, to request McDonnell for work in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The San Francisco Chancery Office, however, refused Ilich's request. A second request was made personally by Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, and McDonnell was released to go to Mexico and later to work in a mission church in São Paulo, Brazil.

McCullough was transferred from St. Linus Mission Church in Stockton to St. Ambrose Church in Berkeley and then became pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Brentwood, California. The other priests in the Mission Band were also transferred to other posts in the archdiocese.

It was McDonald's and McCullough's involvement in the cause of the Imperial Valley lettuce pickers, however, that signaled the beginning of the end for the Spanish Mission Band in California.

The influence of these courageous priests, however, would bear rich rewards in the years to come after their demise as a band, for it was in the early 1950s that Father McDonnell would encounter a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, which was a center of religious as well as social activities in the San Jose, California area, by the name of Cesar Chavez, who was living in the barrio of *Sal si Puedes*, which was close to the Guadalupe Center that McDonnell had founded.

Along with a Community Service Organization (CSO) organizer by the name of Fred Ross and a woman McCullough introduced to Ross in Stockton by the name of Dolores Huerta, the seeds would be planted for the formation of National Farm Workers Association, which would evolve into what is now the United Farm Workers (UFW) union.

Ross was an organizer for CSO, a group of predominantly Spanish-speaking people in California who were attempting to help themselves through community organization. It was founded in Chicago by Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation.

On a salary of $35 per week, Chavez became an organizer for CSO throughout California. Later, in 1959, he became its general director.

When Chavez first met Ross, the initial question he asked was, "How is CSO going to help the farmworkers?" Ross explained that if the organization could get strong enough, it would attempt to build a union. Thus Chavez worked with Ross in the San Jose area for six months before accepting his first assignment. Some 14 years later, Ross would join with the NFWA as its organizer trainer and a key strategist.

CSO grew overnight, attracting Mexican-Americans from throughout the state. Many, however, were not farmworkers but semi-professional and professional citizens who were more concerned with legislative lobbying than direct action. Inevitably, the conflict with the organization came between the people in the cities and the farmworkers. Chavez later reflected on the two major problems that internal conflict produced.

"CSO seemed to always want to meet in the best motel in town, very expensive, and to cut itself off from all the farmworkers who couldn't afford to be there," he said. "The reason given was, we have to build prestige. The politicians have to know who we are; we can't take them to a dump. We have to take them to the best place in town and then we can relate to them about farmworkers. I was naïve about farmworkers. I was naïve enough in the beginning to buy that. Se we ended up just with farmworkers who had gone to school or who weren't farmworkers any more. They thought that going to school gave them the right to be leaders—which incidentally isn't the case; I'll debate that with anyone."

Chavez began to stay away from established groups and so-called "leaders" and learned to guard against philosophizing. "I started a revolt within the CSO. I refused to sit at the head table at meetings, refused to wear a suit and tie, and finally I even refused to shave and cut my hair. It used to embarrass some of the professionals.

"In some ways we were successful, but in one of the most important aspects we were a complete failure, and this was in getting the group to generate its own finances so it became permanent. I remember many times stopping organizing so we could go organize another part of the community to raise money. In most cases when you get money, though this varies in degree, you have some strings attached. We got a lot of money for CSO and we made it very clear to the donors that there could be no strings attached.

"But there's always one string attached—that is when people give money, they expect miracles. Then your staff or executive board starts compromising between a well-thought-out long-range program and something that will show immediate progress."

Many people within the CSO felt that the farmworkers were outside the organization's jurisdiction and that it was a "labor problem." Chavez and others felt differently and decided to force the issue and, if they lost, to begin forming a movement that would serve only the farmworkers. CSO rejected their bid.

"Anyone who thinks they can organize a community and then join with the power structure is in for an awful surprise and a disappointment, because things don't happen that way," Chavez argued. "When you speak of community organization you are also speaking, really, of power. If you haven't the power to do things, you're not going to do anything. Some organizers I know say, 'All I need is a good public relations man.'

"This is a lot of nonsense. The only PR the opposition knows is power, and having the power to strike him where it hurts him, political and economic. You're building power based not on the prestige of your group, but on how many actual bodies you have with you and how many bodies can be united and directed. In many cases community organizations have been started just because there was money available to have them started."

Taking to heart the words of the famous labor martyr Joe Hill, "Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize," Chavez & Co. left the CSO and began putting together the framework of a union that would become the NFWA.

Before he left the CSO, however, Chavez and his friends managed in several instances to help farmworkers in various parts of the state.

One such case occurred in Oxnard. Growers in the area were using braceros illegally, denying work to domestic workers who were available. The Farm Placement Service and a growers' association were operating a "referral system." Any worker who applied to the Farm Placement Service was in turn referred to the growers' association, which would only hire workers in the local carrot fields, where wages were low. Although Public Law 78 forbade braceros to be given priority over domestic workers, the Mexican nationals were used in picking the other crops.

Each morning for several months, Chavez and a small group of workers would apply at the Farm Placement Service, be referred to the growers' association, and then be refused work. Chavez spent sometimes 19 hours a day filing 1100 separate complaints to the director of the California Farm Placement Service.

Oftentimes he would take a group of workers to a field where braceros had been employed, place a call to a Labor Department inspector seeking his assistance in getting the braceros removed, and forcing the grower to hire available domestic labor. With the return of the Labor Department inspector to Los Angeles, the grower would fire the domestic workforce and bring the braceros back.

One day, after repeating this charade many times, Chavez called John Carr, head of the State Department of Employment, Edward F. Hayes, head of the California Placement Service, and a sizable contingent of newspaper reporters and television newscasters. Marching a hundred workers into the fields, Chavez demonstrated to the assembled observers that the braceros were being used illegally. He also built a small fire and workers threw their referral cards into the flames.

The well-publicized event brought a complete investigation of the California Farm Placement Service. One assistant chief, charged with taking bribes from growers, was fired. Hayes, who later became manager of the Imperial Valley Farmers Association, resigned along with two assistants. Many other of the Services' employees were censured and reprimanded.

In April, 1962, Chavez and his family moved from Los Angeles to Delano, where, with a mere $1200 in savings and his wife's family and his brother Richard close by, he lived assured of at least a daily meal.

"I had some ideas on what should be done. No great plans; just that it would take an awful lot of work and also that it was a gamble. If I can't organize them to a point where they can carry on their own group, then I'm finished. If I can't do it, I'd move on and do something else. I went around for about 11 months, and I went to about 87 communities and labor camps and in each place I'd find a few people who were committed to doing something; something had happened in their lives and they were ready for it. So we went around to the towns, played the percentages, and came off with a group.

"I wanted desperately to get some color into the movement, to give people something they could identify with, like a flag. I was reading some books about how various leaders discovered what colors contrasted and stood out best. The Egyptians had found a red flag with a white circle and a black emblem in the center crashed into your eyes like nothing else. I wanted to use the Aztec eagle in the center, as on the Mexican flag. So I told my cousin Manuel, 'Draw an Aztec eagle.' Manuel had a little trouble with it, so we modified the eagle to make it easier for people to draw."

The National Farm Workers Association had its first convention in September, 1962, in Fresno, California. More than 280 people from 65 farming communities attended. Chavez recalled, "We had our huge red flag on the wall, with paper tacked over it. When the time came, Manuel pulled a cord, ripping the paper off the flag, and all of a sudden it hit the people. Some of them wondered if it was a Communist flag, and I said it probably looked more like a neo-Nazi emblem than anything else. But they wanted an explanation, so Manuel got up and said, 'When the damn eagle flies, that's when the farmworkers' problems are going to be solved.'"

In the months following their initial meeting, more than 1100 people signed up as NFWA members, yet at the end of the first month only 211 had paid their $3.50 monthly dues.

"At the end of three months we had 10 people paying. Talk about being scared! But we went back and kept at it. By this time, Dolores Huerta was helping me in the northern part of the Valley, and I was getting help from Gilbert Padilla, both of who later would become vice presidents of the Association. Gradually, the membership increased. At the end of six months, we were up to about 200 members. Instead of going all over the Valley as I did at first, I started staying in one place long enough for them to get in touch with me if they wanted to. We put a lot of emphasis on the people getting members."

Through a series of house meetings where sometimes only two or three people would come, sometimes not even the family that called the house meeting, the NFWA began to grow. "I knew sometimes I was taking their last penny, but it gave the NFWA an awful lot of character. They paid just on faith that in the future something would happen," Cesar said.

Prior to the Delano strike vote in September, 1965, the NFWA had over 2000 family memberships stretching from California through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and into Mexico.

Chavez always sought to structure the NFWA so that members—the farmworkers themselves—did things by themselves in order to help themselves. Too many people, Chavez pointed out, have the idea that farmworkers are only capable of being helped by others, and therefore people want to give things to them.

In the past, the workers had come to expect help from the outside and they would change their idea of themselves and allow themselves to believe they were too small to do anything for themselves. Chavez stressed, "Anyone who comes in with the idea that farmworkers are free of sin and that the growers are all bastards either has never dealt with the situation or is an idealist of the first order. Things don't work that way."

Hailing the founding of the NFWA, Luis Valdez, the founder and producer of *El Teatro Campesino* (The Farmworkers Theater) exclaimed, "You could see a new spirit in the people. Where they were shy and retiring and frightened about American society, now they

were expressive, courageous, and determined. The farmworker who has never said anything was now speaking. Before Delano, it was impossible to define the Mexican-American position in America."

Born and raised in Delano, Valdez recalls that "We called ourselves *la raza*, the race, and we were trying to find our place in the United States."

The agricultural workers who belonged to the NFWA were mostly families, averaging seven children, who depended on seasonal farm work. They lived, with an income that varied between $1000 and $3000 per year, in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The greatest number of local groups were located in Kings, Kern, San Joaquin, Tulare, and Fresno counties.

Chavez disclaimed the idea that the NFWA was seeking to model itself after an industrial union. If such a model were used, the grower or farmer would become the organizer and enforce the closed shop system, checking off the union dues. The business agent or the farm labor contractor would become the dominant middleman.

It was early in our conversation that first day I met Chavez, as we were speeding north along Highway 99 to Delano, that he decried the farm labor contracting system employed by so many of the growers. "I would rather that there be no union at all than to recognize the rotten contractor system," he angrily declared.

"We wanted to get involved in politics," Chavez would later remember, "in voter registration, not just contract negotiations. We had to find some cross between being a movement and being a union. The membership must maintain control; the power must not be centered in a few. Maybe we should have had some system where the jobs were rotated. It is important to remain free to work on many issues. That takes time, and sometimes it seems as if they get lost on unimportant issues. We were still experimenting."

Among the many services that the NFWA provided its membership were representation in all labor contract bargaining proceedings, a credit union (with assets over $26,000 and separate from the strike fund), a newspaper, *El Malcriado,* ("The Voice of the Farmworker"), with over 10,000 circulation, a small burial insurance program, and a legal counsel.

A free medical clinic (with a full-time registered nurse who was assisted regularly by part-time volunteer and physicians from throughout California) was also maintained by the NFWA. Some medical and dental equipment and supplies were donated to the Association and were temporarily housed in a mobile unit that was rented until the money for a permanent facility was available. Workers would share in the costs of operating, staffing, and maintaining the clinic.

A cooperative was also established by the NFWA. The idea began in 1963, when a group of farmworkers discovered they could buy good-quality motor oil at 12 cents a can if they bought it together. In two years, the idea expanded to where services were available to the over 500-family membership of the Farmworker Co-op, which was designed to include a Co-op drugstore, auto parts store, service station, and discount store.

One of the most important tools of the California farmworker is the automobile. Often a good share of a worker's meager wages has to be spent on the buying or repairing of an automobile so they can remain mobile and reach the various areas of the state where and when work is available.

The NFWA's proposed self-service auto repair center was one of the most ambitious features of the Co-op. If a car was disabled, the owner could tow it into the garage with a Co-op tow car, fix it himself under the supervision of a qualified mechanic, using co-op tools, their fee for the service being nominal.

In the NFWA, a single membership covered the whole family, and, through payment of their $3.50 a month dues, the member was not only eligible for the above benefits, but they made a commitment to the organization. Because they pay that money each month, each member felt they were an important part of the organization and had a right to be served.

Chavez stressed that this particular type of commitment had certain advantages.

"It is very hard to limit assistance and service to members; many people come to your door because they know that you might be able to help them out with some problem. But helping everyone who came would take up all my time—and more. Then I would have none left to work with other members. People must come to see assistance to one another as the purpose of the organization, as its very reason for being."

Such an appeal was a letter the NFWA received from a Woodlake, California farmworker during the 1966 pruning season.

"Gentlemen:

For the first time, strikers, I direct these few lines to explain the condition which I find myself.

I am poor and only I work. My wife does not. We have four girls and we do not have enough to support the girls. I am presently employed at Exeter and I get $1 an hour and one and half cents a vine; not enough. It is very little. At the present we are all down with the flu. We have no food. What I make is barely enough for doctor bills and to make payments on a '54 Mercury.

Welfare helps us but obliges me to go to work even if I'm sick. I must go where they send me or else they will not help me.

I ask you to give me an orientation or advice as to what I should do to remedy myself. Help me. I beg you do it for the love of Christ or for whatever pleases you. Give me detailed information as to what I should do. Please. My wife tells me that perhaps writing to you would get me in difficulty or trouble, but I trust in God and you to have mercy on us.

I hope to hear from you."

Despite the disdain for personal publicity, the full glare of the national spotlight did not pass over Cesar Chavez. Some called him the Mexican-Americans' Martin Luther King. Msgr. William J. Quinn, executive secretary of the U.S. Bishop's Committee for the Spanish Speaking, called Chavez "the most important Catholic in California."

His leadership was characterized by Quinn as being related to the needs and aspirations of the poor.

"The real war on poverty must entail the dignity of the people in the war it tries to serve. It is simple for us as clergy to enunciate the social doctrine of the Church, but if someone doesn't put shoes on it and make it walk around the fields, the papal social encyclicals may as well have not been written."

To those who knew him, Cesar Chavez was a deeply religious man. As Archbishop Giovanni Benelli, speaking for the Vatican, observed: "We are indeed grateful to Mr. Chavez for the lesson which he brings to our attention. It is a very important lesson: To know how to be conscious of the terrible responsibility that is incumbent on us who bear the name 'Christian.' His entire life is an illustration of this principle."

Even Chavez's critics had guarded words of praise.

Bruce Obbink, a spokesman for the Association of California Fruit Growers, remarked: "Everybody respects Cesar, he's an honest man and he's done many good things in this community, like his credit union, but he's wrong about the strike."

A former colleague of Chavez in the CSO, Delano Police Captain Al Espinosa, had a different view. "Who are his followers? Not the impoverished masses. The only followers he has are these revolutionaries."

Espinosa, a 39-year Mexican-American at the time, who also was "moonlighting" as a local farm labor contractor, added, "He's not a Gandhi in our books. He's not the fine little gentleman you make him out to be. In closed session, he's quite a man."

One of the most incisive portraits of the NFWA director was offered by Luis Valdez.

"Although he sometimes reminds one of Benito Juarez, Cesar is our first real Mexican-American leader. He is not a traditional bombastic Mexican revolutionary; nor is he a *gavacho*, a gringo, a white social worker type. Both types have tried to organize *la raza* in America and have failed.

"Here is Cesar, burning with a patient fire, poor like us, dark like us, talking quietly, moving people to talk about their problems, attacking the little problems first, and suggesting, always suggesting—never more than that—solutions that seemed unattainable. We didn't know it until we met him, but he is the leader we have been waiting for."

Until the Delano grape strike, Chavez earned $50 a week as the Association's director; however, with the onset of the strike he took his turn in sharing the essential daily living expenses which were meted out to the to the strikers on a weekly basis from the general strike fund.

Chavez's ability was also recognized at the time by the U.S. government. In 1962, he was offered a $21,000-per-year position as a regional director for the Peace Corps in Latin America. He, however, refused the position to stay with the NFWA.

No journalist in recent times better captured the ensuing interplay of labor, corporate agribusiness, and government power and how it related to the beginnings of what was to become the most significant farm labor movement of the 20th century than the *Los Angeles Times*' Ron Taylor in his book, *Chavez and The Farmworkers: A Study in the Acquisition & Use of Power*. In his book Taylor aptly described Chavez as:

"A teacher, a visionary who is at his best in the give-and-take of a meeting with farmworkers. He is gentle, frequently humorous, always persistent, sometimes ruthlessly sharp, seemingly arbitrary. There is never any doubt that he is the leader; yet the people in the meeting somehow convey the sense that they granted him the position, they project an air of expectation, and they impose upon him because he is their leader.

"Chavez is a listener; he hears the farmworkers not only in group meetings, but afterward, if any of them wish to speak to him privately, he is available; and it is from these contacts that the structures of the union have come. While Chavez learned the lessons of farm labor and migrancy as a child of migrants, he has tested his own feelings against the will of the farmworkers in countless meetings in every farming area of California.

"Out of all this he distilled his concept of a union. The hiring hall is the tool by which the [union] tends to wrest the power away from the growers. And from the very beginning Chavez has openly declared that this shift of power, if it is to be successful, must eliminate the labor contracting system that has been used to dominate and exploit farm wage earners since the growers first imported Chinese coolie labor in the 1870's."

Chavez himself reflected:

"All my life, I have been driven by one dream, one goal, one vision: To overthrow a farm labor system in this nation that treats farmworkers as if they were not important human beings. Farmworkers are not agricultural implements—they are not beasts of burden—to be used and discarded. That dream was born in my youth. It was nurtured in my early days of organizing. It has flourished."

The NFWA always expressed pride in the Association, for, while facing formidable financial, social, and political hardships in its early years, the NFWA—later to become the UFW—managed to stay alive and to stay the course in addition to sustaining the longest and most successful farm labor strike in the history of California agriculture.

"We're committed, you see," Chavez said. "When you lose your car, then lose your home, you don't become less committed, but more. None of us have anything to lose."

CHAPTER TWO
Beginning an American Agricultural Revolution

I

> "The growers' power in Washington, D.C. and in the state legislature in Sacramento has always been based on the fact that the workers have not been organized. Now we are organized in Delano and after we win there 'Huelga' is going to become a household word in California"
>
> —Cesar Chavez

Spread across 38,000 acres of vast southern San Joaquin Valley are the grape vineyards of Delano, California. Dating from September 8, 1965, that 400-square-mile lush area became for American farmworkers the focal point of their drive to gain those rights and legal protections that already protected the great majority of this nation's workforce.

Delano was to become the site of the opening battle of an American agricultural revolution. But the Delano walkout illustrated that organizing a farm labor strike presented many problems. One visitor described an often-overlooked aspect of the situation:

"Comparing a strike of agricultural workers to a factory strike is like striking an industrial plant that has a thousand entrance gates and covers 400 square miles. You don't know each morning where the plant will be, or where the gates are, or whether it will be open or closed, or what the wages will be on that day."

Farms in the area ranged in size from the comparatively small 400-acre Radovich vineyards to the DiGiorgio Fruit Corporation's 4600-acre Sierra Vista Ranch, and Schenley

Industries' 4500 acres. None of the 33 local growers employed fewer than 80 workers, and several hired upwards of 300 field workers a year.

Each year, more than 5000 workers were employed in the harvest, many of them with 20 to 30 years' experience in the handling of the delicate table grapes. Because these grapes go through nine different processes before being harvested, they require almost year-round care. As a result, many of the Delano grape pickers had established permanent residence in the southern Tulare and Kern county areas during the year, with only occasional trips elsewhere in the state to pick other fruits and vegetables.

In a state that at the time of the strike produced 98.7 percent of all table grapes grown for the nation's consumer market, the three counties adjacent to Delano's vineyards were responsible for the Emperor (99 percent), Ribier (95 percent), Almeria (99 percent), Calmeria (100 percent), and Italia (98 percent) varieties.

Despite the control of these table grape markets by Delano area growers, they were unable, according to the 1962-63 Federal-State Market News, to establish a stable price. In Boston they might have received $2.74 a lug for Emperor grapes, while in New York they got $3.49, in Detroit $2.95, and in St. Louis $1.97.

Henry Anderson, as editor of the then *California's Farm Labor* monthly magazine, analyzed the situation.

"Here are a group of supposedly hard-headed agribusinessmen, in a monopolistic position, who could easily command a fair, responsible, stable, and predictable price if they organized themselves to do so, but they are instead allowing themselves to be pushed around by commodity speculators and brokers, who are the only ones who profit from the auction market system. It is madness! And most other fresh fruits and vegetables are handled the same way."

Throughout the 1965 harvest season, growers reported a record crop, noting that the harvest was so productive that table grape prices were often $1 a lug below the 1964 price. Chavez disputed that claim.

"The main reason for the low price the growers were getting for their grapes was not due to a quantitative factor, but rather due to the quality of the grapes. Table grapes are delicate, and unless they are picked right and packed properly they will not bring premium prices. The men who picked 1965's harvest were not experienced workers and they damaged the crop," he said.

A major impetus for the Delano walkout came in May, 1965, in the Coachella Valley, 125 miles southeast of Los Angeles. As the grape harvest began, workers were receiving a minimum $1.20 an hour plus a 15-cents-a-box work incentive. Members of AWOC struck

for $1.40, U.S. Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz's criteria for California, and a 25-cent-a-box bonus.

One ranch struck was owned by Lionel Steinberg, vice president of the State Board of Agriculture. The growers soon agreed to the union's demands, and within a week the workers were back in the vineyards. Both the news and a number of the men and women who shared in this victory soon traveled north to Delano.

The AWOC strike began in the first weeks of the 1965 harvest season. On September 8, 500 to 800 Filipino AWOC members refused to report for work unless their grower employers recognized their right to organize and bargain collectively. At the same time, the workers asked for $1.40 an hour wage and the 25-cent-a-box work incentive, pay equivalent to that which was then being earned by other grape pickers throughout California.

Earlier demands by AWOC in the form of registered letters asking for an August 25 meeting to discuss their grievances had been ignored by the growers. Some of their requests were returned unopened to the union's local headquarters in Delano.

AWOC was born in 1959. From his Stockton, California headquarters, the union's first director, Norman Smith, traveled throughout California organizing nearly 3500 farmworkers who were seeking better wages and working conditions through slowdowns and walkouts.

In late 1960, the United Packinghouse Workers initiated a lettuce cutters strike in the Imperial Valley, a rich farming belt that spread across the southeastern section of California adjacent to the Mexican border. Smith and his AWOC organizers were asked to assist in the strike and, in November, 1960, joined the fight.

Anderson, a former chairman of AWOC's Stockton Council, described the strike:

"The Imperial Valley was the most unlikely spot in the United States for a strike, since virtually all the farm work was being done by braceros and 'border crossers.' And any spot is an unlikely spot for a strike when no advance preparation has been made. The strike was broken. In the process, there was more scuffling; some AWOC representatives were arrested; the cases dragged on and on, legal expenses were enormous, and there was nothing to show for it.

"On June, 30, 1961, George Meany, national AFL-CIO president—tired of the jurisdictional wrangling involving AWOC, tired of paying AWOC's heavy legal expenses, tired of AWOC's failure to establish as much as a single self-supporting local—terminated all financial support of AWOC by the national AFL-CIO.

"He did not revoke AWOC's charter, but obviously he and everyone else in the hierarchy expected AWOC would soon fade from existence. It did not do so. The AWOC director had some funds in reserve, with which office rent and other fixed expenses were met. A number of AWOC staff members stayed on the job, living on their insurance. For the first time, support was solicited from central labor bodies, and local, regional, and international unions."

Volunteer organizations from a variety of social action groups were recruited to organize at the community level. Area councils were formed, electing their own spokespersons, and a bilingual newsletter began publication. Building structures of communication, trust, and mutual aid, as Anderson described it, encouraged the workers to abandon the old AWOC method of "strike now, organize later."

In November, 1961, a rumor spread throughout California that Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers union (UAW), was prepared to "organize the unorganized" with several million dollars from the AFL-CIO's executive's Industrial Union Department. Anderson prepared a booklet, "To Build A Union" (*Farm Labor*, vol. 5, nos. 4, 5, and 6).

The booklet called for an end to AWOC's reminiscing about organizing in the 1930s and for a plan for the future, suggesting that the AFL-CIO didn't necessarily have to wait for federal legislation before organizing farmworkers. It outlined how organizing was possible in terms of time, cost, and personnel, and pointed out that union jurisdictional problems in agriculture were not insurmountable.

Neither Reuther, his brother Victor, nor Nick Zonarich, A. Philip Randolph, nor any other labor leaders responded to or acknowledged "To Build A Union" after it was submitted, as the Reuther organizing money died a quiet death.

In December, 1961, more than 200 farmworkers from throughout California came to an AWOC-sponsored Farm Labor Organizing Conference in the small farming community of Strathmore, Tulare County. Among the many important policy decisions made by the workers were to take up a collection (amounting to $317) and send a four-member delegation to the biennial AFL-CIO convention in Miami Beach, Florida in an effort to get renewed AFL-CIO financial support for AWOC.

The convention listened to the workers and then in dramatic fashion demanded from their leadership a restitution of support for AWOC. Later, the national executive council approved the action, and in January, 1962, the union's professional organizers returned to take over AWOC's operations. Norman Smith, who had been criticized by some within AWOC for his lack of running an efficient office, was replaced by C. Al Green.

Anderson recalls:

"The professionals promptly abolished the use of volunteer organizers. They abolished the Area Councils. They abolished decision making by members. They abolished grassroots organizing. For all practical purposes, the resources of AWOC were turned over entirely to the re-election of Governor Edmund G. 'Pat' Brown and other Democratic candidates—who interestingly enough were mostly on the record as opposing state farm labor legislation and favoring the bracero program."

Many farmworkers grew resentful of AWOC as the growers effectively argued that the AFL-CIO was interested only in the workers' dues for political purposes. That resentment of big unions remained for years throughout California's agricultural communities. Ironically, however, at the same time AWOC was losing its "home rule" character, Chavez was taking his initial steps in organizing the NFWA.

In the first days following the Delano walkout, other workers who belonged to the 2000-member AWOC local also left their jobs. Some returned to the fields after a few days. Reaction, however, on the part of the growers was swift and immediate.

The three labor camps on the Caratan Ranch, which housed many of the workers employed there for the past 15 to 30 years, were closed. Personal belongings were thrown into the streets, armed guards evicted the workers, windows were nailed shut, and doors padlocked. In other camps, water and electricity were shut off so workers were forced to leave.

On September 16, 1965, the NFWA membership voted to join the strike, and three days later AWOC and the NFWA agreed to work together and established a joint strike committee.

Each morning before dawn, small bands of roving pickets began to appear at the edge of the Delano vineyards on the county roads criss-crossing the land, shouting to workers in the fields, "Huelga! Huelga!" Large, round, orange and black signs with the Aztec eagle were held aloft by the strikers beckoning to the workers who remained in the fields harvesting grapes to join them picketing the fields.

Often, the pickets would spot visually or through a pair of binoculars a fellow countryman, a neighbor, even a relative, and begin shouting to them personally.

"*Salganse*!" (Come out)
"*Ayudenos*!" (Help Us)
"You are taking our jobs!"
"We are in this fight together!"
"Huelga! Huelga!"
"*Viva La Causa*!"

Growers attempted to ignore the walkouts as news of the strike spread throughout the state. They heatedly denied that their workers were dissatisfied or were leaving the fields.

A group of four churchmen from the Northern and Southern California Council of Churches visited the strike-bound vineyards on September 27 and concluded their fact-finding trip by stating:

"A significant number of workers have left their jobs in a dispute over wages and working conditions and union representation and feelings on both sides are running high. It is apparent that face to face talks between worker and grower representatives would relieve the tensions that exist."

The growers, however, protested that their workers did not want to organize. Bruce Sanborn, vice president in charge of industrial relations for the DiGiorgio Corporation (see Chapter IX), would later recall, "I went to Delano when this trouble first started and asked my foremen if they had any people under them who were sympathetic to the union. The foremen said that the workers weren't interested."

Growers also insisted that the many variables connected with raising table grapes made it economically impossible for them to guarantee the $1.40-an-hour wage sought by the strikers. Meanwhile, workers imported from outside the Delano area were being recruited by the local ranches. It was also reported that these "strikebreakers" were receiving wages close to $2 an hour. A number of the local growers also began hiring their own "security guards"—described by the NFWA as "rent-a-fuzz"—for $43 a day.

Initially, the striking unions received little support from the outside.

Larry Itliong, AWOC's Delano organizer, recalled that for the first three weeks of the strike, his organization's sole support came from the state's various Filipino-American organizations.

Itliong, a native of Pangasinan Province on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, came to the United States in 1929. Before joining AWOC in 1960, he had worked throughout the San Joaquin Valley in addition to serving for three years as a dispatcher for Local 37, International Longshoreman's and Warehousemen's Union in Seattle, Washington. He had lived in Delano for the six years previous to the strike, and in April, 1966, would unsuccessfully run for a position on the local city council.

In Los Angeles, the Filipino counsel general, Alejandro F. Holigores, appealed to his countrymen on TV and radio to return to work. He noted that the growers had told him they could not afford to raise the workers' wages, and that the workers should trust their employers that after a return to work, an equitable solution to their grievances could be worked out.

Union members immediately began to collect petitions demanding that the Philippine government recall Holigores. They accused the counsel general of being "a tool of the growers," as pickets appeared in front of his L.A. residence.

Shortly after the AWOC attack, the *Bataan News*, a West Coast Filipino-American newspaper, editorially defended Holigores, pointing out that if the union succeeded in recalling the counsel general, they world "seek to dominate the economic, social, and political life of Filipinos in America. Like any other power-hungry men, they proceeded to destroy the dignity and honor of the most respected officials of the Filipino government, just because he happens to stand in their way. Branding Counsel General Holigores as 'a tool of the growers' is to all fair-minded Filipinos obnoxious and disgraceful."

II

Reflecting on those first few weeks of the strike, Cesar Chavez described NFWA's situation:

"At the beginning of the strike we had $85 in the treasury. We had the problem of people going out on strike and having no way to support them. So we had a big drive to get workers to go outside the Delano area to work so they wouldn't be strikebreakers."

Gradually, as the news of the strike spread throughout the state, various union locals in Los Angeles and San Francisco, church groups, and the earliest arrival on the scene—the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—began to gather and send much-needed food, clothing, and money to the strikers.

In Santa Rosa, California, for example, children in one school brought two cans of food to class, resulting in a shipment of over 100 bags of food to Delano. In Corcoron, Asunción Rivas sent a week's earnings of $75 to the NFWA, and in Porterville, local farmworkers pledged $50 a week for the duration of the strike.

Growers also began to utilize various methods in an effort to discourage the picketing of the vineyards.

Tractors were driven at high rates of speed alongside the picket lines, stirring up clouds of choking dust. At the Jack Radovich Ranch, pickets were sprayed with toxic field chemicals. In the vineyards, grower-owned pickup trucks attempted on several occasions to run down pickets.

Both the Kern and Tulare County sheriff's departments repeatedly harassed and threatened the strikers. Often they accompanied busloads of outside workers into the fields. A detail of 10 Kern County sheriffs along with a paddy wagon were dispatched to Delano on a full-time basis and lodged at a local motel.

Three growers, in the early weeks of strike, were run down by a car driven by a Filipino worker. The driver was tried and convicted. NFWA leaders, however, alleged that growers frequently attempted to knock down pickets with their pickup trucks and cars, fired shots over the heads of the pickets, and physically assaulted strikers without being brought to justice.

Eugene Nelson, an NFWA picket captain, described one such incident in graphic detail in his book *Huelga*, when on October 16, he accompanied the visiting Rev. Richard Roe of Stanford University and 10 students he brought with him to the John Dulcich Ranch east of Earlimart.

After he was repeatedly physically assaulted by a ranch "security guard" within plain sight of a deputy sheriff, the guard leapt into his truck and speeded off down the road, despite Nelson's efforts to get the sheriff, who refused to identify himself, to give chase, saying only, "I know who he is."

Nelson, unable to get any satisfaction from the local law enforcement officer, drove to the home of a nearby judge, who, although he initially seemed quite reluctant to accept Nelson's story, would, after meeting with Rev. Roe, accompany the two men to the Pixley Justice Court, where a warrant was made out for the arrest of George Dulcich on an assault and battery charge.

At first the judge considered setting bail at $550 but then commented to Nelson, "I think I'll release him on his own recognizance—I know him and I know he won't leave."

Later, Nelson described his assailant's trial:

"George Dulcich's trial for choking me was on December 7—another day of infamy. It turned into a travesty in which the prosecuting attorney didn't even bother to exercise his prerogative to have jurists who admitted to knowing the accused replaced by more impartial jurors. The defense attorney presented a ludicrous picture of a poor farmer, who had seen his people shot down on the streets of his native Yugoslavia by Reds, moved to defend America against 'outside agitators.'

"Dulcich was found 'not guilty'—a reminder of the similar type of 'Pixley justice' which prevailed in 1933 when 11 growers, arrested for the brazen murder of two strikers, were also exonerated."

The day prior to the assault on Nelson at the Dulcich Ranch, Dolores Huerta, NFWA's vice president, was arrested for trespassing after mistakenly driving down an unmarked, paved private road. Bail for the mother of six children was set at $276, and she was kept in jail overnight. Huerta, who had already established herself as an effective strike leader, had in one 60-minute period pulled out over 100 workers from three separate vineyards.

As the Delano walkout continued, with 20 separate disputes certified by the State Department of Employment, strikebreakers were being recruited on a large scale and brought in from Los Angeles, Phoenix, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas. DiGiorgio advertisements for workers appeared in Juarez, Mexico's *El Fronterizo*, urging Mexicans eligible to work in the United States to come to Delano.

Recruited workers were not told that a strike was in progress. Later in the strike, the NFWA was successful in getting Chamizal Labor Agency in El Paso to include a clause in the contracts they negotiated with the workers notifying them of the strike in Delano. The particular clause, however, was in English in an otherwise all-Spanish language contract.

Many of the workers, on learning of the strike in Delano, left their jobs shortly after they began working in the vineyards. Some of them joined the union picket lines; others, after authorizing in writing the NFWA and AWOC as their bargaining agent, found jobs outside the strike area.

Although the NFWA and AWOC claimed that more than 5500 pickers had joined the strike, no exact numbers can ever be determined. While some of the workers did join the strike, others would simply finish their day's work and then leave the area. The problems that the unions faced in attempting to ascertain how many workers were on strike was shown in a typical letter received by Huerta.

"This letter is to tell you that I have gone to Coachella to work because I am so ashamed when you saw me working and called me a scab. I am sending my November dues. I hope you will not kick me out."

Meanwhile, the area's 33 growers continued to claim that only "70 outside workers" were brought into the Delano vineyards on an "experimental basis." The Chamizal Labor Agency, however, admitted having sent approximately 200 workers to the DiGiorgio Corp.'s Delano ranch when the El Paso firm was charged by Huerta with having sent 2000 people to Delano.

In nearby Fresno, R.G. Johnson, an officer with the U.S. Border Patrol, also admitted that more "wetbacks" were entering California than in any previous year since the peak 12-month period in 1954.

As the strike continued, the NFWA began to develop an underground network of "spies" throughout California and the Southwest who alerted the Delano headquarters when growers or farm labor contractors were in the area recruiting workers. Often, these outside workers were met at the local bus depots by the strikers, so complete was the information furnished to the NFWA by its sympathizers.

Wendy Goepel, a 28-year-old volunteer worker from the NFWA and former state director of the VISTA program attached to California Governor Pat Brown's office, recalled one example of the union's spy system.

"One afternoon the telephone rang in Cesar's office. 'I am from Delano,' a woman's voice said. 'We can't afford any trouble, but I cook out at one of the labor camps and I want to tell you that there are all these women workers there. Whenever anyone comes into their camp they run and hide. They're illegals, I can tell.' 'Who is this?' César asked. 'Well I'd rather not say,' she said. 'I've got a lot of kids home and I've had this job for a long time. I just felt like I had to say this to you strike people.' 'Thank you,' César replied. He then hung up the phone and dialed Immigration."

Throughout the fall and winter months of 1965, Chavez and Itliong and other union officials repeatedly appealed to the local growers for a discussion of the strike issues. Their requests were summarily rejected. One grower indicated to an NFWA picket captain that he personally would prefer to negotiate a contract for his workers but feared that if he took such action, he not only would be ostracized by the local Farm Labor Bureau but would jeopardize his chance for any future bank loans.

Martin Zaninovich, a spokesman for the Delano growers, announced that his neighbors would not recognize a union since their workers "have voted with their feet, so to speak...by going to work regularly in our vineyards."

Other growers claimed that because no federal or state provisions existed allowing for contract negotiations with farmworker organizations or unions, there would be constant jurisdictional fights if they recognized the NFWA.

In an interview with SNCC's Terence Cannon, Robert DiGiorgio, president of the company that bore his name, explained the growers' position.

"When the National Labor Relations Board Act was passed by Congress after much investigation, it was decided that farm labor should be exempted. In no way does it come under the jurisdiction of the NLRB. I feel that we must abide by the will of Congress. The growers' hands are tied because of this discrepancy."

DiGiorgio's explanation was disingenuous at best, since it was California's long-time political allies, the California and the American Farm Bureau Federations, that were specifically responsible for pressuring Congress in 1937 not to include farmworkers under the provisions of the NLRB.

Shortly after DiGirogio spoke with Cannon, Henry Bernstein, labor editor of the *Los Angeles Times,* reported that all the Delano growers had rejected a bid from AWOC and the NFWA to hold secret ballot elections on their ranches. The unions' efforts were only one effort in the years prior to the strike to get NLRB coverage for farmworkers.

As noted above, such efforts had been successfully blocked by California's powerful 60,000-member Farm Bureau Federation and its similar-minded public relations voice, the Council of California Growers, who together with the state's large growers and the Bank of America (see Chapter IX) controlled the state's multibillion-dollar agriculture industry.

The late James P. Mitchell, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, would term these organizations "the toughest farm lobby in Washington, D.C."

The possibility of a contract between the workers and growers was again raised on November 27 in Fresno by Allan Grant, then California Farm Bureau president, O.W. Fillerup, executive vice president of the Council of California Growers, and Joseph Brosmer, director of the Fresno office of the Agricultural Labor Bureau. The three indicated that growers probably would bargain with a "voluntary association" of workers, but not with union leaders.

Chavez, upon learning of the offer, wrote Ralph Duncan, California State Labor Conciliator:

"We read with interest that Messrs. Brosmer, Fillerup, and Grant made a public offer on behalf of the Delano grape growers to meet with and bargain with their workers without 'the alleged leaders' being involved. The workers involved have advised me that they accept this offer of grower spokesmen. Workers will meet with growers.

"We ask that you arrange a meeting for a committee of bona fide growers to meet with a committee of bona fide workers. We suggest that each committee have an attorney at the meeting so that any understanding reached can be properly set forth in appropriate language that will guard the legal interests of all parties involved.

"We leave it up to you to arrange such a meeting and convey our offer because to this date no one has developed a means for us to communicate with the growers."

Brosmer replied to the offer explaining that farmers have always bargained with their workers and that when he mentioned his offer, he was speaking of the normal communications which workers have with their employers when they seek work. He indicated that the growers were not interested in meeting with "groups of workers."

At a farmworker rally at Glide Methodist Church in San Francisco, invited guest speaker Allan Grant told the assembled audience that "he would think of himself as a failure as a farmer if *my* workers couldn't come to *my back door* and negotiate wages and working conditions with him." (Emphasis added.)

DiGiorgio, in his aforementioned interview with SNCC's Cannon, admitted that "there is no question that farm laborers are underpaid, although I believe that California

farmworkers are among the highest paid in the country. There are reasons for the low pay of farmworkers:
1) the nature of farm work; that is seasonalability, and
2) the cultural habits of farmworkers.

"There are different skills involved in farm labor, and because of the different cultural habits certain workers earn different wages."

Another Delano grower, Sam Lipoma, took exception at the time to the statement that farmworkers were adequately paid.

"When you pay a person $60 to $100 a week and he has to raise a family on it, we're predicating a big industry's very existence on the fact that we have to pay low wages. I think we have to uplift the whole industry so we can afford to pay more wages. Right now, we can't. And in this transition, some people are going to be hurt. Right now, we the growers are being hurt. But we do not have to break strikes. Let's negotiate. Let's find out what we can do to work with these people so that we don't have outsiders in here."

While gross salaries *sometimes* appear high for farmworkers, by the time miscellaneous deductions are taken out, there is barely enough for the most essential items of everyday life. It was not uncommon, for example, for a grower to charge a worker $5 to $7 for a pair of pruning shears that could be bought at a metropolitan hardware store for less than $3.

Still another inflationary item normally deducted was housing expenses. While some growers in the Delano area maintained adequate barracks-type housing on their ranches, other workers were forced to live in housing that could only be described as filthy and primitive.

Maria Arellano, who came from a family of 11 field workers and who later found it necessary to take five of her own children into the fields, once explained to this author the feelings that both she and to her fellow workers shared. "I don't go for these cardboard houses; people should get enough money to rent or buy their own homes; people should be free to go and buy or rent their own homes."

Edgar Z. Friedenberg, writing on "Another America" in the *New York Review of Books* in those early days of the strike, observed after a visit to Delano:

"What was appalling was the conception of the kind of life that is good enough for a human being, which underlies the very design of these camps (workers' living quarters)....The Zaninovich camp had not been bad; it was weathered, but clean, and rather suggested an old-fashioned tourist court of the early days of motoring....

"The next camp...was a horrible place. (It was) air conditioned and centrally heated; steam burst aggressively out through the doors of its ample shower rooms. But it was still a long,

concrete building whose central corridor was lined with doors that do not reach the floor. Each little room houses two men. Nobody had turned on the electric light in the corridor, which was illuminated only by the light of dusk coming under the stall-like doors. This is not, in the ordinary sense, a temporary dwelling.

"Migrant workers move from one such camp to another, following the crops; many have no other home than such a camp all their adult working lives. This, as Mr. Zaninovich truly said, was one of the best in the country; but nobody accustomed to an ordinary American life—even a poor man's life—could design such a structure for the use of other human beings unless we believed that they ought to accept a pattern of life so impoverished as to suggest a different species....It occurred to me that (the NFWA people I had met) seemed the only people I had seen in months...positively happy and free from self-pity."

III

Nationwide support continued to build for the Delano strikers.

The AFL-CIO's national convention, which met in early December in San Francisco, passed a strong resolution endorsing the strikers.

"Resolved: That this convention pledges its full support and solidarity behind the struggle of the workers on strike against the growers around Delano, California, and we call upon all affiliates of the AFL-CIO to extend both moral and financial support of these workers, who have been the victims of inhuman exploitation, in order to help them win their struggle for a fuller measure of economic and social justice."

Two days after the convention concluded, Walter Reuther, president of the UA and head of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department, visited Delano. Reuther, after walking on the AWOC and NFWA picket lines in the vineyards, urging workers to join the strike, led a parade of farmworkers, flanked by Chavez and Itliong, through the streets of the town, carrying large circular "Huelga!" picket signs.

No arrests were made, even though the Delano City Council had previously passed an ordinance requiring a 20-day advance notice before the staging of a parade. The law had come after more than 1000 farmworkers paraded through the central area of the town early in the strike.

Reuther pledged complete union support for the farmworkers, reminding them, "You've got to win this strike and we're going to stay with you until you do." Later that evening, before a crowd of 700, the fiery red-haired labor leader pledged $5000 a month to the workers "for as long as it takes to win this strike." He presented to them a check for $2500, first payment on a check which would come to a total $10,000—half being the December payment, the other $5000 as "a Christmas present."

Support also came for the strike from the California Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) and the CSO. Prior to the MAPA endorsement, a group billing itself as the Porterville chapter of MAPA had denounced the strike, the NFWA, and Cesar Chavez. State MAPA vice president Bert Corona pointed out later that "there is no such Porterville chapter of this organization" and ordered an immediate investigation.

Strike support also came from other state and community organizations.

In early December, large shipments of grapes began to move out of the fields and packing sheds and into the ports of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, and Stockton. Picket lines by the NFWA and AWOC promptly appeared, along with members of the International Longshoreman's and Warehouseman's Union (ILWU), who refused to cross the lines, claiming that it violated the safety clauses of their contracts with the ship owners.

In Oakland, the separate threats of a DiGiorgio lawyer brandishing a restraining order and the city police attempting to make arrests without the benefit of a court injunction failed to stop union pickets from halting ILWU dock workers loading Delano grapes aboard freighters. Such action cost the DiGiorgio Corp. alone an estimated $100,000 in grapes that were either spoiled waiting to be loaded aboard ships or had to be returned to their Delano warehouses. DiGiorgio later filed, a $200,000 damage suit against the ILWU.

In the strikebound vineyards, meanwhile, 1.5 million lugs of table grapes were put into cold storage. At the Pagliarulo and Keegan cold storage plants in Earlimart, numerous boxes of poorly packed and improperly packed table grapes were dumped into gondolas for shipment to Valley wineries.

Brosmer, while declaring that over 1.8 million lugs had been sold in 1965, added that a large number of Delano grapes, because of the abundant harvest, were being sold to the wineries. Delano grower H.K. Nelson also added that the end of the harvest season saw a lot of grapes left on the vine. "It cost $18 to pick them and you get $15 from the wineries."

The picketing of coastal ports and truck terminals continued through the winter months. Dolores Huerta described her activities along with seven other NFWA members at the produce market in Los Angeles prior to Christmas.

"The truck owners were very rough with us, kicking the girls in the legs and running the heavy steel hand trucks loaded with grapes over our feet. If the guys had tried to help us there would have been a riot and we would have all been hurt and maybe put in jail, and then we wouldn't be able to stop the grapes. These pickets knew this and they just stood by and watched it happen, which was very hard for them.

"The truck owners would push us off the dock which was about five feet high, time after time, every day, and we would just climb back again. It hurt very much to have them run

into you with a loaded steel dolly; it hurt much more to stand by and watch them doing it to others.

"But except for a few, a truck owner would never do it twice, because he would be ashamed of himself. And we slowly began to win support of all the people who were there watching these things happen, and soon there was no Delano grapes going through L.A."

"To be non-violent," Huerta concludes, "you have to decide ahead of time. If most of us had not decided to be non-violent, we certainly would have lost the whole strike."

While many shipments of Delano grapes left the state by truck and boat, a large number were shipped by rail to the rest of the country. Packed in truck trailers and transported "piggyback" by rail, the stopping of these grapes proved a difficult task for the NFWA. In Delano, the trucks were driven onto the flat cars by non-union company employees.

On Friday, December 23, an all-night picket was established at the Roseville, California railroad yard. Almost all grape shipments by rail pass through this small town northeast of Sacramento. The halting of the grapes in the Roseville yards, 8 miles long and approximately 50 tracks wide, proved to be a formidable challenge for the 40 volunteer pickets from throughout the state. Employees from 25 separate AFL-CIO unions entered the yards at 12 different locations, reminding the pickets of the problems faced in the Delano vineyards.

Soon after they arrived, the pickets had a noticeable influence on yard operations. One trainman took 200 leaflets as he entered the yards to hand out inside. Some off-duty workers pointed out to the strikers the best entrances to cover.

Another switchman drove two picket captains around the entire yard, showing them key areas to watch. While wives of some of the railroad workers provided the pickets with coffee and sandwiches, one trainman spent nearly three hours explaining how trains moved through the yards, what tracks "hot" trains took, where they stopped, and how they were switched.

Throughout the night, until 8 a.m., the pickets maintained their headquarters at a public telephone booth a block from the yards. Inside, activity was feverish. More than 50 company men were brought from San Francisco and Sacramento to take over the running of the yards in case of a "wildcat strike" by switchmen or clerks. "There's company men in there I've never seen," one union official told the pickets. The National Railway Act forbids union members from interfering with interstate traffic.

