

Wind In The Fields
A Report On Farm Labor 1966

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Dear Members and Friends of SDS:

Recently the San Francisco Regional Office sponsored a state-wide survey of farm labor organizing drives, projects, and student activities in this arena. The members of that three-week survey have assembled the enclosed work papers, and these are aimed at partially meeting the need for analysis and description of the farm labor movement.

This summer will mark the first year of intense student involvement in the dubious battle. For this reason it was imperative that these work papers reach students before the summer vacation. The papers are necessarily incomplete, poorly executed, and haphazardly structured; they bear the scars of the pressure under which they were composed.

The papers will, however, provide the basis for a less tentative work to be published during the summer. The enclosed papers are being sent as an extensive "letter" from the San Francisco Regional Office. They are not, at this time, intended for general publication or quotation.

Hopefully these hasty notes will provoke comment and criticism that will enable the original authors and others to compile a fairly non-apologetic work. In addition, however, we hope these papers will stimulate interest beyond our assumed role of commentators.

The Regional Office in San Francisco will be acting as the focus for number of related projects; Photo essay, Seminar, Research Library, etc. as well as working closely with students involved in organization efforts.

Write us if you're interested in talking more.

Para La Causa,
Walt Sheasby, Judy Graham,
Jon Jenkins, G. Duncan Ray, Elieszr Risco

P.S. TO SDS CHAPTER PEOPLE: We would like to have most chapter people have a chance to read this before the summer begins. Also, additional copies can be ordered from the Regional Office for the usual discount.

Farm Workers And Concepts Of Change

If there is one single facet of the farm labor movement that is least understood, it is the concepts of social change that underlie the many and varied attempts by farm workers or in behalf of farm workers that currently are being undertaken. From April 8th to May 9th, a group of SDS members attempted to arrive at an understanding and evaluation of those people who have been instrumental in setting the tone and style of particular farm labor programs.

During what we have labeled the First Grapenik Tour, we probably would have had to express our exasperation with the explanations we heard, by falling back on the slogan: a chance is gonna come. If some of us have been critical about contemporary concepts in the radical movement about such change, we reached unanimity in our confusion about how such concepts are being applied in what we must loosely call the farm labor movement.

It would be difficult to say where, or how, or when, but after a point it became difficult to justify going on to the next town. We already knew what we were going to discover, namely: hope, apprehension, determination, and commitment. None of us were particularly anxious to conclude that survey and then attempt to translate that hope and apprehension into an evaluation of the concepts that underlie the various programs, projects, and drives that we studied. The difficulty in reaching agreement should be obvious.

In the following papers; we have begun an analysis of projects going on in California, in terms of both their programmatic concepts and the role which students might play within them. In this paper, we would like to give an over-view of those programs and their conceptual framework.

These programs appear to fall into three categories. There are those that cooperate closely with the National Farm Workers Association in Delano, those that are interconnected through the Alianza de Campesinos (of which the NFWA is not a member), and those whose work is independent and unrelated to the NFWA.

NFWA-oriented programs include the Delano movement, the California Center for Community Development (CCCCD), the Migrant Ministry summer project, the summer boycott and scab control project, NFWA projects outside Delano, the Cursillos de Christianidad, and the Community Service Organization (CSO) programs in the state.

Members of the Alianza de Campesinos.....(a sort of holding company for those who feel threatened or in opposition to the NFWA).... and groups associated with it include: the United Farm Workers of San Jose, Gilroy, and Hollister; the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers in Los Angeles, the Farm Workers Opportunity Project in Oxnard, Citizens Against Poverty (CAP) in Oxnard (CAP), Project Buenaventura

leadership training program in South Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, the Imperial Valley Farm Workers Co-operative in Imperial Valley, the now-defunct Community Recruitment of Personnel (CROP) program in San Jose, and others who may or may not be members of the Alianza, such as the El Futuro Poverty Program in Porterville, and others that we haven't been able to pin down.

Those in the third category include the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, the American Friends Service Committee programs, Self-Help Enterprises, Inc., the University of Southern California Migrant Medical Project, the Legal Committee to Aid Farm Workers in Los Angeles, the Gardner Home Owners and Tenants Council in San Jose, the UCLA Migrant Tutorial Project, and various programs sponsored by the Economic Opportunity Act. (Some of these programs are linked loosely with the NFWA, but operate essentially independently from it.)