Regional railway union directors instructed by telephone the presidents of Roseville locals to order their members to cross the picket lines. "You've shaken this place like it's never been shaken before," one trainman told the pickets the following morning.

The picketing of the grape shipments, however, was part of a larger planned nationwide boycott of all Delano grape products, particularly those distributed by Schenley Industries Inc., the second largest grower in Delano. Through various local SNCC and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) chapters, community-organized groups such as the one in Homer, Alaska, and the committee headed by the legendary television personality Steve Allen in Los Angeles, market managers and liquor store dealers were asked to cooperate with the boycott.

Throughout the south, Delano grape products were added to the list of "Operation Breadbasket," the massive black boycott project. In Harlem, the boycott was 95 percent effective. In Chicago, the UFW and UAW in cooperation with four Protestant Church denominations and the Roman Catholic Church launched a city-wide consumer boycott education program. Tony Orendain, NFWA treasurer and a native of the hot San Joaquin Valley, could be seen walking in the unfamiliar snow urging Midwesterners to boycott Schenley products.

In California, a number of large supermarket chains cleared their shelves of the boycotted products. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, an ecumenical group of Episcopal, Methodist, United Church of Christ, Unitarian, and Catholic clergymen visited the John Finch Distillery at Schenley, Pennsylvania and presented the company officials with a statement of concern regarding the firm's policy in Delano. They noted:

"This plant is one where Schenley bargains collectively with its workers through a local of the AFL-CIO Distillery Workers. We...request that Schenley recognize the plight of farmworkers in California to be represented by a union. We ask them to begin the process of collective bargaining at the earliest possible date."

One of the most dramatic boycott operations was the "Boston Grape Party" organized by the NFWA's Sal Gonzales. On April 2, 1966, more than 300 people gathered in Boston Common as Gonzales read a statement that had been received from U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts: "It is time the guarantee of our national labor laws be extended to the agricultural worker."

The 300, composed of students, union and church leaders, then marched to the Boston waterfront and dumped a lug box of Silver King table grapes from Lucas & Sons Ranch in Delano into the harbor waters. Reenacting the famous Boston Tea Party, Gonzales declared that, just as the colonists of the pre-Revolutionary War period sought to banish second-class citizenship from the new country, so too was the farmworker in 1966 seeking that same goal.

Although threatened with police action if he threw grapes into the harbor, no arrest took place. Two days later, however, Gonzales was asked to appear in Boston Municipal Court to show cause why he should not be arrested for "polluting the harbor." After an

afternoon hearing, as Gonzales notes, distinguished by its formality, a Boston judge dismissed the case.

CHAPTER THREE
Bearing the Weight of His Word

I

> "How naïve can this clergy, dependent on the largesse of its members, become? They march in picket lines with avowed communists whose ultimate goal is the destruction of all religious faith.
>
> I earnestly hope and pray that these professional agitators will see the futility of their efforts and in the darkness of night slip away to other parts. It would be nice to awake up some morning without the stench created by the messengers from Moscow."

While the majority of Delano's 13,000 citizens may not have agreed with his observations, it was clear as the strike progressed that farmer E. Antonell spoke for a significant number of the town's residents in his October 12, 1965 letter to the *Delano Record*.

For unique to the Delano grape strike was the participation of many church groups—principally the California Migrant Ministry (CMM)—and the absence of other churches—principally the Roman Catholic Diocese of Monterey-Fresno—and the open hostility of others—primarily the local Catholic Churches and the Delano Ministerial Association.

Supported by various member Protestant Churches of the California Council of Churches, the Migrant Ministry had worked for over 20 years to encourage the various denominations to support community development work among seasonal farmworkers. Such programs as remedial education, church school, health services, and recreation had been encouraged by the CMM. Direction was given on an organization-for-self-help basis rather than the traditional handing out of special services.

At the time of the outset of the strike, the CMM was active in 22 areas throughout California, including nine year-round fringe and four year-round Migrant Commission projects, plus nine summer-only program areas. In the southern San Joaquin Valley, adjacent to Delano, they were active in the Dos Palos, Southern Bakersfield, Goshen, Tulare County, and Mendota-Firebaugh areas. Most projects were planned and financed in conjunction with local churches.

These CMM-type of programs were directed toward eliminating the underlying causes of poverty and weakness and not merely at attempting to eliminate the symptoms. Rather than, for example, operating special "migrant clinics," the CMM sought better wages for the workers so they could afford to buy regular health services for their families.

Rev. Wayne C. "Chris" Hartmire, the director of the CMM, often explained the role of his fellow clergy:

"It is clear we have both a responsibility to stand with the workers in their basic struggle and a responsibility to help churchmen understand the social and theological issues involved in this struggle. The latter task is enormous since most of our churches are separated from the realities of the workers' world.

"Farmworkers and others cannot hear and respond to the Gospel until our words take on flesh in the life of the world. The Church must be willing to risk its life to live out the urgent message we proclaim."

In 1966 testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Hartmire pointed out the radical power imbalance between employers and their workers that is at the root of the injustices experienced by farmworkers.

"Agricultural employers are not a special breed of irresponsible men. They are just plain men, but with too much power over their workers; like the rest of us they have tended to use that unchecked power for their own interest first, and too often this has meant second class treatment for their workers. Justice in this labor management situation depends on a new balance of power between workers and employers that can lead to mutual recognition, respect and realistic communication."

Illustrative of the CMM's work, in Tulare County in September, 1964, the CMM in cooperation with the United Church of Christ initiated a two-year project to help local farmworkers organize a self-help action program.

In response to the needs of the people, work began on self-help housing, a gas and oil cooperative, voter registration, casework and counseling, investigation of illegal wages paid to sugar beet workers, and later the organizing of a rent strike against the Tulare County Housing Authority over the rent increases at the Linnell and Woodville labor camps.

Housing authorities had sought to raise rents in the two camps from $18 to $25; however, community pressure brought the rent down to $22 Rent for additional family quarters, required for families with four or more children, was raised from $8 to $10, but then lowered to the original $8.

The CMM, in cooperation with the American Friends Service Committee, organized nearly 170 families to stage a rent strike on June 1, 1965, at the two camps. On July 16, more than 350 farmworkers and their friends marched 6 miles from the Linnell Camp to a scheduled Tulare County Housing Authority to learn that the meeting had been canceled due to a lack of a quorum. They continued their march to a local Presbyterian Church, where a petition

of grievances that originally was to be presented to the Tulare County Board of Supervisors was drafted and signed.

On August 16, both the local building and public health commissions condemned the Linnell structures as unfit. They cited 34 violations of their codes in the camp and 17 in the Woodville camp. Although the Housing Authority offered different reasons for raising the rent, including the need to finance a 10 percent share for an Office of Economic Opportunity loan, it later became known that they had developed a $130,000 reserve fund in running the two camps.

A year after the rent strike began, the cases of the strikers were still being heard in the local courts. Although many of the families left the camps and others were later evicted, the two camps remained open and available for occupancy.

On May 3, 1965, at the Mount Arbor Nurseries in McFarland, a small community near Delano, 60 rose grafters walked off the job, demanding bargaining rights on wages and better working conditions. The workers, 80 percent of them members of the NFWA, claimed that rose grafters were required to crawl all day along the ground and graft cuttings into the delicate plants.

The job, which takes years of experience, often produces hundreds of tiny cuts from thorns that turn the workers' fingers black. The nursery at the time was promising the workers $9 per thousand plants but was actually paying between $6.75 and $7. These plants were sold from the nursery for $350 per thousand.

After a series of meetings at local farmworkers' homes, the rose grafters voted to strike, but not to picket. Early in the first morning of the strike, NFWA workers went about in cars checking peoples' homes. Huerta saw one house, lights on and four rose workers preparing the leave for the fields. She reminded them of their pledge to stick together with the other workers, but they said they planned to work anyway. She then parked her green paneled truck so it blocked their driveway, turned off the ignition, put the key in her purse, and sat there alone.

Chavez recalled that the Mount Arbor foreman was so mad the first day of the strike that he refused to talk to any NFWA representatives.

"At 10:30 in the morning we started to go to the company office, but it occurred to us that maybe a woman would have a better chance. So Dolores knocked on the office door saying, 'I'm Dolores Huerta from the National Farm Workers Association.' 'Get out!' the man said. 'You Communist, get out!' I guess they were expecting us, because as Dolores stood arguing with him the cops came and told her to leave. She left."

Chavez and the NFWA asked for the assistance of the CMM in an effort to get a negotiated contract. The strike ended in a week, despite some protests within the NFWA, without a contract but with a significant raise in pay for the workers.

Later that summer, 67 farmworkers from the J.D. Martin Ranch in Tulare County again came to the CMM for help in a labor dispute. The workers knew Rev. James Drake , Rev. David Havens, and Gil Padilla, an NFWA vice president—who had been working with the CMM since January, 1965, through a grant from the Rosenberg Foundation—for their activities in the farm labor camp rent strike.

The workers complained that they were receiving $1.25 per hour for pre-harvest grape work and they wanted $1.40 an hour. There were no toilets for the men or the women and only one drinking cup. The day previous to their meeting with the CMM, the foreman had fired the slowest workers and told the other workers that they would meet the same fate in the days following, as an incentive to speed up their work.

The same foreman also liked to fondle the women and watch them go to the bathroom in the fields. The CMM agreed to intercede for the workers on behalf of better wages and working conditions. Their letters and telegrams to the employer went unanswered, and the workers went out on strike. Although outside workers were eventually employed, the NFA workers did manage to achieve better wages and working conditions.

When the NFWA began their Delano strike, it was the CMM that gave them immediate assistance. Director Hartmire would later explain the initial obstacles faced by the church's clergy in helping farmworkers:

"Farmworkers have tended to look on our churches as part of the middle class power order that intentionally keeps them weak and poor and denies hope to their children. They openly joked about our declarations of brotherhood and love. It is hard for a man or woman who is down, with your *foot* on their neck to hear *your* words about God's love for them. Our deeds make our words a lie and are an enormous barrier to proclaiming the Christian gospel."

CMM staff personnel were immediately sent to Delano on September 20 after word of the NFWA's vote to join AWOC's strike of the local vineyards.

Jim Drake, an affable United Church of Christ minister, began helping the workers in picketing activities and administrative work, and eventually became coordinator of the NFWA's national boycott activities. A dedicated 25-year-old minister who spoke little Spanish, Drake attempted to counsel the workers who had personal problems and instructed them in techniques of non-violence. He was also available to them for specific religious "services" when needed, including funerals.

"In the light of the servant ministry of Christ," Drake often explained, "our role in life has to be one of seeking to banish the dehumanizing influence of today's society. God in Christ sought us out as human beings in an effort to show us how to be as most human as possible. We are destroying His mission if we allow others to rob us of that humanity."

Two days prior to the taking of the September strike vote by the NFWA, the Board of Directors of the Northern California Conference of the United California Church met to discuss their part in the CMM's Tulare County Community Development Project. In June, Drake's role in the Mount Arbor strike had been the subject of controversy. The First Congregational Church of Porterville voted 91 to 39 to withdraw its support in the Community Development Project. Other grower-dominated churches expressed the opinion that the conflict, which they claimed was being created by the CMM in the community, was "anti-Christian."

The Conference Board of Directors, however, in their July meeting decided to pick up the portion of the salary that the Porterville Church had refused to pay, and at the September meeting, by a 12 to 3 margin, voted to continue their support of the CD project through 1965 and 1966.

Another minister who worked closely with the NFWA was David Havens from the First Christian Church in Visalia, California. The 30-year-old Havens had also worked in the Porterville area with Drake in establishing community leaders in low-income groups, and in October, 1964, he assisted in setting up the Farm Workers Organization (FWO). In April, 1965, the FWO voted to affiliate with the NFWA.

On October 17, it was Havens who stood on the top of an automobile alongside the struck Midstate Ranch vineyard and read to a group of workers in the nearby field Jack London's famous "Definition of a Scab" from the NFWA newspaper *El Malcriado*.

Havens was immediately arrested by Sergeant Gerald Dodd of the Kern County sheriff's department for "disturbing the peace." After the arrest Dodd also questioned bystanders, "Who wrote that definition? I want to talk to him." Dodd later admitted that while no complaint had been filed against Havens, he made the arrest because "I didn't feel that it would serve any purpose but to humiliate those who were working."

Joan London, daughter of the famous writer and novelist, commented on the incident: "'Definition of a Scab' is known to generations of organized workers...Jack London has been dead nearly a half century, but it is evident that he remains a vital part of today's struggles."

On November 23, in a Bakersfield courtroom, Judge Gerald Davis dismissed the charges against Havens. The ruling came after his attorney, Milton Younger, argued that the arrest violated the minister's right to freedom of speech. In dismissing the case, the judge said that "there was no clear and present danger involved" in the reading, and "no persons were

about to riot, nor was any form of civil disobedience incipient." He cited the verdict of Edwards *v* South Carolina in his decision.

"The function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. It may indeed best serve its high purpose when it induces a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger...That is why freedom of speech is protected against censorship or punishment...There is no room under our Constitution for a more restrictive view."

Two days after Haven's arrest, 44 pickets, nine of them ministers from the Northern and Southern California Council of Churches, were arrested as they chanted "Huelga! Huelga!" to workers some 200 feet away in the W.B. Camp Jr. vineyards.

Sheriff Dodd, again the arresting officer, stated that the picketing was an "unlawful assembly." The chanting, he explained "was disturbing people who were trying to make a living" at the ranch. Rev. Hartmire, who was talking with the press on the other side of the road at the time of the arrest, was also among the ministers taken to jail.

Drake pointed out that the sheriff's department was merely buckling under pressure from struck growers. "For six weeks we were allowed to talk to the workers in the fields while we picketed, but suddenly they silence us."

Another NFWA picket captain added:

"The growers have been placing the workers in the middle of their fields in an effort to keep them away from the pickets. As the harvest season neared completion, the growers realized that the grapes on the periphery of their property had to be harvested. In their desperation they sought help from the local law enforcement agencies to remove pickets from the scene."

All nine ministers arrested posted their own $35 bail; the other pickets remained in jail for three days until the NFWA was able to raise the money to set them free. A special daycare center was established for the 60 children of the 12 women arrested. Prayer vigils were held outside the county jail in Bakersfield each day. The cry of "Huelga!" was heard frequently as the workers prayed and sang.

Drake noted at the time that it was curious the workers could chant the word "Huelga!" in a city of 60,000 but were thrown in jail for chanting the same word in the open vineyards 32 miles away.

On June 20, 1966, Bakersfield Municipal Court Judge Marvin Ferguson dismissed the case against the pickets "for lack of evidence." A Delano judge had earlier granted the 44 a change of venue, noting that it would be difficult for them to receive a fair trial in a local courtroom.

Even before the October 19 arrests, ministers coming to Delano were made aware by local law enforcement agencies that they were unwelcome.

Rev. Francis Geddes, a San Francisco minister, recalled how he and three other ministers were stopped on a highway to Delano by a Tulare County deputy sheriff on a report that they were carrying a rifle.

"We told the officer that we carried no rifle (two of us wore clerical collars), but he was welcome to look. Several minutes later, two more sheriff's cars drew up, red lights burning. One of the officers began photographing us. Another officer filled out a detailed report form using our driver's licenses as a source of information. The questioning lasted about 25 minutes. No citation or arrest was made. The Tulare County officers wear blue riot helmets, an uneasy reminder for those of us who participated in the Selma, Alabama civil rights march."

Delano's E. B. Antonell expressed his community's attitude toward visiting ministers.

"Our community has always been one of high moral standing in which grower and worker have heretofore settled any differences among themselves. Remove these interlopers who would promote class hatred and our difficulties will be settled before the dust settles from their departing vehicles."

Shortly after the arrest of the nine ministers, the seven-church-member Delano Ministerial Association issued a sharp statement severely criticizing "any ecclesiastical demonstration or interference in the farm labor situation" and reminded the clergy that their concern should be "in the spiritual area." The local pastors added:

"We're here as spiritual leaders to bring people to God. We are not to give any advice on economic matters. We resent very highly the fact that other clergymen have come into this area and destroyed the image of the church. There's no moral issue involved. The clergy have no business to be involved."

Seeking to clarify the Delano ministers' position on their role as "spiritual leaders," Hartmire questioned Rev. E.B. Moore, pastor of the local Baptist Church and a member of the local ministers' association. The CMM director observed that if Moore and his colleagues were not interested in getting involved in the "economic matters" of the workers' lives, would they not at least participate in efforts to see local farm businessmen abide by the laws requiring such health guarantees as toilet facilities in the fields?

Moore replied that "his calling in the church was to a higher purpose. Cesar Chavez isn't a minister; let him put the toilets in the fields."

Allan Grant, president of the California Farm Bureau and a non-voting member of the Board of Directors of the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches, also challenged his own church organization, posing the question, "Where are we letting the leaders of the Church take us?" Grant likewise charged that the Council had ignored proposals from the CFB in its resolutions calling for new legislation to protect farmworkers.

"The dignity and worth of the individual found its highest expression here in the United States. Yet for a matter of decades now we have had a political climate of social reform. Much change has been brought about, but great damage has been done in the process too. In the guise of doing good, we have weakened the core of moral fiber within. The exercise of so-called individual rights without commensurate responsibility brings on chaos.

"Socialism inevitably brings a breakdown of morality...whenever the responsibility is thus shifted from the individual, moral degeneracy follows. Where is the church today? The Church has been in the forefront of much of our social reform, but has it balanced this with a program of education concerning individual responsibility?"

Grant's remarks occasioned a November 27 conference in Fresno sponsored by the Church and Society Committee of the San Joaquin Presbytery and the Church and Economic Life Commission of the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches.

While the theme of the conference was "The Church and the Grower-Worker World," most of the afternoon's discussion centered around whether the workers in Delano truly wanted to be organized. O.W. Fillerup, executive vice president of the Council of California Growers, pointed out that letters he had seen asking for growers to negotiate "had been from union organizers and not from the workers."

The audience, largely sympathetic to the growers' arguments, also heard from Joseph G. Brosmer of Fresno, manager of the Agricultural Labor Bureau (an agency which formerly supplied braceros to local farmers), criticize the CMM for their role in the Delano strike.

"If ministers are going to serve the Lord, they cannot help organize unions. The CMM's role in the strike is doing irreparable damage. Residents of Delano have lived in perfect harmony for a number of years," he said.

Rev. Hartmire responded to Brosmer's claim.

"In Delano some churchmen are trying to say by deed that farmworkers are important people who should be dealt with as men among men. God cares and our presence is a demonstration of that caring. If the Church were united in that presence, if we would put our institutional strength on the line in Delano (and Watts, etc.), then the message would be heard loud and clear. As a matter of fact, Jesus had to put his body on the line and that sacrifice bears the weight of His word to us.

'This is not to say that the Church should not be 'present' with employers," Hartmire continued. "But the *form* of our presence may be different with growers and workers. Among other needs, the workers need our help in a morally just sense. Employers may need our help to confront a painful social situation that needs changing for everyone's sake. Both need the chastisement and the challenge of the Gospel as well as the comfort and strength of a message of faithfulness and a community of faith."

Earlier, in a late October meeting, the Kern County Farm Bureau board of directors, one of the largest of the Farm Bureau groups in California, had unanimously adopted a resolution asking that "all church groups and their governing leaders redefine their areas of responsibility so that their clergy will refrain from participating in social reform activities in any locality that results in lawless, irresponsible action that endangers the life and/or rights of citizens."

The board also noted in their resolution that "local churches and individual members are in a position to know the facts and can effectively deal with these problems in a lawful and responsible manner." They added, "Many such cases of civil disobedience and/or strife have been infiltrated and aligned with every un-American force existent in our country today."

Copies of the resolution were sent to all ministers of record, the Greater Bakersfield Council of Churches, the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, the Bakersfield Ministerial Association, and the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Monterey-Fresno Diocese.

At its annual meeting in November in Berkeley, California, the state's Farm Bureau Federation's House of Delegates also adopted a resolution, which said in part:

"Entry by the National Council of Churches (NCC) into the field of legislative advocacy has been disturbing not only to churchmen in denominations affiliated with the NCC but to farm leaders…."

Noting that the NCC endorsed legislation for minimum wages, unemployment insurance, and collective bargaining for farmworkers, the federation resolution stated that the measures advocated by the NCC "were a political philosophy but not necessarily sound theology."

Grant characterized the NCC and its auxiliary body, the California Migrant Ministry, as "the most divisive force in America today."

Indicative of the support, however, that the churches were beginning to receive in their promotion of the farmworkers' cause was the reaction to the Farm Bureau Federation's resolution by one of San Francisco's three major television stations.

In an editorial telecast on December 16 and 17, Louis S. Simon, general manager of KPIX, a Westinghouse Broadcasting station and local CBS outlet, expressed pleasure that "both the NCC and the Northern California-Nevada Council of churches are CONCERNED with the economic problems of farmworkers.

"In fact, KPIX suggests that if agricultural organizations had been more sensitive to the welfare of farmworkers there would be less need for endorsement of legislation for the betterment of their lot by church groups. The California Farm Bureau SHOULD be disturbed—by a situation that prompts the NCC to feel it must lend its weight for improvement of the economic conditions of farmworkers."

II

At the invitation of the California Migrant Ministry, on December 13 and 14, a delegation of 11 nationally prominent religious leaders visited Delano on a 24-hour fact finding tour. Their visit would dramatically illustrate the unwillingness of the local growers to sit down and discuss the issues of the now nearly 100-day-old strike.

The leaders opened their investigation with an evening meeting at the Filipino Hall in Delano with the members of AWOC.

Sitting in a wide semicircle, listening to the workers tell their stories were Father James Vizzard, S.J., of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Washington, D.C.; Lester Hunt, executive assistant, U.S. Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking, Chicago; Cameron P. Hall, director, Commission on the Church and Economic Life, National Council of Churches, New York; Paul A. Stauffer, executive secretary of coordination, national division, Methodist Board of Missions, New York; Mae Yoho Ward, vice president, United Christian Missionary Society, Christian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana; Kenneth Neigh, general secretary, Board of National Missions, United Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., New York; Rabbi Erwin L. Herman, Synagogue Council of America, New York; Rev. S. Garry Oniki, associate to the executive vice president, Board of Homeland Missions, United Church of Christ, New York; Msgr. William J. Quinn, U.S. Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking, Chicago; Rev. John A. Wagner, executive secretary, U.S. Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking, San Antonio, Texas; and Robert McAfee Brown, distinguished Protestant theologian from Stanford University.

Also sitting in on the meeting was Rev. Hartmire and the author, whom the CMM had invited to act as a press liaison for the delegation during the duration of their stay.

Workers who had lived in Delano 15 or 20 years explained to the delegation how they believed that their experience in the local vineyards handling the delicate table grapes entitled them to better wages and working conditions.

The Filipino workers, most of them unmarried owing to an old U.S. immigration law forbidding Filipino women from entering this country, recalled to the various religious denominational representatives how they were evicted from their grower-owned living quarters the day after they went out on strike.

As the delegations made ready to return to their motel headquarters, Father John Wagner expressed his gratitude to the workers for their strike. "I thank you for what you are doing here for those of us in Texas who still work on farms for 45 cents and 50 cents an hour. They look at what you are doing here and it gives them hope."

Back at the Stardust Motel, located across U.S. 99—a storied highway that racially bisected most of the towns in the valley—from downtown Delano, the visitors discussed the previous three hours. Hartmire then outlined their itinerary for the next day.

First, a meeting with leaders of the NFWA; next, the delegation would split into two sections and while one visited a nearby ranch, the other group would meet with Delano's city manager, police chief, and a representative from the local Chamber of Commerce.

After the morning meetings, a lunch at the local Elks Club with growers, local clergymen, and business leaders was scheduled. At 3 p.m., the group would issue a statement to the press on their findings. It was well after midnight when the ministers' meeting adjourned.

A cold, cloudy December sky greeted the delegation the next morning. After breakfast in a nearby bowling alley, the group reassembled in Room 205 of the motel. Cesar Chavez was introduced, and in a calm, deliberate, but firm manner, the personable NFWA director outlined to his attentive audience the key issues involved in the strike.

Chavez noted that now that the harvest season had been completed, the strike was about to enter a new phase. The NFWA had informed the local growers that unless some attempt was made within 24 hours to meet with the striking workers, the NFWA and AWOC, in cooperation with SNCC, were calling for a nationwide boycott of all Delano grape products, particularly those from Schenley Industries Inc.

Chavez also introduced Jim Drake and David Havens to the delegation, and each of the ministers outlined their roles in the strike. Havens explained how the strikers, reluctant at the outset, had responded enthusiastically to the practice of non-violence during the course of the bitter strike.

The young minister retold how, on September 23, when he and several of the workers were picketing the home of Maximos Martinez, a local farm labor contractor, a group of angry growers arrived and began badgering and cursing at them.

"While a police car sat parked a block away," Havens related, "these growers, who had obviously been drinking, began pushing and insulting us. A crowd began to form across the street and they started to heckle us why we didn't hit back.

"Israel Garza, one of the pickets, fell to the ground, elbowed in the stomach by grower Milan Caratan. Caratan had earlier elbowed me in the ribs. Cesar arrived with some more pickets and the crowd on the sidewalk swelled. Several times I got scared when I couldn't even see Cesar, surrounded as he was by all these angry growers.

"Finally, Cesar approached Al Espinoza, a Delano police captain, and asked him to intervene. In the meantime, a large number of Filipino workers arrived, and they also joined in the heckling, angry that we wouldn't strike back at the growers.

"The police finally stepped in as the tension increased. They warned everybody to stay where they were. Caratan, thinking the police's warning applied only to the workers, shoved another picket. He was immediately seized by the police, despite the loud protests of the other growers, and put into a police car.

"When the crowd, unaccustomed to seeing a grower being taken into custody by the law, saw this, they cheered, and many of us realized right there that the principles of non-violence had not only made a deep impression on the workers, but had survived a crucial test."

[Two days after speaking before the religious leaders, during Walter Reuther's visit, Havens and Drake were physically assaulted by local grower Phil Patti.]

As the delegation began to question Chavez, Hartmire was called from the room. He returned shortly thereafter, troubled and impatient. After Chavez and the NFWA workers finished and left the room, he explained his troubled attitude. Joseph Brosmer had phoned to say that he felt the luncheon was too informal for a meeting with growers. The growers, however, were willing to meet with the visitors at 3 p.m., not coincidentally at the same time as the previously scheduled press conference. Later, it would be learned that the room in the Stardust directly below where the delegation had been conferring was registered to Brosmer.

After relaying his news, Hartmire explained to the delegation that he had contacted Jack Pandol, a local grower, five days ago, and at that time plans had been set for the noon luncheon. Pandol, Brosmer would explain to Hartmire, would not be available the rest of the day, as he was tending to a friend who had had a sudden attack of appendicitis.

The delegation, however, decided to continue upon the prearranged schedule and promptly sent a telegram to 17 of the local growers:

> NATIONAL GROUP OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS INTERESTED IN HEARING VIEWPOINT OF GROWERS ON AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' STRIKE AT NOON LUNCHEON TODAY TO WHICH THEY WERE INVITED BY YOU. LAST MINUTE CANCELATION OF THE LUNCHEON MOST UNFORTUNATE. WE SHALL BE PRESENT AT ELKS CLUB AS PLANNED AND HOPE YOU WILL BE TOO.

Nine of the 17 wires were delivered, five by direct teletype, to the growers' ranches.

Meanwhile, the delegation split into two sections. One group visited Delano city manager Louis Shepard, who, along with the local police chief, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, and two reporters from the *Delano Record*, sat for over an hour with the assembled group.

Shepard told the religious leaders that Delano's image was being tarnished and that at the following week's city council meeting, he planned to ask that the body extend an invitation to the State Conciliation Service to come to Delano and investigate the strike. Under the NLRB, any union can ask the federal government's conciliation service for such an investigation. Farmworkers, however, were specifically excluded from such coverage by the NLRB.

The Delano administrator repeated his pledge two days later to Reuther and representatives of the press; however, a week later he announced that he had not made the request, explaining that after talking with local growers he felt such a request "would be advocating the strikers' cause. City Police Chief James Alies commended the strikers to the religious leaders' delegation for their practice of non-violence."

The other half of the delegation was given a tour of the Bruno Dispoto Ranch. Dispoto, who earlier had termed the clergy's intervention in the strike "the most sickening day of my life," joined the group for the last 10 minutes of their visit. He pointed out to them that none of his workers were out on strike and took sharp exception to the fact that farmworkers in Delano wanted to organize, insisting that their present wages were adequate.

Mrs. Mae Yoho Water later recalled how Dispoto had told the delegation "that his men had their own cook, and their own *little* beds, and their own *little* dressing tables, and some of the men, who had been with him for many years, even had their own *little* private rooms."

At noon, the entire delegation reassembled at the Delano Elks Hall. Inside, places had been set for 55 guests, but the room was empty.

Hartmire, after checking with the hall management, explained to the bewildered guests that he had confirmed with the Elks Hall officials that grower Pandol had arranged the luncheon on behalf of the growers and had taken the responsibility of inviting local clergy and business leaders. A later communication from Brosmer was to affirm Hartmire's findings. "This is the first time I have ever flown 3000 miles to attend a luncheon and have the hosts stand me up," observed Cameron P. Hall of New York.

At the conclusion of the luncheon, a hand-written message from Brosmer was delivered to the assembled delegation. It read:

"You misunderstood lunch arrangement. Wayne C. Hartmire asked us to find a place for you to eat and to invite local community and religious leaders. No indication was made that you wanted to discuss local labor problems with us at lunch....We are still hopeful you will agree to meet with us."

Hartmire immediately attempted to reach Brosmer, but he was not at the number indicated on the recently delivered note. A telegram was sent to his office specifying that the religious delegation would still be willing to meet with the growers at either 2 p.m. or 2:30 p.m.

In the meantime, the visitors returned to Room 205 at the motel and began discussing their statement based on their findings, while waiting for some word from the growers. Several in the delegation voiced their opinion that they felt the growers were deliberately trying to avoid a meeting.

A few minor changes were made in the statement after the reading of the first draft. The draft had stated, "The right of churches and synagogues to engage in such action [informing themselves of the issues involved in the strike] is absolutely clear to us. We reject the notion that churches and synagogues are to be concerned only with so-called 'spiritual' matters...."

Vizzard suggested the word "notion" be changed to "heresy," and the group unanimously approved the change. Such was the mood of the delegation.

Shortly before 3 p.m., as copies of the statement were being prepared for the press, Hartmire received a telephone call from Brosmer asking if the delegation wished to meet with the growers at 4 p.m.—after the press conference. The delegation immediately accepted the invitation on the condition the meeting be open to the press. Brosmer agreed.

At 3 p.m., the delegation met an unusually small band of newsman and local television reporters. Robert McAfee Brown addressed the conference, reading in calm but emphatic sentences the delegation's three-page statement. After a very brief question and answer session, the group adjourned to Slavonian Hall, on the outskirts of Delano, for their long-postponed meeting with the growers.

As the delegation, which the *Delano Record* later would describe as "pitiful," entered the hall, a large number of growers, laughing and drinking in an adjoining kitchen, eyed the visitors with both scorn and suspicion, suddenly erupting into laughter as someone obviously made a private joke.

Brosmer asked if everybody would please sit down so the meeting could begin. As the two groups sat facing one another in the hall, Brosmer requested that each one of the visitors identify themselves prior to their discussions. Not intimidated by Brosmer's request, Rabbi Erwin L. Herman immediately asked the growers if they also would please introduce themselves.

The introductions completed, Brosmer began paraphrasing the delegation's released report to the 35 growers present, glancing occasionally at a copy in his hand. Again, it was Rabbi Herman who would request that the statement be read in full. As Brosmer finished his reading to the growers, he indicated that any attempts by the two parties to engage in a discussion of the issues of the current grape strike would be fruitless in light of the religious groups' statement, and suggested the meeting be adjourned.

Hall and Herman, however, expressed their regret that the two bodies could not have carried on a dialogue during the day concerning the strike and, speaking for the delegation, indicated that they were still mystified as to why the growers failed to keep their luncheon date. Brosmer offered no explanation, only that he did not consider the noon meeting a "formal" enough occasion to discuss the strike.

Two growers then took the floor to attack the delegation. Dispoto angrily challenged the presence of Vizzard, bitterly wondering how the Jesuit priest could be on a "fact-finding" tour when on October 7 he had endorsed the NFWA and the strike. Calmly, Vizzard replied, "I have been studying the farm labor problem for 25 years, and I consider my presence in Delano at this time part of that education."

George Lucas, of Lucas & Sons Ranch and a University of Notre Dame graduate, also bitterly denounced the involvement of the religious leaders in the strike. Standing before the delegation in his ND school jacket, he charged, "You come here playing God and give us your wrath."

Brosmer quickly adjourned the meeting and called an immediate press conference to once again give the growers' views regarding the committee's statement before what he expected to be a largely docile few reporters. What the grower spokesman had not counted on, however, was the presence of William "Bill" Flynn, a hard-nosed veteran journalist and currently the bureau chief for *Newsweek* magazine in San Francisco.

Flynn had been traveling with the delegation throughout the day, gathering material for his magazine on a cover story featuring Robert McAfee Brown and his impressions at the recently completed session of Vatican II in Rome.

In a few direct questions, Flynn quickly had Brosmer on the ropes, not only concerning the treatment of the delegation, but why, if the workers were so satisfied with their wages and working conditions, were they striking and leaving the vineyards in such large numbers.

Brosmer could only answer that "there is no valid evidence that the dignity of the workers is being harmed," while he again reiterated his objections to the clergy's involvement in the strike. "When one gets emotionally involved in a cause, he is no longer able to be objective." He also added that anyone could find hunger and poverty if they looked long enough and hard enough.

Questioned by Flynn about Pope John's statement in *Pacem In Terris* that workers have a right to form voluntary associations and unions, Brosmer, a Catholic, answered that he was sure "the Pope didn't mean that all men everywhere should be organized." Brosmer then quickly ended the press conference.

Meanwhile, some two dozen growers who had remained in the hall were singling out various members of the delegation, explaining to them in impersonal terms the issues of the strike. Others, like Luis Caratan, were taking out their wrath. A graduate of the Jesuit Seattle University (also the author's alma mater), he approached Vizzard and scornfully muttered to him, "You're no Jesuit priest, you're a God-damn Communist!" Caratan's wife would also later angrily question how I could associate myself with the religious leaders, the CMM, and the NFWA and still call myself a graduate of a Catholic university.

It was after 6 p.m. when the delegation began to file out of the meeting hall and into the chill winter night. Those who had flown in from the East Coast for the tour immediately arranged for transportation to Los Angeles, some 135 miles to the south. Others began the long car trip to San Francisco, some 260 miles to the north.

As one car carrying both members of the delegation and the press turned onto U.S. 99, headed north, an ever-present, radio-equipped, grower-owned white pickup truck drew alongside the car. For nearly 50 miles, the truck's headlights were visible behind the car.

As the two vehicles approached the small family farming community of Selma, California, the truck's features disappeared, and the occupants of the San Francisco-bound car, weary from their day of frustration and harassment by the growers and their representatives, recalled one union official's reminder to them earlier that day: "Delano is a lot closer to Selma than most people realize!"

In the months immediately following the tour of the national religious leaders, a number of Protestant Church bodies issued public endorsements of the strike and the role of the California Migrant Ministry in the strike. Among those groups lending such support were:

Board of Christian Social Concerns of the Northern California Conference of Methodist Churches and the Southern California Conference of Methodist Churches; the Pacific Southwest Synod of Lutheran Church in America; Northern California Convention of the Disciples of Christ; Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ; and the Southern California Conference of the United Church of Christ. The California Church Council, the Santa Clara County Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. also endorsed the strike in a supportive way.

While the Presbytery of Los Angeles rejected a resolution of support for the strike, 143 to 122, after what one minister described as "a strong appeal to anti-union sentiment," the Presbytery of San Francisco voted overwhelmingly to support the Delano walkout. Prior to the latter's vote, one San Joaquin Valley minister denounced the strike to the Presbyterian clergymen as a "Catholic plot" being engineered secretly in Washington, D.C. by Father Vizzard.

The Southern California Methodist leaders pointed out in their endorsement of support that "growers have consistently refused to bargain in good faith." They noted that the Delano strike, however, was "a first step across the country to gain for farmworkers the full benefits of the nation's economy." They added that churches in rural areas should "explore ways their congregations might minister more effectively to the needs of the workers who live in or move through their communities."

Immediate opposition to this stand was taken by the Exeter Methodist Board of Churches in Tulare County. In a letter to California Methodist Bishop Donald Harvey Tippett in San Francisco, the Exeter board declared that the involvement of the clergy in a farm labor dispute on the side of the strikers is "out of keeping with the basic Christian principles."

Full support for the strike was announced in early January, 1966, by the Western Association of Reform Rabbis. Urging growers to negotiate, Rabbi Stephen Forstein of Temple Beth Hillel in Richmond, California, also called upon the various congregations of the Association to collect money, food, and clothing for the striking families.

The theological as well as the economic implications of the strike quickly became a popular subject of debate between church leaders and California farming interests as religious support for the Delano strike increased.

In San Francisco on February 6, representatives of grower organizations, the farm labor movement, clergymen, and civil rights leaders explored those implications in a forum discussion held at the Glide Foundation.

Rev. William Miller, a San Francisco Methodist clergyman, representing the CMM, upheld the responsibility of the Church to move from a neutralist position, which by its neutrality supported the "arrogant complacency of the status quo" into efforts to change the social structure.

Allan Grant took exception to the statement, charging that the CMM's support of the farm labor movement was a "humanistic horizontal" approach to religion, where the primacy should be first vertical—man's relationship to God. The Church, he said, as the Body of Christ is responsible to its Head and must speak with the corporate voice of its members and not its liberal or conservative elements. "The Church's role should be redemptive and reconciliatory."

Referring to the participation of clergymen on the Delano picket lines, Grant asked, "Are we reconciling man to man when a clergyman with a bullhorn is yelling to men in the fields and then the clergy asks to be the reconciliatory factor in a dispute? We should be reconciling, but not on the picket line."

SNCC's Terry Cannon responded to Grant's call for personal benevolence.

"The power situation which now exists in Delano and which puts workers at the tender mercy of another cannot be tolerated in our society."

Plans were also revealed by the CMM at the conference for the establishing in California of a "worker-minister" program based on the French worker-priest movement.

The "worker-minister" would be expected to live in rural areas for two years and work with farm laborers. Projected earnings from working in the field would be approximately $1500 a year. An additional $2000 per year subsidy for hospitalization and pension would be provided by a supporting denomination. The idea had grown out of a successful 1963 summer project in West Fresno when Rev. Richard Sample of the CMM had worked in the fields with a youth crew as a worker-minister.

On March 7, the board of directors of California Church Council issued a statement commending the CMM and its director. The statement also again asked that negotiations be held between the growers and workers.

The Delano Ministerial Association again reacted negatively, and later that month, before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor hearings in Delano, expressed its own views. Rev. E. B. Moore, the spokesman for the association, emphasized to the senators that Delano "has always—I repeat, always!—been free of bigotry and discrimination."

Many in the audience listening the black minister's testimony recalled the story of how a Mexican-American teenager, along with his girlfriend, had gone into a local theater in 1943 and sat on the side of the aisle reserved for the "Anglos." When he refused to move after

being warned by the usher and the manager, two Delano policeman were called and removed him bodily from the theater, taking the 16-year-old to the police station. Cesar Chavez remembers his arrest.

"It's not so much that once incident I think about, but a problem was there, and I wanted to strike back," he recalled.

Moore also told the Senate subcommittee that he often wondered what all the fuss was about in Delano and why the churches had aligned themselves with various civil rights organizations and members of university free speech movements to intentionally create a "full-scale civil rights movement."

He asked, "What is their purpose? Is it to break the harmonious and integrated community in which they live? Is it to build barriers of racial prejudice and hatred amongst the various races by fomenting civil unrest ? What we really have is this: a few self-appointed organizers failed in their efforts to induce more than 5000 farmworkers to follow a grandiose scheme which they have invented.

"Failing in this, these same professional agitators then spearheaded an array of attacks on a variety of respectable, social-minded citizens and agencies of our community….We resent civil rights advocates coming into our community to foment civil unrest. There are no barriers to break down, except those of harmonious living and decency—and we don't need or want this."

As Rev. Moore concluded his testimony, Senator Harrison B. Williams (D-New Jersey) read a telegram which the committee had just received from the 400-church Presbytery of San Francisco renewing their pledge of support for the striking grape pickers.

"Your testimony, Rev. Moore," Williams observed, "and this telegram certainly brought to my mind the passage in the Bible which I believe states, 'You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. Were it not so, I should have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you' (John 14:2). I am sorry, Reverend, to learn in listening to your testimony here today that you are in opposition to many of the principles which this committee believes in and the goals we are attempting to achieve."

Hartmire, like the senators and other California churchmen, was saddened over the "division in His house." As the youthful CMM director explained:

"Being with farmworkers would not be controversial if there were not a festering wound in the life of the community that results in suspicion and hostility on the part of farmworkers and guilt and fear on the part of established citizens. Somehow that wound must be confronted and healed.

"It will only happen as men and women who are used to humiliation learn to stand and take their place in community life and as those who are used to a superior place learn to share power and treat their brothers and sisters with respect. That day of healing seems to be a long way off. But the Church by its relevant presence in the Delanos of this Valley can announce its coming."

CHAPTER FOUR
Chalices of Gold and Hearts of Wood

By reason of its social teachings, no one institution had the potential of being more intimately associated with the cause of Delano's striking grape pickers than the Roman Catholic Church. Upwards of 90 percent of the workers were baptized Catholic, and it was estimated that nearly 75 percent of the struck growers were professed Catholics.

Yet the institutional Church, in both Delano and California, with few exceptions, initially turned its back on the farmworkers in those early days of the strike.

"When the Church first came to California, it came with hearts of gold and chalices of wood. Today it is symbolized by chalices of gold and hearts of wood."

To some people this observation by a California priest in 1965 was seen as an understatement of the Church's role in the nation's number-one agricultural state. The fact remained, however, that vast numbers of Mexican-American, Filipino, Puerto Rican, Anglo, and Black citizens in California were receiving little spiritual care from an institutional Church whose concern for their social needs was often too little and too late.

Members of the clergy had long used the argument that "while we may not be taking care of their social problems, we are at least watching out for their spiritual welfare."

Generally, such was not the case. Little concern had been paid to the sacramental lives of the California farmworker. In a typical situation, in a few years prior to the strike one apostolic laywoman made a census of the farmworker community located several miles outside of Tracy, California. She discovered that many of the workers' children had not been baptized or made their first communion. Others had not been confirmed, marriages needed to be blessed, and confessions needed to be heard.

When she presented her findings to the local pastor, his response was simply, "If those people want the sacraments badly enough, they will come into town to the church."

Typical reactions of growers and local businessmen to a census of this type was summed up in the reaction one valley resident expressed when questioned about the spiritual life of the farmworker.

"The Mexicans can't get to Mass? Well, that's too bad, I suppose, but what do you propose? Upsetting the whole economy of the San Joaquin Valley?"

One child interviewed in the Tracy housewife's census was asked if she had made her first communion. Her face lit up in a smile as she said, oh yes, her first communion was in El Paso, Texas two years ago, her second communion in Phoenix one year ago, her third communion in San Diego several months before, and her fourth communion recently in nearby Stockton.

Those few individual priests throughout the state who had attempted to aid the farmworker, and in previous years the bracero, did not have a trouble-free life, as discussed in Chapter I. Threats of economic pressure by growers against their parishes and dioceses were commonplace. Some openly were prohibited from daring to mention the modern social encyclicals in their visits to labor camps.

One Franciscan priest told how during the bracero program, if the priests were found talking to the workers about their living and working conditions, the next time the priest came to the labor camp to celebrate Mass or listen to confessions, the gate would be locked to him.

"One evening in the fall of 1958," Ernesto Galarza relates in *Merchants of Labor*, "a group of 20 Mexicans held a prayer meeting in their barracks near the town of Soledad. The cots had been cleared from one end of the bunkhouse. On an empty tomato box standing on end, there was a figurine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, attended by a sputtering circle of candle stubs set in tin cans. There was no priest present.

"An elderly bracero clasping a rosary of brown beads led the service. Those who had not joined in sat quietly on the beds or stools along the walls of the room. The responses of the kneeling worshippers rumbled softly in the air staled by warm bodies and soiled clothes. The stagnant gloom, spiced by the flicker of the candles, centered in the bright blue mantle, the pink face, and the golden halo of the illuminated Virgin.

"'When the service ended,'" Galarza writes, "and the lights were turned on, the leader explained that the men had been asking for divine intervention for more work than the three to four hours a day they were getting, for the removal of a harsh foreman, and for the renewal of their contracts. Asked why they did not appoint a committee to deal with the employer on these matters, the bracero replied, "We did, last week, but our leader was taken to the Association the next day and he has not returned."

After giving a particularly pointed sermon on social justice in the fields, one Southern California Franciscan was confronted by an angry grower on the same Sunday morning. "You see that church, Father, I built that church." The priest calmly pointed to a nearby field and replied, "You see that tree stump out there, sir, I can celebrate Mass on that tree stump if I have to."

Beginning with Leo XIII, all the modern popes of the Church have stressed the need for economic and social justice reform where men and women suffer from inequality and slavery.

It was only a few years before the Delano strike that Pope John XXIII in his historic *Pacem In Terris* pointed out the way for those who suffer indignities at the hands of an unjust economic order:

"...It is by all means necessary that a great variety of organizations and intermediate groups be established which are capable of achieving a goal which an individual cannot effectively attain by himself. These societies and organizations must be considered the indispensable means to safeguard the dignity of the human person and freedom while leaving intact a sense of responsibility."

In a specific application of this principle, the members of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, at their 1965 meeting, stated in a policy resolution:

"We maintain that the ultimate solution of the domestic farm labor problem must include organization of farmworkers. Only when this occurs will these workers be able to bargain on an equal footing with growers and processors. Through organization, farm workers will secure the same freedom, respect, and responsibility that others enjoy and thus they will participate more fully in our American way of life."

Initial individual Catholic involvement in the Delano strike came in the form of a letter of support for the NFWA and the strike from Father James L. Vizzard, S.J.:

"So convinced am I that your cause is right that if I could I'd be on the picket line myself. Workers have an absolute and inalienable right to organize in order to achieve their common and legitimate objectives. Employers have a corresponding moral obligation not to attempt to hinder or prevent such voluntary organization of workers. Where recognition and negotiation have been refused by the employers, workers have the right to strike and picket."

Vizzard also commended the California Migrant Ministry for its vital role in assisting the NFWA: "The Migrant Ministry is where Christ would be—with the oppressed. It makes me sad indeed that representatives of the Catholic Church are not in the forefront of the battle along with their Protestant brethren."

Both local Catholic churches—Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Mary's—completely ignored the cause of the workers.

In a Sunday sermon the first week of the strike, a visiting priest at St. Mary's Church urged the workers to work immediately and place their confidence in the growers to pay them a

fair wage. Pastor James Dillon explained why he felt it was not the Church's place to take sides in the strike.

"The people are divided. What affects one, affects all. The church would definitely be a loser in the matter. If the growers have a poor year, the church feels the effect of a poor harvest. I think it is an economic issue and that's the reason for the stand of both Protestant ministers and Catholic priests. It's not a moral issue about the rightness and wrongness. It's something I can't answer."

Prior to September, 1965, the NFWA had been meeting in Our Lady of Guadalupe parish hall. Shortly after the strike began, with the pastor, Rev. Francis X. Alabart, on vacation, pressure from growers on the assistant pastor resulted in the NFWA being denied use of the hall for a children's party.

When this writer, as a correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*, attempted to interview the St. Mary's Church assistant pastor, he was ordered under the threat of police action to immediately leave the parish rectory by a man identifying himself only as a "local Catholic businessman." Admitting that over 85 percent of the church's parishioners were involved in the walkout, he angrily charged that the strike "'was not a matter that concerned the Church." Later, after reporting the confrontation, *NCR* received a letter from the St. Mary's assistant pastor denying that anybody from the church had refused to be interviewed and accusing me of fabricating the story to make the growers and church look bad.

Before leaving the church, out of curiosity, I visited the church vestibule to take note of what church literature was available, and picked up a copy of the parish's latest Sunday bulletin. A notice on the bulletin board listing the members of the church altar society caught my eye, and I quickly looked down the list of names, mostly all recognizable names of growers' wives and family members.

II

Despite the lack of official involvement, Catholic religious were active in the Kern County and Delano areas both prior to the strike and at its onset.

As a Christian Brother, LeRoy Chatfield was project director and instigator of a successful Community Brotherhood Vocation School in Bakersfield during the summer of 1965. The philosophy of the school was based upon the premise that motivation and incentive for learning can best be affected by providing a child with learning experiences that are meaningful, exciting, and practical, not necessarily a remedial summer school program or any other program usually associated with "school."

More than 300 boys and girls from the Carversville-Crystal Heights area of Bakersfield participated in the program. Most of these children came from families whose average

yearly income was $2000 a year, whose high school drop-out rate was 90 percent, and whose average grade level attained was the fifth grade. These students and more than 50 volunteers from other high schools and colleges throughout California participated in the "summer of sharing" under the tutelage of religious and lay master teachers.

One San Francisco high school student described his experience in the school as "an opportunity to put into practice what I had been taught, to prove what I really believed in—that all persons are equal, that each person has value and is another Christ."

In their work with the children from Bakersfield, Chatfield and his master teachers found many children from farm labor families and thus became familiar with the work of the CMM, the NFWA, and Cesar Chavez.

One teacher, Mother Assumpta, an Ursuline nun, remarked on the conditions she and the others found existed in the Southern San Joaquin Valley:

"Delano has nothing on Selma, Alabama as far as social injustice or racial prejudice is concerned. I can't understand why the Church is not more involved in backing the efforts of the NFWA to end the shameful exploitation of California's farmworkers. As Cesar Chavez has said, 'To exploit a man is to destroy the image of God in him.' And is it not the purpose of the Church to preserve that image?"

The 31-year-old Chatfield, who also was teaching in the Christian Brothers' high school, would later join the NFWA as the association's co-op director. He explained to this reporter his leaving the religious order:

"I just felt that I could no longer work on behalf of social justice at the level of abstraction that my life as a religious teaching Brother seemed to indicate. Then, too, my ever-increasing involvement and identification with the poor only continued to widen the gap between *my* obedience to religious authority and my own understanding of what my life as a Christian Brother must entail. Actually, the decision to make a decision was probably the most difficult part."

He added, however, "Whatever 'levels of consciousness' I have attained is due in large measure to my having been a Christian Brother."

On October 21, with the strike just a month old, a front page editorial, "Our Catholic Church Is Involved" appeared in the *Central California Register*, the official publication of the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno. In it, Catholics living in the San Joaquin Valley were reminded of the rights of the farmworker as well as those of the grower.

"The situation in Delano had to come. It just happened to begin in Delano. The ingredients for a change in the agricultural workers' plight have been brewing for many years. A long look at the labor problems in the vast industry of agriculture is overdue."

While refusing to take sides, the *Register* noted that the Church "tries to create an atmosphere of justice and charity in which both sides can discuss their problems.

"With a situation like that in Delano, the Church has had much to say over the past years. The problems there are not basically new. The location, people, and local issues may be different, but basic principles still apply."

The paper made no mention of a Mass of thanksgiving in Delano's Ellington Park celebrated by Rev. Ephrim Neri of St. John's Cathedral, Fresno, before 400 strikers on the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Neri was also chaplain of the Diocesan Guadalupe Society.

Two weeks later, the *Register* directed a much more conservative front page editorial at its readers.

"The Church has not taken sides in the Delano dispute, nor has it sent any representatives, whether they be religious or lay, to speak in her name. To align Herself with either side would belie the Church's duty to seek a just and peaceful solution in the dispute."

Denouncing "outside groups," the paper warned that their intervention could be "disastrous" and that their presence could not be of any "useful purpose" except for their own "selfish interests."

A subsequent Council of California Growers newsletter applauded the *Register*'s November 4 editorial noting that "the Church has not taken sides in the Delano dispute." The newsletter also pointed out that Father Vizzard's October 7 letter to the NFWA was "difficult to reconcile" with that of the *Register* editorial. The California grower publication concluded that the diocesan paper's comment on "outside groups" and "selfish interests" was "perhaps in reference to people like Vizzard."

III

> "Join with us! This is a fight for everybody; for you and for us. Leave your work and fight for social justice."

On October 27, seven weeks after the strike began, two Sacramento priests and Cesar Chavez made a dramatic airborne appeal to grape pickers in the struck vineyards. Piloting his own private Cessna 180, Rev. Keith Kenny, accompanied by Rev. Arnold Meagher and Chavez, flew low over southern Kern County vineyards for more than 90 minutes, calling out in Spanish to the pickets below over a bullhorn strapped to a camera mount.

Kenny explained their action:

"After reading the *National Catholic Reporter*'s October 20 account of the strike and learning that no local clergy were involved, Father Eugene Lucas, my assistant, and I drove to Delano. When we arrived, a local priest advised us not to get mixed up in the strike."

Kenny and Lucas, however, walked in two picket lines singing "*Maria Mia Madre"* and other Spanish hymns. NFWA officials later claimed that the priests were responsible for 24 pickets leaving the fields that day.

After returning from the picket lines, Kenny and Chavez discussed plans for the following week's flight. Chavez checked out local laws regarding air traffic while Kenny reviewed Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) regulations. The priest-pilot requested two witnesses to be present in the aircraft to keep a careful watch on the altimeter.

"We noticed one crew gone and one crew leaving as we flew over the fields. We have no way of knowing, however, if this was due to our efforts," Kenny recalled.

Upon landing, the priests and Chavez were immediately confronted by two growers and a Kern County deputy sheriff. One of the angry growers, Jack Pandol, told Chavez, "I see you had the pope with you today."

Two priests representing local Bishop Aloysius J. Willinger also met the flying priests and told them emphatically that "the bishop feels that this is none of your business and asks that you go back to your own diocese."

Kenny protested, "Where the poor are, Christ should be, and is."

Meager later decried the Church's involvement in the strike as a "scandal by default; only Protestant clergy and laymen have been the ones to take up the cause of the people who are mostly Mexican-American and Catholic."

The same day of the flight, a group of growers would return and began taking photographs of the plane. On November 7, Chavez was arrested and charged with operating a loudspeaker system without a permit. Later, he was released on $100 bail. A complaint to the FAA was also filed by Delano growers. Kenny, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento, replied to the growers' charges in a detailed letter to the FAA.

He denied that any violations of FAA standards for altitude, air speed, or maneuvering were committed. He listed two witnesses to safe altitude of the flight itself, two more for pre-flight planning, one for maintenance of the aircraft, four for his reputation as a pilot, five character witnesses, including two state senators, and a witness who had a tape recording of "threats made against me by persons instigating this complaint."

Shortly after the priests returned to Sacramento, it became obvious that they had been silenced by local chancery office officials. Scheduled to deliver a talk on the strike to

students at Sacramento State College on November 10, Kenny notified the school at the last moment that he would be unable to speak. He gave no reason for the cancellation.

Both priests had "no comment" to the press. Similar responses also came from the Sacramento chancery office, although one diocesan spokesman did admit that the whole matter would have to wait until Bishop Alden J. Bell returned from the fourth session of Vatican II in Rome.

Msgr. James H. Culleton, chancellor of the Monterey-Fresno diocese, meanwhile termed "accurate" a November 10 story which appeared in *NCR* stating that Bishop Willinger had requested the Sacramento chancery office to forbid the two priests from coming to Delano.

"We don't want outside clergy making trouble in the area," the chancellor stressed. "The diocese is doing what it can to bring the dispute to a just and peaceful solution."

Culleton also stated that Rev. Vincent Cowan, diocesan Rural Life Director, and "two or three laymen whose names I don't know" were attempting to work a solution to the Delano strike.

"Any further questions," he added, "Father Cowan will have to answer."

Cowan, when questioned on what role his office was playing in settling the strike, offered no comment, adding that any statements on the strike would have to come from Bishop Willinger. The 80-year-old bishop was unavailable for comment at the time and shortly afterward left on a month's vacation to Puerto Rico. In the meantime, however, Willinger forbade Cowan and all other diocesan clergy to discuss the strike with the NFWA.

Reaction to Kenny and Meagher's silencing was immediate and sharp. One layman commented, "Even in 1969, the 'Romans' are still throwing Christians to the lions." One Fresno priest, expressing displeasure over the fact that he and several of his fellow priests were not able to assist the striking grape pickers, deplored the action, which also prevented outside priests from entering Delano.

Later, before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor hearings, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy asked several farmworker witnesses if they had been helped by members of the clergy. Expressing surprise at their negative replies, Kennedy said he felt it was the obligation of the clergy—including bishops—to show concern for agricultural workers.

Sen. Kennedy, in discussing the subject later with this writer, stressed that he considered the bishop's first responsibility to be with the poor and the oppressed. Questioned as to whether a bishop should allow his priests to go out, live with, and help farmworkers, Kennedy smiled and said he would be "both surprised and considerably shocked" to hear of bishops not allowing such freedom to his priests.'

"Bishops should encourage their priests to work with farm laborers, and they themselves should leave their homes, if necessary, and live among these workers," he said.

In early December, Bishop Bell returned from Rome, and a diocesan spokesman acknowledged that the bishop and Father Kenny had conferred on the latter's participation in the Delano strike. Shortly after that conference, the priest was again accepting local speaking engagements.

Involvement of the three Sacramento priests in the strike was later defended in a December 15 editorial appearing in the *Catholic Herald*, the official publication of the local diocese.

Noting that "from numerous reactions in local circles, clerical as well as lay, one would think that they [the priests] absconded with the parish money or ran off with some divorcee," the editorial stated. "All they did was call attention to the fact that Christ was grieved because few voices were being raised in defense of His favorite people, the poor."

Pointing out that the priests were not taking sides as to the "particular decisions" necessary in settling the strike, the paper added that they were merely dramatizing the rights of the workers to be heard.

"These workers have a right to a living wage, which they are not receiving. They have a right—indeed a duty, if we take papal encyclicals seriously—to organize in order to accomplish justice.

"These rights are being denied. They are not even being given a hearing. It is possible that their specific demands may be impractical or impossible. But in not even recognizing their plight and entering into negotiations, the growers are guilty of a serious crime against humanity. That and only that was the message our local priests attempted to write in dust and in the sky."

The Delano Ministerial Association also came under sharp attack from the *Herald*.

"Since when," the paper asked, "is injustice a local situation? What is local about growers in a given area being led around by the nose regarding farm labor policies by the agri-tycoons who operate from San Francisco's plush financial district?" [See Chapter VI.]

The editorial denounced "foreign interference" in Delano in the form of strikebreakers who are being "imported to work the vineyards and starve out the permanent residents."

In El Paso, Texas, the previous week, Bishop Sidney M. Metzger had urged farmworkers in the 18 counties of his diocese not to accept jobs in the strikebound California area after he received a report that Delano growers were recruiting in the diocese.

"No one is an outsider," the Sacramento diocesan paper concluded. "To say otherwise is to deny the common brotherhood of man. Christ made it perfectly clear that we must go to our brothers wherever they exist. The major dictate is their need.

"Will you choose Christ's ministers who appear to have succumbed to the pressure of economic blackmail in preference to proclaiming the message of the Gospel? Or will you thrill to the Christian witness of three local priests who gave the parable of the Good Samaritan a vital application in the waning months of 1965?

Really, there's isn't any contest."

IV

Even before the controversy surrounding the role of the Sacramento priests had subsided, the visit of three other clergymen was being denounced by the Monterey-Fresno chancery office.

In a front-page letter that appeared in the January 6, 1966 *Central California Register*, Bishop Willinger angrily denounced Father Vizzard for a public statement the Jesuit had issued on December 14 while visiting the strikebound vineyards.

Willinger referred to the NCRLC official as "The Horn Blower of Delano."

It was Vizzard, along with Msgr. William Quinn and Father John Wagner, who were among the 11 nationally prominent religious leaders who visited Delano on the 24-hour CMM-arranged fact-finding mission. Willinger termed their presence one of "challenging defiance."

"Neither Vizzard nor his intrusive associates had the courage to face the Bishop nor the courtesy to call upon him. It was all a prearranged scheme. They chose the role of challenging defiance to dramatize their clerical presence as well as to emphasize the super-righteousness of their strike support."

In his letter, Willinger also revealed publicly the contents of a personal memo which Msgr. Edward O'Rourke, executive director of the NCRLC, had recently written to Vizzard.

O'Rourke recalled a previous warning to Vizzard to "avoid public involvement" in the strike. He told the priest that the walkout did not involve the Washington, D.C. office but was under his jurisdiction and "the Ordinaries and the Diocesan Directors of California with whom I have been working closely."

He also noted that "we try to help rural people by supporting the efforts of existing organizations, keeping ourselves very much in the background." O'Rourke termed Vizzard's performance in Delano as "endangering" the efforts of the NCRLC.

"The issue at stake is not whether agricultural workers have a right to strike. It is a question of how a lasting improvement of their lot can be won and what is the proper role of the NCRLC in such efforts.

"I do not accept the inference you made in your letter of December 10 that the issue at Delano is so urgent, that all others within the conference and the California dioceses have been so derelict in our duty toward the strikers, that you are forced in conscience to disregard all regulations and proprieties and rush to the aid of the strikers regardless of the price you have to pay…."

O'Rourke concluded his letter to Vizzard by warning him that any future public involvement in the Delano strike "would be interpreted as a serious breach of duty."

Using O'Rourke's letter as proof that Vizzard was without credentials, Willinger added, "His [Vizzard's] participation in the dispute in Delano was an act of unadulterated disobedience, insubordination, and a breach of office."

The bishop also termed Vizzard's December 14 statement on the strike as "self-injected hysteria of the priest's disposition and the autocratic, flamboyant expression of one-sidedness—symptomatic traits—that preclude soundness and impartiality of judgment. In effect it poses the question of the man's competency, a matter to be looked into lest greater harm is done to the high office and purpose he pretends to represent."

Continuing, Willinger criticized what he termed Vizzard's "slide rule notion of obedience and submission to authority. This norm of conduct is of recent birth and is based on the New Breed's conception of personal freedom. It is called the 'Conscience Crisis.'"

Calling upon the National Catholic Welfare Conference to "hold their subordinates within reasonable bounds, to keep them at their posts, and not allow them to roam the country dictating individual ideologies or promoting personal schemes," Willinger concluded his letter by stating: "Any departure from this rule will only lead to confusion, division, and scandal. *Pacem in terris et in cordibus nostres*."(sic)

In another open letter, which appeared in the same edition of the *Register*, Msgr. Joseph G. Dowling, vicar-general of the diocese, sharply attacked *Ave Maria*, a national Catholic weekly magazine published at Notre Dame, Indiana. *Ave Maria* had editorially praised Father Vizzard for his December 14 statement.

In its editorial, "Delano—Another Selma?" the magazine stated that Vizzard's "intervention is significant because it is the action of a mature leader who has worked many

years for the cause of justice for the agricultural worker. His action represents a confrontation with Church authorities in California; this has caused the priest to spell out his beliefs concerning the official lack of action in this situation."

Dowling in his letter termed the "editorial writers" of the magazine as giving the impression of a "cantankerous, fault-finding, poorly informed lot, who show little of the spirit of Christ-like charity or even a respect for the rudiments of truth and justice."

Accusing *Ave Maria* of "besmirching the fair name" of Bishop Willinger, the vicar-general's letter noted that the bishop had not taken sides in the Delano labor dispute.

"Like every other good and conscientious shepherd he must be mindful of the needs and problems of all members of the fold. And in this instance his fatherly consideration must be not only for the workers but for the growers."

Dowling's letter went on to take exception to Vizzard's characterization of the growers as "unscrupulous taskmasters who are only too ready to squeeze the very life blood out of their employees."

"They are humans like the rest of us," Dowling emphasized, "and have the faults of humans. It is unfair to assume also that we hesitate to speak out against injustice because of the reprisal from those best able to support our churches, schools, and institutions."

The open letter concluded by challenging Vizzard and Rev. John Reedy, C.S.C., editor and publisher of *Ave Maria* to "leave their ivory towers and come out to this vineyard of the Lord where people are, where there are souls to be saved. They would accomplish far more for the poor by honest labor where priests are than by carping criticism and destructive comments."

While the Vizzard-Willinger-*Ave Maria*-Dowling controversy raged, the *National Catholic Reporter* observed editorially that the bickering in Delano was obscuring a national issue.

"We think the situation in Delano is another clear demonstration of the need for some means of getting past the principle of total local control. It's possible that the absence of such machinery added to the tension felt by Father Vizzard in this case. It is not the rights of Father Vizzard that primarily concern us, however, but rather the right of farm laborers—and other individuals and groups similarly situated—to have the justice of their cause judged by its merits and to have any support they deserve. What has happened in Delano, Selma, and Jackson [Mississippi] is bound to happen again, and the Church needs to consider how to handle such situations without bitter and unseemly public disputes."

Three weeks after the exchange between bishop and priest, the NCRLC executive committee meeting in Oklahoma City declared their unanimous support for Delano's striking grape pickers. NCRLC was the official body of the U.S. Catholic Church dedicated

to the welfare of rural people. Among those present at the meeting and approving the resolution were Bishop Frederick W. Freking of La Crosse, Wisconsin, and the Episcopal moderator of the NCRLC; Msgr. O'Rourke; and Father Vizzard.

In their resolution, the executive committee emphasized that the workers' requests for higher wages and collective bargaining procedures "are in keeping with their basic rights."

"Therefore we protest vigorously both the refusal of their employers to honor their requests and the harassment of the strikers. The failure on the part of most of the growers to recognize the right of the workers to organize and conduct a peaceful strike shows that much must be done to develop a Christian conscience toward these issues. We will continue our efforts…to assist workers, growers, and Church leaders to fulfill their respective obligations in this crucial issue.

"In the meantime, we shall go out to these workers to find out from them what they understand to be their own needs, what order of priority they choose in meeting these needs, and how we can help. We shall intensify our efforts to stimulate educational training, housing, and medical and other programs which will better the lot of agricultural workers in California and throughout the nation."

During the winter months, increased support for the strikers and the NFWA came from numerous individual Catholic groups throughout the state and nation. The Catholic Interracial Council of San Francisco and the Sacramento Catholic Council on Human Relations sent both financial assistance and caravans of food and clothing to Delano.

On December 5, an ecumenical-sponsored spaghetti dinner in San Francisco to benefit the striking families raised over $610. The dinner, prepared by the Maryknoll nuns and hosted by the Dominican nuns of Mission San Jose and the women students of Immaculate Conception Academy, was attended by more than 400 Bay Area residents.

The NFWA also received letters of support from Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio, Texas, and Martin J. Burns, executive director of the Catholic Council on Working Life.

Despite these numerous efforts by individual Catholic bishops, priests, and lay groups, the local hierarchy refused to lend its moral and political prestige to the strikers.

CHAPTER FIVE
Three Days That Shook the Valley

I

> "Who among us would choose to go back to the days of unregulated warfare, when the law of the jungle was the only law governing the conduct

> of either side of labor disputes? I am sure there are few…who would advocate such a course. Yet, the law of the jungle still prevails in the world of farm labor-management relations. There are no state or federal laws providing meaningful machinery to bring about amiable settlements of labor disputes.
>
> "…We have chosen California as the site of these hearings for several reasons. California is the nation's largest and most varied agricultural state. Conditions here mirror, to a considerable extent, conditions in the rest of the nation. We have also come to California to seek causes and background of the protracted strike in the grape vineyards in the Delano area…"

With these words, Senator Harrison B. Williams (D-New Jersey), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, opened three days of hearings in mid-March, 1966, which were to take him and his committee from Sacramento to Visalia and then, dramatically, to Delano.

Although the members of the subcommittee included Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Robert F. Kennedy (D-New York), George Murphy (R-California), Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisconsin), and Winston L. Prouty (D-Vermont), only Murphy was present along with Williams the first day in Sacramento. Sitting as a "guest," however, was Rep. Harlan Hagen (D-California), who represented Kings and Tulare counties.

Since the subcommittee first came into existence in 1959, it had initiated legislation that included the Migrant Health Act (then operating in 29 states), the Crew Registration Act, and Title III of the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964. It also first proposed the program of VISTA Volunteers (National Service Corps), which had become part of the poverty program.

Williams, the chairman, had become known as a spokesman for urban-suburban problems. He co-sponsored the Mass Transit Acts of 1961 and 1964, the Federal Open Space Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Medicare, and was chief sponsor and floor manager for the Domestic Peace Corps bill.

In his statement opening the hearings, Williams stressed that the subcommittee was seeking testimony and information relative to proposed legislation planned to bring farm employees under existing minimum wage standards, to assure the farmworker collective bargaining rights, to reform child labor laws, to provide better methods for the recruiting of farmworkers, and the formation of an advisory council on migrant labor.

He noted that the subcommittee had visited California in 1960 and that considerable progress had been made since then. He concluded, "But these are only the first faltering steps in a long and difficult journey toward economic equality for farm employees. This

subcommittee intends to complete that journey. We intend to do it in a manner which will help all segments of agriculture—the workers, the growers, and the processors."

Prior to the testimony of various state and national labor union leaders, a statement from the absent California Governor Edmund G. Brown was read into the subcommittee record. Brown, according to his office, was in Washington, D.C. on "state business."

It was later learned that the affairs of state which kept Brown from the hearings included a briefing by President Lyndon B. Johnson on the war in Vietnam (which Brown "wholeheartedly supported and endorsed") and attending the annual Gridiron Club banquet, at which government and political personalities are lampooned by the Washington press corps.

Brown, in his prepared statement supporting pending farm labor legislation, noted "the deplorable economic and social plight of farmworkers" and urged that a national minimum wage of $1.40 be established for farmworkers instead of the proposed $1.25.

William Kircher, national director of organization for the AFL-CIO and himself a former organizer for the old CIO, told the senators that unless orderly procedures could be established by law to insure collective bargaining rights for farmworkers, workers were likely to resort to methods that could well disrupt the entire agricultural industry.

Harry Bridges, the fiery president of the ILWU, pointed out in his testimony that "the shocking conditions of mainland migratory agricultural workers will only be fully corrected by the pressure of self-organization. Self-organization can be assisted and the stubborn resistance to unionization on the part of the big growers in part overcome by appropriate legislation."

Citing the success of union organization and higher standards of living for sugar and pineapple workers in Hawaii, Bridges explained to the senators that a new agreement recently negotiated with the Hawaii sugar industry raised wages for the lowest classification to $1.89 per hour.

Average hourly wages, including fringe benefits, were in excess of $3. The pineapple minimum is $1.80. He noted also that both industries had comprehensive medical plans, pensions, paid holidays, vacations, sick leave, and severance pay. Hours of work had been reduced to eight per day and 40 per week, with overtime thereafter.

While noting that the proposed legislation for farmworkers could assure them of paralleling the accomplishments of the Hawaii workers, Bridges expressed opposition to two bills—S. 1867 and S. 1868—which were being considered by Williams' subcommittee.

S. 1867 authorized the U.S. Department of Labor to recruit, train, and transport agricultural workers. The labor leader pointed out that there was already an abundant supply of workers "as would become obvious with adequate wages and decent facilities."

Bridges continued, "The facts about farm labor have been known for many years. Progress to correct the situation has also been around for many years. The difficulty is that no one has come up with the muscle necessary to convince DiGiorgio and the other growers that they must learn to behave like employers in other industries. An advisory council [as proposed in S. 1868] is not going to do the job."

Senator Murphy, in responding to Bridge's testimony, stated that he favored laws to protect the farmworkers but feared that unionized workers could strike at harvest times, endangering the picking and shipping of crops. He also feared that higher wages might drive California growers to Mexico.

Bridges replied, "If the growers are going to continue to be subsidized by the workers and if the union movement doesn't have enough steam to change the situation, then I say let them go." Murphy's apprehension also led Bridges to observe, "You used to be a good man, Senator, but you're changing over." The remark caused Murphy to laugh. For many year, the ex-movie star, now junior California senator, was involved with the future California governor Ronald Reagan in the organization of the Hollywood Screen Actors Guild.

Grower representatives, angry at not being able to appear before the subcommittee until early afternoon, complained privately that their testimony would be delivered too late for the prime TV newscasts throughout the state that night.

Lester Heringer, president of the California-Arizona Farm Labor Association, emphasized that the farmworker did not want unionization. "There is little if any grassroots interest in worker organization. Most of the interest in organization has been evidenced by labor union organizers, church and social groups, and troublemakers from the cities who disrupt existing labor-management relations on the farm."

Heringer also opposed S. 1865, which would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to provide limitations on agricultural child labor outside of school hours and when school was not in session. The bill would also extend the then-current protections set forth in Section 12 of the act to any child under 14 years, unless they were employed by the parents on a family farm.

The father of seven children, Heringer protested that while he would not deprive a child of school or exploit the young, he believed "that there are far-reaching educational benefits in young people being allow to work, for this would teach them responsibility, money management, wise use of time, and a feeling of personal accomplishment. Productive and gainful employment also serves as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency."

During a survey week of its 1964 joint Enumerative Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 84,000 children under the age of 14 were working in paid employment on farms. Of these, only 17,000 were family workers.

Speaking for the 60,000 members of California's powerful Farm Bureau Federation, Allan Grant, the organization's president, stated that his group also opposed S. 1864.

"While California farmers are attempting to upgrade farm employment and employees in order to improve the productivity of the farm labor work force, there are still those individuals who are unable to meet the standards, but who nevertheless are of significant help during peak periods. We believe a statutory minimum wage would make it impractical to employ these workers, and would result in a reduction in the total number of workers available to agriculture," Grant said.

Senator Murphy was led by Grant's testimony to call the subcommittee's attention to the fact that California's average farm wage in 1965 was $1.40 and that the state was far ahead of the nation in this respect. "This committee should hold hearings in Texas, as I understand the plight of the workers there is the worst in the nation."

The sharpest exchange of the day came when Cesar Chavez testified before the subcommittee. "I am hoping we don't have to go as far as the Negro revolution and its resulting bloodshed to prove that farmworkers are tired of occupational discrimination and that we are ready for our freedom."

Chavez went on to again label the farm labor contractor "the most evil of all evils in the system."

"One must first understand that a farm labor contractor does not contract work in the full sense of the word. He contracts, actually he buys and sells, human beings. His profit is based on the sweat and toil of the workers and not on any special skills or business acumen of his own—as would be true in the building trades field. All the farm labor contractor does is to promise hourly workers at the lowest price he can find men to work at. The sum of his job is to say: I promise 40 men for 20 days at $1.15 an hour.

"We are told that the system first started in California when the Chinese were recruited in similar fashion by other Chinese acting as labor contractors. That was about 70 or 80 years ago. The system has changed very little. The only thing that has happened is that society has come to accept it. Here in California, we license contractors, a very large percentage of the work is done through them, and they are recognized as the employer."

(At the time of Chavez's testimony, more than 1100 farm labor contractors in California were licensed; however, it was estimated that there were also more than 200 unlicensed.)

"The grower," Chavez continued, "works within this system and supports it because he gets a lot of mileage for his dollar and a lot of fringe benefits on top of that. The labor contractor in many instances acts not only as a recruiter, but also as a bookkeeper, an on-the-job supervisor, a transportation agency, and one who handles all worker grievances in his own special way…Of course he provides the grower with other valuable services, as we have seen in Delano of late; he provides strikebreakers in strike situations."

Shortly after Chavez testified, a federal grand jury in Los Angeles returned a two-count indictment against Gene Morales, Jr., charging the 53-year-old Fresno farm labor contractor with reporting taxable wages of $121,082 during 1960 and 1961, when the true amount was $181,398. On April 14, 1966, Morales pleaded no contest to the charges.

Chavez clearly struck a raw nerve next when he outlined to the subcommittee how the Kern and Tulare counties' sheriff's departments had harassed pickets in the Delano area during the six-month-old strike. Both Murphy and Williams, obviously taken by surprise by the charge, indicated that they would request representatives from the two local law enforcement agencies to appear in Delano to be questioned concerning the labor leader's charges.

At this point, Congressman Hagen asked Chavez if there was any Communist influence within the NFWA. Chavez shot back that he was unaware of such an influence. Hagen countered that one man associated with the NFWA had traveled to Cuba as a student under the sponsorship of the Castro government, but Chavez again denied that any Communist influence existed with the NFWA and challenged Hagen to prove his charges.

It was Senator Murphy at this point who interrupted Chavez, objecting to Hagen's line of questioning and asked chairman Williams to rule the congressman out of order. Williams agreed with Murphy, despite Hagen's objections. The chairman rebuked Hagen, reminding him that "some committees may tolerate this type of questioning, but not this one" and pointed out to Hagen that he was sitting as a guest.

Hagen, a 12-year veteran in Congress, while supporting his party's positions on most domestic legislation, had consistently championed the interests of the large landowners in his district, voting against farm labor legislation and for ever-increasing federal water subsidies.

Despite Williams' warning, the House Democrat again sought to raise the issue of Communist influence. Now an angry Williams turned and confronted Hagen, reminding him again that he was out of order and adding, "I'm chairman here, and I am not afraid to use this," pounding the gavel into his hand. The jammed hearing room in the state capitol broke into applause, only to be brought immediately to order by the pounding of the gavel. Chavez was then excused with the committee's thanks.

Ironically, it was a concerted voter registration drive by Chavez in 1954 that was credited for giving Hagen his margin of victory and his chance to serve in Congress. "He gave me a $45 pen and pencil set later as a token of his appreciation," Chavez later chuckled.

In the previous October, shortly after the strike began, Hagen called upon the OEO to review a $267,887 War on Poverty grant the agency had awarded to the NFWA. Hagen said he thought OEO's director, Sargent Shriver, should make "a review of the grant's merits in terms of program objectives and the desirability of the recipients as the management agency."

Prior to the strike, the NFWA had made application to the OEO for a $500,000 grant to finance three association projects—money management, education, and community development; citizenship education; and research into the basic facts about migrant farmworkers. OEO officials announced in October that they were awarding the NFWA $267,887. On the request of Chavez, however, the grant was to be held up pending the outcome of the strike.

Delano city officials, along with Hagen, strongly criticized the OEO for approving the grant, saying the money could serve a better purpose if it was given to the local high school. After meeting with local growers on October 9, Hagen declared that he would ask for a Congressional investigation of the grant.

A resolution by the Delano City Council asked the OEO to "review" the grant. The resolution stated, " Cesar Chavez is well known in this city, having spent various periods of his life in the community, including attendance at public schools, and it is the opinion of this council that he does not merit the trust of the council with regard to the administration of the grant."

Delano Mayor Clifford Loader declared that the OEO had bypassed local elected officials. He said the grant was "another example of the federal government trying to solve problems when local persons know more about them."

Among those urging the OEO not to withdraw the loan was the Friends Committee on Legislation of Northern California. In a letter to OEO director Shriver, the Quaker group pointed out that if the Delano City Council request was honored and the NFWA was denied the grant, it would have "serious implications" for the entire War on Poverty.

"It raises the question of whether an economic opportunity grant is to be denied when the organization applying for the grant is in conflict with the dominant economic group in the community. We can foresee that, if this is the case, the entire outreach of the 'War on Poverty' to those who are poor and politically weak will be destroyed."

Ronald Van Dorn, local OEO spokesperson, closed the debate, however, stating that "there is no question the grant will be forthcoming when the strike has been settled."

Before convening the March 15 session of the Senate subcommittee hearings in Visalia, California, Williams, Murphy, their staffs, and the press toured various farm labor housing units surrounding the San Joaquin Valley farm community.

First stop was a self-help housing project in nearby Goshen. There, the senators inspected the homes of Manuel and Elida Galindo, who had eight children, ages three to 13, and Joe and Nellie Aguilar, who had seven children, ages one to nine.

Both families had made a down payment on their lots about a year prior to the start of the construction of their homes. Monthly payments were $15. Each family then received a $6600 construction loan from the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA). Most of the work on the homes, with exception of the plumbing, was done by the families themselves.

The homes had four bedrooms, one and a half baths, insulated walls and ceiling, a range, a cooler, a septic tank, carport, and an outside storage closet. The loan called for 10 payments per year of $38.50 each. No payment was required in April and December, when the owners had to pay their property taxes. The total yearly cost to the family, including taxes and fire insurance, was $592, or an average payment of $49.50 per month.

This housing had been developed as a pilot project that involved 20 families who worked with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and had established an organization called Self-Help Enterprises, Inc. The legislative and administrative support for the program had come through technical assistance funds from the OEO and loans for both the housing and land through the FmHA.

In Tulare County, four groups, totaling 29 families, already had qualified for loans and were working on their homes together. Five other groups were discussing preliminary plans, and OEO was processing even more applications, which would enable six of eight San Joaquin Valley counties to start such self-help housing projects.

Testifying later in the day before the subcommittee, Howard Washburn, executive director of Self-Help Enterprises, asked that new legislation be enacted making it easier for farmworker families to participate in the project.

"Legislation should be established to reimburse a homeowner for equity in his substandard house, if this house is condemned when he vacates. More than half the rural low-income families own their own homes. Their total life savings are often wiped out when their home is condemned to society's general benefit."

Examples of these substandard dwellings could be seen by the senators as they left Goshen.

In marked contrast to the clean, economical housing of the Goshen project, the senators next visited the Linnell Farm Labor Camp on the southeast edge of Visalia. Run and maintained by the Tulare County Housing Authority, the camp consisted mostly of corrugated 12-by-18-foot tin shacks that had been built in the 1930s for less than $100 apiece as emergency housing. Rent was presently $22 per month, and if the renting family was larger than four, they were required to rent an additional shack for $8.

The Linnell Camp was the same housing that John Steinbeck used as the model government camp in his classic *The Grapes of Wrath*. These bare cement-floored shacks were windowless, with only rusted screen doors at the entrance. A single light bulb hung from the ceiling. The camp's water supply came from a single cold water faucet nestled among outside garbage cans. Heavily pitted dirt roads rambled throughout the camp. No washing machines were allowed at Linnell, and the women were forced to do their clothes washing with old-fashioned scrub boards.

One resident, Ernest Loredo, described to the senators how he and his family, after working in the fields all day with the temperature often hovering near 100 degrees, would rest in a nearby park after work before returning to their sweltering shack.

"It's like rain if you go inside during the day," Loredo related.

No water-run air conditioning units were allowed in the camp, with only 13 showers available to the families living in some 225 metal shelters.

Murphy came out of one of the camp's shacks obviously disturbed over the crowded living quarters with beds, chairs, and tables jammed together, labeling the housing "shameful," and urged the immediate destruction and replacement of the units with federally financed homes.

"I am generally not known in Washington as an advocate of big government spending, but if we can give money to people like Tito and Nassar, we certainly should be able to do something quickly for these workers." Murphy expressed the hope that no committee or senators would ever have to visit the Linnell Camp again and see what he had just seen.

Senator Williams told newsmen, after inspecting the camp and talking with a half dozen residents, "It is unimaginable that people in the 20th century have to live in this type of housing."

Prior to the senator's visit, U.S. Secretary of Labor Wirtz had toured the state and expressed "shock" and "horror" at the living conditions in a camp maintained by C.W. Englund , who owned some 55 camps throughout California, housing some 10,000 workers.

After the Linnell Camp, the Senate subcommittee visited a child daycare center, which occupied an old tavern near downtown Visalia. The center, one of 25 that were needed in the Tulare County community, was funded through legislation proposed by Senator Williams' subcommittee three years previously.

After their housing tour, the senators were greeted by a packed Veterans Memorial Hall crowd when they arrived for their formal hearings. Chanting AWOC pickets greeted the senators on the sidewalk as they entered the hall.

The first witness to appear before the subcommittee was Congressman Hagen. Assuring the subcommittee that he had remained "neutral" in the Delano strike, he proceeded to question at great length the relevancy of the Delano investigation.

Next to testify was Professor Benjamin Aaron, a law professor at UCLA. However, before he could begin, the audience suddenly broke into loud and sustained applause as Senator Robert F. Kennedy took his place at the committee table.

After the crowd again settled down, Prof. Aaron, who had been appointed by Wirtz in 1965 to head a panel of three to study California growers' requests for more braceros, expressed his support for the bills before the subcommittee. He added:

"I am well aware of the political obstacles in the way of such sweeping changes in public policy. Moreover, I know from my own experience as chairman of the California Farm Labor Panel that when it comes to reform, the best is often the implacable enemy of the better."

Following Aaron's testimony, Msgr. Daniel J. Kennan, a long-time advisor to Bishop Aloysius J. Willinger of the Monterey-Fresno diocese, came before the subcommittee. Kennan admitted that the farmworkers had a moral right to organize but was reluctant to agree with Senator Kennedy that the employer had a corresponding moral obligation to allow the workers such a freedom.

The aged monsignor said he felt that a national minimum wage would take away the farmworkers' incentive and initiative, that he had yet to see a true representative emerge capable of organizing the workers in California, and suggested to the subcommittee that trailers and mobile homes should be considered toward solving the farmworkers' housing problems.

He added that collective bargaining was nearly impossible, since no one could devise a system to establish such procedures. His observation immediately drew a response from Kennedy. "If we can put a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s, then it seems to me we should be able to work out such a simple problem for farmworkers after 30 years of talking about it."

As Kennan concluded his remarks, Kennedy thanked the Huron, California, pastor for his testimony and added, "We shall be praying for you in Church on Sunday, Monsignor." Lost in the audience's laughter, Kennan replied, "Yes Senator, and you'll be paying for me on Sunday, too!"

After the noon recess, at which time Kennedy, after arriving in midmorning, visited the Self-Help Enterprises Project housing units, John H. Dungan, president of the Tulare County Farmers Association, was the first to testify. Earlier in the day, Dungan had called a press conference to protest the fact that he was the only grower witness to appear before the subcommittee in Visalia.

Dungan, in his testimony, noted that "the trend away from migrancy among farmworkers was quite general throughout California." He quoted a 1963 Governor's Commission on Housing Problems report:

"California's agricultural labor force no longer fits the classic picture of the migrant following the crops from town to town as a camper with no fixed place of residence. Eighty-eight percent of the farmworker population now live regularly in the same county; 73 percent have been county residents for more than five years."

Dungan concluded by stating that federal farmworker recruiting was no longer necessary, as farmers could recruit their own workers; government policy should be directed toward reducing migrancy, not increasing it; a national minimum wage would destroy the incentive piece rate system; and by abolishing certain state and federal farm employment agencies, tax money could be used to finance farmworker housing.

During the Tuesday afternoon session, the senators also heard appeals for passage of more far-reaching farm labor legislation from Prof. Arturo Caberra, Mexican-American Education Association; Gil Simonsen, western district director, United Packinghouse Workers; Bert Corona, Mexican-American Political Association, Oakland; and Don Campos, American G.I. Forum, Campbell, California.

No testimony heard on March 15, however, provided more dramatic impact on the subcommittee than that given by Mrs. Guadalupe P. Olivarez, a member of the Governor's Advisory Commission on the Status of Women and a farmworker herself.

Dressed simply, with a white and red NFWA "Huelga" button pinned to her blouse, Mrs. Olivarez explained in broken English her life as a wife and mother working in the fields of America.

Born in 1922 in Mexico, she lived with her divorced mother, who died in 1932. There she finished the fifth grade and came to live with her father in the U.S., becoming a citizen in 1937 so her father could qualify for "relief surplus."

After spending nearly 10 years in farm work, she married in August, 1945, later giving birth to her first and second child. The first one died, the second, a girl, lived. Poor health, which she blamed on their poverty, plagued the family for the next 10 years, with a son being born during that period.

She recalled how one Ohio farmer hired the family to pick tomatoes and gave them free housing, light, and water. "School in September started, and our first blow came; the farmer informed us that there was a law that children of school age could not be in the fields during school hours.

"We were confused and yet we had to obey the law. They were too small to be left alone in the house or to go in for school; what to do? We decided to leave them in the car close to our job 'till school hours were over. This is like a punishment for energetic growing children, but there was no other way, we were poor and needed work."

In 1957, she recalled, while in Texas, "We had to work $3.50 and $4.50 a 10-hour day, but many times they offered us women $4.50 equal pay and then at the field they would say $4.50 for men and $3.50 for women. I would put my hoe on my shoulder and being as far as 16 miles away from home, we would walk home."

As Mrs. Olivarez progressed through her testimony, she repeatedly apologized for her broken English, but an obviously moved Sen. Kennedy kept urging her on, telling her to just tell her story and not to concern herself with her broken English.

In June, 1960, she continued, the family was chopping cotton in West Texas up to 12 hours a day for 75 cents per hour, when Mrs. Olivarez's boy developed a kidney and bladder infection. Unable to afford housing, the family lived in a farm labor camp.

"It was $5 a week. It was a nightmare sight, no screens, green flies swarming. We had to sleep on the floor, and the outside houses were in terrible unsanitary condition. In September, my daughter fell sick with yellow jaundice."

In June, 1962, the Olivarez family moved to California permanently and chopped cotton, picked table grapes, oranges, and tomatoes, pruned and tied vines, and thinned sugar beets. She also noted that the sanitary condition regulations, as applied to drinking water and restrooms, were not observed by many of the large growers. However, small farmers, she stressed, tended to follow the regulations.

Concluding her testimony, Mrs. Olivarez asked the subcommittee, "If agriculture is California's most vital industry, how come we have such low wages? Low wages are part of our poverty; so is lack of education. I beg of you to consider my words: why so much high school drop-outs? Does not our children deserve a better chance for the future?"

All three senators expressed their deep appreciation for her testimony. Kennedy, father of nine, obviously moved by the accounts concerning her children, asked her what she most wanted for the future.

"Senator Kennedy, I will keep working as long and as hard as I can to see that my child and the rest of the farmworkers' children will have a much brighter future than the one we have had."

III

Children, especially those of the farmworkers, were still on Kennedy's mind the following day when the New York senator, Williams, and Murphy paid an early morning visit to the AWOC hall in Delano.

A tumultuous crowd of Filipino workers greeted the senators when they entered the hall, their first stop on a quick tour of the Delano strikebound area before the final session of the hearings got under way later in the day at the local high school auditorium.

Kennedy, speaking before a battery of TV cameramen and news photographers, which nearly hid him from the audience, emphasized to the crowd that the situation of the farmworker needed to be changed, not just in Delano and California, but also throughout the country. "Wages, housing, and education are the basic needs of the future not only for you but more importantly for your children. All this can't be accomplished overnight, but this committee wants to work with you to make those dreams a reality."

After leaving the AWOC hall, the senators visited NFWA strikers who were meeting in an abandoned labor center west of the city limits. A gusty wind greeted the visitors as they arrived; the three senators walked around the camp talking with the workers. Kennedy paused before a large tin Quonset hut, used by the NFWA to store clothes and food, and began discussing the strike with Cesar Chavez.

Kennedy inquired whether any of the local clergy had become involved in the strike. Chavez, with a sad smile, replied that it seemed the farther away a clergyman was from Delano, the more involved he usually became in the strike, occasioning a wry grin from Kennedy, who joked, "Maybe you should call them up and tell them what's happening; maybe they don't know what's going on."

A quick visit to a few AWOC-NFWA picket lines, a short drive through a portion of the struck vineyards, and the senators' motorcade returned to Delano. Word had been received by the subcommittee that the growers and their local friends had packed the high school auditorium and that many of the workers were being barred from entering the hall by the local police. When the subcommittee arrived at the hall, they found local law enforcement officials standing at each entrance.

Senator Kennedy, who was one of the last to arrive, along with an aide, Father Vizzard, and this reporter, had to push by a local policeman after he refused to budge, claiming that the local fire marshal was forbidding anyone further from entering the hall, despite Senator Kennedy identifying himself as a member of the subcommittee.

More than 100 people were in the hall as the senators began taking their places at the committee table. Another 400 stood outside waiting for admission. Members of the press also had to ask reluctant people to leave their section, despite the fact that many protested their removal.

The left side of the auditorium was reserved for various classes from Delano High School, which rotated throughout the day. The middle section of the hall was occupied by members and friends of the Independent Kern-Tulare Farm Workers Association (IKTFW). Beside them and against the far wall were members of the NFWA and AWOC. Many of the crowd booed when anyone would take a seat in that section of the hall.

Father Vizzard, upon entering the hall, sat down among the members of the NFWA. One angry grower yelled out, "Father Vizzard, what are you doing sitting with the likes of those people?" The middle section of the hall hooted their agreement, but Vizzard slowly stood up, turned in the direction of the scornful grower, smiled, and bowed to the audience as a roar of approval welled up from the nearby workers.

Senator Williams opened the session with a quick announcement that a rotation system was being worked out and at the lunch break the auditorium would be emptied and those presently waiting outside would be allowed to enter. He also warned the audience against demonstrations while testimony before the subcommittee was being given.

Mayor Clifford Loader was the first witness, welcoming the senators to Delano, but quickly pointing out that he felt their trip was unnecessary, since no strike really existed in the area. He blamed "outside agitators" for the excessive publicity given the "disturbance" and added that if any group in Delano represented the farmworkers, it was the IKTFW.

Loader was followed by Martin Zaninovich, the Delano table grape grower, who emphatically disputed the claim that a strike existed in the area and denied that the workers were dissatisfied with the conditions in the fields. "It has been apparent that our workers are not interested in becoming part of these unions. They have rejected all of their efforts. And we respect their decision.

"The simple truth is, gentlemen, that there is no strike in Delano. More than 5000 of the people who regularly, year after year, have picked our crops, stayed on the job." He noted that "the only deviation from long-standing and standard recruiting practices was the recruitment of 70 workers from outside the Delano area."

Zaninovich in his testimony also called for an end to the activities of the U.S. Department of Labor in California.

In questioning, Kennedy asked Zaninovich if the growers would be willing to hold a secret ballot election to determine if the workers, in fact, did want to be represented by a union.

Zaninovich said he doubted whether such an election could be held, due to the difficulties presented by the mechanics of setting up such a procedure that had to deal with a shifting workforce. Kennedy, in maintaining that such a vote should be given serious consideration, reminded the Delano grower, "In your testimony you emphasized that the 1965 crop was picked by '5000 of the people who *regularly*, year after year, have picked our crops and stayed on the job.'

"If this is true, then why not hold a secret ballot election to determine if these regular employed workers do or do not want a union, and then the whole world would know you are fair and equitable."

Kennedy added, "You know, in Mississippi, I have heard some people say Negroes don't want to vote and so there is no need for the voters' rights bill—all we say is give them an opportunity and let them vote if they want to."

The civil rights aspect of agriculture in America was also brought before the subcommittee by Jack T. Conway, executive director of the Industrial Union Department (AFL-CIO), in supporting the pending farm labor legislation.

"It is important to note that a large percentage of agricultural workers are members of racial minority groups. In 1963, 31 percent of the 3.6 million workers who did farm work for wages were nonwhite. In addition, about seven percent were of Spanish-speaking background.

"The National Labor Relations Board Act contains language exempting the agriculture industry from its protection; the Fair Labor Standards Act exempts agriculture from minimum wage and overtime coverage and from full coverage under child labor provisions. Almost all states exempt agricultural workers from protections of workmen's compensation, disability, and unemployment insurance and safeguards of laws regulating some aspects of working conditions.

"In principle," Conway concluded, "these exemptions constitute a denial of civil rights and therefore present another fundamental reason why they should be eliminated."