Many of these programs are described in the following papers, and others are avoided because of lack of information or space. Here, we shall consider briefly a few of the more important programs in their concepts of social change. The categories used above to link programs will be more apparent in the following papers. Below, we will, instead, group programs into uplift, holding, militant, and movement programs.

We found many cases of fairly traditional "uplift" programs in which selected farm workers are helped, educationally or otherwise, to overcome the most obvious cultural disadvantages of their poverty. At Oxnard, a projected six hundred farm workers are being given basic English and pre-occupational training under a MDTA grant to the farm workers opportunity project. The program was quickly adapted to blend with an effort by a related grower-sponsored training program which eventually collapsed. Despite this early effort of the program, the personnel complains that since then the program has had to continually compromise and conservativize in order to retain its MDTA financing. Of those trainees we spoke with, all expressed a desire to become foremen or to get out of farm labor altogether.

Again in San Jose a well-intentioned Director of an O.E.O. program that provides educational services to migrants said she was very hopeful, because before, when she worked with church groups, she was only doing band-aid work, but now the government allowed her to do for hundreds what she did before for only two or three at a time. In other words, the band-aids were bigger and longer.

There is no question in our minds about the honesty of those engaged in such programs. However, it is difficult to see how the increased status of a few will modify fundamentally the conditions in which over three hundred thousand farm workers throughout California suffer economic, social, and political disfranchisement. The real fault with such programs, aside from their concern with symptoms instead of the roots of Agribusiness exploitation, is that something is being done for some farm workers who, in turn, have little to do with the structure and content of the projects.

These programs usually avoid the accusation that they are “uplift” projects concerned with the integration of farm workers into preordained socio-economic structure by incorporating the rhetoric of community participation into their literature. Such programs, however, can be easily “exposed” (for whatever that means) by analyzing their ineffectiveness in the context of the need for real economic and social change. Only after such a particular analysis is made, can we hope to do political work with the staff of such projects, and hopefully with those they consider their clientele, the farm workers of California.

More harmful potentially, because they promise much more, are the so-called leader training programs. Project Buenaventura is supposedly training 12 farm workers for leadership positions. We received no literature on the project, and so we were never able to get a clear explanation of how recruitment was conducted, the content of the training program, or the social context in which that leadership was to be applied. Yet these are crucial questions and will determine the direction of that program. Some of the trainees are involved in community organizing along with FWOP personnel in a group called Citizens Against Poverty (CAP) with a block-by-block organizing structure in the Mexican colonia. The group seemed to have no specific labor orientation; neither did it seem to have a clear program. It could conceivably become a significant community union; but it does not appear to lead into labor unionism. Still, such a development might make the leadership training program more meaningful and relevant to future political work.

Similarly, we found some self-help programs which opened up some possibilities— notable, the American Friends Service Committee—initiated self-help housing projects. Under these projects, now handled by an independent corporation, the Self-Help Enterprises, Inc., interested farm workers in a community are helped to qualify for government loans, and then are organized in a co-operative group which will see through the building of the homes, using their own labor. In this way, an equity is established in their labor. The number of people who benefit from these is rather small and their advancement is limited by their ability to go into debt. However, once having seen the value of group action, some of the people involved in those projects have gone on to do civil rights or political work.

The potential militancy and political education of many farm workers is handicapped in a series of organizations we refer to as “holding operations.” Basically, these programs try to keep industrial peace by emphasizing the short term gains which can be made through political pressure, moral appeal, etc. In the long run, however, they leave political and economic power in the hands of the growers and their allies. Sometimes, holding operations are organized by churches, trying to minimize the potential struggle between the poor and the mighty within their membership. Their slogan might be: practice charity on the poor, but don’t block sources of funds. On occasion, concerned citizens of the middle class will engage in organizing holding programs to avoid class strife within their communities (though this is seldom the express purpose of their work). There is political capital to be made in this, as well. Often enough, labor unions will make

jurisdictional claims to establish their holding position. These are made in the form of organizing committees, offices for future locals, or quickie, localized strikers, and are made often without the intention of becoming involved in a serious organizing drive.