IV

Complying with the request made by Senators Murphy and Williams after Chavez's testimony in Sacramento on the opening day of the hearings, law enforcement officials

from Kern and Tulare counties appeared before the subcommittee in Delano immediately prior to the lunch break on the following Wednesday. They were asked to answer charges made by Chavez regarding their harassing of pickets and extending preferential treatment to the local growers.

Kern County District Attorney Kit Nelson acknowledged to the subcommittee that he had not arrested or taken any of the growers to trial because he personally held a "reasonable doubt" that they were guilty. He went on to emphasize to the senators, however, that he had warned a number of growers "not to break the law in the future, or I would have to enforce the provisions of the law."

Sheriff Leroy Galen from Kern County then answered questions put to him by Senator Kennedy on the allegations that he and his department had badgered striking grape pickers by stopping them frequently on no charge, making unwarranted arrests, and repeatedly taking their pictures.

One Filipino farmworker had reported that he and a car full of other workers were stopped on the night of September 25 by three cars of Kern County deputies and a paddy wagon. They were subsequently detained for nearly 30 minutes while their names and addresses were being taken and they were photographed. No citations or arrests were made, and when a deputy was questioned on why they had been stopped, he replied, "We're making a confidential investigation relating to the strike."

Other workers also reported having their pictures taken seven and eight different times by local sheriff deputies.

Gaylen said that he needed the pictures for identification purposes, but an incredulous Kennedy reminded him that a man simply walking in a picket line is not considered a "potential troublemaker."

The subsequent exchange between the former U.S. Attorney General and a local symbol of "law and order" would later become the stuff out of which legends are made—almost tantamount to sacred scripture—in the farmworker communities throughout California's valleys, where the law has always stood for the will of the local growers, and order the enforcement of that will.

SEN. KENNEDY: "…When they [the pickets] are just walking along, what did you arrest them for?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "Well, if I have reason to believe that there's going to be a riot started and somebody tells me that there's going to be trouble if you don't stop them, it's my duty to stop them."

SEN. KENNEDY: "Then do you go out and arrest them?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "Yes."

SEN. KENNEDY: "And charge them?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "Charge them."

SEN. KENNEDY: "What do you charge them with?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "Violation of—unlawful assembly."

SEN. KENNEDY: "I think that's most interesting. Who told you that they're going to riot?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "The men right out in the field that they were talking to said, 'If you don't get them out of here [the pickets], we're going to cut their hearts out.' So rather than let them get cut, we removed the cause. . ."

SEN. KENNEDY: "This is the most interesting concept, I think, that you suddenly hear or you talk about the fact that somebody makes a report about somebody going to get out of order, perhaps violate the law, and you go out and arrest them, and they haven't done anything wrong. How can you arrest somebody if they haven't violated the law?"

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "They're ready to violate the law. . ."

CHAIRMAN SEN. HARRISON WILLIAMS: "We will recess…"

SEN. KENNEDY: "Could I suggest that the district attorney and sheriff reconsider their procedures in connection with these matters, because it really is of great concern to me. In the last five minutes, it's a considerable concern to me."

SHERIFF GAYLEN: "Before I do anything, I ask the district attorney what to do. Just like these labor people out here, they ask their attorney, 'What shall we do?'"

SEN. KENNEDY: "Can I suggest in the interim period of time, the luncheon period of time, that the sheriff and the district attorney read the Constitution of the United States!"

Senator Murphy, obviously embarrassed over the sheriff's testimony, and in attempting to restore some dignity, only exacerbated the situation by observing to the committee that it was "too bad that Governor Brown didn't think of this [Sheriff Gaylen's explanation for the arrests] before the riots in Watts." [Three months after the Delano hearings, Sheriff Gaylen lost his re-election bid in Kern County.]

As the subcommittee recessed for lunch and the auditorium was being emptied, a member of Sen. Kennedy's staff approached a local civic official and asked if the farmworkers and the other people waiting outside would be assured of getting seats for the afternoon session.

"Of course," the man answered, "the police and sheriffs are handling the whole thing." The aide hurried on past the official and up the aisle, a look of panic and worry on his face.

After the lunch break, however, the several rows of the hall that had been occupied during the morning session by the IKTFW remained occupied by the same group, as they had refused to leave the auditorium at the lunch break. Rather than risk a major incident, the organization was allowed by the subcommittee to keep their seats throughout the remainder of the day.

V

It was almost 2 p.m. when Williams called for order, and the afternoon session of the Delano hearings began.

Most Rev. Hugh A. Donohoe, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Stockton, was the first afternoon witness. He emphasized to the subcommittee that he spoke in the name of the state's eight bishops and would confine his remarks to the farm labor situation in general, making no comment on the local dispute.

Despite his disclaimer, many of the remarks in Donohoe's subsequent testimony were interpreted by the working press as an expression of tacit approval for the Delano strike. It was significant also that the Stockton bishop, long active in farm labor problems, had traveled over 250 miles to Delano from a neighboring diocese to testify before the senators, instead of appearing before the subcommittee hearings the first day in Sacramento, only a quick 50-mile drive from Stockton.

Such testimony reminded me of *NCR* editor Robert Hoyt's "farther franker theory" dictum in the church: the farther one is from a controversial situation, the franker one tends to be about the issues involved.

No account of the Senate hearings appeared in the *Central California Register* except for a text of Donohoe's testimony simply headlined, "A Bishop Delivers Catholic Testimony at Delano Hearings."

The bishop began by stressing that it was of "crucial importance" that the government "legislate criteria and techniques for determining the legitimacy of a particular effort to organize workers and protect these workers from reprisals for joining in these organizing efforts.

"Those who seek to organize farm laborers," he stressed, "are not to be looked upon as outside agitators."

Stressing the bishops' endorsement of a national minimum wage, Donohoe stated:

"We appreciate the fear of the farmer, especially the independent farmer. It may appear to him that organized farm labor poses a threat that could bankrupt him. This might be true if he is not protected by local, state, and federal governments. This protection should reckon with the disparity in labor costs between the various states and other nations; e.g., a national minimum wage would seem to balance the competitive position of California farmers who must compete with farmers of other states who may pay lower wages."

Commenting on the workers' right to strike, the bishop quoted paragraph 68, Chapter III of the Vatican Council's "The Church in the Modern World," which read in part:

"Although recourse must always be had first to a sincere dialogue between the parties, the strike, nevertheless, can remain even in the present day circumstances a necessary, though ultimate, means for the defense of the workers' own rights and the fulfillment of their just desires."

He concluded by stressing to the subcommittee, "It is becoming evident that unless farmworkers are given the chance to organize, they are going to become the wards of the state."

Sen. Williams broke his own rule at this point by leading the applause for Donohoe's statement. He praised the bishop for giving the subcommittee great inspiration and a sound philosophical basis for the legislation they were considering.

Williams' colleagues echoed the chairman's praise, saying that they had no questions to ask of the bishop. Williams, however, on second thought, said he did have one last question for the bishop.

"Is Huron, California in your diocese? [Msgr. Kennan's home]. Donohoe smiled and said he wasn't familiar with the name. Williams turned to Father Vizzard, sitting at the press table. Vizzard explained that Huron was in the Monterey-Fresno Diocese. Williams chuckled. "That's too bad, Bishop Donohoe, because there is a man there I wish you could speak to!"

As Williams concluded his observation, Congressman Hagen asked for recognition and promptly launched a defense on behalf of Sheriff Gaylen, criticizing the subcommittee for attempting to undermine law enforcement in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Williams quickly interrupted Hagen and ruled him out of order, pointing out that if Hagen wished to address the subcommittee on Gaylen's testimony there would be time later, but that he was not going to let him embarrass Bishop Donohoe, who was still before the senators.

Later, when Hagen again raised the subject, Sen. Kennedy was quick to point out that the subcommittee had in no way sought to discredit the sheriff; rather, Sheriff Gaylen himself was the one who made the incriminating statements, and that he, Kennedy, was simply attempting to learn from the local law enforcement official if his procedures were in conformity with the rights of the individual under the law.

After listening to testimony from three workers from the NFWA and three from AWOC, representatives from the IKTFW were called to the witness stand. Their presence had been requested by Senator Murphy. The IKTFW had been formed in Delano in January, 1966. Termed a "company union" by Chavez, the organization's membership was open to those whose "primary occupation is working for farming enterprises in the area."

Persistent questioning by Sen. Kennedy revealed that the group did not consider itself a union, did not believe in farm labor organizations, had few actual farmworkers on its membership rolls, and the chairman of its board of directors was a farm labor contractor, its treasurer a foreman, and its secretary owned a business establishment in Delano.

During the testimony of the NFWA's Pedro Cardenas, Tony Mendez, and Dolores Huerta, Congressman Hagen began questioning Huerta as to the "true aims and objectives" of her union. The NFWA vice president, however, refused to answer Hagen, directing her remarks to Williams.

"Mr. Chairman, Congressman Hagen is not a member of the committee, he is only a guest, yet he has used his position the past three days to attack the NFWA and call into question our members and our goals. I respectfully decline to answer any of his questions."

Despite Huerta's rebuke, Hagen attempted to ask further questions, but Huerta again refused to answer him. Williams finally ended the confrontation by thanking her for her appearance before the subcommittee and summoning the next witness.

The last witness to testify before the Senate subcommittee was Dr. Jerome A. Lackner, a physician from San Jose, California, engaged in the practice of internal medicine. Lackner had been one of the doctors who had helped staff the Delano Free Medical Clinic. Along with a full-time registered nurse—Peggy McGivern—and Marion Moses, who served as volunteer nurse after having been head nurse of the medical/surgical unit at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in San Francisco, they had maintained the clinic since October, 1965, providing free clinic care to both the NFWA and AWOC strikers. Medical and dental students from the University of California, San Francisco had also been assisting the clinic.

Moses would later become a physician—board-certified in public heath and preventive medicine. Her interest in chemical poisons began with her work with the union, first as a nurse from 1966 to 1971, and then as the medical director of the National Farm Workers Health Group from 1983 to 1986.

Today, Dr. Moses directs the Pesticide Education Center, founded in San Francisco in 1988 to educate workers and the general public about the adverse heath effects of chemical poisons and the availability of safer alternatives. In addition to serving as a doctor to Chavez and the Catholic Worker's Dorothy Day, she has also served on many government panels and committees, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Veterans Administration, and the Toxic Substances Advisory Committee.

Lackner explained to the subcommittee that most of his examinations of patients in Delano had shown them suffering from respiratory tract infections and gastroenteritis, both of possibly viral origin and of longer duration than those patients he examined in private practice. He gave an example, however, of a more serious case and the inordinate obstacles faced by farmworkers.

"I was asked by the nurse to make a house call on a person who was unable to come to the clinic. The husband, who had just two days previously joined the strike, came to the clinic and asked us to see his sick wife.

"We followed him to a very nice, relatively newly built bungalow apartment. Not bad looking, I thought. It had a bathroom, a small living room, and a little kitchen. It would have been an ideal residence for a young couple without children. Inside, though, were a mother and seven children. The stench of putrefying, necrotic tissue filled the interior of the apartment. A baby of 18 months lay asleep on the bare floor in front of a blazing gas heater.

"The mother lay sick on the couch, She had delivered her seventh baby at home with the aid of a neighbor lady several days before I arrived. There was reportedly a considerable blood loss. She was pale and febrile, appeared very toxic, and had a profuse malodorous lochia, which she absorbed on towels stuffed into her underwear. She complained of lower abdominal pains and unquestionably was suffering from fulminant endometritis and probable puerperal sepsis. It was Christmas Eve; I wondered who would take care of the children when she died; the new baby was asleep in the crib.

"I called the county hospital and talked to the admitting resident; prompt evaluation and probable admission was concurred on. I phoned the emergency room four times in the next five to six hours before the poor man showed up at the hospital with his wife. Even then, it was hard for me to understand how it could take anyone so long. The next day he explained.

"He had to go to the NFWA office to get money for gasoline. He had to find a friend whose car would make the trip. He had to place the six older children with a friend who had seven children. Once in Bakersfield, he had to find the house of a relative with enough know-how to bottle-feed and care for the new baby, and then the relative pointed him in the direction of the hospital, which he had trouble finding at midnight, as he had never

been there before. Fortunately, the patient responded well to what must have been technically excellent treatment and was later discharged to return to her family."

As Lackner spoke of the inadequate medical facilities available to farmworkers, many in the audience thought back to the night of January 27 and the death of the NFWA's San Francisco field representative Roger Terronez. The 32-year-old farmworker and former prize fighter had been fatally injured in a freak automobile accident near Delano.

Terronez, father of four children, was taken alive to the Delano hospital. Neither the type of medical care nor the doctors that he needed were available. He was unconscious for two hours as specialists were brought from Bakersfield 32 miles away. The Delano equipment, however, was inadequate, and an ambulance was called to take him to a Bakersfield hospital. He died en route.

Describing his relations with physician members of the Kern and Tulare county hospitals, Lackner was impressed with their interest and intent to provide proficient and prompt medical care for patients he referred in. He did not feel the same way about some of the paramedical personnel in the hospitals.

It was the same paramedical personnel that this writer was concerned about the night before the Delano hearings, but out of that fear came a demonstration of the giving humanitarianism of Lackner. In the process of covering the three days of hearings, I was accompanied by my then-wife and infant son, David.

The afternoon of the second day, he developed his first serious cold, and, being new and concerned parents, we were anxious about his condition. Originally, I had planned to stay with him and his mother in the Stardust in Delano that evening, in case his condition worsened. I remembered, however, that I had seen Lackner's name on the witness list for the next day, and, knowing that the farmworkers were having a rally that evening, I decided to go to the rally to see if I could locate Lackner and get some advice on what we could do to relieve David's misery.

At the rally I quickly found Lackner and after apologizing to him for taking advantage of his medical expertise at this late hour, explained to him David's condition. He, being familiar with my coverage of the strike, didn't hesitate a moment in writing out a prescription for me. After some searching I found a drugstore to fill the prescription and returned to our motel room. The medicine seemed to have some effect, but about 3 a.m., David awakened us with a terrible hacking cough, crying in discomfort.

Because I was fearful of how he might be treated if we took him to the local hospital, since by that time I wasn't exactly appreciated by the Delano citizenry for my coverage of the strike, my wife and I worked out a plan whereby I would drive her to the hospital and let her take him to be examined, thereby not complicating David's treatment.

She immediately bundled him up against the chill night air, and I went downstairs to warm up the car before we left. Descending the stairway, I met Lackner, who had just completed making some urgent house calls in the farmworker community. I explained to him that we were taking David to the local hospital since he didn't seem to be getting any better, despite the prescription the doctor had given me earlier in the night.

Lackner, after listening to my concerns, told me to go back upstairs, get David undressed, and he would be in our room momentarily to examine him, which he did, and found that he was merely suffering from a bad cold with flu-like symptoms and gave us some medicine from his kit for David's relief.

It was an act of kindness that neither my wife nor I would ever forget. Lackner later in the late 1960s and early '70s became Cesar Chavez's personal physician.

In concluding his testimony before the subcommittee, Lackner pleaded that the senators speed legislation that would insure farmworkers those rights, protections, and benefits other American working people enjoy.

"I urge you in the health interests of the farm laborer to legislate to the effect that farm laborers have the right to federal minimum wages, to overtime pay, to sick leave, to unemployment insurance, to health, welfare, and pension plans, to the enforcement of child labor laws, to an intelligent, humane person-oriented rather than crop-oriented solution to the fact that some labor is by nature seasonal, and above all, to the effect that farm labor has the right and the duty to organize—the right to union recognition and to collective bargaining.

"*Viva la huelga*!"

The hearings were concluded. The battery of television lights were turned off. The members of the press sought out the individual senators to get their impressions and comments as the audience noisily filed out of the auditorium. But is was clear that Delano had been noticeably affected by the hearings, although the ramifications of those three days wouldn't be instantly felt by the community and California agriculture.

Yet the Williams' subcommittee hearings would become a turning point in the history of the farmworker movement, and from the testimonies that were heard came a clear warning to the state's leading industry that reform was inevitable.

It was as a Delano high school civics teacher stated in an interview in the school paper, and which drew several chuckles from the senators and the press when they were presented with a copy of the paper.

"Delano High students have a rare opportunity in attending the subcommittee hearings. Rarely do we have an opportunity to see the legislative branch of the federal government in action."

It would be less than 24 hours after all the testimony had been delivered that Delano's embattled farmworkers manifested a dramatic welding of the centuries-old religious tradition of "pilgrimage" with the contemporary cultural syndrome of "demonstration" springing from the spontaneity of the poor, which would galvanize not only California and the nation, but the churches as well.

CHAPTER SIX
Peregrinación, Penitencia, Revolución

I

> "In every religious oriented culture the pilgrimage has had a place, a trip made with sacrifice and hardship as an expression of penance and of commitment—and often involving a petition to the patron of the pilgrimage for some sincerely sought benefit of body and soul.
>
> "Pilgrimage, penance, and revolution. We know all the towns on our march—Delano, Madera, Fresno, Modesto, Stockton, Sacramento—because along that very same road, in that very same valley, the Mexican race has sacrificed itself for the last 100 years. Our sweat and our blood have fallen on this land to make other men rich. Our pilgrimage was a witness to the suffering we have seen for generations."—Cesar Chavez

Down the Capitol Mall they came, scarlet flags with the black Aztec eagle framed in a white circle snapping in the breeze, as dark clouds periodically obscured the sun. A silk embroidered banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe heralded their coming. Mexican and American flags followed, flanking a flower-entwined white cross.

For a mile and one-half behind them, priests, ministers, rabbis, nuns, civil rights leaders, union officials, state and local politicians, men, women, and children carried signs and flags of support. Applause greeted them from the many bystanders as they made their way at mid-day along the Sacramento thoroughfare toward the west steps of the Capitol Building. Ascending those steps 60-strong came the striking farmworkers as 8000 voices roared their approval.

Viva la causa!
Viva la huelga!
Viva Nuestra Asociación!
Viva Cesar Chavez!
Viva Cristo Eey!

Sixty Mexican-American, Filipino, Puerto Rican, Negro, Arabian, and Anglo farmworkers had just completed a 350-mile, 25-day pilgrimage from their hometown of Delano. While triumphant in Sacramento, the workers came perilously close to being thwarted before they ever left their headquarters outside of the southern San Joaquin Valley town.

The pilgrimage began with the celebration of an outdoor Mass by Father Keith Kinney of Sacramento on an improvised altar of Coca Cola boxes behind the headquarters of the NFWA. The altar bread container was a peanut butter jar. Assisting Kinney in the celebration were Rev. Lyle E. Konen, C.S.S.R., Rev. William King of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Rev. John Beno from Pueblo, Colorado. To the accompaniment of the whir of television cameras and a rooster crowing nearby, the crowd of 200 prayed and sang for God's blessing on their venture.

Last-minute instructions were given to the pilgrims and then the crowd, including union officials like Jack Conway and Paul Schrade, western director of the U.A.W., priests, civil rights leaders, and friends of the Delano workers filed two by two out onto Albany Street to begin the march.

It was in 1956 that Chavez had first thought of the idea of a farmworkers' march. At the time he was in El Centro organizing for the CSO and felt a march to the state capital would call dramatic attention to the plight of workers in California's southernmost agricultural area.

In the early months of the1965 grape strike, the idea of sending five local families on a cross-country march to New York to the headquarters of Schenley Industries, Inc. was considered but finally rejected. It was later, at an NFWA meeting in January, that Father Kinney reminded the workers of the time-honored Mexican tradition of the Lenten pilgrimage

At the February 22 meeting, the idea of a pilgrimage to Sacramento was agreed upon by the workers. Medical checks were made on the prospective marchers, and 68 were finally chosen. Two SNCC field representatives—Chuck Gardiner and Marshall Ganz—who had been working closely with the NFWA since the beginning of the strike, were appointed march organizers. They would be assisted by Robert Marino, Tony Mendez, and Manuel Uranday.

DeWitt Tannehill was put in charge of the chuckwagon that would accompany the marchers; Luis Valdez, Agustin Lira, and Errol Franklin were to handle the arrangements for the evening rallies; Peggy McGivern would attend to the medical needs of the marchers; NFWA photographers Jon Lewis and John Kouns would visually record the 350-mile walk; Kathleen Lynch would act as secretary, and Gustavo Espinosa and Henry Uranday would serve as the mechanics for the vehicles accompanying the pilgrims. SNCC's

The Movement 's editor, Terry Cannon, would serve as press coordinator, assisted by Joanne Forman.

As the pilgrims proceeded up the street toward Garces Highway, a sight confronted them similar to the one that had greeted civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama the year before. A human cordon of riot-helmeted, night-stick-wielding members of the Delano police department, backed by members of the Kern County sheriff's department, barred the city limits to the oncoming marchers.

Chief James Ailes stopped the pilgrims, explaining that he could not "control the route" if the workers moved through the city's business district. Alex Hoffman, a full-time legal counsel for the NFWA, reminded the chief that for the three previous days, workers had listened to a variety of witnesses testify before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor that Delano was not another Selma or Mississippi. Yet now, Hoffman pointed out, the city's number-one law enforcement officer was saying he couldn't control the 13,000 residents during a religious pilgrimage by farmworkers.

Calls were immediately placed to the mayor and city manager by Chavez. Mayor Loader, a local dentist, told the NFWA leader that his first concern was his patients and that he could not bother himself with the pilgrimage. City Manager Louis Shepard, however , soon arrived at the scene. He accused the workers of trying to "create an incident for an incident's sake," but promised to confer immediately with Chief Ailes.

As the two Delano city officials discussed the matter, the marchers knelt at the roadside and, led by Father Kinney, said the "Our Father" in Spanish and English for the success of the pilgrimage. A voice with a heavy Spanish accent completed the prayer by asking that "God bless the policemen."

The crowd of more than 200 stood silently and began to sing "We Shall Overcome" in Spanish and English. Their voices echoed across a plowed cotton field less than a mile away from a complex of Voice of America towers now gleaming in the mid-morning sun. One of the marchers was heard to mutter, "All I know about the free world is what I hear from…." The last three words were lost in the singing.

It was in these same San Joaquin Valley fields 30 years ago that people on relief were put to work chopping cotton for 20 cents an hour. The refusal of many to do such work was denounced as a "Communist conspiracy." At the time, 30 Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergymen had investigated the situation and denounced the growers. The growers in turn declared that the clergy had "stepped out of their pulpits" and were "lining up on the side of "professional agitators."

As the Delano farmworkers continued their singing, Shepard and Ailes conferred with each other behind the phalanx of police who stood staring stone-faced, facing the head of the procession. The large banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe remained stationary. Behind the

banner was a worker carrying a small wooden crucifix with the Mexican and American flags on either side of him, making it clear that this was a religious demonstration. Luis Valdez explained the symbolism:

"In their desire for freedom, the Mexican people have not always had the backing of the Church, the bishops, or the clergy, but the Virgin—the Virgin is ours."

Almost 45 minutes after the pilgrimage had been brought to a halt by Chief Ailes, the police line was suddenly withdrawn and Shepard told the workers to proceed. Resuming the singing of "We Shall Overcome," the marchers made their way through downtown Delano as scattered groups of residents looked on in silence.

II

The first day of the pilgrimage covered 18 miles, wending its way through many of the same vineyards that these grape pickers had been striking for the previous six months. At Ducor the first night, room was eventually found for all the marchers, and the next morning one of the local women cooked breakfast for 60 of the marchers.

In the days that followed, as the workers came into a town, they scattered among the farmworker families in that community for food and shelter. Later in the evening, the workers would stage a rally as visiting guests would be introduced, and *El Teatro Campesino* would stage a number of humorous skits dramatizing the plight of the workers in Delano.

Concluding the rally each night, Luis Valdez, in dramatic and passionate phrasing, would read "The Plan of Delano." Afterwards, printed copies of "The Plan" would be passed out through the audience by the pilgrims for signatures.

The only priest to accompany the marchers all the first day was Rev. William King. He later recalled, "When I first joined the marchers, the people couldn't believe I was a Catholic priest. They kept asking me, 'Are you really a padre?' It wasn't until I had marched the whole day with them that they began to accept me. The strikers, being ignored by the Church, are turning away. The church is failing them completely."

On March 19, Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken of San Francisco surprisingly broke the official silence of the Church in California by authorizing three personal representatives to join the march. They were Rev. Eugene J. Boyle, director of the Archdiocesan Commission on Social Justice, John F. Delury, the commission's executive secretary, and Eduardo Lopez of the local Catholic Council for the Spanish Speaking. The three immediately joined the pilgrimage, as Lopez commented:

"The workers' determination struck me first; secondly, their feeling that their rights had actually never been taken into account and their hope in the NFWA that was now being

formulated; thirdly, they are doing this mostly for their children. The kind of life they are living now is not the kind of inheritance they want to leave their children."

In the days that followed, other priests and ministers from the San Francisco Bay Area and from around the state joined the marchers as they zigzagged their way through the dusty and hot valley.

Meanwhile, reminiscent of the Hollywood black-listed film *Salt of the Earth* (which would become one of the union's organizing tools), the strikers' women carried out the long arduous task of picketing the struck vineyards.

On the same day that the pilgrimage passed through the infamous Linnell Farm Labor Camp in Visalia, former California Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike in San Francisco issued a statement of public support for the striking grape pickers. He noted in his statement of support that people should not only march with the workers but work for them.

Leading the pilgrimage each day as it passed through the valley towns was Chavez, supporting himself with a cane after a minor foot injury on the second day of the march.

In Cutler, the pilgrimage held its first night-time candlelight parade, after the Mexican-American hall and the local parish church hall were closed to them. In Porterville, a three-man band with accordion, guitar, and snare drum joined the march and remained with the pilgrimage for several days. North of the town, a family offered the marchers refreshments from a silver punchbowl as they passed by.

It was one week after the pilgrimage began that California Governor Pat Brown announced that he would be unable to meet the farmworkers when they arrived in Sacramento on Easter morning. The governor pointed out that he was planning to spend the holiday with his family at the palatial home of Frank Sinatra in Palm Springs, California. The governor, however, indicated that he admired "the dedication of the vineyard strikers" and that he would attempt to "pay his respects to them" along the route of the pilgrimage.

Chavez acknowledged Brown's statement by sharply replying, "We are not interested in respect from the governor, we are interested in action! We want laws which will grant farmworkers collective bargaining rights, unemployment insurance, a minimum wage, and other legal protections which cover most workers."

The exchange between Brown and Chavez began a whole series of efforts by union officials such as Paul Schrade and Church authorities such as Archbishop McGucken to get Brown, a Catholic, to meet the pilgrimage in Sacramento on Easter. All such efforts, however, were unsuccessful.

On March 24, Delury, Lopez, and Father Boyle called a press conference in San Francisco to give a summary report of their brief participation in the march and a general status

report on the pilgrimage. But it was not until the last question at the conference that the inevitable head-on clash between the growers and those church representatives, who were attempting to champion the rights of the striking farmworkers, manifested itself.

Boyle was asked if he would care to comment on a speech being given at that very hour by grower spokesperson Martin Zaninovich before a luncheon meeting of the California Grape and Tree Fruit League at the nearby Fairmont Hotel. The questioning reporter read Boyle a few passages from the grower's prepared address.

Zaninovich called for the removal of the tax-exempt status for churches, warning that "church leaders had better start looking for other financial means" to carry out "their radical theories."

"It is apparent to me that the need for churches to administer to the spiritual need of men has taken a back seat to the need to fight causes of various types," Zaninovich declared.

Because the churches were, in Zaninovich's words, becoming political organizations, it was about time that they started paying their own way.

"I maintain that the church-going people of this state do not subscribe to the involvement of church leaders in the foreign policy of this government, public demonstrations, free speech demonstrations, civil strife activities, labor organizing activities, and many other programs that are causing unrest in this country."

Zaninovich also observed that instead of the Delano growers being required to take a secret ballot among their workers to see if they wanted to join a union, that elections be held "among congregations of the churches in this country to determine if the philosophy church leaders are expounding today is representative of the attitudes of their flocks.

"I feel certain that Americans would reject these self-appointed leaders in the same manner our workers have rejected the agitators in Delano."

The Delano grape grower also severely criticized Archbishop McGucken for his approval of San Francisco's priests' participation in the pilgrimage. He pointed out that the S.F. prelate "is evidently not familiar with the facts of the strike. It is certainly evident that religious hierarchies have elected to abdicate their positions as representatives of all churches by entering into the field as union organizers."

Sen. Harrison B. William's Subcommittee on Migratory Labor likewise did not escape the wrath of Zaninovich, as he described the recent hearings as "a three-ring circus. The three days of hearings held by Senator Williams reminded me of an old-time medicine show. The barker pulled every trick he could think of in an effort to sell the public, via the press, his own special brand of 'political snake oil.'"

He also termed the current pilgrimage "a parade that is nothing more than a publicity stunt for the benefit of the news media."

Boyle, reacting to Zaninovich's financial threat, termed it "the most banal form of blackmail I've ever heard." He also replied emphatically to the grower's election proposal. "Since when do we vote on moral issues? Since when do we wait for a consensus to proclaim the moral teaching of Christ?"

Stressing that it was the clergy's responsibility to be leaders, not followers, Boyle noted that the presence of clergymen in the Delano pilgrimage was not only to give support to the workers but to instruct congregations by their presence. "This I consider to be education. And you can't separate education from action."

In the aftermath of Zaninovich's speech and the Boyle response, a meeting between the Delano grower and the San Francisco archbishop scheduled for March 28 was cancelled.

Meanwhile, the pilgrimage had reached Fresno and was greeted at the City Hall by Mayor Floyd Hyde. Chavez was still using his cane, and almost half of the original to 68 marchers, whose average age was 32, were limping from blisters and sore feet.

"We are tired," admitted 19-year-old Emma Agarno, who had quit school at 13 to work in the Delano vineyards. "But we are strong. I didn't have enough clothes to go to school, I was ashamed. Now I am marching and I am no longer ashamed."

At a four-hour rally in West Fresno, more than 1000 sympathizers crowded into the Aztec Theater to hear Chavez and other farm labor leaders call for action. "We shall need many strikes," he declared, "if need be, a general strike to get results."

III

As the pilgrimage neared the halfway mark, it began to receive an increasing amount of statewide and national attention. Each day, prominent political figures or union officials would join the marchers for the continuing journey to the next town. A brilliant splash of scarlet followed by more than 200 people was a daily sight to travelers speeding along U.S. Highway 99 and its arterial roads.

One day a psychiatrist stopped his Mercedes-Benz alongside the highway and promptly wrote a check for $20 to the NFWA and then quickly drove off. A threat of a possible confrontation with California's Hells Angels motorcycle club was rumored as the marchers approached Livingston, but it failed to materialize. Another day, two farmworkers emerged from a roadside shack and presented the march *jefe* with $30 and apologized for not being able to give the workers more.

As the marchers left Bishop Willinger's Monterey-Fresno diocese and entered the neighboring Stockton diocese, many nuns and priests from various religious orders joined the pilgrimage. Willinger had officially warned all clergy and religious both in and visiting his diocese not to participate in "the demonstration march from Delano to Sacramento."

On Palm Sunday, April 3 the pilgrimage arrived in Stockton.

As they entered the town, Lisa Bowman, a 29-year-old mother of three, watched the marchers pass by. Although suffering from an advanced stage of cancer, she had asked to be brought to the roadside so she might view the workers as they approached the city's interior.

A migrant worker for the past six years, Lisa had become active in union organizing efforts from the apple orchards of Washington state to the lettuce fields of the Imperial Valley. She was noted for speaking directly to the unorganized and from personal experience many times about hungry men desperate for work and about the beginning of workers' demonstrations and attempts at organization. With the help of friends, she walked to the pilgrimage route and then joined the pilgrimage for a short while.

Near the city limits of Stockton, the pilgrimage passed St. Linus Roman Catholic Church. They stopped at the church for refreshments and rest on the warm Sunday afternoon. For some it was one of the most dramatic moments of the entire pilgrimage, for on the steps of the church stood Father John Ralph Duggan, its pastor, and Father Thomas McCullough.

Few of the Delano farmworkers who later knelt inside the church to receive the blessings of the two priests knew the story of the Spanish Mission Band and the priests who had attempted to carry the Church's social apostolate to the men and women who harvest our nation's crops.

Father McCullough spoke to the pilgrims.

"People who say, 'What has religion to do with this?' don't know what religion is," he told them. "Religion is the perfection of the virtue of justice, that habit of the soul or will which inclines people to regard and to respect the rights of others.

"You are," he continued, "the children of God. If God is to be honored, you must be honored. He who honors the children of God honors God. There are some who say, 'I do honor the worker. I take good care of them as I do my little children.' But honoring workers is not found in treating them like little children. A man in honor must have a contract based on an equality with the person who makes a contract. Workers who are united to their fellow workers—sacrificing themselves for them—respect the rights of God and of neighbor and of all concerned."

Later in the day, the marchers arrived in downtown Stockton to be met by more than 1000 people shouting "Huelga! Huelga!" and singing "*De Colores*." Priests and nuns from throughout the Central California area greeted the marchers as a fiesta atmosphere prevailed in Stockton's Washington Park. Food prepared and served by the people of Stockton was blessed by Alan McCoy, O.F.M., pastor of St. Mary's Church, with a prayer also for "those not sitting down tonight to a full meal."

Monday was a day of rest after a special Mass was celebrated for the marchers by Bishop Hugh A. Donohoe. "This is a march not for physical fitness but physical existence," Donohoe told the workers. Noting that they were focusing national attention on all persons engaged in farm labor, he added:

"If the Church has been remiss in the past, rest assured, it is incumbent upon everyone to know that what the Church proclaims is put into practice. What good does it do if we feed the hungry in other parts of the world and exploit our own people? Before charity, we must have justice here. We want justice at the farm level and charity at the world level."

Tuesday, entering their final week of their four-week pilgrimage, Cesar Chavez's 82-year-old father and 79-year-old mother joined them for the day.

As the pilgrims left Lodi on Wednesday, there was an air of excitement as the long column of marchers walked alongside the lush wine grape vineyards of San Joaquin County. On Sunday, Chavez had asked the marchers if he might leave them for a couple of days to travel south to Los Angeles on association business.

Pausing for their mid-morning rest under a warm California sun, the marchers began commenting on the vineyards stretching toward the horizon as they sipped fruit juice from small paper cups.

Suddenly, the press truck, which had been loaned to the NFWA by a Los Angeles UAW local for the duration of the pilgrimage, drove up after being parked for nearly a half-hour on the roadside about a mile back, receiving incoming telephone calls.

Terry Cannon, along with march captain Roberto Bustos and Tony Mendez climbed on top of a parked automobile and announced to the hurriedly assembled throng news that they had been waiting to hear for many, many weeks.

"Hemos ganado una gran victoria. We have a great victory!"

Schenley Industries, Inc., the second largest grape grower in the Delano area, had just agreed in Los Angles to recognize the NFWA for purposes of collective bargaining as the sole representative for its agricultural workers in Tulare and Kern counties. The agreement on the precedent-setting pact was reached between Chavez and Sidney Korshak, attorney for Schenley Industries in Los Angeles. Negotiations between the NFWA and Schenley

had been initiated by the AFL-CIO's Bill Kircher, who also had witnessed the signing of the agreement.

The crowd was jubilant. Picket signs calling for the boycotting of Schenley products were torn up as the crowd began repeatedly shouting "*Viva la causa! Viva Cesar Chavez*!" Rev. Donald Postom, a Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ minister, offered a brief prayer of thanksgiving, and a few of the crowd had tears in their eyes as the gathering broke up and the march resumed. "Now that Schenley has seen the light, let's hope Gov. Brown will see the light!" Bustos shouted.

In Thornton that evening, the marchers were greeted with a large sign in the community center proclaiming, "*Schenley, Si, DiGiorgio, No*." The rally was loud and happy. Earlier it had been announced that Chavez would be unable to be with the workers, but as the rally continued on into the night the rumor spread that the NFWA leader was on his way.

Suddenly a roar went up from the back of the hall and Chavez, weary from a near-400-mile trip from Los Angeles, came up the center aisle, his face in a broad smile, as the crowd repeatedly shouted its litany of association rallying cries. Chavez held a piece of paper aloft, and the crowd, sensing its was the signed Schenley agreement, roared their approval. He patiently waited until the noise subsided and then read the terms of the agreement.

The audience came alive, and to many it seemed as if the workers were planning another whole new rally to celebrate their leader's victorious return from the bargaining table. *El Teatro Campesino* put on two skits and the laughter was rich with joy.

A new group of visitors to the pilgrimage was announced and introduced. Among them were Rev. Thurston N. Davis, S.J., editor-in-chief of *America*, and Rev. Eugene Culhane, S.J., managing editor of the Jesuit magazine. Prior to introducing them, Chavez questioned me as to a proper way that they might be introduced. I suggested they be presented as the editors of the first national Catholic magazine to publish an article, by San Francisco veteran freelancer Alice Ogle, about the strike, which Chavez did. After the two men addressed the crowd—Davis in English and Culhane in Spanish—the crowd roared its customary approval with shouts of "*Viva America*!" followed by a single lone voce in the back of the hall who shouted "*Viva Mexico*!"

Later, Chavez again spoke to the pilgrims. Gov. Brown had offered to meet with the pilgrimage on Saturday or the Monday following their arrival in Sacramento. Chavez asked his union brothers and sisters whether they would accept the governor's offer or if they still wished to meet him in the capital on Easter Sunday. A worker in the middle of the hall made the motion that it be on Sunday or no meeting at all. His motion was quickly seconded and in a deafening shout of "*Domingo o nada,*" the motion carried.

In the aftermath of the news of the Schenley agreement, the *San Francisco Chronicle* immediately hailed it in a April 8 editorial.

"The victory of the Delano vineyard workers in winning the first recognition of a farmworkers' union by a major California grower cannot be ignored as a turning point in a real revolution . . .The Delano workers' . . . victory is a religious one, even an international one, as well as an economic and social one."

The agreement, however, drew immediate opposition from the Council of California Growers. The council charged that the NFWA did not represent the vineyard workers and that Schenley "is not representative of California agriculture, whose growers steadfastly have refused to sell out their employees and force them into a union that does not represent them."

Good Friday found the pilgrimage walking along the banks of the Sacramento River, and as the marchers paused throughout the day, clergymen and laymen from all areas of the nation recounted the Stations of the Cross, meditating on Christ's suffering as it related to the decades-long suffering of the farmworkers.

Earlier that morning in Hood, the marchers had 60 dozen eggs with their breakfast, which Sacramento County Sheriff John Misterly had supplied "in the interest of human dignity" after learning that the pilgrimage was running short of food.

As the pilgrimage left Freeport on Holy Saturday, 615 people swelled the line of march. Cloudy gray skies hung over the Sacramento Valley, but their goal was only a day away, and the mood of the marchers was one of joyful anticipation. By day's end, more than 1100 sympathizers had joined the pilgrimage. Rain also began falling for the first time in 24 days as some of the marchers joked that "the gods were angry" over the Cecil B. DeMillian Passion Play presented by local Catholic seminarians at the Good Friday evening rally.

Representatives of labor and religious groups from across the nation, including an official delegation from the National Council of Churches, joined the ranks of the marchers as they approached Sacramento. Nearing Our Lady of Grace School in West Sacramento in the late afternoon, the golden dome of the Capitol Building could be seen in the distance. Inside that building Gov. Brown was again reiterating his refusal to meet with the marchers on Easter Sunday, as he had promised to spend the day with his family in Palm Springs.

"Farmworkers have no better friend in the country," he declared, "but there are some things I won't do."

Prior to the rally Saturday evening, 10 young Mexican-Americans carried a torch of Christian Hope through Sacramento streets to the crowd waiting with the Delano pilgrims in West Sacramento. The torch was lit from the new fire ignited by flint and steel at the traditional Easter vigil services on the steps of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento, where its pastor, Father Kinney, officiated.

"The new fire which touched off the bonfire to begin the farmworkers' rally symbolized the New Hope that the pilgrimage has brought into the lives of exploited farmworkers," Kinney said.

At the rally, the many visiting dignitaries were introduced, and each gave their greetings of support to the workers and the large crowd packed into the school hall. Chavez introduced many of the pioneers of the farm labor movement, including Fred Ross, the man who had brought Chavez to work for the CSO.

Rev. James Drake introduced the 16 regional chairman of the national boycott committee. Drake in his introduction pointed out that when, three days previously. he had requested them to return immediately to California to draw up plans for the DiGiorgio Corp. boycott, nearly all of them were able to fly home on half-fares because they were under 21 years of age. Drake called each of them to the stage:

Bob Solodow, Mike Sayer, Eugene Nelson, Sal Gonzales, Mark and Mike Vincent, Sylvia Kalinttinskl, Tony Orendain, Harry Johnson, Ida Cousino, Eddie Frankel, Jack Ybarra, Mike Miller, Gil Padilla, and Marcos Munoz.

As the audience enthusiastically expressed their appreciation of the group's efforts, a young civil rights worker and poet—Tim Hall—standing next to me, quietly observed, "I wonder what these old-time labor leaders standing in the back must be thinking about now. The most successful nationwide economic boycott in history, and there aren't more than three or four of those kids who are over 21."

IV

Easter Sunday was bright with a few white clouds drifting over the Sacramento Valley toward the distant High Sierras.

Rev. Jim Drake conducted a Protestant service in the church school hall, followed by a Mass concelebrated by eight priests from throughout the nation. As the marchers and sympathizers offered their prayers for a successful end to their long pilgrimage, in a Stockton hospital, Lisa Bowman, the 29-year-old farmworker and mother of three who had joined the pilgrimage on the previous Sunday for a brief period, died of cancer.

Immediately after the Easter services were concluded, the marchers began the last four miles of the pilgrimage to the State Capitol building. Leading the way was the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, made for the pilgrimage by 22-year-old local resident Alicia Jiminez, followed by the "voice" of the march, Robert Romeo, barefoot and carrying a crucifix no longer wrapped in black, but in white, entwined with bright Easter flowers.

Behind him came the flags, the workers, the placards, more workers (four farm laborers from Arizona had driven all night so they could participate in the final stages of the

pilgrimage), more placards, and more than 3000 people from California and the nation. Passing beneath a newly constructed freeway underpass, the familiar chant of "Huelga! Huelga!" echoed and re-echoed off the walls until the entire line has passed through the concrete maze.

(In Washington, D.C., meanwhile, more than 200 marchers, including Father Vizzard, had gathered in the shadow of the Washington Monument as Rev. Victor Salandini celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving for the success of the California farmworkers.)

Approaching Sacramento's Tower Bridge, which spans the Sacramento River, the pilgrimage paused momentarily in an effort to tighten up the long line of marchers. Then, beginning their "Huelga!" chant again, they crossed the wide river.

After Roberto Bustos, the march "*jefe,*" was greeted by Sacramento City Councilman Richard Marriott and given the keys to the city ("I hope this will open up the DiGiorgio and Bank of America vaults," Bustos declared), the workers proceeded up the Capitol Mall, past the State Agriculture Building (its motto visible to all—"Bring Me Men to Match My Mountains"—chiseled above the building's portico, up the Capitol building steps, and took their places of honor beneath California's golden dome.

Although rain would eventually fall several times throughout the afternoon, the spirit of the huge crowd was not dampened. Singing and chanting punctuated the program for the next three and one-half hours.

Gil Padilla, NFWA vice president and master of ceremonies for the rally, introduced what seemed like an endless number of visiting union officials, who all renewed their dedication to the cause of the agricultural workers. Visiting politicians, after pledging their support to the farmworkers, soon vanished from the platform to campaign among the crowd.

Bustos introduced his assistant march captains and all the union personnel who had made the long 25-day journey possible.

Epifanio Camacho, one of the original Delano strikers, was introduced and told the cheering crowd in one of the more dramatic deliveries of the afternoon, "There are those who thought it impossible for farmworkers to strike—it has been done; those who thought it impossible for us to reach Sacramento—here we are!"

Paying tribute to Chavez, he declared in fiery oratory, "He has come up from poverty because we needed him. He is one of the greats. The Mexican people, this brown race, will overcome, and get the justice they deserve!"

Next came Rev. Wayne C. Hartmire of the California Migrant Ministry, who delivered a scathing attack on the absence of Gov. Brown.

"Until I resigned two weeks ago, I was a member of the California State Social Welfare Board, closely associated with Gov. Brown's efforts to eradicate poverty. His absence today, for whatever reason—and the governor should know that he is not the only one who is accustomed to spending Easter with his family—his absence today makes a joke of the efforts to eradicate poverty among farmworkers.

"The governor has now demonstrated that he is either indifferent or hostile to the basic aspirations of seasonal farmworkers and their children. He is apparently willing to continue and expand a degrading welfare system rather than help farmworkers establish justice and pay their own way.

"Today in Sacramento," the young Presbyterian minister continued, "the governor has turned his back on the hopes of farmworkers for social justice and embraced the present farm labor system with all that means for human suffering and continued social unrest."

He paused to reflect that Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers often thanked the Migrant Ministry for its support.

"He really shouldn't have to. Standing with oppressed people ought to be as natural to us as breathing and singing hymns. It should be part of our daily style of life—unexceptional and uncontroversial. But as many of you know, it is not necessarily so. In fact, the Protestant churches of this state are involved in a costly internal struggle to decide the future of the Migrant Ministry. Like Peter, James, and John, we have discovered that following Jesus is most difficult when it is most costly."

In concluding his remarks, Hartmire pointed out to the assembled crowd that "since this day is not the end of a struggle but the beginning of a new hope and strength for a long struggle ahead, I would like to close by reading a challenge to Christians that comes from the pen of a non-Christian, Albert Camus in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*.

"Hence I shall not . . . try to pass myself off as a Christian in your presence. I share with you the same revulsion from evil. But I do not share your hope, and I continue to struggle against this universe in which children suffer and die . . . .What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today. The grouping we need is a grouping of men resolved to speak out clearly and to pay up personally . . . .

"And what I know—which sometimes creates a deep longing in me, is that if Christians made up their minds to it, millions of voices—millions, I say—throughout the world would be added to the appeal of a handful of isolated individuals who, without any sort of affiliation, today intercede almost everywhere and ceaselessly for the children and for men."

Two union leaders—long acknowledged friends of farmworkers—next spoke to the crowd. The AFL-CIO's Bill Kircher, in lauding the NFWA, declared, "The only road workers can travel for progress is unity; the only language employers understand is the language of solidarity." Lou Goldblatt, secretary-treasurer of the ILWU, referring to the union's organizing of the Hawaiian sugar and pineapple workers, reminded the strikers, "If any man says legislation for farmworkers is unrealistic, that unionism makes no sense for the farmworker, that man is a liar—we know better."

Chavez was next introduced to the cheering crowd. Many had urged the Mexican-American leader to deliver the principal address at the rally, but Chavez declined. In the same manner he had exhibited throughout the strike, Chavez asserted that this Easter Sunday in Sacramento belonged to the workers and the pilgrims. He would only take a few moments to thank the crowd for their support.

"This is only the first victory. But we must remember that just as in defeat we must have courage, in victory we must have humility."

Chavez singled out the ILWU for their loyalty throughout the previous months of the strike while NFWA members had picketed the docks where Delano grapes were being readied for shipment. "We will not sign any contract with the DiGiorgio Corp. until the damage suits of over $200,000 against the ILWU are dropped," he declared.

The keynote address of the afternoon came next, and it was Dolores Huerta, the NFWA's outspoken and fiery vice president, who delivered it, immediately challenging both Gov. Brown and the State Democratic Party.

"As of this moment we wish to inform the Democratic Party of the state that we will be counted on as your supporters *only* when we can count you among ours. The Democratic Party does not have us in their hip pocket."

She rejected any idea that the NFWA leadership might later meet with the governor to discuss farm labor legislation.

"We are no longer interested in listening to the excuses the governor has to give in defense of the growers, to his apologies for them not paying us decent wages, or telling us why the growers cannot dignify the workers as individuals with the right to place the price on their own labor through collective bargaining."

Speaking on behalf of the leaders and members of the NFWA, Huerta "unconditionally demanded" that Brown call a special session of the state legislature to enact a collective bargaining law for the state's farmworkers. "We will be satisfied with nothing less. If the rules to settle our economic problems are not forthcoming, we will call a general strike to paralyze the state's agricultural economy."

Brown would later turn the NFWA's proposal for a special session down, while pledging to ask the 1967 legislature for a state law guaranteeing farmworkers the right to collectively bargain. In a letter to Chavez, the governor indicated that he supported the association's "struggle for economic and social justice," but felt that any immediate action would be "too controversial and too complex to be handled . . . in an election year."

Both the growers and the NFWA rejected Brown's proposals, the growers claiming that such legislative action was unnecessary, while the workers demanded that the pending legislation be enacted upon immediately and not put off to another year.

As the rally concluded with the singing of "*Nosotros Venceremos*," the workers began the final few blocks' walk to from the State Capitol building to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. There, in front of the church, Sacramento Bishop Alden J. Bell offered benediction beneath a large multi-colored stone mosaic of the Blessed Mother, patron of Mexico.

Accepting the pilgrimage candle which the marchers had brought with them from Delano, Bell congratulated the workers for "coming a long way and with great dignity. I am sure the Mother of Our Risen Savior receives your gift and your pilgrimage, and that she will seek blessings for you and your cause."

The benediction brought the pilgrimage to an official end, and although the workers had aroused national attention for their struggle in the fields of California, they returned home frustrated in their attempt to meet with the governor of their state.

Father Kinney expressed the mood of the workers in a reply to an unsolicited letter Brown sent to the Sacramento pastor a few weeks after the pilgrimage was completed. Brown attempted to explain his absence from the capital.

"I spent Easter Sunday with my mother, children, and grandchildren because it is one of the two days each year I have been able to keep as a family occasion. The farm labor problem requires the continuing concern of all of us…and I will continue my efforts to move differences from the picket line to the conference table."

Kenny replied:

"In answer to your unsolicited letter, I can only say that it fails to lighten the disappointment or cool the smoldering anger that I, along with all the little people of the state, feel to discover that we really don't matter at all to the governor of this state.

"We all felt surely you would not disappoint us, that the 'public servant' would want to be with the little people, with the Mexican citizens of California when they needed him and where they needed him. But Easter has passed into history—and so have our illusions.

"We are fed up with promises," the priest continued, "that do not produce. We are fed up with a pat on the head and being talked to like little children—and your sanctimonious appeals to 'motherhood,' and 'family' and the 'conference table' are just that. Easter Sunday has changed a lot of things. We found out who our friends are, and we do not forget.

"Once more the 'gringo' has treated us like 'poor Mexicans,' has ignored our sensitivities, our dignity. It has always been like that, but this too we do not forget. When you offended us by your absence it was only another example of the way you and your office and other state offices have bungled and blundered the whole Delano issue, up to and including the latest DiGiorgio-owned conciliation service and the 'so-called' investigation of violation of civil rights by the attorney general's office."

"The poor still have no rights and no dignity in California," Kinney concluded, "and no one in high office really gives a damn. But Easter Sunday means that now we understand all this. It also means that that we are united as never before in the history of California. You should read history, Mr. Brown, you could learn something from it. Now we are just fed up, and fine words mean nothing —nor shall we be 'bought off' by a couple of appointive positions to our race. That time also is past.

"I am sorry, Mister Brown, to have to say such hard things. You see, life is hard, but I guess you don't know about that. Easter has changed so much. We are not afraid any more to say hard things. We are not afraid any more of anything.

"Goodbye, Mister Brown."

CHAPTER SEVEN
Castigating the Infidel, Claiming the Miracle

I

In the week following the Schenley recognition agreement and the return of the farmworker pilgrims from Sacramento to Delano, two more significant labor victories were recorded by the NFWA. Any illusions, though, that this series of successes would change the general attitude of the Delano citizenry toward the area's striking grape pickers was soon to be emphatically dispelled.

In a telegram on April 12 to Cesar Chavez, the Mont La Salle Vineyards, a corporation owned and operated solely by the Christian Brothers of California, formally recognized the NFWA "as the organization through which social justice may be realized for our agricultural workers." Brother Gregory, F.S.C., president of the vineyards, told Chavez:

"As you are aware, the Christian Brothers believe that Christian principles, to be effective, must be applied to social progress in an auspicious and timely manner…We believe in and teach the right of men to organize and to be recognized, and we seek a just application of these Christian principles."

Chavez, in acknowledging this action, noted that the NFWA and Christian Brothers shared a mutual concern for social justice. "Organizers of our union have been working for several months in the Mont La Salle areas and most of the other major agricultural areas of California," he replied.

The Mont La Salle vineyard locations included the Christian Brothers Novitiate in Napa, the Greystone Winery in St. Helena, and the Mt. Tivy Vineyards in Reedley. These vineyards employed approximately 25 farmworkers. In announcing their decision, the religious order became the first grape grower to recognize the NFWA without having economic pressure or a strike used against them.

The Christian Brothers, who had rejected an earlier NFWA bid for recognition, revealed in an April 12 press release that on February 25, they had sent a letter to a group of other vintner growers. "Mont La Salle Vineyards is committed to the policy of collective bargaining for its vineyard employees as well as its winery employees," the letter stated.

The vintners were not asked for approval of the principle, but rather they were given the opportunity to act upon it and join with the Christian Brothers. The growers emphatically rejected the proposal.

In explaining their offer, a Christian Brothers spokesman noted that the growers "should come forward to join with them in establishing an employer organization to further the principle of collective bargaining for vineyard workers. This hope follows the reference to employer associations contained in the recent statements issued by the Catholic bishops of California."

Upon hearing of the Christian Brothers' recognition offer, Most Rev. John F.X. Connnolly, S.J., provincial of the California Jesuit province, stated that his order "whole-heartedly supported Cesar Chavez and the NFWA. We look forward to meeting with them soon."

Three days later, Rev. Francis J. Silva, S.J., rector of the Los Gatos Novitiate Winery, located near San Jose, California, sent a formal request to Chavez seeking to convene contract negotiations between the NFWA and the novitiate. Silva extended "cordial and prayerful best wishes" to the association and its cause.

Reaction in the Delano business community to the recognition agreements was immediate.

A group calling themselves "Women for Democratic America" (WDA) was formed and promptly announced that they would attempt to organize a national boycott of Schenley

products and Christian Brothers wine. Jean Cuadra, WDA's chairwoman, explained that the group's purpose would be to protest "the dictatorial manner in which the two organizations have forced their employees into a union not of their own making."

It was shortly after the Christian Brothers and the Jesuits affirmed their recognition of the NFWA that an appeal for similar agreements was made by church leaders to vintners in California who produced sacramental wines. San Francisco's Father Boyle sent a letter on April 14 to the Beaulieu, Concannon, and Beringer Brothers wineries appealing for their assistance.

"It is our strong recommendation that your firm follow the commendable step of the Schenley Corp. and Christian Brothers in recognizing the NFWA as your sole bargaining agent for your vineyard employees," he wrote.

Boyle later explained his reasons for writing the letters: "The Catholic Church has always been deeply concerned that the principles of social justice be applied in labor-management relations. My letter was a natural extension of the Archdiocese's efforts to get all the firms which it does business with to practice non-discriminatory hiring."

In early June, Boyle's letter suddenly became a center of controversy when the *California Farmer*, the Council of California Growers, and the DiGiorgio Corp. attacked the priest and the Church for using "threatening" and "brazen tactics to thwart free democratic practices." In "Editorially Speaking," the *California Farmer*'s Jack Pickett declared:

"There is a papal bull charging around raising hell in the labor relations field in the form of a letter. Out of the Archdiocese office in San Francisco…has come one of the greatest hijacking jobs we have ever seen. The Church is not only threatening the wineries, but is also dictating which union they shall force their employees to join. If the church is going to dictate in political and economic fields, we see no reason for them to continue to enjoy the privilege tax free."

CCG president Carl Samuelson said his organization deplored the action suggested in Boyle's letter. "Growers are deeply shocked over the fact that certain church leaders have joined in such brazen tactics. We think it is time fair-minded church members call upon more responsible clergymen to condemn these activities."

Donald Connors, counsel for the DiGiorgio Corp., described Boyle's letter as "threatening" in writing to John Duff, attorney for the San Francisco Archdiocese. "The letter seeks to impose a representative on workers without giving them an opportunity to discuss such representation."

He contended that clerical endorsement of the NFWA was made "without much effort to come to the full facts. If the church is to enter the area of trade unionism, and this endorsement of the NFWA amounts to that, it had best apply a little scholastic

epistemology and determine the validity of its knowledge about the organization it endorses."

Boyle, however, defended his endorsement of the NFWA. "It is an organization which, at the present time, most closely approximates those social principles pertaining to free, democratic unions that are found in the papal encyclicals. The NFWA is viable and by that I mean it has substance and is capable of living and generating power if given support."

II

On April 17, with recognition by Schenley Industries, the Christian Brothers, and the Jesuit Fathers, plus the homecoming of the pilgrims from Sacramento, Delano was the occasion of a parade by some 900 California farmworkers.

After marching through the town's west side on a blustery Sunday afternoon, the workers converged on Ellington Park for a special open-air Mass of thanksgiving. They were met by a group of townspeople questioning their right to celebrate the Mass.

The 60 pickets were led in their protest by Rev. James Dillon, an assistant, Rev. W.H. Van Lun, and a number of growers, most of whom who were Father Dillon's parishioners and whose vineyards were being struck. They carried signs that read, "Keep the Mass Sacred," "Keep the Mass in Church," "Has This Mass Been Authorized by the Bishop?" and "How Can You Use Our Lady of Guadalupe in a Labor Dispute?"

The Mass celebrant, Rev. Joseph Bishop from Sacramento's Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, after sensing the tension building up in the crowd, conferred with Chavez for a time and cancelled the Mass. Father Bishop explained that the situation was "explosive" and "rather than risk open conflict, we asked the workers to adjourn to the AWOC hall for a rally."

As leader of the pickets, Father Dillon explained his action: "The Mass belongs in church and should not be used in a phony local labor situation. The strikers have been attempting to use every gadget to make people believe the Church is behind them."

Dillon went on to emphasize that he had remained "neutral" during the now eighth-month-old strike and that he deplored the "ballyhoo and circus atmosphere" which the strikers had created in the community. The local pastor estimated that between 25 percent and 35 percent of his parishioners were "workers who have remained in the fields during the strike" and added that 37 southern Tulare and northern Kern County growers were also members of the parish.

Chavez expressed regret over the tense conditions that forced the cancellation of the Mass. "The Mass is sacred wherever it is celebrated. Many of the workers, including my wife and

children, had not attended morning Mass in anticipation of the evening celebration. The workers will not soon forget who deprived them of their Mass of Thanksgiving."

Msgr. James V. Dowling, vicar-general of the local Monterey-Fresno diocese, was later questioned on whether Fathers Dillon and Van Lun had chancery office permission to lead the anti-Mass demonstration. He stated that "the priests acted on their own. We advised the pastor and his assistant not to demonstrate and let the priest who was to celebrate the Mass face the consequences of coming into another diocese without the Bishop's permission." No subsequent action was taken against Father Dillon and Father Van Lun.

The *Central California Register* editorially defended the two Delano priests in its following week's edition. "The Mass is not a tool to be used in strike situations like a "huelga!" sign. It is not a showpiece embellishment to a parade. In the dispute between farmworkers and their grower employers, the priests of Delano and indeed, the Bishop of Monterey-Fresno, have made it clear that the Church does not support any one side or any one organization…No one has the right to appropriate the Mass or the Church to support their own particular causes."

Two Sundays later, in a paid advertisement appearing in the *Fresno Bee*, the "Catholic Citizens of Delano" asserted that "a miracle occurred" prior to the scheduled farmworker Mass on April 17.

"Yes, a miracle happened here that Sunday! In many years Delano has not experienced such dirt and wind as we witnessed from 3:30 to 5:30 that afternoon. Yes, God threw dirt in their faces! The good priest, Father Joseph Bishop from Sacramento, said to Cesar, 'You tricked me, I can't say Mass here.' When he agreed to say a prayer for both sides, the wind and dirt suddenly stopped. And the multitudes bear witness to this miracle."

Father Bishop, of course, later denied that he had made such a statement. He indicated that his decision to cancel the Mass was not motivated by the wind, and that "someone had placed the altar in front of this large NFWA banner. I was afraid that the wind might blow the banner down during Mass, so I mentioned to Cesar that I couldn't say Mass there."

The ad, which was later circulated as a handbill throughout Delano, also pointed out that the workers had "played the humble, pious front" throughout the pilgrimage, but "when Schenley agreed to hand the group the contract, they stopped talking about God and gave their praise to Cesar."

"When Cesar reached Sacramento Easter Sunday he didn't thank God. Easter Sunday in Sacramento was ugly. God and the Virgin must have felt very sad. The Lady of Guadalupe must have wept to see her friends set her aside. Now that Schenley has chosen Cesar and his friends to work for them, they no longer spoke to her."

As church groups from throughout the nation and California became more vocal in their support of Chavez and the NFWA, the Catholic Rural Life Directors of California were seeking ways to establish guidelines for bringing social justice to the state's multibillion-dollar agricultural industry.

"Agriculture in California," a statement drafted earlier in the year and approved by the state's eight Rural Life directors, was first published in the April 14 edition of *The Register*. Headlined "A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of California," the statement was signed by Bishop Willinger, but in the San Francisco archdiocese and Oakland dioceses, "Agriculture in California" was later released as "A Pastoral Letter from the Priest-Directors of Catholic Rural Life in California."

Monterey-Fresno Diocesan Vicar-General Dowling attempted to explain the confusion surrounding Bishop Willinger's lone stand in the letter.

"Bishop Willinger received the statement on April 11, signed it the following day in an effort to make *The Register*'s Tuesday deadline. He presumed that the California bishops would approve it on April 13 at their regular meeting in Los Angeles. No such action, however, was taken by the state's bishops, as consideration of the document was not on the agenda."

One observer of the San Joaquin Valley church politics reflected on the mixup. "In a hasty attempt to cover up their displeasure over the success of the Delano to Sacramento pilgrimage, the Monterey-Fresno Chancery Office must have grabbed at the first opportunity to convert action into theory." Prior to the printing of the "pastoral letter," many readers of *The Register* had voiced concern over the paper's silence during the pilgrimage.

One letter to the editor had asked why the paper had refused to cover the event, why it didn't note Martin Zaninovich's economic boycott threats against the churches, and why it didn't report that many priests, nuns, and religious from throughout the state and the nation were daily joining the march.

The editor responded: "We agree that the issue is sadly divisive, but we do not think that a Catholic newspaper should encourage further breeches of charity by publishing heedless and inflammatory statements issued by both or either side."

Another reader noted: "It is surprising and disappointing…that there was no coverage in *The Register* of the farmworkers' march to Sacramento…Is this attitude on the part of *The Register* compatible with the tenets of charity and justice which we Catholics have been taught is an integral part of our faith?" The editor's note simply stated, "Yes."

Major changes, meanwhile, were taking place on the staff of *The Register* in the early months of the strike. The editor of the diocesan publication was Charles A. McCarthy, a layman who had twice received awards from the Catholic Press Association.

Shortly after McCarthy published an article—"Delano Diary"—in the Catholic monthly *Ave Maria*, an account of the first months of the strike, he was "reassigned" as managing editor, and Rev. Seamus O. McMullan was named editor. Later, in early May, after *The Register* defended the action of Fathers Dillon and Van Lun, McCarthy resigned his position on the paper.

In the "Agriculture in California" statement, there came a call for brotherhood among men, and it pointed up the need for discussion of the mutual problems facing labor and management so solutions could come through peace and understanding.

"The Church has not only the right but also the corresponding duty to teach the moral laws and to apply the principles which are necessary to enable all segments of agriculture to solve the problems which face this important part of our economy. Should she fail to do so, teachings will come, indeed, but from other sources, including that other dominant teaching force, namely communism."

Pointing out that many untrue statements and claims could be made unless proper distinctions were made, the pastoral letter continued:

"In California there have arisen huge land holdings which are only part of an industrialized form of farming which also includes ownership of shipping facilities, packing houses, and even retail outlets. This 'vertical integrated' form of farming is certainly to be distinguished from other forms of agriculture such as the independent or family farmer."

Referring to a September, 1962 NCRLC definition of the family farm, the statement continued:

"A family farm is large enough to support a family in frugal comfort; it is small enough so that members of a family can supply most of the labor and management required. It is also desirable that most of the capital involved be owned by the family operating the farm.

"It is…erroneous to equate a family farm with a subsistence farm. A subsistence farm is not large enough or productive enough to support a family adequately. Nor is it correct to assume the corporate farms are always opposed to family type farms. In some instances there is good reason to incorporate a family farm. Incorporation facilitates transfer of a farm from one generation to another. Hence a corporate farm may or may not be a family type farm."

Finally, the commercial farm was defined:

"The term 'commercial family farm' refers to the situation where the owner-operator lives on or near his farm which may vary in size from a few productive acres to a thousand or more depending on the crop and degree of mechanization, but who manages the farm himself, does most of the work himself with additional help in season. He is truly part of his farm and depends for his livelihood on the direct sales of its products."

Exhorting the reader to recognize the distinctions between these types of farms and 'agribusiness,' the statement urged the consumer to study seriously and know the various forces and counter-forces at work in agriculture today.

Specific recommendations contained in the pastoral letter's first section were addressed to farmers, including a national minimum wage, new kinds of trade agreements and subsidies, enforcement of water reclamation, cooperative ownership, buying and marketing, and the increased planning in local communities for farm labor housing.

Noting that the average farm laborer's income was between $2000 and $3000 per year, the second section of the statement opened with a reminder that "poverty tends to propagate itself." Stating that farmworkers are "legally discriminated against," the statement decried the feudal system still found in agriculture.

"We recognize that many farmers have over the years exercised a benevolence toward their agricultural workers, provided them with housing, cared for them as if they were their own family. But this feudal system, this paternalistic form of society, although having many benefits when exercised by a benevolent employer, does not by its very nature admit of the inherent dignity of every man regardless of his race, education, or abilities and of the right of that man to self-determination."

Calling for self-determination and the necessity for farmworkers to form associations, three specific recommendations were made in the letter: a) inclusion of agriculture in the provisions of the National Labor Relations Board Act, b) necessity for a national minimum wage, and c) inclusion of agricultural labor in the provisions of both Social Security and unemployment insurance.

Recognizing the specific problems that farm labor confronts in being included in the aforementioned provisions, the Rural Life directors recommended that the building trades could perhaps serve as a model for agriculture.

A renewed call for education and instruction in Christian principles was also contained in the letter, as it concluded by stressing the responsibility of "agribusiness" to help reform existing inequities.

"Best able to achieve the objectives outlined in this analysis of agriculture are those giants, the huge land barons, whose influence through interlocking directorates with other corporations is so powerful, whose influence in the legislature is so effective, whose assets

are readily available for publicity and public relations, that should they set their minds to these agricultural reforms, they could be the leaders for all time in bringing about great advancement in agriculture, not for selfish motives or personal profit but for the betterment of their fellow man."

"Agriculture in California" concludes with the words of the late John F. Kennedy:

"We live in times of great change, and it is our duty, our responsibility to make that change, that revolution, peaceful and constructive for all. Those who do nothing invite shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly act from right as well as from reason…if peaceful revolution is impossible, then violent revolution is inevitable."

CHAPTER EIGHT
By Their Deeds You Shall Know Them

I

Henry Miller arrived in California in 1847 and soon became the territory's richest land baron. His biographer tells us that during the state's infancy, "Men were tramping the country almost in armies looking for work. Miller employed as many as possible and [they] did all the work possible during the period of low prices."

These men, described by Miller as "tramps" and "hobos," were kept constantly moving throughout the far reaches of his land-rich empire. With a turnover rate of nearly 40 percent, these "migrants" were provided only with the most squalid living conditions and poor wages.

In a directive to all his ranch foremen, Miller instructed, "Never refuse a tramp a meal, but never give him more than one meal. A tramp should be a tramp and keep on tramping. Never let the tramps eat with the other men. Make them wait until the men are through and then make them eat off of the same plates."

From this philosophy, whereby Miller sought to encourage a stream of men constantly flowing over his land and thus keep an available and cheap labor force on his farms at all times, came an established route that Carey McWilliams later described as constituting the beginning of migratory farm labor in California, a journey which came to be known as the "dirty plate route."

From the inception of the "dirty plate route" through the era of the "slaves we rent," to the present day, California has been the scene of a never-ending farm labor turmoil and a struggle for social and economic justice by its exploited farmworkers.

Long before John Steinbeck wrote his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which managed to temporarily arouse an apathetic nation, California's farmworkers had for decades been literally fighting for better wages and working conditions with little success, primarily due to the fact that they were

prevented by corporate agribusiness from establishing legitimate collective bargaining agents who could negotiate with their employers in good faith.

Beginning with those Chinese who were brought to this country to build the transcontinental railroad and then were later dumped like human flotsam into the San Joaquin Valley, California agribusiness for over a century has controlled the lives of a never-ending parade of Japanese, Hindu, Armenian, Portuguese, Italian, Mexican, Filipino, Native American, Black, and Mexican-American farmworkers.

As McWilliams relates so graphically, throughout those early years a variety of grassroots organizations and labor unions, including the International Workers of the World (the IWW or the "Wobblies") engaged in such struggles. Some would achieve limited success, others would end in violence and death, such as the Wheatland tragedy in 1913.

Like many growers, the Durst hop ranch near Wheatland intentionally advertised throughout the state and the Far West for more workers than they actually needed in order to force wages down. Durst then purposely allowed his camp, with more than 2800 men, women, and children, to remain in filthy condition (nine outdoor toilets and a few insufficient water wells served the entire settlement), thus forcing many workers to leave in frustration before the end of the picking season.

Water in the camp, it was later learned, had been purposely made scarce due to the fact that Durst's cousin operated a lemonade concession, selling small glasses of lemonade for a nickel to workers who were earning only 75 cents to $1 a day in wages.

In 1913, during a large workers' rally to protest the camp's conditions, the local sheriff and some of his deputies attempted to arrest one of the speakers. Another deputy at the edge of the crowd fired a shot in the air "to sober the mob," and a riot ensued. In the end, the district attorney, a deputy sheriff, and two workers, a Puerto Rican and an English boy, were killed, and dozens were injured.

As McWilliams reminds us, "Wheatland, clearly marked as one of the most significant episodes in the history of migratory labor in the West, also forms an important chapter in the social history of California. In the lurid illumination which the fires of the riot cast forth, the ugly facts about the conditions of farm labor in California were for the first time thoroughly exposed."

II

In 1933, after a wave of farm strikes throughout California, large growers and other agribusiness interests openly organized and supported a concerted effort aimed at the suppression of the growing union movement within agriculture. In the Depression-ridden 30s, a major effort was made by a variety of unions—including some that were backed by the Communist Party—to organize farmworkers. When the threat that they might succeed became so immediate, vigilante groups were formed to terrorize the workers.

The most ambitious of these efforts, supported by the California Farm Bureau Federation and the State Chamber of Commerce, was the organizing of the Associated Farmers of California. With headquarters in San Francisco, the Associated Farmers' initial organizational funds were raised by Earl Fisher of Pacific Gas & Electric and Leonard Wood of California Packing Company (CPC), later to be known as the Del Monte Corp. In a five-year period, CPC either raised from other sources or donated from its own account some $74,161.09 to the Associated Farmers.

A study by the Simon J. Lubin Society of California, Inc. in 1938 showed that the Associated Farmers also received financial support from such corporations as Sante Fe, Western Pacific, Union Pacific, and Southern Pacific railroads, PG&E, Southern California Gas Co., Transamerica Corp., the state Chamber of Commerce, and Joseph DiGiorgio, among others.

Not only would the Associated Farmers be responsible for enacting many of the anti-picketing and so-called "emergency disaster" ordinances in many of the state's rural counties (some of which still exist today), but they also would maintain a strong and powerful lobby in Sacramento. McWilliams has described this era in the state's history as "constitutional fascism." In *Ill Fares the Land*, he writes:

"The gentlemen who sit in their offices in San Francisco and Oakland and write checks to the Associated Farmers are not the men who, wearing the armbands of the group, organize mobs to browbeat and coerce agricultural workers. They have cleverly stimulated the farmers and townspeople to act as their storm-troopers. Nevertheless, the real headquarters of vigilantism in California are to be found on Montgomery Street in San Francisco and not in the great valleys of the state."

The Associated Farmers not only used storm-trooper mobilizations, cross burnings, lynch-mob tactics, and a sophisticated statewide intelligence and espionage system, but they also began constructing concentration camps throughout the state to hold strikers. With the publication of *Factories in the Field* and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Associated Farmers conducted wholesale book burnings throughout many Central Valley communities.

Aided and abetted by local and state law enforcement officials, the Associated Farmers actually took control of entire communities such as in Salinas. Their police-state tactics were later carefully documented by McWilliams in several of his books and described quite graphically by Steinbeck in his classic novel, *In Dubious Battle*.

The California Farm Bureau as an organization did not openly engage in the organized violence of the Associated Farmers, but rather let its bitter anti-union policies operate through more conventional channels. Yet, in some counties Farm Bureau secretaries—University of California appointees—were simultaneously leaders of the Associated Farmers. One of the latter organization's founders, and its first president, was a university employee: Parker Frisselle, who operated the university's vineyard at Fresno.

In 1938, UC's College of Agriculture organized an agribusiness conference in Sutter County, which adopted a three-point anti-labor program along lines dictated by the Associated Farmers, including the repeal of the Wagner Act. After the conference, the Alameda County CIO Council (which includes the city of Berkeley) publicly charged UC with directly aiding the Associated Farmers. J.E. Tippett of UC's Agricultural Extension Service denied the charge, noting that the university could not be held responsible for recommendations passed at conferences it helped organize.

The chairman of the State Division of Immigration and Housing at this time was author Carey McWilliams, who publicly charged that UC's Extension Service was being used by the Associated Farmers to "sabotage civil liberties, labor, and even the state administration's own legislative program."

The evidence McWilliams presented was never really in dispute. Booklets published and distributed by Extension at county conferences, which had been held since 1937 and organized by Extension itself, were full of the then-all-pervading anti-labor, anti-state-government, and anti-civil liberties recommendations of the joint Farm Bureau-Associated Farmers programs.

In 22 agricultural counties, 10 of the university-organized conferences had passed recommendations endorsing the Associated Farmers itself as an organization by name, not merely just its programs. UC's subsequent response to all these charges and others of favoritism toward the anti-union movement in the state was complete silence.

When Wisconsin's famed U.S. Senator Robert LaFollette brought his congressional committee to California in December, 1939, to investigate violations of free speech and the rights of labor, he found a state that for a decade had been wracked by violence, riots, bloodshed, and vigilantism. As McWilliams would later observe:

"Before the hearings were a week old, the Senator was conducting a forum on the economics of industrialized agriculture. He had come, of course, to the right state, for these changes have become more apparent in California than elsewhere in the United States. But the relationships which he exposed in California [were] indicative of trends already apparent in other segments of American agriculture…When he lifted the curtain ever so slightly on industrial agriculture in California, he was staging a 'preview' of what is likely to happen generally in American agriculture….

"For, in the course of its investigations, the LaFollette Commission was soon holding hearings in the nation's Capitol and was discovering that the processes which were so strikingly apparent in California were but symptoms of similar processes at work throughout American agriculture."

In focusing on the role played by the Associated Farmers and how they were supported financially by many of California's biggest corporations, the LaFollette Committee soon laid bare the "relationships" that existed within "industrialized agriculture" in California.

While such financial institutions as the Bank of America's local bank contributions were shown as minimal ($500), several of its employees, officers, and many of its best customers and its grower allies were major forces in the running and sustaining of the Associated Farmers and their nefarious anti-union activities.

Why banks would be inclined to support such anti-union activities as those of the Associated Farmers was best explained by the LaFollette Committee:

"Although certain banking corporations in California have taken over a large amount of farm properties through foreclosure of mortgages and are actively engaged in their operation, the principal interest of banks in agricultural labor relations is limited as one of the fixed charges on agricultural employers. If the workers were to receive a larger share of the gross farm income. the employers might attempt to secure a reduction in interest charges to counterbalance the increased labor costs. It might reasonably be assumed that the banks would support the status quo in agricultural labor relations in order to forestall such a movement."

An exchange of letters, however, between Bank of America headquarters in San Francisco and two of its branches in Fresno and Hanford, California show that some of the bank's decisions concerning whether or not to financially support the Associated Farmers were agonizing ones for bank officials.

These exchanges of correspondence also reveal the economic pressures that the large growers and their corporate backers were putting on community businesses and family farmers to support the activities of the Associated Farmers.

In a later effort to escape the taint of the Associated Farmers' "vigilantism," California corporate agribusiness organized the California Citizens Association. On its letterhead, it declared that its purpose was "for the protection of home labor, of Industry and Property, for the preservation of public health, and for the advancement of the common welfare of the state."

With the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the FSA as its prime targets, this new organization sought to offer wages to labor, in the words of the *Rural Observer*, "below the minimum decency standard of relief, and to enforce this wage rate by giving workers no alternative—the usual 'work or starve' order fashioned so closely after the German pattern."

This could be done if all the federal government's relief mediums were routed
from California's fields and replaced by "hidden subsidies" in the form of "hand-outs" to a labor supply that would only remain in the state during harvest time.

Inaugurated in May, 1939, the California Citizens Association was an outgrowth of a so-called Committee of 60 in Bakersfield, California, which was promoted by Asa G. Dimon, a company vice president and manager of the Kern County branch of the Bank of America. Dimon would later come to serve on the Association's executive committee.

In a list of contributors compiled by the Samuel J. Lubin Society, which had also been tracking the activities of the Associated Farmers for many years, it was found that the Citizens Association was being supported by 27 oil companies; six banking and investment firms, led by Bank of America; three of California's largest land companies—Miller and Lux, DiGiorgio Farms, and the Kern County Land Co.; various businesses; agricultural packinghouses; and public utilities.

In the years since the 1930s, Bank of America, although attempting to maintain an appearance of neutrality on the farm labor issue, has frequently betrayed itself in public statements.

Concerning the desirability of continuing the bracero program ("They provide a necessary labor force that is not available elsewhere"), working conditions in the fields ("Farmworkers aren't so bad off…it's all been badly distorted"), union recognition of workers on a Bank of America property ("We're not a dealer in grapes. The bank is not a farmer. It would be improper and unfair for us to take a position on this. We don't want to lead the parade…this is a social revolution.").

Such efforts in the 1930s to organize the workers in the fields, however, were not just unique to California. While from 1930 to 1939 there were some 140 strikes by California farmworkers involving 127,176 laborers, there were also 135 strikes in 27 other states involving 50,612 workers.

As Bulletin No. 836, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1945, succinctly points out, hired farmworkers "numbering in the hundreds of thousands have participated in literally hundreds of strikes throughout the nation in the past five or six decades. Almost every state in the Union has experienced at least one farm-labor strike at one time or another. By far the majority of such outbreaks occurred during the 1930s."

This report, prepared, curiously enough, by Stuart Jamieson, lecturer in economics at the University of British Columbia, also provided an insightful, detailed study of the varied origins, development, problems, and accomplishments of unionism among the nation's farmworkers.

Its conclusion made some telling and relevant observations regarding efforts by farmworkers to organize; observations that even today, many years after its publication, are quite applicable to any number of our current troubles on American farms.

"Theoretically…*farmworkers and operators and industrial workers all have common economic interests*. Small farm operators and industrial workers alike would gain if the wages and working conditions on the land were improved. The operators, depending on family labor, could compete more equally with the large industrial operators employing wage labor. [Emphasis added.]

"The industrial workers would also be more secure if the wages of farm labor were increased, since this would lessen the competition for jobs in urban industries. Viewed in this light, there are reasons to expect that workers in agricultural and allied industries may again organize in

international unions which will function as an integral part of the broader labor movement in the United States. *In the long-run, indeed, farm-labor unionism of this kind may be in a strategic position to bring together organized small farmers and industrial labor for unified political action*." [Emphasis added.]

Quite aware of the possible consequences of such "unified political action," California corporate agribusiness, while successful in breaking the back of the union movement in the fields in the 1930s, was nevertheless unwittingly sowing seeds that would blossom into even greater efforts by farmworkers to organize themselves in the years to come. Only World War II and the "emergency manpower" programs that emerged from the conflict managed to temporarily delay those efforts.

III

Despite the difficulties of organizing workers during the bracero program in the 1940s and 1950s, there were concerted attempts made during the duration of the program to gain better wages and working conditions for domestic farm laborers. From such efforts emerged structures that would inevitably lead to Delano, California in 1965 and Huelga!

One of these early ill-fated attempts was in 1947 when the newly formed National Farm Workers Union or "National Farm Labor Union" (NFLU), struck the mammoth DiGiorgio Fruit Corporation ranch near Arvin, California. The NFLU was the successor to H.L. Mitchell's Southern Tenant Farmers Union, which had become affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

DiGiorgio had long been a symbol to California farmworkers of agribusiness's contempt for farmworkers' unions. Arvin, it will be recalled, was also the "company town" which Walter Goldschmidt used in his now famous study that showed the negative effect of big farming companies on rural communities.

The strike by the NFLU's recently organized Local 218 would continue from October, 1947, to May, 1950, and would be marred by the use of braceros as strikebreakers, intimidation of workers, assassination attempts on union leaders, bloody violence (often instigated by the Associated Farmers) and vitriolic attacks on the union, including considerable "red-baiting," by local, state, and national politicians.

H.L. Mitchell in his book *Mean Things Happening in This Land* and Ernesto Galarza, the union's research/education director, in *Spiders in the House & Workers in the Field*, not only have given us vivid and rich accounts of this strike, but explained how the walkout was to have such a profound influence not only on the future of farm labor in California, but on the Byzantine politics of the American labor movement and on the national political scene.

Compounding the workers' struggle, in November, 1949, a House Committee on Education and Labor came to nearby Bakersfield for two days of hearings on the strike. Although it was chaired by a Democrat sympathetic to the NFLU, it was a young, politically opportunistic California congressman by the name of Richard Nixon who dominated the proceedings.

As Galarza recalls, "The thing I remember about Richard Nixon was the way he played to his audience. That room in the Bakersfield Inn was filled to capacity with growers from all over the state, who came to see the union raked over the coals, and Nixon was in his glory. I remember his face. Every time he made a point, like scoring the union for bloodshed or subversion, he would look up at his audience to see how he was doing."

Although the subcommittee consisted of a Democratic majority under a Democratic administration and was expected to come up with a report that would be supportive of the strike, when it returned to Washington, D.C., it was Rep. Thomas H. Werdel, representing DiGiorgio's home county of Kern, who placed in the appendix of the *Congressional Record* ("Extension of Remarks") a report obviously written at the behest of the DiGiorgio Corp.

Purporting to be an "official report" of the subcommittee, Werdel's work, which appeared over the names of Nixon, Rep. Thruston B. Morton, and Rep. Tom Steed, was a 4400-word attack on the union, using, as Galarza has described, "words seldom printed in the name of Congress." Not only decidedly anti-union, it also went on to indict an NFLU film, *Poverty in the Valley of Plenty,* on multiple counts of defamation.

Just three days before the congressional hearings, the film, produced by the Hollywood Film Council (AFL), had been accused of libel by DiGiorgio. In a suit against the AFL, the council, Mitchell, Galarza, the NFLU, and Hank Hasiwar, the NFLU's western states organizer, DiGiorgio sought a $2-million-apiece settlement.

By the spring of 1950, with the damaging but unofficial Werdel report being widely circulated throughout the state and nation, the strike began to collapse. In May, 1950, a settlement was reached between DiGiorgio and the union, the former being paid $1 and the latter agreeing to recall and destroy all the film's prints and to call off the Arvin strike.

Thus, after maintaining "the world's longest picket line," for public roads surrounding the DiGiorgio ranch covered nearly 20 miles, every day except Sundays for two and one-half years, the union pickets left the Arvin property. Gone virtually unnoticed, however, on that picket line was a young Mexican-American participating in his first farm labor strike, by the name of Cesar Chavez.

Hasiwar describes the days following that strike:

"In the fall of 1949, the Associated Farmers felt sure that the attempts by farmworkers to organize were dead for another 20 years. They held a meeting and reduced the wage being paid for picking cotton from $3 per 100 pounds to $2.50. This meant a loss to pickers of at least $1 per day. Led by the dispersed DiGiorgio strikers, caravans began to roll through the west side from Bakersfield north to Stockton.

"Ernesto Galarza and I, by then the only NFLU organizers in all of California, became involved. Twenty thousand or more men, women, and children engaged in picking cotton were called out on

strike. The caravans would clear the ranches of pickers in one area. The rates would go up, and the caravans would move into an adjoining area and repeat the same operation….However, by 1950, huge cotton-picking machines were in the fields. Workers were needed only to supplement the mechanical pickers."

Recounting those years of confrontation by farmworkers of the most powerful forces of California agribusiness, organizer Galarza has written:

"With the breaking of the strike, Local 218 shrank to a small guard of seasoned union men and women. Many left California. Others found work elsewhere in the state. Carrying the lessons of Arvin with them, they formed the core of [NFWU] locals in the major farming areas. In the next 10 years they maintained a watch over agribusiness…."

Agribusiness, Galarza adds, by the mid-1950s had become a remarkably efficient system of production and contained a loose but effective power federation of employers to protect that system. The DiGiorgio Fruit Corp. was never far from the center of that power. Against it, the thin line of farm labor locals set up a resistance the length and breadth of California.

"They struck in the tomato, the peach, the melon, the cotton, and the potato harvests. In a decade of lost engagements of this type, the Union forced the great ranches to the picket lines. The results were always the same—small wage gains for the harvesters, the adamant refusal of growers to recognize the Union, and a growing accumulation of facts on how the agribusiness system, as production and as power, operated on all levels."

It is Galarza's *Farmworkers and Agribusiness in California, 1947-1960* and Henry Anderson and Joan London's *So Shall Ye Reap* that provide us today with striking and in-depth accounts of not only that struggle by farmworkers to accumulate facts on how California agribusiness grew politically and economically powerful during the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, but of the continued efforts by those same workers to build a strong, viable union.

The NFLU would change its name to the National Agricultural Workers Union in 1955. About this same time, NAWU and the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), which claimed jurisdiction over lettuce shed workers, who were being moved into the fields to do the necessary packing and shipping, began encountering state and federal officials who were now letting braceros pack and ship. It was at this juncture, as the unions' struggle to organize appeared "unbelievably bleak," that the AFL-CIO established AWOC and promised it would "do the job at last."

However, the ensuing years would soon see the emergence of a bitter struggle between national and local union labor leaders; a heated exchange between the NAWU and UPWA over who had jurisdiction over the workers organized by AWOC, which was being aggravated by the chaos of the farm labor market with both domestic labor and braceros vying for work; another $2 million lawsuit by the DiGiorgio Corp. against the AWOC leadership for showing the *Poverty in the Valley of*

Plenty film; and a series of short-lived strikes that sometimes won high wage rates for small batches of workers, but in no case won the union official recognition as a collective bargaining agent.

Perhaps the most important of these confrontations took place in the Imperial Valley in December, 1960, where the winter lettuce harvest was about to begin. Although there was practically no organizational base in the Imperial Valley at the time, enough workers were located there to set up picket lines.

Believing that with AWOC representing "Big Labor," and a new, liberal Democratic administration about to take office in Washington, D.C., domestic workers' rights would be recognized, the union's strategy rested almost exclusively on the hope that government agencies would uphold the provisions of Public 78 prohibiting braceros as strikebreakers.

Anderson/London explain: "The AWOC-UPWA strategy, however, fatally overestimated the influence of labor with the new administration, and underestimated the influence of Imperial Valley growers. At no time during the strike did the government ask growers to remove more than a few braceros, and even this the growers refused to do. Their punishment for such defiance was a fair revelation of the bracero program's enforcement machinery. When the lettuce season was over, the growers in question were denied the use of braceros for six months; a period during which they had no need for braceros."

After someone in the Mexican Embassy in Washington indicated that his government, otherwise unable to intervene, might take some action if it had reason to believe that the health and safety of its nationals were in jeopardy, there followed what Anderson/London describe as "one of the shabbiest hours in the history of the farm labor movement. Union representatives, to make it appear braceros were in mortal danger, cached some dynamite, making sure authorities would find it. Other 'organizers' ran through bracero camp barracks, punching startled Mexicans and belaboring them with broom handles."

The Mexican government quickly withdrew its nationals, but it was far too little and too late to affect the season's lettuce crop.

These incidents, however, did provide local growers and peace officers with the excuse they had been looking for, and soon AWOC and UPWA representatives were arrested and charged not only with battery, disturbing the peace, and trespassing, but the more serious offense—conspiracy. Obtaining the release of key union staff members, the subsequent lawsuits, and a long series of investigations, hearings, and trials would eventually cost AWOC tens of thousands of dollars.

"Business-minded George Meany [then national president of the AFL-CIO] might have been willing to accept these heavy expenses if anything had been gained from the Imperial Valley venture. But there were no contracts, no dues-paying members, no permanent reduction in the use of braceros. And although growers had been far from nonviolent, it was the union's violence which was remembered. AWOC, brawling in the sands of the Imperial Valley, seemed to many observers a black sheep, giving the entire AFL-CIO family a bad name."

While all this strike activity was taking place, however, the jurisdictional battle between NAWU, which was seeking now to merge with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (AFL-CIO), and the UPWA was intensifying. Meany thought he could end the dispute at the 1960 AFL-CIO executive council meeting by directing AWOC to reorganize as a national union with authority to charter its own local unions.

This unprecedented move by Meany, since by definition an organizing committee had always been understood as a temporary phenomenon that in due time would give way to a national or international union, was approved without recorded dissent. As Anderson/London add, "From start to finish, the jurisdictional imbroglio was part tragedy, part farce: sad because it was unnecessary; absurd because the jurisdiction existed only on paper….

"Meany himself never troubled to ascertain whether his Department of Organization had a coherent conception of how to organize farmworkers. At no time did he visit Stockton [AWOC's state headquarters] to find at firsthand whether…glowing progress reports were based on substance or whether they were merely wishful thinking."

The new AWOC experienced repeated growing pains, belated financial support from its parent AFL-CIO, and, in 1962, after being effectively pressed into service to get out the vote in his successful effort to defeat Richard Nixon, Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, shortly after his victory, "rewarded" the union for its work by flying off to Washington, D.C. to urge Congress to extend the bracero program for still another year.

IV

During the years that this internal strife within the farm labor movement was taking place, corporate agribusiness in California was being well served by UC through its Extension Service, its Experimental Stations, and by the Giannini Foundation.

Established in 1928 by A.P. Giannini, founder and president of the Bank of America (see Chapter 12) and described as the "modern Caesar of the financial world," the foundation was set up for the purpose of conducting research in agricultural economics; specifically, research in production-cost studies, commodity economic surveys, and informing farmers of favorable and unfavorable economic consequences.

An initial gift of $1.5 million by Giannini ($500,000 of which was used to build Giannini Hall on the Berkeley campus, and which also once housed the state offices of the CFBF), combined with federal and state funds, soon made it possible to expand UC's program in agricultural economics and establish it as an integral part of the College of Agriculture.

"Though UC-82 appears to be replacing the tough VF145-B7879 after the overly-sensitive UC-134 proved unsatisfactory, the not-quite mature MH-1 remains on the job."

Not a plot for a new James Bond film, nor the plans for Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars," this little scenario is but a reflection of developments in recent years in the tomato business.

For no single project at UC would provide a more vivid illustration of how land-grant college research has come to benefit corporate agribusiness at the expense of human resources than does the development of the mechanized tomato and tomato harvester.

On September 11, 1960, the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s farm reporter, Henry Schacht, who was later to become the university's director of agricultural information, wrote a column describing a new tomato harvesting machine as "a symbol of the farmer's determination to be as independent as possible of hired labor."

"This year's farm labor organizing drive by the AFL-CIO has strengthened this determination, but it is nothing new by any means…," Schacht wrote. "It took a three-way parlay of University of California scientists, a commercial manufacturer, and interested growers who helped finance the research, to turn out the tomato machine."

Indeed, since 1942, when a California tomato grower suggested to G.C. Hanna, department of vegetable crops, UC Davis, that the university develop a tomato for processing and canning that could be harvested by a machine, work had been under way on mechanizing tomatoes.

"I had gotten interested in the history of asparagus in California, and I found that the first asparagus cutters were Chinese and the second group was Japanese. Then we had immigrating Italians and Portuguese, then the Hindus and then the Filipinos in the 1940s. And then I got to looking at the rest of our agricultural labor and I found out that most were imported nationalities and *we were running out of nationalities to import*." [Emphasis added.]

A pear-shaped tomato that was tough enough to withstand the rigors of a machine was soon developed at UC and released to growers in the late 1940s. Subsequently, Colby Lorenzen, UC department of agricultural engineering, began work in 1949 on a machine that could pick these newly designed tomatoes.

Throughout the 1950s, as Hanna/Lorenzen worked on their project, research was also under way on similar machines at Michigan State University, University of Maryland, and the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station. Several commercial firms were also seeking to develop such machines of their own during this same period of time.

By 1959, the UC model had been perfected and was patented by the university, which in turn licensed the Blackwelder Manufacturing Co. to produce and market the expensive new machines. By 1961, however, only 25 machines were being used by the state's growers, accounting for but one-half of one percent of the total California tonnage for processed tomatoes.

Most growers were initially cool to the new machine, but as the legislative campaign in Washington, D.C. in the early 1960s came dangerously close to abolishing the bracero program, the state's tomato growers began to panic.

Established during World War II as an "emergency manpower program," the bracero system allowed growers to hire Mexican contract workers to work in their fields, provided there was not an adequate supply of domestic workers available.

As author-journalist Ernesto Galarza so carefully and painstakingly documented in his now-classic *Merchants of Labor*, the growers, working hand-in-hand with the Department of Labor and other government agencies, frequently ignored government criteria (such as requirements establishing a minimum wage for attracting domestic workers). Thus, through these covert and overt measures, the growers of California were successful in maintaining the bracero program for nearly two decades after the war.

It was the tomato growers, however, who were the largest users of bracero labor in California, tomatoes constituting the state's largest cash vegetable crop, and thus making its growers a highly organized agribusiness group.

As UC reports on the progress of the new harvesters continued to be pessimistic, the growers' demand for more braceros continued. A 1964 Giannini report, aimed primarily at supporting continuance of the bracero program, downgraded the possibility of replacing labor with machines. Detailing the progress in each of 12 major crops using braceros, it enumerated the difficulties, how much more research was necessary, and how related developments had to take place first. In several cases it indicated that mechanization, if at all possible, was a long way off.

Such gloomy prospects only reinforced the argument by corporate agribusiness that it had to have braceros until years of promised research could change the picture. The university's dean of agriculture, M.L. Peterson, declared in 1964:

"Right now it seems almost certain that for at least three to five years we will have to substitute other people for about 70,000 braceros….Today, machines are not yet ready to replace the Mexican braceros in harvesting California's crops."

By the end of the year, however, it was apparent that the bracero program was finished and that the current domestic farm labor force was beginning to get better organized in its efforts to attain fairer wages and win for itself collective bargaining rights. It came as no surprise, therefore, that UC became increasingly interested in speeding up its mechanization research, as evidenced by this 1965 press release.

"A broad university-wide program to speed farm mechanization in the face of a growing labor shortage has been announced by the University Dean of Agriculture Maurice L. Peterson.