Holding programs should not be discounted because of the conservative motivations behind them. It is quite common for these types of programs to create difficulties for their organizers, once the people have a framework within which militancy can be expressed. The experience of urban war-on-poverty programs has frequently substantiated this. We would say that the Community Service Organization, the Agricultural Workers Organizing committee (AFL-CIO), and United Farm Workers function, or have functioned, often as holding programs.

Of special interest to SDS members are those programs which consider themselves part of the "The Movement." Movements give a high priority to membership participation in decision making, allow for the positive development of militancy in achieving their goals, and represent broad alignments of viewpoints (internally) and support. We found three groups in whose operations these elements are operative: the Migrant Ministry, the Cursillos de Christianidad, and National Farm Workers Association.

The Migrant Ministry, after years of band-aid and soap-and-water projects, has become engaged in grass-roots organizing of many kinds. Most important, yet, is that the Migrant Ministry has become engaged in a theological dialogue, within the church, which might bring about the first socially-relevant transformation of the protestant churches since social gospel days. The Student Christian Movement (SCM) and similar groups should become available to political debate and action within the student left. The Cursillo de Christianidad are the least known and most remarkable of developments within the Catholic Church. Organized by some progressive church clergy, the Cursillos represent a brotherhood of lay people deeply committed to bringing Catholic doctrine to bear on social issues. Within the Mexican-American community, it plays a role similar to that which some protestant groups have played in the South. Activists in the farm labor movement are bound to hear more about the Cursillos. Both the Migrant Ministry and the Cursillos have already helped to modify the attitude of the churches towards mass social action.

The other group doing movement-type work is the National Farm Workers' Association. In the four years of its existence, it has used elements of self-help, uplift, and holding operations. During the same period, FWA has constantly increased its membership; it has shown more than a potential for militant action; it is training secondary leadership in the process of increased organizing activity; and it has enlisted wide-spread public support. Maybe the most important aspect of NFWA as a movement is the role it might play in the renewal and political education of the rank and file of labor unions. The community development aspects of NFWA's style of organizing (small house meetings, co-operative businesses, the politically sharp Teatro) may help safeguard against bread-and-butter unionism. In the FWA's approach, as is the need for real economic reform.

The overall farm labor situation in California is still flexible at present. Most groups are in the process of rapid change and modification, and it is difficult to forecast their development over the next year. But all symptoms would seem to indicate that more and more agricultural workers are beginning to demand social justice in their lifetimes. There are innumerable opportunities of research and action which should not be allowed to go unused and the question of the underlying conceptual framework of these programs is one which can only be partially answered in terms of their past development and, perhaps, of our own impact as student radicals on these programmatic concepts of social change.

Students And Farm Labor

This year, as in the past, a variety of farm groups, with a variety of approaches, are working with agricultural workers. Some of them represent new beginnings; many have had a history of four years or more. The FWA is now one of the most widely known of these groups, but it is only one grape on the vine. And the responses of non-FWA people to the union will be complex and important to understand. Listed below are some of the active organizations. Representatives of many of them have expressed an interest in student volunteers. Arrangements to work with any of them should be made by letter as soon as possible, before coming to California. (A special note on the FWA: there are several offices outside the area of the strike; request to work with any of them should be made through Delano.) The work that can be done with these groups ranges from volunteer typing to formal staff membership to creating a new job in close co-operation with an on-going program. It must be understood that each organization or program has its own stake in the community and will direct the activity of its members accordingly. The value of working on these programs is twofold: any of them will allow the volunteer a geographical and organizational base from which he can develop his involvement in, and understanding of, the community and California farm labor; some of them will have that kind of flexibility which will allow the volunteer to do direct organizing in the community.

American Friends Service Committee, 440 W. Willow, Visalia

The AFSC initiated various projects such as the self-help housing (see below), now independent, and a farm labor co-op in which, for a few years, members pooled their labor in seeking employment. The main farm labor work of the Friends now is on El Porvenir (see below).

The Community Service Organization, 2701½ East 4th Street, Los Angeles 33, California

“The CSO, through constructive civic action, promotes the harmonious integration of the Spanish-speaking people into all areas of community life.” (Dept. of Labor Bulletin #236) In the late fifties, the CSO had 10,000 members in a strong, grass-roots organization reaching throughout the state and into the Southwest. It was an effective lobbying force in Sacramento and was instrumental, through Dolores Huerta, in passing AB 59, a bill for underemployment compensation. CSO is less active today.