"The accelerated research effort, financed by a special $150,000 state legislative appropriation, will be centered on development of machines or systems for using labor more efficiently….The speeded across-the-board research effort has grown out of discontinuance of the bracero program, the import of temporary farm labor from Mexico, at the beginning of this year."

"'It was apparent at once,' director C.J. Kelly said, 'that there could only be two solutions to the problem: *find another labor source or mechanize*.'" [Emphasis added.]

As the termination of the bracero program came closer, Harlan recalls the problem he and his fellow growers were about to face, the fear that they would have "to give up farming. Canners made plans to move to Mexico. But by 1965, when the bracero ban went into effect, most of the bugs had been worked out of the harvesting machine, and we had learned what cultivation practices the new tomato plant required. The way this saved the tomato business in California reminds me of those cavalry rescues in Wild West movies."

Meanwhile, giant canneries like Del Monte, Hunt Foods, Libby, McNeil and Libby, and the California Canners and Growers, all of which had maintained close business and administrative ties with UC over the years, were beginning to benefit enormously from this new mechanized tomato harvester.

As one small San Joaquin Valley farmer, who at the time went broke growing tomatoes, pointed out, "The basic canner-grower relationship, like with Del Monte, leaves the grower at a disadvantage. The natural interest of the canner is to encourage overabundance to drive down the prices. In this relationship the small grower is in the weaker position, especially when so many of us depend on the canners for financing."

William Friedland and Amy Barton's *Destalking the Wily Tomato* and *Manufacturing Green Gold*, explored the similar ramifications to California agriculture stemming from the development of the mechanized tomato and lettuce harvester, and became the landmark case study in how such mechanization affects farmers, farm laborers, consumers, and the taxpayer.

As they note in discussing "tomato technology," "The mechanized tomato harvest has produced a shift in California from an unsophisticated production system accompanied by primitive employment relationships to a sophisticated and complex production system with continuing primitive employment relationships.

"The new system of production with its calculated rationality and planning and with a mobile factory—the harvester—represents a genuine 'factory in the field.' But social relationships between employee and employer have been and continue to be feudal in

character: employers believe that they 'know' what is best for their employees, want to use employees only when necessary and then discard them, and remunerate such employees only at the minimum required."

In March, 1979, the California Institute for Rural Studies published *Labor's Dwindling Harvest*, which not only dealt specifically with the impact of mechanization on those workers who harvested the state's fruit and vegetable crops, but also examined the farmers who produce those same crops.

Their study indicated that harvest mechanization had eliminated tens of thousands of hand-harvest jobs in California since 1950 while creating a smaller number of machine-harvest jobs. This new work was of a different skill level, more strenuous, and involved a greater safety risk than the hand-harvest work. Much of it was also being performed in different production areas by a new workforce, thus resulting in severe unemployment in localized labor markets and preventing the unionization of farm employees.

By way of illustrating how mechanization had led to greater concentration in California agriculture, the CIRS study noted that the trend to large-scale farms that principally raise vegetables, for example, had shown a dramatic increase in recent years.

"The California vegetable industry has become very concentrated in the last 25 years. The number of vegetable farms has decreased from 4779 in 1950 to 2047 in 1974. In this same period, the average size of a California vegetable farm increased from 152 acres to 533 acres. While the average size of farm is an indicator of concentration, a more direct measure…shows that the largest 233 farms harvest 58 percent of the cropland of all California vegetable farms."

UC's both apathetic and at times outright hostile attitude toward farm labor is not of recent origin, as evidenced so dramatically by its tacit support of the vigilantism of the Associated Farmers in the 1930s.

Gone today is the blatant racism that R.L. Adams of the UC faculty expressed in his 1921 textbook on farm management.

Negroes, stated Adams, were "notorious prevaricators" and robbers besides; Japanese were "tricky"; Hindus were "lean, lanky and enervated"; Mexicans were "childish"; etc.

Migrant workers were "unappreciative of attempts to provide more livable surroundings." All of his anti-labor prejudice, which has also frequently been expressed by California growers in the same terms, was set down as scientific fact. Adams warned especially against allowing poker playing and "radical talk," the latter term being a catchword of the time for farmworker organizing activity.

In more recent years, UC's anti-farm labor bias has been couched not in the demeaning rhetoric of Professor Adam's racism, but in the agro-academia jargon of public testimony and reports. A case in point is the major role the university maintained throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s as a corporate apologist for keeping the aforementioned bracero program alive.

Ever since the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which in 1848 ended the war between the U.S. and Mexico, the Southwest was a place, as described by Ernesto Galarza, where the toilers were left on one side of the border and the capital and the best land was on the other side.

World War II provided California agribusiness with a vehicle to bring the two sides together in the form of a "tractable, obedient, cheerful, and eager workforce" to fulfill their needs for manpower on the state's farms, which were faced with an unpredictably shifting pool of labor occasioned by the war.

The bracero agreements of 1942 and later an extension of the agreement in 1951 were supposedly strictly provisional labor arrangements under Public Law 78 between the governments of the U.S. and Mexico to provide contract workers for U.S. farms. The law carefully laid down the provision that the contracting of these aliens should have no adverse effects on the conditions of employment of domestic farm laborers.

No one better chronicled how agribusiness molded P.L. 78 for decades to its own insidious purposes and how it economically, socially, and politically exploited both the braceros and U.S. domestic labor, than Galarza. In his analysis of the bracero program, Galarza asks a series of rather prophetic questions, ones interestingly enough quite relevant to our modern-day controversy regarding the increasing migration of illegal aliens into the U.S. job market.

"Does the employment of braceros keep down prices of California products to consumers? Is the state's agribusiness so competitive that its very survival requires a permanent alien contract labor force? Is this indentured alien—an almost perfect model of economic man, an 'input factor' stripped of the political and social attributes that liberal democracy likes to ascribe to all human beings ideally—is this bracero the prototype of the production man of the future?"

By the end of the 1950s, the hinge of an enormous input of some 500 million man-hours to raise 33 million tons of agricultural products had become a bracero labor force of over 100,000.

It was at this time that a state Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Labor and Welfare conducted a comprehensive inquiry into agricultural labor. A final report in 1959 declared that a state minimum wage for farmworkers was not desirable ($1 an hour was the current standard wage for domestic farmworkers), unemployment insurance for seasonably

employed farmworkers was not feasible (only 36 percent of such laborers worked 50 to 52 weeks a year), and collective bargaining for agricultural labor was summarily dismissed.

The influence of UC throughout these hearings was unmistakable, as indicated by the committee's expression of gratitude:

"We are particularly indebted to the California Department of Employment and the University of California College of Agriculture, especially the Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics, the Agricultural Extension Service, and the Department of Agricultural Engineering…. The data and analyses supplied by the university's staff members were primarily in the field of agricultural economics, mechanization, and agricultural labor-management relations. Their value is gratefully acknowledged by the committee."

The theme which pervaded the volumes of testimony presented to the committee by UC's experts was perhaps best expressed by Dr. George L. Mehren, director of the Giannini Foundation and a man who would later serve under Clifford Hardin and Earl Butz as the USDA's assistant secretary for rural development.

"The increases in distributive shares to labor have been at least as high as increases in labor productivity rates…. *There is no compelling indication of exploitation of hired domestic agricultural labor anywhere in any agricultural industry for any protracted period*." [Emphasis added.]

In 1963, as it became apparent that the bracero program was in serious political trouble, two prominent UC agricultural economists, Dr. Eric Thor, later to become administrator of USDA's Farmer Cooperative Service, and Dr. John Mamer began issuing a steady stream of reports and statements which foretold economic and social disaster if the state was to be deprived by Congress of its imported "rented" labor force.

The university thus published a report, "Seasonal Labor in California Agriculture," emphasizing the importance of retaining the braceros. Largely because of Thor's and Mamer's pleadings, Congress was successfully persuaded to extend Public Law 78 for another year to the end of 1964.

Meanwhile, in California, as throughout the nation, overcrowded cities, slum housing, unemployment, street crime, burgeoning Welfare rolls, and racial unrest were being compounded precisely at the same time that millions of rural poor were uprooted from the land and pushed into the cities by programs that sought to economically enslave rural workers.

Again in 1964, at the request of California Governor Edmund G. Brown's administration, the university's division of agricultural sciences drew up a new report entitled *California Agricultural Labor Requirements and Adjustments*.

The preface to this 175-page report by Dean of Agriculture Peterson gave major credit for the report to Thor and Mamer, assisted by many other individuals in Agricultural Extension and the Giannini Foundation. The dean also expressed the hope that "the report will be useful to those involved in making policy decisions regarding California agricultural labor.

It, of course, argued that the bracero program must be maintained. With all their research and expertise, UC agricultural economists somehow "overlooked" a fact which Dick Meister, labor editor for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, had pointed out in a February 23, 1964 article on "The Impact of Losing Braceros"; i.e., with more than 400,000 unemployed workers in California (half of whom were in or close to agricultural areas), why couldn't the growers recruit the 60,000 workers needed to replace the braceros?

Meister attempted to answer his own question.

"By any measurement, agricultural working conditions are hardly attractive, especially to urban workers. State Health Director Malcolm Merrill reports, for instance, that there is an 'almost universal lack of toilets and hand-washing facilities' at farm job sites.

"Would-be workers are discouraged, too, contend labor leaders, by the lack of guaranteed hours, wages, and union representation on the farm, and the availability of very few fringe benefits and almost none of the legal protections and social insurance benefits afforded urban workers."

Some months after the "Giannini Report" was released, the *Los Angeles Times'* Ruben Salazar (later tragically killed by police "crossfire" in an East Los Angeles barrio) disclosed that 17 pages of the report had been deleted somewhere between the report's inception and publication. These "missing pages" not only underscored Meister's points, but projected that *an adequate domestic labor force was available if minimal wage and working conditions afforded urban workers were, in fact, available.* [Emphasis added.]

UC at first called the 17 "missing pages" a "misunderstanding" and only part of a "draft within the University." However, when it was revealed that this "draft" had been sent to the governor's office and not to any state legislative body, the university sat back in silence. Subsequently, the state AFL-CIO sought (unsuccessfully) to elicit a response from UC.

"The apparent grower veto of this section of the Berkeley study constitutes a gross violation of academic freedom with respect to research personnel. This flagrant trifling with scholarship smacks of an effort to convert a great university into a Madison Avenue public relations outfit whose findings can be shaped to meet the desire of any group with the price or the influence to dictate the end product."

Despite such protestations, in the months following the publication of the "Giannini Report," it was repeatedly used by state corporate agribusiness interests to keep the

braceros—or to find some sort of other state or federal means to maintain cheap laborers. As the *Chronicle* noted in an October 1 article:

"California's powerful farm organizations yesterday demanded Federal assurance that they be allowed to import Mexican farm hands next year, despite the death of the bracero program. The groups…based their demand on a University of California study released this week…. [They] cited UC findings that growers cannot attract domestic workers and demanded that Federal authorities institute what would amount to an informal bracero program."

Undaunted, Thor would continue his drumbeat for the continuation of the bracero program. A November 12 *Chronicle* reported:

"The state Chamber of Commerce yesterday urged state and federal officials to take 'prompt action' to find a substitute for the Mexican farmworker program…The view of [U.S. Senator George] Murphy and the Chamber of Commerce that domestic workers won't be able to replace Mexicans was supported in a report yesterday by Eric Thor of the University of California's Giannini Foundation. He added that although workers can be brought in through the immigration law, it will be more costly than under the bracero program and that labor shortages will continue for at least five years until there is more farm mechanization."

Despite these efforts, the bracero program came to an end on December 31, 1964. But even as that battle was lost, California's agribusiness and its land-grant university complex were preparing to wage a new offensive to hold onto their cheap labor force.

In 1967, during the campaign by the NFWA and AWOC to organize farmworkers, author James Ridgeway sought out UC officials to measure their reaction to such efforts. In his book, *The Closed Corporation*, he tells of those interviews.

"I asked Dr. Ivan Hinderaker, the political scientist who is chancellor of the Riverside campus, the southern [California] agricultural center, how he viewed the unionizing of farmworkers; Dr. Hinderaker said he was a political scientist and really didn't know much about the subject. Being uninformed, he didn't have any opinions.

"Then I asked Dr. Aldrich, the chancellor at Irvine who had been chancellor of Riverside and who sat on the U.S. Labor Department panel which had worked out a scheme to reduce the number of braceros, how he viewed the unionizing effort; Aldrich said he just didn't know.

"When I brought up the subject of braceros with Dr. Mrak, the outspoken chancellor at the Davis campus, he said it was his opinion that ending importation of braceros was like cutting out a useful AID [Agency for International Development] program for Mexicans, leaving them all lying around with little to do."

On other occasions, when research presented conclusions unfavorable to corporate agribusiness, the results were either suppressed or emasculated, as with the 17 pages of the Giannini Report. Such was the fate of Henry Anderson, employed by the University in 1965 as a graduate research public health sociologist to study the health problems and attitudes of braceros.

In 1958, while in the middle of his research, Anderson was asked for a statement of opinion about the bracero program by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Citing a number of abuses he had observed, Anderson said he thought the program was fundamentally unjust and should be abolished.

His statement soon came to the attention of the California Farm Bureau. The relationship between the Farm Bureau and UC at the time was so close that the grower organization's state headquarters was on the university's Berkeley campus. An FB representative called UC's vice president for agricultural affairs and reportedly told him, "We have good friends in the state legislature. Next time the university goes to Sacramento and asks for funds, our friends might ask some embarrassing questions about why you have on your payroll a man who attacks the state's agricultural industry."

Bowing to such pressure, the university "worked out" an agreement whereby Anderson was ordered to halt his field studies, his research only half finished, and submit a truncated final report.

Such an agreement was subsequently approved by Glenn Seaborg, then chancellor of the Berkeley campus, and also reportedly by Clark Kerr, then president of the university. Despite even these limitations, Anderson's final report proved too much for the university's now thoroughly frightened officials. All copies were destroyed, except one, which the author kept for his personal use.

Such has been the state of academic freedom at the University of California when corporate agribusiness felt its interests were being seriously threatened.

V

Perhaps the most significant, but undoubtedly questionable, move AWOC made in its early years was in 1963, when, instead of organizing its members directly from the farm labor force, it pressured farm labor contractors to sign up the men and women whom they "recruited" for harvest work as union members.

Farm labor contractors, or "crew leaders" as they are known on the East Coast and in the Midwest, are usually persons who recruit workers for a grower and then subsequently will often "care for" and yet at the same time "shake down" the workers, not unlike the manner in which pimps handle their prostitutes.

More than 100 of these farm labor contractors in the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley soon had "contracts" with AWOC, deducting a month's dues ($2) from each worker's pay each day, up to a maximum of 12 months in advance.

Anderson/London recall, "Almost everybody was happy. Growers were relieved of any necessity to recognize a union. Labor contractors continued to make their profits. AWOC gathered substantial numbers of 'members' without effort. George Meany was delighted that AWOC had at last been put on a sound, businesslike basis. Urban liberals slept well, with the thought that the farm labor movement was again in competent professional hands."

Recognizing the abuses of farm labor contractors, the federal government had sought to regulate their behavior with the passage of the Farm Labor Contract Registration Act of 1963. But because it was seldom enforced, it had only a minimal effect on the lives of farmworkers.

The number of compliance officers went from 40 in 1965 to five in 1972. An amended act in 1974 sought to broaden its coverage and enforcement capabilities.

It was not until the early 1980s, however, after negotiations between farmworkers and farmers, that one of the few consensus farm labor bills in history was enacted in 1983. The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act switched emphasis from registering farm labor contractors to protecting migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

By the early 1960s, the public's awareness of the plight of farm laborers, not only in California but throughout the United States, was also starting to be fueled by the increasing attention the media were devoting to the subject. Newspaper reports and incisive radio reports such as those by Edward P. Morgan on the continuing struggles of migrant workers were becoming more frequent throughout the nation.

But it was on the Thanksgiving, 1960, weekend that Edward R. Murrow, standing in a Florida field, tieless and in shirtsleeves, introduced to a national TV audience the shocking story of America's "Harvest of Shame."

"These are the forgotten people, the underprotected; the undereducated; the underclothed; the underfed…This is Belle Glade, Florida. This is a shape-up for migrant workers. One farmer looked at this and said, 'We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them.'"

Conceived by Fred W. Friendly, produced by David Lowe, and filmed by Marty Barnett, this landmark documentary evoked immediate nationwide attention and outrage. In her brilliant biography, *Murrow: His Life and Times*, A.M. Sperber recalls:

"It was clear cut advocacy journalism, and Murrow's skillful narration, ranging from understated irony to flaming anger, carried along Lowe and Barnett's portrait gallery of pickers, farmers, lobbyists, missionaries, and politicians, from the introductory voice-over juxtaposed against the

early-morning 'shape-up' for the hired help ('This…has nothing to do with Johannesburg or Capetown…This is Florida…These are citizens of the United States'), to the closing appeal for action in the muckraking tradition of Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens."

The program's critics wondered why Murrow, for his part, was so invariably pro-union. "Because I hoed corn in a blazing sun," he once answered such an accusation. Yet, despite the praiseworthy attention the program received, it was, as Ms. Sperber tells us, effectively Murrow's last hurrah.

" …The final round of [*New York*]*Times* editorials, the praises and damnation in the press and Congress, the anger of the interest groups, the squirming by the sponsors [two executives dispatched to Florida had virtually apologized], as well as the public calls to action that would probably fizzle."

However, as Murrow himself often reminded others, television could only hold the mirror; the idea was to hold it up until something happened: a seven-day-a-week job, defending the Republic and pointing up the warts.

In the immediate years following the CBS-TV report, additional efforts to document the saga of farmworkers continued. One such effort was Truman Moore's *The Slaves We Rent*, an explosive report not only devoted to the living, working, and health conditions of the more than two million men, women, and children who annually harvested the nation's crops, but also a book that contained a damning overview of the system that created and continues to this day to tolerate such subhuman conditions.

It was also at this time in the 1960s that a series of U.S. Senate committee investigations, which would last into the mid-1970s, began in an effort to improve the living and health conditions of farmworkers. At the same time, these hearings sought the adoption of appropriate federal legislation guaranteeing these workers the right to organize and bargain collectively with their employers under previously established guidelines enacted under the original National Labor Relations Act.

Under three chairmen, Sen. Harrison Williams (D-New Jersey) Sen. Walter Mondale (D-Minnesota), and Sen. Adlai Stevenson II (D-Illinois), the committee and its tireless and committed chief counsels, including Fred Blackwell and, for many years, Boren Chertkov, the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor held dozens of hearings in cities and rural communities throughout the U.S., collected thousands of pages of testimony from farmworkers, farmers, corporate agribusiness executives, and state and local government officials.

Two volumes of that testimony, the eight-part *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness* and the five-part *Farmworkers in Rural America, 1971-1972* remain to the present day one of the most comprehensive and telling stories of America's "forgotten people" ever published.

Yet, after a dozen years, and although it managed to introduce and pass several pieces of necessary and remedial farmworker legislation, the committee was unable to bring thousands of unprotected men, women, and children farmworkers under the jurisdiction of the NLRA.

It was, therefore, a rather grim reminder of exactly how prophetic "public calls to action" would "fizzle" when 10 years after "Harvest of Shame," NBC-TV felt obliged to present in 1970 still another documentary on migrant workers, "Migrant—An NBC White Paper." At the program's outset, it was now narrator Chet Huntley, standing in a familiar Belle Glade field, who, after showing Murrow's introduction to "Harvest of Shame," intoned to his audience:

"….Though many of them no longer travel, they're still called migrants. Despite some changes effected by federal and state agencies and local organizations, the migrants live in poverty and despair."

After crossing over many of the same fields and traveling the same roads Murrow and his crew had traveled a decade earlier, Huntley concluded his commentary by noting:

"We concentrated on conditions in Florida, which officially describes the migrants as, quote, the most economically and socially deprived segment of the population in the United States, unquote. We could have made this film in any number of other states. But we chose Florida because it depends on the migrants. And for more and more of them, Florida is now home….

"The responsibility goes beyond Florida and other states that depend on migrant labor. Beyond even large farmers, big business, organized labor, and federal agencies. To say that no programs have been instituted to help the migrants would be misleading. It is our observation that recent reforms have had little substantial effect on the conditions of their lives.

"It should be the responsibility of all Americans to see that no American is deprived of the quality of life that the rest of us take for granted. It has been 10 years since Edward R. Murrow made 'Harvest of Shame.' We hope that no one will need to make a film about migrants 10 years from now."

CHAPTER NINE
A Vision About to Become a Reality

I

Violence, no stranger to the southern San Joaquin Valley farm labor strikes, reared its ugly head again on April 20 at the DiGiorgio Fruit Company's Sierra Vista ranch. The incident between a company guard, a supervisor, and an NFWA picket, took place only 10 days after Delano's pilgrim marchers returned from Sacramento.

According to eyewitnesses, Hershel Nunes, a DiGiorgio "security officer," told a woman picket shouting to workers still in the vineyards, "If you don't shut up, I'll kill you," and

pointed his revolver in her general direction. The picket, Ida Cousino, then sought to make a citizen's arrest of Nunes for brandishing a firearm in a menacing manner.

Thirty minutes later, as Tulare county sheriff deputies questioned witnesses about the incident, Nunes attempted to leave the scene in his car. Miss Cousino ran to the car, reaching inside to restrain him from leaving. She was grabbed by the DiGiorgio supervisor, Richard Myer, and pulled to the ground.

Another NFWA picket, Manuel Rosas, tried to separate Myer and Cousino, but he was grabbed by sheriff deputies. Nunes, meanwhile, got out of his car carrying a billy club, and in the ensuing scuffle, Nunes struck Rosas on the head while the picket was being held by the deputies. The wound required 10 stitches.

DiGiorgio later announced that all guns were being taken away from its guards in Delano. Robert Ham, a DiGiorgio executive, explained:

"Our people recognize the volatility of the situation in Delano, and have been cautioned repeatedly not to provoke any incident. There is no reason to believe our people acted improperly in any way, but we do want to relieve tensions. Our investigation showed that Nunes was simply taking his gun out of his holster in the car in order to put the holster on his belt, a safety precaution for officers riding in a car."

The incident came only a few days after grower Louis Lucas told a meeting of the Agricultural Labor Board, "Unless this strike is settled soon, some grower is going out and settle it himself."

Nearly a month later, Nunes was again accused of physical assault by the NFWA. The alleged attack took place at a women's camp on the Sierra Vista ranch. Association picket captain Pete Cardenas was walking on a road near the border of the camp when Nunes, according to Cardenas, ordered him into a car, and when Cardenas refused, he was attacked by Nunes.

Suites totaling $640,000 were filed in Tulare County Superior Court by five NFWA pickets, Miss Cousino, and Manuel Rosas against the DiGiorgio Corporation, Nunes, and company supervisor Myers.

After the April 20 violence, Cesar Chavez also wired State Attorney General Thomas Lynch and U.S. Attorney Nicholas Katzenbach asking for an immediate investigation to "correct gross violations of civil rights" by Tulare County authorities. The NFWA had claimed the Tulare County District Attorney Jay Ballantyne had shown partiality toward DiGiorgio when he merely charged Nunes for brandishing a weapon and Rosas for assault and resisting an arrest. The state attorney general's office later absolved Ballantyne's office of any wrongdoing concerning the charges.

A day prior to the violence, the State Mediation and Conciliation Service, at the request of DiGiorgio, held its first meeting in Fresno in an attempt to set up procedures for a union recognition election. The NFWA, however, did not attend the conference, due to the presence of the Independent Kern Tulare Farm Workers Association. AWOC also boycotted the meeting. State Conciliator Thomas Nicolopolus said after the 90-minute talk, "Quite a bit of progress was made." He also announced that 31 growers had been asked by his office to consent to elections, but no response to the request had been received.

On April 6, Robert DiGiorgio wrote a letter to Gov. Brown calling upon the California State Mediation Service to assist in setting up free secret ballot elections. Brown, friend and former high school classmate of DiGiorgio, responded that he had been trying for several months to "create a climate" for this type of agreement. It was later reported that William Becker, a member of the governor's staff, assisted DiGiorgio in drafting the election offer.

Ten compulsory points were presented to the unions by DiGiorgio to serve as guidelines for any collective bargaining agreement. Included among the offers were:

• Recognition of the union that wins the election;
• After 30 days of collective bargaining, if no agreement is reached, the unresolved issues to be submitted to an impartial board of arbitration;
• No strike or work stoppage during negotiations;
• Eligibility of voters would be determined by rules applicable to elections conducted by the National Labor Relations Board.

In a April 7 press conference, DiGiorgio stated, "The NFWA say they represent our workers. Therefore, we are asking for a secret ballot election to determine if the NFWA does in fact represent our workers."

Chavez replied that the NFWA had made the same election proposal several months previously, but had been rejected by Delano's growers—specifically by the DiGiorgio Corp.

"We accept the idea of elections at the Sierra Vista ranch. We look forward to sitting down with DiGiorgio to work out the procedures on such elections. The preconditions and governing rules should be those that the NLRB would use if they were handling the elections. The corporation should not have the sole right to determine the conditions by which an election should take place."

Chavez also stated at that time that the NFWA would not be a party to any elections in which the IKTFW was involved.

"The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor has made it clear that this group is controlled by employers and supervisors of employees. The chairman of the board of

directors is a farm labor contractor, the treasurer is a company foreman, and the secretary owns a local business establishment."

Chavez argued that the NFWA was the only organization to have a strike certified by the California State Department of Employment (Trade Dispute #65-3294a) against the DiGiorgio Corp. and that the other groups named were not relevant parties to the dispute.

Until elections were assured, the NFWA announced plans for a nationwide boycott of DiGiorgio-owned S&W Fine Foods and Tree Sweet fruit juices.

Informal talks between DiGiorgio and the NFWA were opened on April 20, but when Chavez was informed of the altercation in Delano between Nunes and Cousino, he immediately left the Fresno meeting. "Talks with DiGiorgio would be fruitless as long as the corporation continues doing bodily harm to our pickets. We simply cannot sit in the same room in Fresno with them while their hired gunmen are beating our men in Delano."

Chavez also sharply criticized the local law enforcement officials.

"If the Tulare County officers had arrested the offending company security guard and disarmed him, we would not have had this near tragedy. We are tired of having to do battle with growers and their allies—the police."

The following Monday, in a speech before the State Board of Agriculture in Fresno, DiGiorgio's Robert Ham indicated that more law enforcement officials were needed in the Delano area because of the bitter strike. He revealed plans to seek Gov. Brown's assistance in the matter.

One week after the Rosas beating, the NFWA and DiGiorgio held another meeting, but no agreement was reached. On May 4 at 3 p.m., a DiGiorgio representative phoned the NFWA and asked for an immediate conference.

Such a meeting was impossible as the association's legal advisor, Alex Hoffman, was in San Francisco. DiGiorgio had invited the press to attend, and after it was clear the NFWA could not meet with the corporation, the farmworker organization was publicly accused of bad faith and manifesting an unwillingness to bargain.

The following day, NFWA's San Francisco field representative, Jack Ybarra, announced that federal negotiations between his organization and DiGiorgio had been terminated. In a press conference, Ybarra explained the association's actions:

"It has become obvious the DiGiorgio Fruit Co. is not interested in negotiating in good faith, wants to foist upon the farmworker a labor union, and is bent on employing brutality tactics that were used by a number of industries 30 or 50 years ago when workers were fighting with their lives to be organized."

Ybarra introduced a letter from E.C. Fontana, the Sierra Vista ranch supervisor, and Myer to the company's Delano employees. The letter read in part:

"We want you to know the DiGiorgio Fruit Corp. deeply appreciates your continued loyalty and that we very much regret the fact that you have been annoyed and insulted by the pickets around the Sierra Vista ranch. There is enough protection now so that pickets will not provoke another scuffle.

"As you know, we have been trying to arrange an election through officials of the state of California to allow you to tell us if you want to be represented by any one of the three unions not active in the area—AWOC, NFWA, or the IKTFW—or if you want no union, as it has been in the past….

"DiGiorgio firmly believes that you do not need a union, but we are ready and willing to let you tell us in a secret ballot election if you want a union or if you want DiGiorgio Fruit Corporation. We are willing to have an election. Why is the NFWA *not* willing?...."

II

In the 1930s, a similar communication was reported by Carey McWilliams in *Factories in the Field* involving one of the DiGiorgio ranches.

"In an interesting interview in the *Los Angeles Times* on August 15, 1937, which appeared under the title "I Work, You Work: The Land Works," Mr. Joseph DiGiorgio set forth his views on labor organizations. It seems some organizers appeared at his factory and said 'Mr. DiGiorgio, we're going to unionize your farm.' 'You're going to what?' he demanded. 'My men are free men. You aren't going to do anything here they don't want done.'

"So concerned was Mr. DiGiorgio about the 'freedom' of his employees, that he promptly called a meeting and addressed his men on the subject of unionization.

"'You know that one day the fruit is green,' he orated, 'and the next it's ready, and the third it's rotting. We're in the shipping business and it's got to move. How can you have a union? If you think you can, go ahead and try it. If this farm goes to hell your jobs go, too.'

"'The employees then 'voted,' and after the vote was taken, announced the results. 'Mr. DiGiorgio, we have voted.' 'That's a good American way,' DiGiorgio replied. 'Do you give your pay to those fellows in the city, or not?' To quote from the interview, 'A smile flashed across the man's sunburned face. "The men say nothin' doing."' 'Good,' said DiGiorgio. 'On the DiGiorgio farms we grow crops—and men!'"

No other farming interest had been more typical of California's agribusiness, which had dominated the state's economy for decades, than the DiGiorgio Corp. It was appropriate,

therefore, that the NFWA should choose to seek recognition from the rich, powerful agricultural giant.

In 1966, the corporation's land holdings included 20,000 acres in California and 510 acres in Florida, with assets over $65 million. Sales in 1965 of $232 million were up $100 million from the previous year's volume, while earnings advanced $336,000 from 1964's $2,535,000. Despite the Delano strike, first-half earnings in 1966 were $1,330,000 as compared with $1,255,000 for the same six-month period in 1965. The firm's sales for the first half totaled $121 million compared with $106.6 million the previous year. In 1964, 60 percent of the corporation's earnings came from S&W Fine Foods and 11 percent from Tree Sweet fruit juices.

A cornerstone of DiGiorgio's wealth was in maintaining a controlling interest in five major auction companies, including 100 percent of the Philadelphia Fruit Auction Corp. and 47 percent of the New York Fruit Auction Corp. In 1964, one-third of all DiGiorgio's carload sales of fresh fruit and vegetables went through these auction markets. This type of control allowed DiGiorgio not only a ready market but the opportunity to exercise considerable financial influence over the selling of fruits and produce by small farmers and city jobbers to the small retailer.

Until he died in 1951, Giuseppe (Joe) DiGiorgio, Robert's uncle, was the director of the multimillion-dollar corporation, which earned him the title of "the Kublai Khan of Kern County" and "the Paul Bunyan of Agriculture."

Born June 10, 1874, as a young man he was a lemon picker on his father's modest farm in Cefalu, Sicily. Later he went to the seminary, but soon after his 14th birthday, he left Sicily and came to America with a small consignment of his father's lemons.

"If you cannot do good to America, son, don't do them any harm," his father advised him.

In New York he found an $8-a-week job with an importer. Later, in the 1930s, when he revisited his home, an old priest at the seminary began musing over the possibility of what DiGiorgio might have done if he had become a priest. "I tell you one thing right away," DiGiorgio said, "if I had gone in then, I would be pope or there'd be a new Church."

After learning English, DiGiorgio moved to Baltimore, where he became a fruit jobber himself, specializing in the city's chief fruit import—bananas. Soon he obtained a loan from the Maryland National Bank and purchased the Monumental Trading Company. DiGiorgio also became, at 21 years of age, a director of the Maryland bank. Within 10 years, in 1904, DiGiorgio began the Baltimore Fruit Exchange, which was to become the center of his auction business.

He continued to expand his operations in the next 20 years. In 1911, he purchased the Earl Fruit Company from an old California landowner and shipper. In 1918, he acquired large

citrus holdings in Florida. Two years later, he also incorporated 40 separate companies into what would become the DiGiorgio Corp.

In the year prior to this consolidation, be bought 10,000 acres of arid desert southeast of Bakersfield. This 18-square-mile area, which surrounds the towns of Arvin and DiGiorgio, soon became productive acreage for grapes, cotton, plums, and potatoes with the aid of pumped-in water and foreign labor. DiGiorgio explained his success: "Fruit is nothing but water and labor and more labor and freight."

Labor and water have always been the two key factors in the DiGiorgio Corporation's "success story."

An early and frequent user of braceros under the provisions of P.L. 78, DiGiorgio also hired "illegals" or "wetbacks" to work its California farms. In 1948, for example, a Border Patrol raid on the Arvin Ranch found 29 "illegals." The following year, 315 "illegals" were apprehended in two separate raids while working for DiGiorgio. A ranch official would later describe the raids as "surveys" by government officials, and Robert DiGiorgio, then in charge of hiring operations, told a congressional committee in 1949, "We have no way of knowing a man is not a Mexican citizen. We only accept a man's word for it."

The use of these "illegals" and braceros at the ranch in the late 1940s was to be the crucial factor in the breaking of a strike by the National Farm Labor Union (later the National Agricultural Workers Union), who were seeking recognition at that time. Throughout the 1950s, when the bracero program was being utilized by California growers to its fullest extent, the DiGiorgio Corp. was wielding powerful control within the program itself.

The Farm Placement Service was under the directorship of Edward F. Hayes, a DiGiorgio stockholder. His agency regulated the volume of the foreign labor pool, acted as the operating arm of the U.S. Secretary of Labor in the fields, and was entrusted to conduct wage surveys, determine the need, and certify requests for foreign labor. Other DiGiorgio Corp. officers also served on various federal and state advisory commissions that dealt specifically with labor needs for California's farming industry.

Water and its use in raising the state's crops were also in large part controlled by large growers such as DiGiorgio.

In 1902, as part of President Theodore Roosevelt's reclamation program and a desire to open up western lands to small family farms, a bill was enacted putting a 160-acre limitation on water furnished through federally subsidized water systems. In Roosevelt's words, the program was intended so "every dollar is spent to build up the small man of the West and prevent the big men—East or West—from coming in and monopolizing the water and the land."

But alas, Roosevelt's dream quickly became hollow. For example, in 1965, the total cost of bringing water to land in the southern San Joaquin Valley was $700 an acre-foot (an acre covered with one foot of water), with farmers repaying $123 an acre-foot and the balance written off as a federal subsidy.

With the lure of such lucrative subsidies, DiGiorgio, like many of his large grower neighbors, would find ways to circumvent the 160-acre water subsidy law. A case in point: Back on April 9, 1952, the DiGiorgio Corp. and the U.S. secretary of the interior signed a recordable contract agreeing upon a divestment order pertaining to the 4000-acre Sierra Vista ranch in Delano.

The terms of the agreement stipulated that within 10 years, the corporation had to dispose of its excess land at an approved price to individuals who could take title to the land as non-excess owners. Owners of these parcels of land would also become eligible for government water subsidies.

The contract further provided that if DiGiorgio failed to dispose itself of this excess land in compliance with the contract, the power of attorney was granted to the secretary of the interior to carry out the provisions of the contract—acting for the DiGiorgio interests. The corporation did not make the sales, and the secretary in the mid-1960s was exercising its power of attorney to sell the excess land.

In the meantime, because it agreed to sign the pact, DiGiorgio had use of the water flowing through the multimillion-dollar Friant-Kern Canal.

By that time, DiGiorgio's 3900 acres of "excess land" were being offered for sale in 27 parcels varying in size from 40 to 160 acres for prices ranging from $64,000 to $292,500 per parcel. According to the Bureau of Reclamation, the variation in price was due to the difference in the size of the parcel and the "improvements" thereon, while some of the parcels were being offered without vineyards.

E.F. Sullivan, the bureau's assistant regional director, explained that the prices "were determined by a team of qualified appraisers employed under contract by the bureau acting for the Secretary of Interior."

In 1965 alone, four parcels of the Sierra Vista ranch were sold at an after-tax profit of $535,000. The ranch itself had an assessed value of $7 million. DiGiorgio also announced that within the next 10 years it expected to sell land worth $40 million in an effort to funnel more of the corporation's time and capital into food processing and the distribution and marketing of its products.

George Ballis—a former crusading editor of the *Valley Labor Citizen* an extraordinarily gifted photographer who chronicled much of the early years of the strike on both film and still photographs and who later founded National Land for People, which would document

many of the abuses of the 160-acre law—denounced DiGiorgio's circumvention of the "excess land" law.

"The so-called Sierra Vista land sale by DiGiorgio is completely phony and another example of gutless federal officials allowing California land barons to gain perpetual control of heavily subsidized irrigation water from reclamation projects. The government is allowing DiGiorgio to 'sell' the land at an inflated price which charges the buyer for the subsidized water. This is contrary to the law.

"The government is also allowing DiGiorgio to 'sell' to absentee owners and thereby maintain the corporation's control of the land. This is also contrary to the law. DiGiorgio's actions are understandable. It is operating in the profit system. The government compliance in these evasions is reprehensible. It is supposed to enforce the law and represent the public interest."

Most of the purchases of the Sierra Vista land were made through loans, and Bank of America, with assets at the time of over $17.1 billion, was the financial institution that was financing over 50 percent of California's agricultural industry.

Carl F. Wente, the vice president of the bank, served as a member of the DiGiorgio board of directors, while Robert DiGiorgio and corporate board members A. E. Sbarboro and Prentis Hale served on the board of directors for Bank of America.

DiGiorgio, in disposing of all its "excess land," also offered to operate one or all of the parcels for the new owners under an appropriate operative agreement whereby the owners "can share in the benefits of large-scale operations through continued DiGiorgio management."

That arrangement would be accomplished through the transfer of a dead-leaseback setup which, while adhering to its reclamation law agreement, did violence to its intent. It also allowed DiGiorgio to continue to take advantage of the federally subsidized water program as it attempted to expand its economic power in the San Joaquin Valley.

III

Unionization, however, posed a serious threat to DiGiorgio's power, as evidenced by a Myers-Fontana letter circulated among the corporation's field workers on May 5. The letter complained that "Cesar Chavez refuses to meet with our representatives. He will not talk over the situation. He will not tell us what he wants. He will not explain his evil plan….Do not worry about him. As we have said before, DiGiorgio has been here for nearly half of a century, and DiGiorgio will be here long after Cesar Chavez and the NFWA 'No Fair Working Association' are nothing but an unpleasant memory."

When the NFWA announced on May 5 that it was suspending talks relative to union recognition elections with DiGiorgio, Robert Ham indicated that his firm would be willing to accept a worker's signature on an association membership card as a "vote" for the union. Events in the next two weeks appeared to contradict Ham's offer.

On Monday, May 16, Ophelia Dias, a DiGiorgio employee for 24 years and a forelady since 1954, was fired for what company officials claimed was a lack of interest in her work. Mrs. Diaz immediately retaliated: "Dick Meyer said that I was not doing enough work, which is nothing but a lie against the truth."

The DiGiorgio forelady had been one of the witnesses to the April 20 violence and was prepared to testify on the pickets' behalf despite repeated efforts by Myers to have her sign what she felt were inaccurate statements. Company officials also claimed she had spoken on behalf of the NFWA in recent weeks to the workers at Sierra Vista.

The day after the firing of the 38-year-old mother of four, her husband, Henry, was also discharged from his job at the nearby Lucas & Sons Vineyards. The ranch gave no explanation for its action against Diaz.

On May 17, another DiGiorgio employee, while suckering the recently pruned vines, left his work and came out to the NFWA picket line seeking information. After listening to an explanation of the strike, he signed one of the association's authorization slips and was immediately fired by a company supervisor. The 14-man crew from which he came, angered at the firing, walked away from their jobs and returned to the ranch barracks. After a heated argument, eight of the workers and the fired employee joined the NFWA picket line.

Meanwhile, S&W Fine Foods revealed plans for one of the largest West Coast newspaper campaigns ever used by the company. Ads for its products were scheduled to appear in more than 95 daily and weekly newspapers during the months of April and May. Countering this was a renewed plea by the NFWA for increased boycott activities.

Typical of the support the boycott received was a resolution passed on June 13 by the Northern California Council of Churches urging cooperating communions "to be discriminating in their future purchases of foodstuffs, identifying and excluding from purchase all products of DiGiorgio and DiGiorgio associated industries…."

The AFL-CIO also reaffirmed its support of the strikers and urged union membership throughout the country to cooperate in the boycott.

As it was becoming obvious that the union recognition talks were collapsing, additional workers from Texas were brought in by DiGiorgio to the Sierra Vista ranch. Since early May, ads such as the one which appeared in Spanish in *El Mexicano*, published in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, attempted to lure workers to Delano.

MEN AND WOMEN
ARE NEEDED FOR
THE DIGIORGIO FRUIT CORPORATION
For their ranches in California, for work in the
grapes. Preference will be given to
old workers
Information at
CHAMIZAL FARM LABOR AGENCY
108 West Palsano Dr. Tel. 533-2997 El Paso, Texas

On May 15, two busloads of imported workers, who had been trailed by an NFWA radio car since entering the San Joaquin Valley, were met by more than 200 pickets at Sierra Vista's main gate. One bus sped on past the pickets and a stop sign and into the ranch in the direction of the women's camp. The other bus was stopped and was immediately surrounded by pickets handing leaflets through the windows. Many of the workers in the bus were obviously surprised that the ranch was being struck.

Also early in May, the DiGiorgio Corp. sent a letter intended as a strike "progress report" to religious leaders and pastors throughout California. In the letter, Ham questioned the continued support of the NFWA and the national boycott by the churches, as it appeared that the state's churchmen were endorsing unilateral recognition of one bargaining agent and "a complete disavowal of the right of the workers to choose their own representative."

Ham added, "We do not ask you to abandon any support you may be giving to Mr. Chavez and his cause. In the interest of fair play, however, we do request that you speak out in favor of granting workers the right to determine whether or not they wish to be represented by the NFWA or any other labor organization."

Ham's letter brought an immediate reply from the Migrant Ministry's Rev. Hartmire, who recounted the events that led up to the breaking off of the talks. He stressed that direct intervention in the negotiations by the state's religious leaders as suggested by the DiGiorgio letter would only tend to weaken the NFWA's bargaining position.

He warned: "Given the realities of a difficult power struggle, the workers must be cautious at every step of negotiations. They must concern themselves with several questions: Is the company serious about elections or is this a propaganda play for public opinion? Why does DiGiorgio Corp. want elections now instead of eight months ago when elections would have avoided months of sacrifice and suffering? If the company is serious about elections, why have they insisted upon preconditions that no labor organization could accept…It should be recognized, however, that a positive step has been taken; the two parties to this dispute are now in direct contact after months of conflict and isolation."

At the moment that it appeared DiGiorgio and the NFWA had reached a hopeless stalemate, a powerful third party suddenly entered the Valley labor picture—the Western Conference of Teamsters.

On June 1, the Teamsters revealed that after three weeks of secret negotiations they had signed contracts with eight major California growers and their farm labor contractors covering nearly 2000 workers, although the Teamsters declined to name the growers involved.

Einar O. Mohn, international director of the conference, indicated in early January that his union would work with any "legitimate labor organization" in organizing farmworkers, as long as they recognized the Teamsters' jurisdiction.

"We will work out any kind of an assistance pact with any AFL-CIO union that has any right to be in the field, as long as they recognize our rights," he said. Later he added, "The Teamsters recognize the difference between harvesting peaches and making automobiles," and in a labor dispute it would not unnecessarily endanger a perishable crop.

Mohn, former executive assistant to one-time Teamster president Dave Beck, had been described by Senator Robert F. Kennedy as "first and foremost an organization man. As we learned during the course of our Senate investigations, he did what he was told—nothing more, nothing less. His foremost interest was and is keeping his job and not offending the boss. Nevertheless, he is an honest man, and if he had shown courage at the right time, he could have made a major difference with the Teamster movement."

Kennedy's observation came in *The Enemy Within*, an account of the investigations made by the McClellan Committee into wrongdoing and corruption inside the Teamsters Union.

Prior to the announcing of the June Teamster-grower agreements, the union had negotiated only two contracts on behalf of farmworkers.

On May 4, 1961, the Teamsters signed a six-year pact with the Bud Antle Company, purported to be the world's largest lettuce grower. The signing came after the unsuccessful AWOC-UPW Imperial Valley lettuce strike discussed earlier. Some of the features of that contract included:

"SECTION 11(c)—UNION SECURITY. It is understood and agreed between the Union and the Bud Antle Co. that the Company may employ foreign national supplemental workers assigned to the Bud Antle Co. in accordance with appropriate law and government regulations in such jobs as may be covered by this agreement as are not occupied by Union members.

"The union agrees to give immediate notice to the Company of its inability to furnish the Company the number of workers requested by the Company *and the Union agrees to assist the Company in obtaining foreign supplemental workers for the Company and its operations covered by this Agreement*. [Emphasis added.]

"SECTION III—MANAGEMENT RIGHTS. The Company shall have the exclusive right to direct the work force, to direct the means and accomplishment of any work, to determine the number of workers required for any job including the number to be employed at any particular piece rates of pay as may be provided hereinafter…and the Company shall have the right to hire and fire workers.

"SECTION VII—NO STRIKE–NO LOCKOUT. The Union agrees that during the life of this agreement there will be no strikes, slow downs, or any other interruption of work. Bud Antle Co. agrees that there will be no lockout during the life of this agreement.

"SECTION VIII—DISPUTES AND GRIEVANCE. Should any dispute or grievance arise between the Company and the Union as to the terms or interpretation of any provision of this agreement that cannot be settled amicably between the business agent of the Union and representatives of the Company, such disputes shall be referred to an arbitration committee…."

The contract (which some workers would refer to as a "sweetheart" contract) also allowed for call time, holidays, and collective bargaining ("The Company shall deal solely with its own employees through the union representative as provided by this agreement" —Section X).

Pay guarantees ranged from $1.12 an hour for cutters, trimmers, and packers to a $1.40 for litter loaders among the ground crews. A comparable pay scale was also established for wrapping crews.

In June and July 1966, the Teamsters and Antle quietly renegotiated the contract. Although the old pact still had 12 months to run, the new agreement became effective July 16, 1966. Similar in most respects to its predecessor the contract did establish a new $1.60 an hour "minimum guaranteed straight time rate" for any labor, including piece work, covered by the pact.

In light, however, of the U.S. Congress terminating the bracero program on January 1, 1965, the most surprising aspect of the July renegotiated contract was the retention of Section II(a). The farm labor movement had bitterly assailed the Teamsters in 1961 when the details of that section first became known.

Two additional sections of the renegotiated contract were also noteworthy.

"SECTION X— STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE. The Company agrees to bring all workers covered by this agreement under the State Unemployment Insurance Act and further agrees to assume and continue paying the level of payroll taxes required for coverage.

"SECTION XI—HEALTH PLAN. Prior to July 15, 1967, the Company agrees to meet with the Union for the purpose of negotiating a suitable health plan covering the worker and his family under this Agreement."

The other Teamster-grower contract came on May 4, 1965, with the Mapes Produce Company of Brentwood, California. Similar in nearly all respects to the Antle contract, the three-year agreement called for a wage scale of $1.12 to $1.50 an hour for the company's cantaloupe, celery, and lettuce pickers. Time and a half overtime pay began after 10 hours of work.

Section XII of the contract stipulated that the company and union agreed to "investigate the feasibility of substituting a Medical Plan" in lieu of any forthcoming pay raises.

After it was learned that the Teamsters were making new efforts in 1966 to organize farmworkers in the valley, Mohn began receiving telegrams from Roman Catholic clergy in Chicago, Syracuse, New York, Jersey City, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C, in addition to numerous telephone calls from clergy in California.

On June 6, in a letter to Archbishop John F. Cody of Chicago and the bishops of California, Mohn announced that the Teamsters, acting "solely in response to the entreaties made by Roman Catholic clergymen on behalf of the NFWA," were "forgoing the present opportunity" to organize DiGiorgio's Delano employees. Yet 10 days later, the Teamsters claimed they had received petitions from 400 to 500 DiGiorgio employees expressing regret that the union had "succumbed to the entreaties made by clergymen."

Father Vizzard would explain the clergy's position:

"The reason the Church is backing—and the growers are opposing—the NFWA is because it is a grassroots, democratic organization and the most likely vehicle for farmworkers to gain social justice on their own."

Both the Council of California Growers and the DiGiorgio Corp. quickly denounced the clergy's interference on behalf of the NFWA. Carl Samuelson, CCG president, said the clergy's action was "laying the groundwork for no elections at all" among DiGiorgio employees. Ham also joined Samuelson, charging that the clergy "forced" the Teamsters to withdraw.

The call for DiGiorgio's "free elections" got another supporter at this time when, on June 17, Bishop Willinger issued a statement endorsing the corporation's position. "Every

worker has the right to accept or reject a plan of union organization or membership in said organization. It is the duty and responsibility of social justice-minded organizations and groups to safeguard this right of self-determination."

Willinger's statement came after a 50-minute meeting with the Teamsters' Mohn and a May letter from Robert DiGiorgio asking the bishop to mediate the dispute between his firm and the workers.

A personal request by Chavez to Willinger to act as mediator in the early weeks of the strike had been summarily rejected.

The Monterey-Fresno bishop's statement also observed, "We remain somewhat mystified as to how so-called champions of social justice can applaud unilateral agreements which bind farmworkers without any opportunity of choice on their part. The right of self-determination has been advocated as a call for all farmworkers. But in practice it would seem that the farmworkers are being denied this right by those who speak in their behalf."

The NFWA promptly accused Willinger of being a "dupe" for DiGiorgio and the Teamsters, taking the position that as a union they could not ignore their original responsibility to those workers who had in the past nine months left DiGiorgio and joined the NFWA.

The corporation had at no time since the opening of negotiations made any provisions for these workers to participate in the elections. Such elections, the association noted, were usually held to avert strikes and not to break them. Willinger, therefore, in calling for elections at that particular time in the strike, was merely operating as an instrument of the DiGiorgio Corporation and Teamster union policy.

In Visalia, meanwhile, Judge Leonard Ginsberg rejected an injunction, which DiGiorgio had sought in late May, attempting to limit the number of pickets to six and restricting them to the ranch's entrance gate. The Ginsberg decision was delivered June 16.

V

On June 15, two days before Willinger's statement, informal talks between the NFWA and DiGiorgio were reopened. Conditions for elections were outlined, and on June 20, at another meeting, election procedures were determined.

Chavez, however, had to submit some procedures to the NFWA for approval, so another session was scheduled for the morning of June 22. It was also agreed that any future statements to the press would be made jointly.

In the San Francisco Press Club on the morning of June 22, at the same time Chavez and his delegation were to confer with the corporation, Robert DiGiorgio "in accordance with

Bishop Willinger's recommendations calling for 'free, democratic elections,"' announced that balloting to settle the union recognition question would be held within 36 hours on June 24.

The voting would be supervised by Touche, Ross, Bailey & Smart, a national public accounting firm, and would be held in Delano and at the company's Borrego Springs ranch in San Diego County. Later, it was learned that the accounting firm had been in Delano selecting election sites on the previous Monday at the same time the NFWA and DiGiorgio were discussing proposed election procedures.

Workers would vote by secret ballot and would choose whether or not they wished to be represented by a union. They would also be asked to state their preference among AWOC, NFWA, or the Teamsters. A blank space would be provided for those wishing to write in any other union.

Serving as "impartial observers" at the Delano voting booths, DiGiorgio added, would be Rev. R.B. Moore and Rev. Roger Mahony of Bishop Willinger's staff. Mahony would later become bishop of the newly created diocese of Fresno, chairman of the California state precedent-setting Agricultural Labor Relations Board, and the cardinal archbishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, California.

DiGiorgio's action was immediately challenged at the press conference by Bill Kircher, who likened the announcement "to the treachery at Pearl Harbor," declaring that the unions had been given no advance indication that DiGiorgio would call for elections on June 24, and that his decision was entirely unilateral. The AFL-CIO executive recalled the informal talks of June 15 and June 20 and the agreements that had been made between the two parties.

Kircher charged that the corporation's idea of "free elections" would include only votes from men and women who had no economic, social, or political ties to the local community, and that DiGiorgio sought a union which was not worker-controlled but rather an easily manageable company-oriented association.

Kircher indicated that AWOC and the NFWA were fully prepared to go to court to enjoin the firm from placing their names before the workers. Ham later replied that despite "the goon-squad activities exhibited here this morning," DiGiorgio would proceed with the elections.

On Tuesday, the day prior to DiGiorgio's announcement, California's farmworkers passed another milestone when Schenley Industries Inc. and the NFWA revealed the signing of "a memorandum of agreement" concerning wages, working conditions, and hiring practices. The memo was signed by Chavez and Schenley attorney Sidney Korshak in the L.A. offices of the L.A. County Federation of the AFL-CIO. The signed document was similar to the

one signed in the 1930s by General Motors and the United Auto Workers Union—an unprecedented agreement at that time in the unionization of industrial workers.

General terms of the agreement called for all hourly wages to be raised 35 cents immediately (approximately $1.75 an hour minimum); piece rates to reflect this same 35 cent increase; any inequalities existing regarding paid vacations to be resolved by a union-management committee; the union to provide employees to the company within 72 hours or the company would be free to recruit workers from elsewhere; all workers, whether recruited through the hiring hall or by the company, would become members of the union; no recruitment through farm labor contractors; and all dues and any credit union loan payments to be automatically deducted by the employer.

Later, appearing before a California State Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Agriculture hearing in Delano, Schenley vice president James E. Woolsey cited pressure and "adverse publicity" as the key factors in bringing about his company's signing a contract with the NFWA.

"We recognized the union because of a threat of serious damage to our business on a nationwide scale." He went on to cite specifically the national boycott activities of the NFWA and the association's allies—the churches, student groups, and unions. Woolsey also noted the threat of Teamster drivers in San Francisco and elsewhere who refused to deliver Schenley products as a contributing factor in the company's decision to bargain with the NFWA.

VI

On the day following the DiGiorgio press conference in San Francisco, Superior Court Judge Gerald S. Levin issued a temporary injunction sought by the NFWA and AWOC to keep their names off the June 24 ballot. Ham countered by announcing that the workers would simply be given a blank ballot and told to write in the name of whatever union they wished to represent them in collective bargaining talks.

Only 385 DiGiorgio employees, out of the 732 eligible to vote, cast ballots in the company-sponsored elections at both the Sierra Vista and Borrego ranches. Of the 385 who voted, 284 favored a union, 60 rejected the idea, and 41 ballots were disqualified. Of the 284 that voted for a union, 281 wrote in the name of the Teamsters.

Both the NFWA and AWOC had urged workers to boycott the elections. Chavez repeated this charge in June 25 letters to Gov. Brown and Senator Williams that the elections were "phony" and the results were "fraudulent."

On June 26, in a hot, cramped, vacated building on Delano's west side, representatives from religious groups throughout the state and nation listened to local farmworkers call for a federal investigation of the election. The 14-member Interfaith Committee for Just Farm

Labor/Management Relations immediately wired Brown, individual members of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, and U.S. Secretary of Labor Wirtz, calling for an investigation.

After listening to the testimony of more than 25 current DiGiorgio field workers and non-NFWA members, the Interfaith Committee also sought to question Robert DiGiorgio. In a telegram to him, the committee noted that the testimony they had heard from the employees indicated that the election was fraudulent.

> WE CAN PRESUME THAT YOU WOULD REJECT THESE CLAIMS OF FRAUD. THEREFORE WE ASK YOU TO JOIN THE FARM WORKERS IN CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION OF THIS ELECTION BY AN IMPARTIAL GOVERNMENT BODY.

The committee received no response from the company, as DiGiorgio had indicated the previous day that he would seek to open immediate collective bargaining talks with the Teamsters, who had no comment on the situation.

The chief complaints made to the Interfaith Committee concerned pressure tactics, intimidation, and fraudulent election procedures used by the company during the voting.

The committee was told how workers were put into buses and trucks and brought to the polling places, where supervisors boarded the buses and harangued them as they disembarked to vote. Some workers joined the more than 300 NFWA and AWOC pickets across the street from the polling place, while others simply returned to the fields.

Some employees were reportedly forced off the buses and trucks physically. One worker told how after being ordered to stand in line to vote, DiGiorgio supervisory personnel stood behind him to discourage him from leaving the line.

Others told how their jobs were threatened if they did not vote.

One woman, after refusing to vote in the morning, was returned to the polls in the afternoon and told she must vote. She again indicated that she did not wish to vote, but an election official told her that if she cared not to vote, then she needed only to mark the box "no" on the ballot (which indicated a "no" vote for wanting union representation).

Among the fraudulent election procedures noted by the workers was the continuous display on the door of the Borrego ranch polling place of a sign that that read, "TEAMSTERS FOREVER." An NFWA observer pointed out that the Borrego voting booths remained open for 20 minutes after the announced closing, as two truckloads of workers who had earlier refused to vote were brought back to the polls a second time.

Rev. John Desmond, a Julian, California, Catholic priest designated by DiGiorgio as an "official impartial observer" refused to sign the certification of the Borrego election results. Chavez also recounted that only 40 of the 83 who voted at Borrego Springs were field workers, the remaining 43 being office personnel, custodians, cooks, etc., many of whom were already members of other unions.

Other evidences of fraud reported to the Interfaith Committee included DiGiorgio officers and salaried personnel having free access to the polling place and the use of foremen by DiGiorgio to pressure the workers under threat of firing, by word of mouth and through distribution of leaflets, to vote for the Teamsters. Copies of the leaflets that the workers were given were shown to the committee.

The tract, distributed by the "Teamsters Packinghouse and Allied Workers Organizing Committee," did not carry a "union bug" and thus was presumed not to officially come from the Teamsters. Listing the nine advantages of joining the Teamsters Union, the sheet reminded the workers:

• The Teamsters is a real union that has a proven record of results and signed contracts to prove it.
• The Teamsters Union has strength, experience, the know-how, and the guts to win for you.
• If you want to work under signed contracts and put a permanent end to the confusion and disorder in Delano and the rest of the San Joaquin Valley, SIGN THE AUTHORIZATION CARD WITH THE TEAMSTERS UNION NOW.

The Interfaith Committee was also shown leaflets distributed to the stores of Delano the day prior to the election by "Citizens for Facts from Delano."

DIGIORGIO WORKERS ELECTION
VOTE! VOTE! VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!
THIS IS YOUR AMERICAN RIGHT
BISHOP WILLINGER WANTS YOU TO VOTE
YOUR VOTE DECIDES IF YOU WANT A UNION
DON'T BE AFRAID
WE URGE YOU TO VOTE

The workers protested to the committee that no other unions had been allowed at DiGiorgio since the company first announced a call for free elections in early April. In its letter to Sen. Williams, the NFWA declared:

"It was not by chance that the Delano Sierra Vista ranch was used during World War II as a concentration camp; because of the location of workers' dormitories at great distances from public roads and their constant surveillance by security guards (tall wooden watchtowers still remain at the camp), for all practical purposes it still is a concentration

camp. Thus, not only were NFWA organizers barred from going in to see the workers, but the workers could not come out of their camp to contact our organizers."

The committee also heard how many long-time employees, such as Mrs. Diaz, had been fired from their jobs at the ranch after they were discovered attempting to associate with the NFWA.

The Interfaith Committee emphasized at the conclusion of their one-day investigation that they were not attempting to sit as judges but merely seeking information so all parties in the election would receive a fair and equal hearing.

Yet the election had its defenders.

Rev. Moore, whose home was the site of an all-night prayer vigil on June 23 by NFWA members and Black farmworkers, accused the NFWA of doing its best to "harass all who voted."

"The NFWA and its contingent of civil rights workers are guilty of one of the most blatant displays of bigotry and denial of rights I have ever seen. While others are currently risking life and limb in Mississippi so that my people may vote, others who profess to advocate civil rights are attempting to prevent their fellow citizens from voting right here in Delano.

"They aren't working for the poor people; they're working on the poor people….A hog doesn't grunt because he's sick or hungry; he grunts because it's his nature to grunt…."

Bishop Willinger also chimed in in defense of the elections, observing in a June 30 *Central California Register* editorial, "The farmworkers of Delano were given an opportunity to exercise their right of self-determination and their right of choice of representation but not without undue pressure from the NFWA to keep them from exercising this right according to the democratic, American way of life."

Late Monday, June 27, after a two-hour meeting between Gov. Brown, Chavez, and representatives from the Mexican-American Political Association, the state's chief executive agreed to select "an impartial investigator" to look into the vote. "This investigation would affect only public opinion. I have no power to force anyone to do anything."

Brown's action came after the powerful 650,000-member MAPA had given its endorsement to Brown for re-election to a third term the previous weekend. Balloting on the endorsement was delayed despite Brown's appearance before the delegates on Saturday. After Lt. Gov. Glenn Anderson's address the following morning, he, Herman Gallegos of San Francisco, and other MAPA officials phoned Brown in Los Angeles to get his support in calling for an investigation of the Friday elections in Delano.

The governor interrupted a round of golf at the Los Angeles Country Club to take Anderson's call. He assured his callers that he would meet with them and Chavez the following day in Sacramento. "We wanted a commitment of help from the governor before we endorsed him," Gallegos, a past president of the CSO, stated.

Brown's appointee for studying the workers' charges and recommendations for labor-management peace was the distinguished labor arbiter Ronald W. Haughton, a University of Michigan labor consultant and a member of President Lyndon Johnson's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity.

Subsequently, in Washington, D.C., Sen. Williams and Sen. Robert Kennedy sent a joint wire to both the Teamsters and the DiGiorgio Corp.:

> IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUS CHARGES MADE AND THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE RECENT ELECTION, WE URGE YOU TO ACCEPT GOVERNOR BROWN'S PROPOSAL TO DELAY BEGINNING NEGOTIATIONS UNTIL A REPORT IS MADE BY HIS SPECIAL APPOINTEE. THE INTEREST OF AGRICULTURE, AND OF FARM WORKERS AND THE PUBLIC, CAN BE BEST SERVED BY AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION OF THESE SERIOUS CHARGES.

VII

As Haughton proceeded with his investigation of the elections, a new incident took place at the Borrego Springs ranch, again involving DiGiorgio, Chavez, the clergy, and the law.

In the week following the elections, more than 100 workers had walked off their jobs at the Borrego Springs ranch, protesting the company's policies and handling of the balloting. On June 28, eight workers, after joining the NFWA picket line during the day, sought to return to the company-owned barracks to pick up their personal belongings.

Knowing that the company supervisors would allow them to return to the camp only one at a time under the eyes of DiGiorgio armed guards and watchful dogs, the workers appealed to Chavez to accompany them. The NFWA leader asked the San Diego County sheriff's department for assistance, but was refused.

It was an early summer desert evening with the temperature still over 100 degrees when Chavez, Rev. Hartmire, and Father Victor Salandini decided to escort the workers into the camp. As they entered the ranch in a station wagon, they were soon stopped and put under citizen's arrest for trespassing and "attempting to destroy property" by DiGiorgio "security guards." After being kept in a company truck for four hours, they were driven to a sheriff's substation at Borrego Springs, where they were taken into custody by local law enforcement officers.

The prisoners were stripped, searched, handcuffed, and chained by San Diego County sheriff's officers before being transported 100 miles to the county jail in San Diego. Only Salandini was not required to go through what one sheriff's spokesman described as a "routine" procedure. Questioned as to why Salandini wasn't treated like the other prisoners, one officer indicated that the priest, unlike Hartmire, was identifiable because he was wearing a Roman collar. All of them were released the following morning on $110 bail.

Several days later, Salandini, who was home on vacation from Catholic University of America, revealed that he had been warned to stay away from the Borrego ranch or be shot. The death threat came on July 2, when the priest's widowed mother received an anonymous telephone call.

"Your son got away pretty easy last time; you tell him if he even appears again at Borrego Springs he'll get shot." Despite the ominous warning, the priest rejoined a NFWA picket line at the ranch without incident.

On August 3, in a Ramona courtroom, Chavez, Salandini, and Hartmire were found guilty on two charges of trespassing. The farmworkers were acquitted even as the 10-woman, two-man jury returned 22 separate verdicts, since the each of the workers was arrested on two counts.

Prior to the jury's two-and-one-half-hour deliberation, defense attorney William Gavin moved for a mistrial, charging prejudicial remarks on the part of the prosecutor—San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Gilbert Smith.

"I don't see how the jury can reach an impartial verdict after the colored statements of the prosecuting attorney," Gavin contended. Smith, in his summation, declared that Salandini, whom he termed a "buttinski," had appeared before the workers "in his preacher's get-up" and, in talking with them, gave the impression that anyone who disagreed with him was "anti-Christ."

Referring to Salandini and Hartmire as "henchmen" and "scoundrels," he said the two clergymen went out of their way to get involved in matters that did not concern persons of their calling.

Explaining his connection with the workers, Salandini told the jurors that Chavez and the workers had asked him to go with them so they wouldn't be hurt. "They told me they were afraid of the guns and the dogs. I encouraged them to walk off the job following the principles outlined in the social teachings of the Church."

Smith reminded the priest that the "bishop doesn't own the property. Mr. DiGiorgio does." The priest replied that although the attorney was correct, the bishop does have "spiritual direction" over the men who work there.

Earlier, Judge Will L. Stalnaker had refused a change of venue and two other defense motions. The motions for dismissal were made on behalf of the defendants by attorney A.L. Wirin, chief counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Los Angeles attorney John W. Porter, and Gavin. The three attorneys argued that the statute under which the accused were arrested was unconstitutional. They also contended that statutes may be so declared if they are vague or too broad in scope, and cited several cases in which such action had been taken.

In denying the motions, Judge Stalnaker pointed out that he did not intend to rule the statutes unconstitutional and that he was not going to allow the trial to be delayed by a "morass of semantics."

Fines of $500 were reduced to $250 on each count, plus court costs, and two years' probation was given by Stalnaker to Chavez, Hartmire, and Salandini when they appeared before the judge on September 7 for sentencing.

Meanwhile, after two weeks of traveling up and down the state and interviewing more than 200 people, Ronald Haughton submitted to Gov. Brown on July 14 his recommendations that another election be held August 30, 1966, in an effort to "accomplish a fair and equitable resolution of the total problems."

He specified that the elections be conducted by the American Arbitration Association at both the Sierra Vista ranch in Delano and at Borrego Springs. He emphasized that his recommendations were not a condemnation OR an endorsement of the earlier company-sponsored elections.

Among the key provisions of Haughton's proposals to the disputing parties were:

• Any eligible employee who was on the payroll at Delano as of September 19, 1965, and at Borrego Springs as of June 23, 1966, the day preceding the start of the strike at that property, would have the right to vote. Similarly, any eligible employee who was on the payroll for 15 working days prior to August 30 would also have the right to vote.

• Each party on the ballot would have the right to appoint two observers at each election site. Such observers for company or union would be required to be non-supervisory personnel.

• Union representatives would have access to corporate properties during non-working hours in order to meet with eligible employees.

• For the purpose of receiving complaints, a resident representative of the American Arbitration Association would be in Delano until and including election day.

• There was to be a termination of all strike and boycott activities. "Company cooperation to carry out the letter and spirit of the recommendation is required."

DiGiorgio, the NFWA, and the Teamsters immediately accepted Haughton's recommendations. Some union officials, however, did voice concern that one provision might open the way for segregated unions on the farms of California. Haughton recommended that one ballot (white) be available for all field workers directly connected with field operations, except truck drivers. Another ballot (green) would be used for all other employees, except for field workers.

The future, as was spelled out in Haughton's report, began to hold real promise for Delano's grape pickers. Nearly one full year after they went out on strike seeking the right to organize, the vision was about to become a reality.

CHAPTER TEN
The Beginning of the End
I

Hand-drawn street maps of nearby farming communities hung on the wall of what was once the living room of the weather-beaten pink house. Small, brightly colored-coded squares, circles, and triangles dotted the map.

Men and women in tattered field clothes, others wearing the laborer's blue denim, small children already showing the lines of age about their eyes, and obviously dressed city people milled about the room, speaking excitedly to one another in Spanish and broken English. Occasionally, a list of names would be called, and a small group would go from the house into the hot valley sun, heading toward one of the many cars parked nearby.

In the other rooms of the "Pink Palace," telephones rang, voices clashed in hurried conferences, and typewriters noisily clicked out their messages, each sound contributing to a seemingly chaotic symphony of activity.

This was the NFWA headquarters, and today was election day.

Seven miles away, under tall shade trees, farmworkers were quietly and slowly filing into a small gray-and-white clapboard bungalow, which ordinarily served as a main bunkhouse annex. The line of workers grew and shrank intermittently throughout the day, as men and women from throughout the great valley and southwestern United States entered the roped-off area in front of the building to patiently wait their turn to vote.

Every half-hour or so, the stillness would be shattered by the arrival of a large orange and chrome charter bus pulling up in front of the annex to deposit its load of field workers. Only moments before, these same workers had been hard at work harvesting ripe table

grapes in the DiGiorgio vineyards surrounding the ranch buildings. Now these Mexican-American, Black, Filipino, and Anglo agricultural workers were preparing to vote.

On this day, more than 1300 of the company's present and sometime warehousemen, shed workers, truck drivers, and field workers were making farm labor history by participating in the first independently sponsored union recognition elections in California's 100-year-old corporate agricultural industry.

After all parties—DiGiorgio, the NFWA, AWOC, and the Teamsters—had accepted the recommendations submitted by Ronald Haughton on July 14, the NFWA immediately drew up lists, based on DiGiorgio payroll records of workers eligible to vote. NFWA volunteers were sent to El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico to seek out these former DiGiorgio employees and try to arrange for their return to Delano and Borrego Springs on election day to vote.

Nearly 350 migrant workers were sought out in this manner. In most cases their last known addresses were the only record available to the volunteer workers. A vast search for missing persons began throughout the southern U.S.

As the campaign began, an announcement which some feared but viewed as inevitable, was made by the NFWA and AWOC. The two unions planned to merge, and on August 22 in Chicago would successfully seek a charter from the national executive board of the AFL-CIO. It was argued that the unions, by remaining separate, would not only be committing financial suicide but would tend to split the vote in the coming DiGiorgio elections, allowing a third force—namely the Teamsters—to organize farmworkers. Others speculated that the NFWA, truly a "grassroots" organization, might suffer the same fate as AWOC endured in 1961.

After AWOC and the NFWA were recognized as one—to be known as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) AFL–CIO—Bill Kircher declared, "We are going to let the men who organized this union run it."

At DiGiorgio, meanwhile, the election campaign between UFWOC and the Teamsters was well under way.

DiGiorgio, in repeated letters to its employees, openly endorsed the Teamsters while questioning "the sincerity and good faith" of UFWOC. Another Myer-Fontana letter explained the company's position to the workers.

"We believe that the Teamsters union will do the best job for you. We are sure that we can sit down and negotiate in a fair and reasonable manner with the Teamsters. We think it makes good sense for you to vote for the Teamsters."

On August 2, before a meeting of the reactionary "Citizens for Facts on Delano," Bill Grami, chief Teamsters' organizer in the southern San Joaquin Valley, flatly stated that the past strike activities of the NFWA were "the greatest fraud ever perpetrated upon the American public. The Teamsters believe the farm worker is entitled to be represented by a legitimate union and not to be used as a revolutionary tool for the New Left to build a power base for political action."

The Teamsters' attack came as shock to California's farm labor movement.

As recently as April 10, at the end of the Delano workers' pilgrimage to Sacramento, Jack Goldberger, a special representative of the Teamsters' president, had lauded the strikers and pledged his union's support of the NFWA's nationwide boycott of DiGiorgio products.

Yet later in the current campaign, Grami again characterized the NFWA as "people who pretend to be downtrodden farmworkers but who are really highly sophisticated people from the New Left with a liberal sprinkling of kooks."

The Teamsters, in addition to passing out free soda pop, key chains, and beer to the workers, also began circulating material from an article titled "The Grapes," which appeared in the June, 1966 issue of *American Opinion*, published by the far right-wing John Birch Society. The article, authored by Gary Allen, a Los Angeles screenwriter, accused the NFWA of being a Communist-front organization. Among those charges contained in the article were:

"The one thing that the members of the current batch of Migrant Ministers active in Delano have in common is that they are all, coincidentally, graduates of the same school, the 'University of Alinsky,' which has a rather narrow curriculum—offering classes only in revolution....

"The California Council of Churches and the *'liberal dominated'* Central California Diocese of the Catholic Church have also supported the phony 'strikers.' [Emphasis added.]...What is happening in Delano is a textbook example of the classic Communist 'united front' technique, in which Communist stage managers work hand-in-hand with non-Communist fellow travelers, opportunists, and dupes. Delano has been made the gathering point for a number of famous and infamous characters who ostensibly make strange bedfellows….

"The marching revolutionaries carried large red flags bearing a small outline of a black eagle. This is the flag of the Trotskyite revolution in Mexico. Many of the agitators also carried banners declaring that they meant to start a revolution….

"If you live in the city you can expect to hear more of the 'Grapes of Wrath' that exist for the farm workers. You will be told that only massive federal legislation, poverty grants, and unionization will end the terrible situation—just as you heard a similar tune concerning

'civil rights.' The charges are phony. They come from the same sources. And you can count on the fact that the Communists are continuing to run the show."

The subject of "Communist influence" was also to be the central concern of the state Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Agriculture when it came to Delano on July 19 through 21 to hold a series of hearings on pending state farm labor legislation.

Prior to the opening of the hearings, it was learned that the committee had subpoenaed Albert J. Lima of San Francisco, West Coast director of the Communist Party of Northern California. Chavez, upon learning of the subpoena, charged that the committee, in asking men like Lima to appear, was only serving groups like the John Birch Society with "red-baiting" and "union busting" material. It was also noted that appearing with the committee as a "guest" in Delano was the notorious Hugh Burns (D-Fresno), chairman of California's Senate UnAmerican Activities Committee.

Before an overflow, noisy crowd in Delano's Cecil Avenue School auditorium, Lima asked if he might make an opening statement to the committee. He then declared that he had never been to Delano and denounced "the effort of the committee to involve the Communist Party in this hearing in a crude effort to label a bona fide effort of farmworkers to secure economic justice as some sort of 'Communist plot.'" Lima was excused after he refused to answer any further questions.

As Lima left the auditorium, state Senator James Cobey (D-Merced) charged that despite Lima's statement, the Communist leader's car had been seen in front of the NFWA headquarters on November 2, 1965. Outside the hearings, Lima's 22-year-old daughter, Margaret, freely admitted that the car had been parked outside the NFWA building, as she had used it to bring food and toys to Delano for the striking workers' families.

Following Lima to the witness stand, the UAW's western region director, Paul Schrade, bluntly told the state senators, "Communism has no place in these hearings; it has nothing to do with the issues; the problems and injustices in farm work are here already. The John Birch Society is the one that is making an issue of Communism in Delano."

(It would be just two years later that Schrade came perilously close to death when he was shot while he accompanied Sen. Robert F. Kennedy through the Ambassador Hotel's kitchen, when the Democratic candidate for president was assassinated. Schrade, unwilling to accept the Los Angeles police department's sloppy investigation of the murder, upon his recovery continued to pursue and investigate the true story as to what happened that night of national tragedy.)

Committee chairman Senator Vernon Sturgeon (R-San Luis Obispo), acknowledging Schrade's statement, ruled that "we asked Lima here to get the facts about reports he had been here before. He did not hedge on the subject, and now, as far as I am concerned as chairman of the committee, the subject of Communism is dead in this hearing."

At the end of the second day of hearings, Kern Country Sheriff Gerald Dodd informed the committee that he had the name of "5000 outsiders" who had visited Delano since the beginning of the strike. He said his department had gathered the names by questioning pickets and jotting down out-of-town car license numbers. Sen. Walter (D-Kern) questioned Dodd as to "what good 5000 names would be to the Fact-Finding Committee on Agriculture."

Among those appearing before the committee on the final day was Bishop Hugh A. Donohoe of Stockton. He told the senators that the Catholic Church "stands behind the workers in their right to organize and choose the union they want to represent them." He added that the charge that Communists had influenced the strike "is a conclusion that is false."

Saul David Alinsky, the controversial social organizer, was the hearing's final witness. Although the committee had issued a subpoena for Alinsky, it was not served. and he appeared voluntarily. He was questioned about his role in the strike by the senators after Harold Marshall, a local druggist and spokesman for the Citizens for Facts on Delano, told the committee that Alinsky was the guiding hand behind the workers' revolution.

"I believe this confusion [strike]has been deliberately produced and maintained…and is consistent with both the strategy and tactics of associates and students of Saul Alinsky. These strike leaders' efforts are an organized, well-financed, and mature politico-socio-economic movement…whose aim is revolutionary changes in the basic structure of American life. Their primary tactic is to either destroy or render ineffective all existing social institutions and, amid the wreckage, build a new power structure dominated by their own ideology."

Alinksy, however, told the hearings that he had "unfortunately" had no communications with Cesar Chavez since 1958 when he worked with the Alinsky-founded Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), "not by spiritual séance or in any other way." He admitted, though, that Fred Ross, now an NFWA organizer, had for 18 years worked as a foundation director and that Dolores Huerta worked with the foundation for "a few months," but he denied any part in the strike or the formation of the NFWA.

Prior to the hearings, when Alinsky was addressing a San Francisco Bay Area all-day seminar on community organizing, I approached him in my role as *NCR*'s West Coast correspondent and posed the same question to him that the committee had asked: What role did he have in the recent strike by Chavez and the Delano farmworkers? With an infectious smile he replied, "None! All I know about the strike is what I read about it in the *National Catholic Reporter*."

Organized in Chicago in 1940, the IAF was financed by industrialists, church organizations, unions, and individuals interested in helping the poor learn how to organize themselves

into a position of power in the community. The IAF provided communities that sought its help with trained, skilled organizers who worked with low-income families in their efforts "to do something about their legitimate demands to organize, so they can have something to say about their future."

As Alinsky would often remind audiences, "A movement without organization is nothing but a bowel movement."

Senator Stiern asked Alinsky if he wished to make any recommendations concerning farm labor legislation, but Alinsky said that question could better be answered by Chavez. "In the years I have known Cesar, I found him to be an extraordinary, remarkable person, and I can think of no labor leader you could find who could give you more reasonable recommendations on needed law."

The one-track Sen. Colby persisted, despite Chairman Sturgeon's earlier ruling, and asked Alinsky if he had any Communist affiliations.

"I am not now, nor have I ever been a member of the John Birch Society, the Minutemen, the DiGiorgio Corporation, or the Communist party, and anyone making such a statement is not only an unmitigated liar, he is a fool as well."

II

Despite the denials made before the Delano hearings of the state senate committee of "subversive influences" in the grape pickers' strike, as charged in the *American Opinion* article, Grami defended the Teamsters' use of the Birch material. "Sure, we used Gary Allen, and I don't like it, but the piece in the Birch publication was, in this case, accurate and valid. And so, while it is distasteful to me, when they (the NFWA) persisted in calling us criminals we had no choice."

Grami's reference was relative to the fact that, during the election campaign, the UFWOC passed out copies of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's *The Enemy Within*, an account of charges brought against the Teamsters and their president, Hoffa, by the McClellan Committee, upon which he served as chief counsel.

The Teamsters, in their appeal for DiGiorgio workers' votes, stressed that their union recognized the harmful effects a strike at harvest time could have on both growers and workers and that in drawing up contracts, the Teamsters would seek an alternative method to resolve differences.

They characterized the election campaign struggle as one between "business unionism" as represented by the Teamsters and "social unionism" as advanced by the AFL-CIO. Kircher, working in Delano with the UFWOC, described the Teamsters' "business unionism" as simply a reflection of the "employer mentality."

"It would be natural for a union which has no interest in the worker beyond the workaday aspects of his job to fall into a great love match with the employer. The Teamsters by their actions in Delano are giving a union blessing to the historically bad labor-management reputation of the DiGiorgio Corp."

He decried the type of campaign the Teamsters were carrying on, observing that a worker's introduction to unionism should be educational and affirmative and not in an atmosphere of strikebreaking. "It's a shame these farmworkers have to learn about the American labor movement in this fashion." The AFL-CIO official also pointed out that the recently signed Schenley contract was an example of the benefits the farmworker could receive under "good social unionism."

Throughout the hot summer days of August, as the UFWOC organizers sought votes, handbills carefully explaining the Schenley contract were distributed to the DiGiorgio workers during their 45-minute lunch break and in the evening after they returned to their camps.

One letter, signed by a majority of the 286 employees at the nearby Schenley ranch, told the DiGiorgio workers about the benefits they enjoyed working under a UFWOC contract. Mario Santos, a worker who was one of the original strikers, showed a check earned for six days of work (40 hours) for the week ending August 17. He had grossed $154.67, and after deductions his take home pay was $146.62, or the equivalent of $3.66 per hour.

The Teamsters, meanwhile stated in a letter to the workers:

"The Teamsters realize that without the farm worker there would be no work for the rest of the Teamster food processing family. The farm worker is as important as his brother and sister member in the packing shed, cannery, or produce market. Therefore, the farm worker is entitled to wages and benefits equal to the rest of the Teamster family. This cannot be accomplished overnight, but it can be done soon. And it will be done!

"Over 65,000 Teamster food processing workers in California are covered by a contract that provides, in part, the following:
Women's wages, $2.15 to $2.45 per hour
Men's wages, $2.45 to $3.42 per hour
High guaranteed piece work rates, medical and hospital plan, paid by the company, disability and unemployment insurance, etc., etc."

As the campaign rushed toward its August 30 climax, a new organization with a nearby Visalia post office number began mailing letters to workers urging them to cast their ballots for "no union." The organization—identifying itself only as the "DiGiorgio Workers Against Unionism"—charged that the Teamsters was the "union of violence and fear" and "for people who want control by criminals every working hour of their lives." UFWOC

was described as "the union run by Catholic priests and beatniks" and "for people who would rather quarrel than work."

In the week prior to the balloting, the organization also began publishing a daily sample vote report. In its last newsletter, it proclaimed, "When the vote is counted after next Tuesday, they will find that DiGiorgio's Sierra Vista employees do not want any union…Here is the latest results:
UFWOC (AFL-CIO) 41
TEAMSTERS 33
NO UNION 52"

In Santa Barbara, only hours before the voting was scheduled to start, State Senator Alvin C. Weingand unleashed a bitter attack on the Teamsters.

"The union has achieved great advances for workers in many fields and it is especially commended for bettering wages and conditions in related agricultural work such as packing and canning. However, the record of the Teamster leadership at all levels regarding field workers has been, and still is, disgraceful. What is happening in Delano is no mere jurisdictional dispute—it is a conspiracy between the growers and the Teamsters to destroy what the Chavez organizers took months to achieve."

The senator's statement came in criticism of Cliff Jameson, secretary of the Ventura-Santa Barbara Teamsters Local 186, who was one of the 25 state union officials in Delano working on the Teamsters' election campaign.

Election eve, the newly chartered UFWOC received a congratulatory telegram from Gov. Brown, which was immediately denounced by the Teamsters as a blatant display of partisan politics. The wire read:

> "CESAR CHAVEZ AND LARRY ITLIONG
> AFL-CIO UNITED FARM WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
> FILIPINO COMMUNITY CENTER
> DELANO, CALIFORNIA
>
> DEAR CESAR AND LARRY:
> MY CONGRATULATIONS TO BOTH OF YOU ON THE CHARTERING OF YOUR NEWLY MERGED ORGANIZATION BY THE NATIONAL AFL-CIO. I REGRET THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO ATTEND YOUR CELEBRATION OF THIS HISTORIC EVENT ON SUNDAY, BUT I WANT BOTH OF YOU AND YOUR MEMBERS TO KNOW THAT I FEEL THIS IS A MILESTONE IN THE PROGRESS OF FARMWORKERS IN CALIFORNIA AND ULTIMATELY ACROSS THE NATION. AND I WANT YOU TO TELL THEM THAT I INTEND TO FIGHT FOR COLLECTIVE

> BARGAINING RIGHTS AND EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS TO THEM IN THE NEXT LEGISLATURE. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO BRING FARMWORKERS INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMY AND TOGETHER WE SHALL OVERCOME. GIVE MY REGARDS TO BILL KIRCHER AND TELL HIM TO KEEP UP THE GOOD FIGHT.
> *VIVA LA HUELGA*, GOVERNOR PAT BROWN."

Grami claimed that the wire was "deliberately calculated to win left-wing support" for Brown and "is inconsistent with the prospects of fair play, demonstrates bias, and is in extremely poor taste for the holder of the highest executive office of this state."

Immediately after the election, Grami announced that he was resigning from Brown's re-election committee and the governor's traffic safety commission.

Questioned as to whether he planned to support Republican Ronald Reagan in the upcoming gubernatorial election, the Teamsters organizer observed, "Maybe I haven't fully understood his position, and I want to have a meeting with him before I make a decision on whether I back him. But I am not going to vote for Brown."

Curiously, one of the two public relations agencies employed by the Teamsters in the Delano struggle—Knowles Robertson Enterprises—was also working on the Reagan campaign and producing a series of radio ads to be broadcast in the southern San Joaquin Valley area. The UFWOC claimed that the ads were also designed to help the Teamsters, as the Republican candidate told listeners that he "believed in the right of working people to organize" but was not in sympathy with the UFWOC because it sought "to organize without allowing workers to vote on whether they want to be represented by a union."

The *Delano Record*, commenting on Gov. Brown's telegram in a front-page editorial on election day, claimed that "a fair election is impossible" and urged DiGiorgio and the Teamsters to boycott the balloting. "The telegram of endorsement…which Brown sent to NFWA-AWOC leaders stands as a classic example of intellectual dishonesty and political hypocrisy in high officialdom. It casts the chief executive officer of a great state in the shameful posture of groveling at the feet of the powerful forces of labor."

Other laudatory wires were also received at the Filipino Hall prior to the voting, including one from Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, AFL-CIO President George Meany, and notification by the National Catholic Social Action Conference that the NFWA had received the Catholic organization's national award for the promotion of social justice.

Now, for those men and women waiting in single file outside the DiGiorgio ranch bungalow on election day, this long and heated campaign was simply another chapter in the grim history of the struggles of farmworkers for economic and social justice.

Behind them in a roped-off area a few yards away were representatives from the nation's press, including this writer, watching the voters entering the building. Two Delano housewives continually circulated throughout the press area taking photographs of the newsmen and television reporters. Over under the trees to the left, workers who had already voted waited for the big bus to take them back to the vineyards. Beyond the bunkhouse in the unpainted carports, helmeted members of the Tulare County sheriff's department joked and laughed with DiGiorgio supervisory personnel.

As a worker reached the door of the bungalow, he or she was asked to show a DiGiorgio, Teamsters, or UFWOC identification card. They were then shown to one of four tables where they presented their Social Security card to a representative from the American Arbitration Association. (Employees of the State Conciliation and Mediation Services and the Fair Employment Practices Commission supplemented the AAA election crew personnel.)

The worker's name was called out, and if none of the Teamsters, DiGiorgio, or UFWOC representatives at the table objected to their voting, they were given a ballot and shown to a voting booth. There they marked their ballot and cast it into a large metal drum.

If either the company representative or the two union delegates objected to a particular worker voting, they were sent to a table where Margaret Carlson, election manager for the AAA, filled out an envelope form detailing the reason the vote had been challenged. The worker was then given a ballot, which they marked and placed in a sealed "secret ballot" envelope.

This envelope was placed in the challenge envelope and dropped into a separate ballot box. Nearly 75 percent of the 332 challenged ballots were those of workers whose names were not on the unions' or the company's lists of eligible voters. The others were challenged because of uncertainty as to which ballot the worker was eligible to vote on—white or green.

One man, who had driven from El Paso for the election, was challenged because he had not signed his Social Security card.

Throughout the day, more than 1349 workers filed into the voting booths to cast their ballots, including nearly 325 former DiGiorgio employees who had been located by the NFWA volunteer workers outside the immediate Delano area.

Seven workers employed in full-time jobs in the El Paso area drove to Borrego Springs, about 100 miles east of San Diego, to vote. After marking their ballots, they immediately

returned to El Paso—a 1300-mile round trip in less than 36 hours. Another former DiGiorgio employee, after receiving a letter from Chavez telling him he was eligible to vote, traveled almost 3000 miles from Jalisco, Mexico to cast his ballot.

Some growers outside the Delano area attempted to also participate in the election, as DiGiorgio's Richard Myers told how he had received a phone call from a grower in the north on election eve, asking if the company wanted him to bring his workers down for the balloting.

At 10 p.m., the historic vote came to a close and the locked ballot drums were loaded into the trunk of a California Highway Patrol car, and with observers from both unions and the company in the back seat and two members of the Highway Patrol in front, started their 260-mile journey to San Francisco to be counted at the AAA office the following morning.

Although the AAA released no official results, the day after the balloting word spread—the UFWOC had won the field workers' vote!

Forty-eight hours later, it was made official. The UFWOC had received 530 votes and the Teamsters 331, while 12 had voted for no union. On the green ballot, the Teamsters won 94 to 43, with seven favoring no union. After reviewing the 332 challenged votes, the AAA determined that only 79 would remain challenged. All the parties agreed, however, that those ballots would not change the results shown by the ballots counted. The decision, therefore, was that such challenged votes would remain moot.

One of the congratulatory telegrams following their victory came from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"As brothers in the fight for equality, I extend the hand of fellowship and good will and wish continuing success to you and your members. The fight for equality must be fought on many fronts—in the urban slum, in the sweat shops of the factories and fields. Our separate struggles are really one—a struggle for freedom, for dignity, and for humanity. You and your valiant fellow workers have demonstrated your commitment to righting grievous wrongs forced on exploited people. We are together with you in spirit and in determination that our dreams for a better tomorrow will be realized."

The workers had chosen a "grassroots" union as opposed to an outside organization. The fact that only 19 out of the 1349 who voted had rejected unionization offered a dramatic rebuke to the long-used grower argument that agricultural workers did not want unions.

The victory also answered the outsiders' repeated question: how did the workers who did not go out on strike feel after all the past months of toil in the fields while being shouted at by pickets and pressured by union organizers alter the vote? The vote conclusively proved that the workers, when given a real opportunity to express themselves, opted not only for unionization but for a union they knew on a personal and local level. Many had had an

allegiance to *La Causa* but financially simply could not afford to leave their jobs and the families to starve.

The DiGiorgio election victory also symbolized the importance of devoting one's attention to the individual in the beginning of a movement as revolutionary as organizing farmworkers. While both unions turned out massive amounts of literature and filled the local airwaves with radio advertisements, it was the quiet, painstaking work by the NFWA, talking to individual workers, patiently explaining to them the issues of the strike, and seeking out each one of the workers eligible to vote from all over the southwestern United States, that in the end brought the UFWOC official recognition as a collective bargaining agent.

Dolores Huerta summed up the results:

"In voting for the UFWOC the farmworkers have clearly demonstrated that they want their *own* union and not an outsider like the Teamsters representing them. The victory marks the beginning of the end of the exploitation of the farmworker, for the DiGiorgio Corp. has always been a symbol of anti-unionism for the men and women who work the crops."

The unions and DiGiorgio now had 45 days to begin collective bargaining talks on wages and working conditions at the Sierra Vista and Borrego Springs ranches. All matters left unresolved at the end of those bargaining sessions would be submitted to the AAA for final and binding arbitration.

While Robert DiGiorgio stated that his company would abide by the results of the election, the Council of California Growers discounted claims that the DiGiorgio elections results would become a landmark in farm labor organization. O.W. Fillerup, executive vice president of the powerful growers' organization, stated that the DiGiorgio election "involves one employer whose farming operation represents only a fraction of his total enterprise, certainly not a farm employer typical of California agriculture in size and nature of operations."

Though Cesar Chavez expressed in the union's victory statement the feeling that the UFWOC victory was a turning point in the organizing of agricultural workers, he admitted that "realistically we have to expect the other growers, both in Delano and throughout the nation, to fight some more before unionization on the farm is here for good."

Clearly, the farmworkers' revolution had begun. Started and nurtured on sacrifice and courage, the workers in Delano were renewed in their long-sought-after goals of complete social and economic equality.

One of the key factors, however, in this beginning of a revolution was the workers' religious faith. Many of them visited the weather-beaten shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe,

mounted on the rear of Chavez's old station wagon, which had been parked for several months across the road from the DiGiorgio workers' living quarters.

For many, that grotto-laden station wagon, which the long-time Mexican-American leader drove up and down California's great valleys in his early years of organizing, was a symbol of the past, which had brought the farmworker to Sierra Vista and Borrego Springs on August 30, 1966.

The future for the agricultural laborer, however, was now becoming symbolized in the birth of a new generation, given life by the Huelga. On election day, Roberto Bustos, the young farmworker who served as the *jefe* on the Delano to Sacramento pilgrimage, and his wife, Lupe, became the parents of their third child and named the six-pound, eight-ounce baby boy Cesario V. Bustos—Cesario for Cesar Chavez and "V" for victory!

IV

With the DiGiorgio victory, some important questions for the UFWOC, its leadership, and its supporters were raised.

Would the churches, student groups, civil rights organizations, and union locals continue to find it necessary to financially support the Delano strikers, or would the necessary AFL-CIO financial resources be available to farmworkers not only in Delano but to those who chose to strike elsewhere?

What role would the churches and civil rights groups, who first came to the aid of the beleaguered strikers, assume in the future?

What would be the relationship between those interested bodies and the AFL-CIO leadership, both of whom in recent years had become suspicious of one another's intentions?

How much autonomy would the "grassroots"-oriented unions retain under national leadership?

What paths would the Teamsters and the UFWOC take in embarking on a new era of old-fashioned union jurisdictional battles in our nation's agricultural communities?

Would the growers follow the Delano signposts and recognize the need for state and federal collective bargaining legislation?

In the immediate months ahead, some of the answers to these questions would come more sharply into focus as the UFWOC sought to further organize and bargain collectively with the state's growers.

Regarding DiGiorgio, what National Land for People's George Ballis predicted (see Chapter IX) and the UFWOC feared might come to pass in fact took place in December, 1968, when DiGiorgio announced that it was selling 12,000 acres of its southern San Joaquin Valley property and thus terminating its 18-month-old contract with the UFWOC.

DiGiorgio's agreement with the union was the only one of the union's 12 contracts without a "successor clause" that bound new owners of businesses to the contracts of their predecessors. Thus the union would be forced to win recognition from each of the new owners before engaging in collective bargaining negotiations.

An angry Cesar Chavez denounced the action.

"We are willing to risk the union's all and maintain our contracts at these ranches. We must know who these new buyers are or we will enter a new phase of non-violent experimentation, and you can expect a great number of people to go to jail."

DiGiorgio refused to reveal the names of the prospective buyers. However, at a December 5 press conference, UFWOC officials disclosed that they had learned that 1100 acres from the corporation's 7200-acre Arvin ranch near Bakersfield was in escrow to the Milan Caratan ranch. The UFWOC spokesperson said that Caratan, who with his brother already owned 3300 acres in the strikebound Delano area, had been a leader in fighting the union's efforts to organize grape pickers.

The Migrant Ministry's Rev. Jim Drake and the UFWOC's national boycott coordinator told the press conference that the union had assured Donald Connors, the DiGiorgio attorney, that if he would reveal the new owners, the UFWOC would engage in no picketing or boycotting activity against them, providing there was an orderly transfer of the contract.

"We will never forgive Sam Kagel for what he has done to our cause and the union," Chavez emphasized. Kagel, a member of the AAA, would act as a referee during the negotiations of the 1966-67 DiGiorgio contract negotiations, and union officials recall that he specifically ruled against a "successor's clause" in the contract. Subsequently, the union's other 11 contracts, which included "successor's clauses," were all the result of direct negotiations between the company and the UFWOC.

Some 2525 acres of DiGiorgio's remaining 6117 acres in Arvin were then covered by a contract with the secretary of the interior, which required, according to the 160-acre federal reclamation law, that the land, in order to continue receiving federally subsidized water for irrigation, must be sold.

Union officials, however, were quick to point out that the 160-acre limitation law only talks about ownership of land, not control. Thus they charged that DiGiorgio, in putting the land up for sale, was offering prospective buyers "the opportunity to obtain prime

California agricultural land in small parcels which *in combination can share* in the benefits of large-scale operations *through continued DiGiorgio management* of multiple parcels." [Emphasis added.]

"In other words," Drake charged, "the DiGiorgio Fruit Co. or another DiGiorgio subsidiary could still control the land but would not legally be its owner and therefore not bound by a union contract. The DiGiorgio Corp. is simply reverting to its traditional anti-union position."

Meanwhile, in 1966, shortly after the Sierra Vista and Borrego Springs victories, a group of California's religious leaders—including all eight of the state's Catholic bishops—called upon DiGiorgio to hold recognition elections at its 9000-acre Arvin ranch.

The multi-crop Arvin ranch was located 45 miles south of DiGiorgio's Delano ranch and served as the backdrop for the famous Arvin-Dinuba study made by Dr. Walter Goldschmidt in 1946 where he compared the viability and advantages of a town amidst small family farms (Dinuba) with a company town (Arvin).

The call for elections came in separate statements from the Roman Catholic bishops, the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches, six Episcopalian priests from Santa Clara County, and from a committee of Protestant and Catholic clergy and laity.

The Catholic bishops noted with approval the settlement of the Sierra Vista dispute "through the supervised elections whereby the worker himself decided on the union of his choice. This one election, however, has not solved the problem. Many farms are still being struck and there is the ever present danger of incidents that will prove harmful to all citizens of the state.

"Justice and equity demand that every reasonable method be employed to bring this matter to a peaceful and just solution. Certainly, free elections have much to recommend them as a first step in the right direction. Therefore, we earnestly ask the growers and the unions to agree on free elections as a pledge of good faith in effecting a peaceful solution in this most serious situation."

The statement was issued following the fall, 1966, meeting of the bishops in Los Angeles on October 14.

Union officials called for elections to be held at Arvin before the end of October if all 500 field workers presently harvesting grapes were to be afforded a chance to vote. Since the August 30 election in Delano, Ronald W. Haughton, now Gov. Brown's special farm labor consultant, had tried unsuccessfully three different times to set up union recognition elections at Arvin.

DiGiorgio had agreed to such elections if the procedures, similar to those followed in Delano, were approved by the two unions seeking recognition—namely the UFWOC and the Teamsters. But the Teamsters had refused.

On October 16, a group of 35 DiGiorgio workers, some with 21 years of service, testified before an 18-man interfaith committee that they and their fellow workers wanted to vote for a union. Among those on the committee were Fathers Vizzard and Boyle and Rev. John Garcia, diocese of Oakland, and Rev. William Hughes, diocese of Stockton, rural life directors. The workers told of their suspicions of collusion between DiGiorgio and the Teamsters.

They charged that Teamster organizers were being allowed to move freely about the ranch during working hours and that workers were receiving Teamster organization signup cards each payday with their checks.

On November 4, an election on the Arvin property was held, but only the UFWOC appeared on the ballot. The Teamsters' refusal to agree to the terms of the election led to their nonparticipation, even though they indicated beforehand that they would not contend the election. When the ballots were counted, the UFWOC received 263 votes, while 199 voted against union representation.

Even while the Teamsters and the UFWOC were battling over jurisdiction at Arvin, another dispute between the two unions was brewing. On September 9, 48 workers at the A. Perelli-Minetti & Sons' 1500-acre ranch in McFarland requested the UFWOC to bargain with their employer for wage and representation rights. When the ranch refused, all 48 workers left their jobs and the California Department of Labor immediately certified the strike as valid labor dispute.

After the fields remained empty for two days, local farm labor contractors began providing the strikebound company with workers who were driven into the fields in Teamster buses with Teamster "representatives" acting as armed guards. On September 19, Grami announced the signing of a three-and-one-half-year contract with A. Perelli-Minetti & Sons. Chavez called it a conspiratorial "backdoor agreement," claiming his union had been negotiating with the grower for some time before the Teamsters' announcement.

The company had claimed that the strikers were only temporary workers. However, the ranch had employed many of these "temporary" workers for over 10 years and from seven to eight months a year. On December 28, two workers who had not struck but remained at the ranch were fired for refusing to sign Teamsters' union cards.

The UFWOC, now claiming a "family membership" of 20,000, with chapters in 12 states, continued strike activities against more than 30 local growers who were refusing the workers' right to organize, and also launched a full-scale national boycott of A. Perelli-

Minetti & Sons' products, including Ambassador and Eleven Cellars wines, Aristocrat brandy, and other products distributed by the California Wine Association.

Union volunteers spread out across the country, concentrating their educational and boycott efforts on four major market areas: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Miami. In Los Angeles, Thrifty Drugstores and Young Markets, two of Southern California's largest liquor distributors, announced on December 10 that they were halting any further purchasing of A. Perelli-Minetti products. Likewise, prior to Christmas, more than 20 San Francisco pickets dressed as Santa Claus picketed Macy's department store, protesting that firm's selling brands distributed by the California Wine Association and manufactured by A. Perelli-Minetti.

On December 30, the Teamsters announced a "counter offensive" against the UFWOC boycott. The Teamsters said that the A. Perelli-Minetti contract was "noteworthy" and that they would urge the purchase of the firm's products and defeat "the unjust persecution" of the company by the AFL-CIO.

It was at this same time the California's Migrant Ministry, which had remained with the NFWA after the incorporation with the AFL-CIO, again came under attack by a handful of Protestant churches in the state.

The Rev. Fred Wilken, pastor of the Hanford Methodist Church, demanded a "complete, unprejudiced investigation of the Ministry." He made his demand in an open letter to directors of the Southern California Area Council of Churches, the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches, and all participating denominational groups. He also suggested that the Rev. Wayne Hartmire, the ministry's director, resign because of his involvement in the strike.

Hartmire defended his role against the Wilken's accusations.

"Should we support one labor organization at the expense of another? In some situations the answer could be no. But from the beginning, the churches have been in this Delano fight on behalf of dignity for farmworkers and their kids. Cesar Chavez has demonstrated that he takes the workers seriously as men and women of worth. He built the NFWA from the ground up so that workers would pay for and run their own organization. The union has continued its commitment to non-violence.

"On the other hand, the Teamsters have shown contempt for the workers. With the help of the company they have tried to intimidate and browbeat workers into their union. They have beaten and insulted workers, recruited strikebreakers, and armed some of their organizers. Workers have not participated in or even known about negotiations the Teamsters have had with growers.

"It seems clear," Hartmire concluded, "that Christians should maintain their concern for the dignity of the field workers even when that means making difficult decisions in the midst of inter-union warfare."

Prior to the Arvin election, the specter of violence had again reared its ugly head in the valley as a salesman at the strikebound Irving Goldberg & Sons Packing Shed drove through a grape pickers' picket line with a loaded truck and ran down a 53-year-old striker. The picket, Manuel Rivera, father of eight, suffered multiple fractures of the pelvis, internal injuries, and a broken leg. His condition was initially listed as critical. No arrests were made.

On November 22, DeWitt Tannehill, a veteran 55-year-old AWOC staff member, returned to his brother-in-law's home in Yuba City, California from a farmworkers' meeting at a labor camp in nearby Marysville. Two men pushed their way into the home, forced Tannehill to disrobe, and then forced a stick the size of a broom handle with a nail in the end up the man's rectum.

Severe injuries to Tannehill's liver and kidney necessitated an operation, leaving him paralyzed and in serious condition. Although his unidentified assailants warned Tannehill to discuss the attack with no one, he told authorities and Sutter County sheriff's officers, who began investigating the attack. Shortly after the dawning of the new year, the UFWOC offered a $1000 reward for information regarding the brutal attack on Tannehill.

With the coming of 1967, despite a bumper crop of significant victories in the previous years, the UFWOC and Chavez feared that their achievements might soon be neutralized by the advent of California's new Republican administration headed by Ronald Reagan. Gains under the Brown administration obviously would become harder to achieve with the new Republican governor in Sacramento. Reagan's first actions would only confirm the UFWOC's worst fears.

Allan Grant, then in his fourth year as president of the powerful 60,000-member California Farm Bureau—a long-time opponent of farmworkers and a dominating force within the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), which was largely responsible for excluding farmworkers from national labor relations legislation—was named as president of the state board of agriculture. At the same time he was also a member of the University of California's board of regents, a seat automatic with his position as state farm bureau president.

Grant was also a member of the National Right to Work committee and a member of the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches board of directors.

California's state board of agriculture's major functions included advising the state's agriculture director on how the needs of agriculture could best be served as well as advising

the governor and state director of employment on farm labor matters and policy-making decisions.

Complementing Grant's appointment, Reagan also named Earl Coke of San Francisco as the $23,000-a-year state director of agriculture. Coke, a director and vice president of Spreckels Sugar Company from 1935 to 1949, was a former vice president of the Bank of America in charge of agricultural activities and loans from 1955 to 1965.

V

Faced with a hostile state administration and continued opposition by a large number of California growers, the UFWOC was also confronted by a sudden reversal of fortunes entering 1967, when a grower who had initially agreed to recognize the union as its collective bargaining agent reneged. Little did I realize as a journalist that I would become personally involved in the ensuing struggle between the union and the Christian Brothers. On February 22, 1967 I reported in the *National Catholic Reporter*:

> "A dispute between the Mont La Salle Vineyards owned by the Christian Brothers and the UFWOC (AFL-CIO) erupted last week just before a union recognition election.
>
> Only an hour before the polls opened on February 14 at the Napa and Mt. Tivy Vineyards, Cesar Chavez, UFWOC director, announced the union would not be a party to the company's recognition elections. He charged the management with 'harassment, intimidation, and coercion' of employees. The election was postponed.
>
> In April, 1966, the Christian Brothers, one of the state's largest wine producers, announced that they were 'prepared to formally recognize the NFWA (later merged into the UFWOC) as the organization through which social justice may be realized for our California agricultural workers.'
>
> Shortly after the announcement, union officials claim, the Christian Brothers declared that negotiations concerning a contract would have to wait until after the Schenley Industries agreement was signed.
>
> The religious order, according to a UFWOC spokesperson, indicated it did not want to be the first California grower to sign a contract with the new union because of their relationship with other local growers.
>
> John Broad, a San Francisco attorney and spokesman for the Mont La Salle Vineyards, denied that the order was influenced by its relations with other growers. He said, however, a high percentage of the Mt. Tivy winery's grapes came from other local growers.

As negotiations continued throughout last fall, Christian Brothers representatives demanded evidence that the union represented the workers.

On February 3, an agreement was reached between the Christian Brothers and the UFWOC that a recognition election to be conducted by the State Conciliation and Meditation Service would be held February 14. The agreement gave the workers the opportunity to vote for either the UFWOC or no union.

Shortly after the elections were announced the UFWOC charged that both company foremen and a local farm labor contractor began 'improper activity,' intimidating workers, and claiming the 'benefits' which they had previously enjoyed might not be available to them if they belonged to the union.

The union said five employees at the Mt. Tivy vineyard, sympathetic to the union, were fired the week before the election. The company said not enough work was available. The union, however, said that two and three days prior to the firings, workers were being hired with a promise that there was a month's work of pruning left in the fields.

Chavez protested to Brother Gregory, the winery's director, that a fair election under these circumstances was impossible.

On election eve, Brother Gregory, Chavez, and a representative of the State Conciliation Service appeared before the workers. Brother Gregory told the worker' and urged them to vote with 'their hearts and minds,' reminding them that the Christian Brothers paid them better than other growers.

He called the employees' attention 'to the dues and fees in the union hiring hall' if the UFWOC won the election.

During the following 12 hours, according to Chavez, the intimidation of the Christian Brothers vineyard workers continued at an accelerated pace by company foremen. In signed affidavits workers later said that one company foreman, denouncing the union, referred to the UFWOC leadership as 'Communist.'

On the day of the election, which was scheduled from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., workers at the Napa Vineyards were to meet at lunchtime with union organizers. No workers showed up. Later, it was learned that Brother Justin, a winery official, had taken the workers back into the hills and gave them a talking-to similar to Brother Gregory's.

> Chavez then announced that the UFWOC would not participate in the election. Brother Timothy Jerome, San Francisco provincial of the order, said that he recently returned from a Chicago meeting and 'was as surprised as anyone to hear the news. I thought everything was going smoothly.'"

Obviously sensitive to the publicity surrounding the whole controversy, the Christian Brothers determined the best way to mitigate the turmoil and embarrassment occasioned by my article: they chose the time-honored method of attacking the messenger. In a lengthy letter to the editor of *NCR* on March 15, John Broad, whom I quoted in my article, attacked my account.

> "The article by A.V. Krebs presents a grossly misleading explanation of why Mr. Chavez refused to participate in representation elections on February 14, 1967. Although Mr. Krebs interviewed me to obtain information for his article, he did not give me any opportunity to refute the specific charges which he lists as reasons for Mr. Chavez's refusal to proceed with the election. Almost the entire article is made up of such charges and statements by Mr. Chavez and union representatives.
>
> Although I spoke with Mr. Krebs for almost a half-hour, only one statement in the article is attributed to me, and that statement was a denial of one claim. With the exception of three or four sentences describing the representation election agreements and a quotation of Brother T. Jerome, provincial, as being surprised at the news, all the rest of the lengthy article recites statements and charges by Mr. Chavez and the union. These charges are serious and should have been answered as a matter of fair reporting.
>
> The Christian Brothers are committed to collective bargaining as a means of achieving social justice. Through Mont La Salle Vineyards they have taken a position in the forefront of efforts to organize vineyard workers. It is therefore most regrettable that the writer of the article chose to disregard what I told him… and to write only of the union's excuses for breaching its written agreements….
>
> Following is an itemization of misstatements and half truths in…Mr. Krebs' article:
>
> 1. 'He charged the management with harassment, intimidation, and coercion of employees.'
>
> Mr. Chavez's telegram calling off the election made no such charge against management, but instead referred to 'conduct of employer agents.' Mr.

Chavez's charge was leveled at a labor contractor who opposed the union, and this was carefully explained to Mr. Krebs.

2. 'The election was postponed.'

This statement is inaccurate because there was no agreement for postponement and because Mr. Chavez, in his telegram, demanded recognition of his union without an election.

3. '….Union officials claim…that negotiations concerning a contract would have to wait until after the Schenley Industries agreement was signed.'

The truth of this matter is that all parties realized that there was the preliminary problem of agreeing upon a procedure whereby it could be determined that a majority of the vineyard employees wished to be represented by the UFWOC. The proposed recognition agreement submitted by the union in April, 1966, required satisfactory evidence that the workers desire to be represented.

Until December, 1966, the union was not agreeable to having this determination made by an impartial agency, such as the State Conciliation Service. Mr. Krebs asked if other growers influenced Mont La Salle Vineyards in its decisions. The article simply reports my denial but does not give my explanation that no contract was pending with the union, since agreement had not been reached as to recognition and therefore there was no question of being the first to sign a contract.

4. 'As negotiations continued throughout last fall, Christian Brothers' representatives demanded evidence that the union represented the workers.'

This demand did not come in the fall, it was made at the onset in the spring and continued in the summer and fall of 1966.

5. '…The UFWOC charged that both company foremen and local farm labor contractors' foremen began improper activity….'

A careful investigation has been made and it is certain that no company supervisory employee is guilty of any improper activity whatever in connection with the election. This charge just cannot be substantiated.

6. 'The union said five employees at the Mount Tivy vineyard sympathetic to the union were fired the week before the election.'

This is untrue. The employment records show that no employees of Mont La Salle Vineyards were fired during the week before the election. In fairness, Mr. Krebs should have explained that a labor contractor (not Mont La Salle Vineyards) laid off several employees and that, with the intervention of Brother Gregory and the State Conciliation Service, this complaint was settled to the union's complete satisfaction. This settlement is mentioned in Mr. Krebs article in the *Catholic Voice* of the Oakland, California diocese but was omitted from his article in *NCR*.

7. 'Brother Gregory told the workers…reminding them that the Christian Brothers paid them better than other growers.'

Brother Gregory rightly took credit for pay rates which he said were among the highest paid for similar work. Mr. Chavez gave personal approval of Brother Gregory's remarks at the conclusion of the talk and reiterated his approval in his election day telegram.

8. '…Intimidation of the Christian Brothers vineyard workers continued at an accelerated pace by company foremen.'

As mentioned above, no supervisory employee of Christian Brothers at any time said or did anything that would be calculated to intimidate any vineyard worker. Any such action on the part of a supervisor would have resulted in his dismissal, as strict instructions were given in this regard.

9. '…One company foreman, denouncing the union, referred to the UFWOC leadership as 'Communist.'

No supervisory employee of the company made such a statement. In Mr. Krebs' article, the term 'company foreman' is used repeatedly, and it is believed that repeated use of this term was intended to mislead. By the term 'company foreman,' the union refers to the labor contractor or his employees, not to any Mont La Salle Vineyards supervisor.

10. '…Brother Justin…had taken the workers back into the hills…'

This is not true. Brother Justin talked to groups of workers at the equipment shed assembly areas at two vineyard locations where workers normally assembled. Brother Justin is a student specializing in viticulture at the University of California at Davis. He urged all the workers to vote at the election and to vote in accordance with their own consciences, and he assured them if the union were certified to represent them the company would deal with the union as their representative.

> When I spoke with Mr. Krebs I suggested that he bore a heavy responsibility as liaison between Mont La Salle Vineyards and the union. Unfortunately, he was in such haste to publish one side of a complicated issue that he could not wait to check his facts even though he was on notice since April 1, 1966, that Christian Brothers could not and would not hinder any steps leading to collective bargaining. I was available for comment and Mr. Krebs knew it, but he chose to ignore me.
>
> In his obvious desire to advance the *causa* of UFWOC, Mr. Krebs has neglected the larger causes of truth and justice. In so doing, he has disregarded what has been described as the first duty of the Catholic press and of journalists in general: "a natural one even before a Christian duty…is to be absolutely faithful to the truth, whether it goes one way or the other, whether it is useful or harmful to a specific faction or party."—the *Catholic Voice*, February 22, 1967, page 2, article entitled "Rome Goads Press")
>
> John W. Broad
> San Francisco, California
>
> *Editor's note: Mr. Broad is an attorney and spokesman for the Mont La Salle Vineyards."*

Directly accompanying the Broad letter appeared my response.

> "Throughout my lengthy conversation with Mr. Broad I questioned him repeatedly on why he thought Mr. Chavez called off the election and charged Mont La Salle vineyards with 'harassment, intimidation, and coercion.'
>
> Mr. Broad, while telling me that the telegram containing the UFWOC charges was 'full of generalities and not specifics,' did mention, in my judgment, a number of crucial incidents which took place in Reedley the week prior to the election for which he admitted he had no *first-hand* knowledge.
>
> Unwilling as a reporter to settle for second-hand information generously mixed with opinion, I made an effort to contact some of the Christian Brothers directly involved in the aforementioned incidents, including Brother Gregory, and obtain from them their side of the story.
>
> Each of them was busy when I phoned and despite my request that they phone me back collect I received no reply. A second effort found them unavailable for comment. In each case, I was referred back to Mr. Broad. I

did not, however, feel he could furnish me with the eyewitness information I needed.

It is unfair to say that I neglected the 'larger causes of truth and justice' because I simply quoted *first-hand* information (not opinion) given to me by the UFWOC. In the 18 months I have been writing stories on the strike, I have had no occasion to doubt their honesty and integrity.

What is apparent in this whole episode is a lack of communication and candor. A willingness to discuss differences openly 'is to be absolutely faithful to the truth, whether it goes one way or the other, whether it is useful or harmful to a specific faction or party.'"

Five weeks after the called-off election at Mont La Salle, the UFWOC was certified as the representative of workers at the order's Napa County vineyard. The union was approved by the State Conciliation Service after checking names on the winery's payroll against union membership. More than half of the workers were listed as UFWOC members, the check revealed.

After the earlier controversy, it was Bishop Donohoe who presided at a meeting where the vineyard and the union agreed to the name check. Donohoe, chairman of the California Bishops' Social Justice Commission, had urged the Christian Brothers to resume the labor negotiations. The agreement reached provided that union elections would be held later at two other Christian Brothers' vineyards.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
Fasting for A Non-Violent Struggle for Justice

I

As California's farmworkers prepared to enter their fourth strikebound year, the coming struggles of 1968—laced with victory and frustration, inspiration and tragedy—marked another significant milestone in their struggle for economic and social justice.

Bitter over their losses at the ballot box, the Council of California Growers' president, O.W. Fillerup, again accused an interfaith clergy committee of "bludgeoning growers in behalf of farm union organizers."

He made the charge as A. Perelli-Minetti acknowledged the UFWOC as its collective bargaining agent for its workers. The recognition came July 21, after the UFWOC and the Teamsters resolved their 16-month-old dispute. Seven clergymen served as an arbitration board during the five months of recognition between the company and the union representatives.

Fillerup accused the clergymen of following "the whine of the powerful bosses of organized labor."

"These church leaders have now appointed themselves the ultimate authority as to who will decide what contracts are valid, who should be boycotted, who should be picketed, and literally who does what to whom," he said.

Replying to Fillerup's criticism, the Rev. Richard Byfield, chairman of the Episcopal diocese's department of social relations, said, "The committee was working at the request of, or with the concurrence of, all three parties in the dispute. Mr. Fillerup has mistaken reconciliation for dictation."

Under terms of the labor agreement, UFWOC had jurisdiction over field workers and the Teamsters had jurisdiction over workers in the canneries, creameries, frozen food processing plants, dehydrating plants, produce markets, and warehouses.

Chavez also noted, in agreeing to the Perelli-Minetti settlement, that other large California wineries had expressed a willingness to recognize the UFWOC. "We now have several contracts signed and are preparing for representation elections at several other companies."

Just as the CCG was battling Chavez, a vocal group of Delano citizens was belittling the UFWOC leader.

A group of local parents succeeded in having the *Word and Worship* (published by Benziger Bros.) religious textbook series withdrawn from St. Mary's grammar school, with 250 pupils, due to their objections that the book made favorable references to labor unions. The books, which had already met resistance from right-wing Catholic parents in Chicago and New Orleans, were quietly removed from the third through eighth grades in September, 1967, after school had begun.

Other objections to the book included favorable references to the family of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Among the more vociferous of the parents were some local growers, Mary Espinoza, wife of deputy police chief Alfonso Espinoza, and Katherine Cesare, an officer in the Citizens for Facts on Delano.

Sister Catherine James, school principal, declined to discuss the matter with this writer when asked for a comment. Rev. Gaylen Wright, an assistant pastor at the local St. Mary's Church, said the parish priests had decided to let the nuns and parents resolve the issue at a large protest meeting.

One Delano mother who favored retention of the books, and who asked to remain anonymous, said that before the meeting the sisters "were all for this series."

She said one woman who wanted to keep the books had protested that she couldn't afford to buy new ones for her children, so someone asked if volunteers would pay for the new books. A number of people in the audience said they would contribute the necessary money; it was decided that Sister Catherine would purchase the new series and send the bill directly to the dissatisfied parents.

The official revised edition of the *St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism* was adopted to replace the rejected *Word and Worship*.

"There were only a few of us, mostly wives of farmworkers, at the meeting who favored the series, but there were others who also liked it but didn't come. None of us said anything because we didn't have the right words and we didn't get a chance," the woman said.

Contacted by telephone, Jack Pandol, one of the local grape growers, told of his objection to the books.

"We didn't want to be accused of book-burning, but still we didn't want our children being exposed to Communism and revolution." Pandol, who frequently opened his interviews by stating that since he was often misquoted he had little or nothing to say, and then would promptly launch into a prolonged attack on the striking farmworkers, said he strongly objected to several passages in the book, including one from the eighth grade book, which read:

"God wants all his children to live together as a family. He wants workers to join together in labor unions so they can help one another together and employers to join together to order to find better ways to bring more things to more people. He wants labor and management to be partners, not enemies. He desires that all men work together for the good of the whole human family. He wants the government to help see that all the people obtain justice. We need laws to keep the strong and powerful from taking advantage of the weak."

"This is Fabian socialism," Pandol claimed, "the first step on the road to Communism."

Sharply critical of the support given the workers by the churches, Pandol said he did not know who had financed the new books. "But nobody asked me for a penny. I haven't even looked at or asked my children about the contents of the new books. I trust the nuns' judgment," he said.

While the anti-union growers and the anti-UFWOC Delano townsfolk were seeking to expunge Chavez and the strikers, newly installed Bishop Timothy Manning of the recently created diocese of Fresno met with Chavez on January 29. Chancery officials, however,

confirmed only that the bishop planned two meetings, one in Delano with Chavez and another with local growers in nearby Bakersfield.

The purpose of Bishop Manning's visit with the opposing parties in the strike, according to a diocesan spokesman, was "to hear both sides first-hand and probably set up the beginning of communications," something the recently retired Bishop Willinger was unwilling to do and vigorously opposed.

Meanwhile, the UFWOC announced a nationwide boycott of all grape products grown in the Delano-Earlimart area, although their main target was the products of the Giumarra Vineyards. "We are going to boycott Delano grapes, period!" Chavez declared.

Inaugurating the general boycott, a 50-member party left by bus for a cross-country trip during which they demonstrated in 20 cities before arriving in New York City. "They will stay on the road as long as it takes; they will be housed and fed by church organizations, union councils, and friends along the way," Chavez explained.

Later, it was learned that efforts by the Delano-based Agricultural Workers Freedom to Work Association (AWFWA) to punish the diocese of Fresno's diocesan newspaper for editorials on "reconciliation" were succeeding in financially punishing the paper.

The paper's editor, Gerald Sherry, told a House Labor and Education Subcommittee hearing in Delano on August, 1968, that "grower-supported people had been harassing and picketing and threatening those firms which advertised in the *Central California Register*." He said these threats had resulted in the paper's advertising revenue reaching the lowest point in the past 20 years.

"We have taken no sides in the dispute between growers and the union, but we have urged conciliation in keeping with the position of the Catholic Church," Sherry stressed.

Sherry claimed that growers and members of the AWFWA were displeased about the paper's free distribution of pamphlets on the Delano strike in July to 50,000 families in the Fresno diocese. The pamphlets contained a statement by the California bishops regarding their position on the rights of farmworkers to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. It also included interviews with Chavez and Martin Zaninovich, then president of the South Central Farmers Committee in Delano.

The *Register* editorials had in recent months coincided with the California bishops' statements on the rights of agricultural employees. The states' Catholic hierarchy had advocated that farmworkers be covered by the National Labor Relations Act, which would give them the right to go onto farms to hold elections to determine whether the employees wanted union representation. At the time, the UFWOC was on strike against 32 local table grape growers.

Letters to the *Register*'s advertisers were sent out in July by Jose Mendoza, general secretary of the AWFWA. They accused the paper, the Church, and Bishop Manning of "helping to promote an illegal boycott against certain California vineyards" and indicated they would picket any firm that advertised in the diocesan paper.

Union officials charged that the pro-grower AWFWA was composed of mostly local businessmen and merchants who in the past had formed such organizations as Citizens for Facts on Delano, Mothers Against Chavez, and Men Against Chavez. In June, the AWFWA picketed a Fresno conference called by Bishop Manning dealing with the problems of Spanish-speaking Americans, during which an UFWOC flag was burned during the noisy demonstration.

II

Not only had spirituality been a major attribute in the life of Cesar Chavez, but at its core. UFWOC, which he founded, with its adherence to the ideals of brotherhood and sisterhood and non-violence, radiated those Christian—specifically Catholic—values that characterized the Gospels.

It was, therefore, with profound concern that Chavez viewed events in the spring of 1968, as the union stood on the threshold of achieving major victories in its struggle to organize and unionize. Not only was the impatience of many UFWOC members becoming increasingly evident, but they were also facing some 32 powerful intransigent growers—led by Joseph Giumarra—and the brutal Teamsters.

Thus, after he was served with a 12-count summons accusing his union members of harassing Giumarra's non-union employees, on February 14 Chavez embarked on a "spiritual fast" in a dramatic effort to reaffirm among his followers the ideal of non-violence.

The UFWOC had already launched a nationwide consumers' boycott against Giumarra, who grew and bought grapes from many smaller Delano area growers in addition to the 12,459 acres Giumarra Vineyards Inc. owned through Kern and Tulare counties. Giumarra had attempted to counter the boycott by shipping his grapes under a proliferation of new labels in an effort to make the boycott more difficult.

While a union spokesman declined to tie the union leader's fast to the charges in the summons, he did point out:

"After two and one-half years of raising the hopes of many with only limited success, there might be a tendency by people to look for shortcuts to success. Sometimes this might include violence."

In the court summons charging union members with throwing dirt clods at the non-union workers, using profanity against them, and following them from their work in the vineyards to their homes, Giumarra argued that these acts were in violation of an injunction Giumarra had obtained, forbidding misconduct by the strikers. Chavez was ordered to appear in court February 26 to answer Giumarra's charges; however, because of his weakened condition, Judge Morton Barker delayed the hearing until April 22.

Until August, 1967, the union had been on strike for two years against only the company's 500 acres in the Delano area. After the repeated efforts to set up recognition elections and/or bargaining procedures with Giumarra, the strike became general. The union claimed that nearly 1000 workers left their jobs on August 3, "making the strike 98 percent effective." Giumarra claimed the walkout "bothered us but didn't hurt our business."

Giumarra's labor relations council, Philip Feick, said his company felt that the UFWOC was not a responsible union but rather a "socialist-civil rights movement enlisting the help of do-gooder elements, beatniks, and socialistic-type groups" who did not represent regular Giumarra employees. The strike, however, was certified as a valid labor dispute by both the State Department of Employment and the U.S. Secretary of Labor's office.

It was immediately after the strike began that the company obtained a court order limiting the union to three pickets at each vineyard entrance, stationary pickets 50 feet apart along the fields, and no approaching workers during off hours except by invitation. John Giumarra, Jr., general counsel for the company, insisted that "we went to court only to prevent violence against our workers who have refused to join Chavez."

The union repeatedly denied violating the court order and in turn accused Giumarra of using "green card holders" (Mexican citizens with temporary U.S. work permits), illegal aliens, and neighboring growers' crews as strikebreakers. They pointed out that in the first two months of the strike, during the peak harvest season, the U.S. Border Patrol picked up nearly 100 illegal workers on the Giumarra property. Based on criteria established the previous year by Labor Secretary Wirtz, "green card holders" were forbidden to work on property involved in a certified labor dispute. Giumarra said it did not know the workers' background.

Chavez first announced his plans for a fast at a union meeting on February 13, then walked two and one-half miles to the union's co-op store outside of Delano, where he began his water-only fast in a 10 by 12-foot room furnished only with a cot. During the day he would rest on the cot in his room in the adobe-like building, which was located on 40 acres of union-owned land on the outskirts of Delano and was situated next to the city dump and across a highway from a complex of towering Voice of America radio antennas used to beam American's messages of democracy and freedom to Asia.

In the days to follow, he received groups of visiting farmworkers, and each evening took part in the celebration of a Mass in a makeshift chapel in the union's nearly completed co-

op gasoline station, which also served as a shrine to Our Lady of Non-Violence. Joining him in the Mass was his wife, Helen, his eight children, and his mother and father. The daily Mass was celebrated by the union's unofficial chaplain, Rev. Mark Day, O.F.M., who, although staying at a local parish, spent most of his time with the union.

In his talks with the workers and visitors, he emphasized the religious aspect of the cause of the workers, as he did back in the early organizing days of the union. Soon hundreds of workers began attending the evening Mass with him and, according to a union spokesman, on the initial weekends of the fast, more than 1000 workers were in attendance, causing the Mass to be celebrated outdoors.

Visiting farmworker s began coming from as far as 450 miles away. One group of 50, for example, came from the Santa Rosa diocese, led by Msgr. Gerald Cox, chancellor of the diocese. Locally, observers reported warmer relations between Chavez's union and Bishop Manning.

As Chavez entered the second week of his fast, a union spokesman reported that he was weak and suffering from leg cramps, which later were diagnosed as due to his having one leg slightly shorter than the other. At the beginning he took nothing but a gallon of water a day, but on March 2, Dr. James McKnight advised him to take a clear medication with his water to correct a dangerously high lactic avid content in his blood, which could have caused permanent kidney damage. Dr. McKnight would remain with Chavez throughout the fast, making periodic tests and examinations.

During the first two weeks of his fast, more than 100 telegrams were received, including one from Sen. Robert F. Kennedy urging Chavez to abandon his fast. Kennedy's message reaffirmed his support for the union leader's commitment, but added that that was the very reason "why your active leadership is so badly needed not only for the future but right now as well."

Union officials, however, reiterated to his supporters that Chavez's action was in no way to be considered a hunger strike, but rather a "spiritual fast. A hunger strike usually follows some sort of specific demands. But Cesar Chavez's fast is entirely different. It is simply an action of rededication to those ideals of non-violence which the union has sought to maintain throughout the Delano strike."

In an official statement, the union also declared that Chavez's fast was "a powerful call for faithful and effective leadership so that present hopes will not turn to frustration, frustration to despair, despair to violence."

Others, including the local growers, saw Chavez's fast as "a veiled but hollow threat of violence." Martin Zaninovich told one reporter that "in effect it might be construed as a threat to the growers…an implied threat that he's losing control."

Conceding that Chavez "probably in himself believes in non-violence," Delano Mayor Joseph Hochschild, a local commercial printer, observed, "We in this town get so fed up with this crap. Everything that comes up that may be unfavorable, he (Chavez) comes up with something new like this fast. All we get is another con game."

Some outsiders viewed the fast as an answer to "a new militancy" among Mexican-Americans in the southwestern United States, as expressed by Reies Lopez Tijerina, the 42-year-old president of *Alianza Federation de Pueblos Libres* (Federal Alliance of Free Towns).

Tijerina was currently free on bond, along with 11 other *Alianza* members, after being charged with "false imprisonment," "assault to commit a violent felony" and one count of "unlawful assembly" in a jail. All the charges stemmed from an effort to make a citizen's arrest of the district attorney and judge of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, after 10 fellow members had been arrested during a federation meeting and accused of "unlawful assembly." Tijerina would attend the end of Chavez's fast.

III

"It was a fast for non-violence and a call for sacrifice."

Before a crowd of some 7000 farmworkers and friends of the farmworkers, Cesar Chavez ended his three-week fast on March 10 at the city park in Delano with a Mass of thanksgiving.

Weak and gaunt, he sat among the large crowd with his wife, Helen, family, parents, and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy close by as two union officials read—one in English and the other in Spanish—his statement at the conclusion of the Mass.

Concelebrating the Mass were Fathers Mark Day, James Vizzard, S.J., Eugene J. Boyle, David Duran from Porterville, California, and Fathers Louis Vitali and Hugh Noonan from Los Angeles. Jim Drake and Dr. Jerome Lackner offered prayers on behalf of Jews and others attending the Mass. The altar was placed on a flatbed truck with flowers, a Mexican flag, and the union's own scarlet, white, and black flag as an altar backdrop.

Offerings at the Mass came from farmworkers and national labor leaders, including UAW's president, Walter Reuther. In Reuther's name, Paul Schrade presented the union with a check for $50,000 to be used for constructing a new office building on the union's 40-acre site. Students at the Jesuits' Alma College in Los Gatos, California, sent the union a check for $400.

"The fast has had different meanings for different people," Chavez said to the crowd in his statement. "Some of you may still wonder about its meaning and importance. It was not intended as a pressure against growers. For that reason we have suspended negotiations

and arbitration proceedings and relaxed the militant picketing and boycotting of the strike during this period.

"I undertook this fast because my heart was filled with grief and pain over the sufferings of farmworkers. The fast was meant first for them and then for all of us in this union. It was a fast for non-violence and a call to sacrifice.

"Our struggle is not easy. Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something the rich do not own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons."

Chavez concluded:

"When we are really honest with ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us be men!"

Sen. Kennedy told the enthusiastic crowd that Chavez is "one of the heroic figures of our time. You came here on this day so special to honor Cesar Chavez for what he has done for you. I have come here to honor him for what he has done for the whole country."

The senator, buoyed by the response to his presence and his tribute to Chavez to a degree that six days later would announce his Democratic party candidacy for the presidency, emphasized to the crowd of 7000 that while the victories achieved to date had been the results of their efforts, not those of outsiders, it was time that federal laws be enacted to give farmworkers "the same protections other workers have enjoyed for over 30 years."

As a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Kennedy once again urged rapid passage of the National Labor Relations Act coverage for agricultural employees in addition to laws that insure that "green carders" be barred from being used as strikebreakers in the U.S. He also appealed for stricter enforcement of local, state, and federal laws as related to agricultural workers.

In broken Spanish, he called the cheering crowd's attention to the words of the Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez:

"El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz (Respect for the rights of others is the essence of peace)

You stand for justice. I am proud to stand with you.

Viva La Causa!

Viva Cesar Chavez!

"Viva all of you!"

AFTERWORD
More Than a Union

Even though Chavez's 1968 fast drew national attention in the years following, the UFW was to suffer continuing growing pains, both winning elections and losing them, transitioning through a period of even losing large number of its members, yet it still managed to survive and become a force that the California agribusiness establishment could not ignore or dismiss.

Frequently during this period, and often prematurely, supporters and institutions such as *The New York Times* would sound its death knell. Chavez, however, remained focused. "Those who attack our cause often say, 'It's not really a union. It's something else: a social movement, a civil rights movement. It's something dangerous.' They're half right. The UFW is first and foremost a union. But the UFW has always been something more than a union, although it's never been dangerous if you believe in the Bill of Rights."

The UFW has survived, however, and in the process has even managed on occasion to turn back corporate agribusiness-sponsored statewide ballot initiatives in both Arizona and California (Proposition 22), which would have, in effect, not only restricted its right to organize and bargain but would have at the same time given a green light to the establishment of company
unions and fixed elections.

Five years after the Delano workers walked out of the local vineyards, they claimed victory, for 26 of the area's growers, including the Giumarras, opened negotiations with the UFWOC, and on July 29, an historic pact was signed ending the grape strike. As Chavez, John Giumarra, Sr., and Larry Itliong inked the pact, they were surrounded by AFL-CIO's William Kircher; Jerry Cohen, UFWOC's dedicated take-no-prisoners attorney; Msgr. George Higgins and Bishop Joseph Donnelly, representing the Conference of U.S. Catholic Bishops, Catholic newspaperman Gerry Sherry, and a number of union members.

The contract called for $1.80 an hour with 20 cents for a field-picked box, plus the growers would pay 10 cents an hour into the Robert F. Kennedy Health and Welfare Fund, 2 cents into a social service fund, workers would be dispatched through a Delano hiring contractor and would be protected by special chemical poison safety language.

Two weeks later, on August 12, 1970, in Salinas, California, Chavez and the Teamsters' Bill Grami signed a jurisdictional pact, with Msgr. Roger Mahony, Sherry, and Msgr. Higgins, who all had played such an important role in getting the two sides together, looking on.

Yet peace between the two unions was short-lived, as throughout the 1970s, the UFW and the Teamsters would physically and politically battle each other for the right to represent the Salinas Valley lettuce workers. Some growers, including those in Delano who already had contracts with the UFW, eventually were also successful in abrogating their agreements in an effort to win more favorable terms in their dealings with field workers and a Teamsters leadership, which a 1986 President's Commission on Organized Crime would later charge had been "firmly under the influence of organized crime since the 1950s."

The Teamsters' efforts at that time were clearly looked upon favorably by corporate agribusiness in California, as the UFW was seeing its members harassed, beaten, shot at, and killed. The media, meanwhile, in large part sought to portray the struggle as simply inter-union rivalry.

What was in fact happening, however, was yet another example of California's large growers adroitly manipulating not only their smaller farm colleagues, but also dealing only with those unions they felt they could control and at the same time enlist them into serving their own selfish interests, namely to destroy the idea of collective bargaining in the fields and orchards of the state and deprive farmworkers of their most basic social and economic rights.

It would take a decade before this destructive battle between the UFW and the Teamsters would be resolved.

Prior to the 1970 agreement with the Delano growers, the UFWOC became alarmed, and more and more farmworkers showed signs of being chemically poisoned as they worked in the fields and lived nearby the exposed fields. The union began investigating the dangers of chemical poisons for workers and consumers, while Chavez and other union leaders marched in front of the Food and Drug Administration's headquarters to protest against the dangers of chemical poisons.

After launching a national boycott against all California grapes in 1969, the union declared an International Grape Boycott Day, and throughout the year, shipments of table grapes destined for Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Montreal, and Toronto were stopped. Abroad in England, port workers refused to unload California grapes.

Chavez organized a march from the Coachella and Imperial valleys to the Mexico-U.S. border to protest the use of undocumented immigrants from Mexico as "scabs" to break the strike and was joined along the way by the Southern Leadership Council's Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Sen. Walter F. Mondale, the new chairman of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor.

On December 14, 1970, Chavez was jailed for defying a court order against the boycott. In jail he was visited by Coretta Scott King and Ethel Kennedy. On Christmas eve, the California Supreme Court ordered Chavez to be freed pending appeal.

On January 25, 1972, outside the Talisman sugar factory near Belle Glade, Florida, 18-year-old Nan Freeman was killed during the second week of a UFW protest. Despite repeated complaints to the local police of violence on the part of truck drivers, Freeman, a university student, was beaten and left unconscious when a truck full of cans crushed her against a security railing.

On May 12 of the same year, Cesar Chavez initiated a fast to promote the recall campaign against the governor of Arizona, Jack Williams. Health problems, however, obliged him to suspend it on June 4. During the campaign, the UFW membership grew significantly and elected Raúl Castro, the first Mexican-American governor in the history of Arizona.

In California, Proposition 22, which aimed to have boycotts declared illegal and to limit secret ballot elections to permanent full-time workers, went before the state's voters and was soundly defeated.

Violence in 1973 saw Negri Daifulla, a UFW member and an immigrant from Yemen, and Juan de la Cruz, a UFW member, killed on protest lines. Assassination threats against Chavez and warnings of arson also created a dangerous environment, in addition to new battles between the Teamsters in Salinas and Delano and the growers over the extension and renegotiation of union contracts.

For example, on July 10, Gallo Brothers, the nation's largest winery, recognized the Teamsters for four years as their field workers' bargaining agent, despite the fact that it had a previous six-year contract with the UFW. Claiming that the "workers" voted 150 to one for the Teamsters, they ignored the fact that all but 27 of Gallo's regular workers were on strike. The union's problems with Gallo would continue to this day.

Beatings and shootings by the Teamsters occurred frequently throughout 1972 and 1973, with barely any interference by the local law enforcement agencies, while the mass jailing of UFW pickets throughout California became commonplace, most all of them later dismissed. Supporters of the union's cause held frequent demonstrations, adjacent to both the struck growers' properties and the jails where the workers were being held. In early August, the Catholic Worker movement's co-founder, Dorothy Day, who had openly and physically supported the workers' strike since 1965, lent her continued support and was jailed in Fresno County.

The year also saw the United Farm Workers AFL-CIO hold its first constitutional convention in Fresno, California. Both Sen. Edward Kennedy and the UAW president,

Leonard Woodcock, gave speeches in support of the union, which adopted and ratified a 111-page constitution.

After repeated calls for such a board, the California Labor Relations Act was passed in 1975, becoming the first law to govern the organization of agricultural labor in the continental United States. It provided for secret ballot elections, ensured the right to boycott, granted voting rights to seasonal workers and the control of the elections process.

It established the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) to administer the elections. Governor Jerry Brown of California named LeRoy Chatfield, an ex-NFWA and UFWOC organizer, and newly consecrated Fresno Bishop Mahony, who had earlier served as mediator between the union and the Teamsters, to the five-member board.

The same year, Chavez led a 1000-mile march in the Imperial and San Joaquin valleys to promote the subsequent elections. At the same time, a long-time enemy of the farmworker—the short-handled hoe—was declared illegal by the United States Supreme Court in the case of Sebastián Carmona et al vs. Division of Industrial Safety, as well as by an administrative ruling of the state of California.

Cesar Chavez announced the end of the grape and lettuce boycotts in 1978 and indicated that from then on only specific products would be targeted. At the same time and in the year following, he initiated an internal reorganization of the UFW, which saw many of those who had helped pioneer the union through the 1960s and '70s leave.

On February 10, 1979, Rufino Contreras, a UFW member, was shot to death by an armed company foremen in a lettuce field in the Imperial Valley during a workers' strike.

By 1984, Chavez was calling for a new grape boycott to underscore the problem of chemical poison residues on fruit. Three years later, the UFW produced *The Wrath of Grapes*, a film exposing the dangers of those chemical poisons. It included shots of birth defects and the high rates of cancer in workers and consumers.

Chavez traveled throughout the Midwest and the East Coast to promote the film. On August 16 of the following year, he began a fast to protest the use of those poisons Thirty-six days later, he ended it in the company of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the family of Robert Kennedy. With each fast, however, the union leader's health suffered and became of increasing concern to his aides and the union's membership.

In 1992, the UFW helped organize widespread partial work stoppages in the Coachella Valley to protest the lack of drinking water and sanitary facilities for farmworkers, and, in the Salinas Valley, Chavez led a march of more than 10,000 workers to demand better working conditions.

After traveling to Arizona in the spring of 1993, on April 23, after fasting for a number of days to assert moral strength, Cesar Chavez died in his sleep.

More than 35,000 people attend his funeral, walking behind the plain wooden coffin, crafted by union members, for over three miles from Delano to the union's Forty Acres. Cardinal Roger Mahony celebrated a requiem Mass and offered personal condolences from Pope John Paul II. Cesar Estrada Chavez was buried in Keene, California, at the headquarters of the United Farm Workers, a union he had dreamed of as a young man, nurtured in its infancy, and guided through years of revolutionary struggle.

The following year, he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian decoration in the United States, bestowed by President Bill Clinton, and in April, 2003, the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp of his image. The image of Chavez on the stamp was painted by Roberto Rodríguez from a photograph taken by Bob Fitch in 1976.

Six years after his death, in 1999, Susan Samuels Drake penned a poetic memoir of one woman's relationship with the farmworkers movement and Chavez. At 24, she had joined her then-husband, Rev. Jim Drake, in the formation of the NFWA and would serve for a number of years as Chavez's personal secretary.

In the introduction to her memoir, *Fields of Courage: Remembering Cesar Chavez & the People Whose Labor Feeds Us* (Many Names Press, Soquel, California: 1999), she candidly writes:

"'I never loved nor hated anyone as much as I love and hate Cesar Chavez,' I used to say to friends during the years when I was the farm labor leader's secretary. Loved, because Cesar was bigger than anyone I'd ever known—big in spirit, physical endurance, smarts, generosity, and charm. Hated? Simply a distortion of my immense frustration. I was young, and when our interactions felt too much like those I had with my father, I took Cesar's short-tempered words personally, as I did with Dad.

"Such is the stuff of families, and Cesar created a kind of family which I walked into in 1962. My life in that family changed me, as it changed the face of California agriculture and as it changed forever—if not the way farmworkers are treated—the way they are able to see themselves."