El Futuro, Porterville

El Futuro is a poverty program administered under the Tulare County Community Action Agency.

El Porvenir, P.O. Box 673, Mendota

El Porvenir is an offshoot of the AFSC self-help housing program and is administered by the AFSC. Twenty families, now living in post-World War II temporary housing (which cost the landlord \$1 a-piece), are building a new community on near-by land. The families are planning, and will construct and control, community services like the water system. They will build their own houses with FHA loans and direction from a carpenter and an architect. The director, Dave Bersiaga, is the FWA representative in the area.

The Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, 8455 Beverly, Los Angeles

The Emergency Committee is primarily an information and lobbying organization. Its leadership initiated the Farm Workers Opportunity Project and Project Buenaventura (see below).

The Farm Workers Opportunity Project, 128 Colonia Rd., Oxnard

FWOP is funded under MDTA and was designed to “eliminate the need to import large numbers of foreign contract workers.” The project is aimed at helping the laborer and the rancher. Activities consist in teaching of basic academic skills, basic job training, and personal counseling. The project involves over one hundred twenty people.

The Gardner Home Owners and Tenants Council, San Jose

This is a new organization in San Jose,, created in the face of a freeway being built through the area. It is dealing, initially at least, with the failure of the city to provide relocation or sufficient compensation for the residents. Many members are cannery or part-time farm workers.

Interfaith Migrant Committee

For information, write: Father Burke, Catholic Church, Gilroy

The Interfaith Committee, a group actively concerned with farm laborers, was created through a merger of Migrant Ministry and Catholic social interests in the community of Gilroy. Its clerical leadership sponsored the Agricultural Workers Association of Gilroy in the early sixties. AWA merged with the UFW (see below) last year. The Interfaith Committee works with the UFW although the clergy has withdrawn from leadership.

Jim Lorenz, 620-4120, Los Angeles

Jim Lorenz is setting up a Legal Committee to Aid Farm Workers. He has applied for poverty money, and we don't know if he's got it yet.

National Farm Workers Assoc., P.O. Box 894, Delano
Summer Project, P.O. Box 130, Delano

Summer Project—Volunteers will arrive for a one week training session in Delano on June 19, after which they will be assigned to one of three job areas:

1) Boycott and support—students will work on behalf on the NFWA in cities throughout California and across the country, uniting groups in strike support and joint action for social justice.

2) Reaching the unorganized workers-teams of farm workers and students will work in California, the Southwest, and Mexico, keeping scabs out of Delano and signing workers for la causa.

3) Other—students with special skills will be given other assignments. We know little more about this summer program but hope and suspect that flexibility will be the key.

Branch offices:: Office activity varies from area to area. In general, the staffs are spreading the work of the FWA, recruiting some members, and providing some services for the area, especially in compiling workers' complaints and helping them with social security, etc. They may form the focii for new locals in the future: Hollister, Salinas, Porterville, Bakersfield-534 S. Cottonwood, Oxnard-515 Cooper Rd., Yuba City-1363 Bancroft Ave.

Project Buenaventura, 128 Colonia Rd., Oxnard

Funded under the CEO, this project was conceived as leadership training among farm workers. It is small, only twelve enrollees.

Self-Help Enterprises, Inc., 220 S. Bridge, Visalia

Self-Help grew out of an American Friends Service Committee pilot project in Visalia. It works with families wanting to build their own houses at low cost with Farm Home Administration loans. The staff organizes initial meetings among interested families; guides in-planning and financing; and provides skilled carpenter-teachers. The emphasis is on integrating participants into the community. The incorporation is funded by the Rosenberg Foundation and the OEO. Self-Help has state regional committees in Tulare-Kings, and Merced Counties. They have been asked to expand to several other counties as well.

Tri-County Mexican-American Unity Council (Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and Monterey Cos.)

A sub-group of this is one called Friends of Delano.

USC Medical Project

For information, contact:

Mick McGarvey, Student Medical Conference, P.O. Box 3902, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles

Financed through OEO; members work in urban and rural areas out of county health office. The application disallows participation in any form of political activity.

United Farm Workers, P.O. Box 3102, 222 S. Jackson Ave., San Jose

The UFW was formed in 1965 among farm workers to press for higher wages and better working conditions. Una Comunidad is their bi-lingual newsletter. Future plans are for a credit union, insurance for members, a co-op store, an employment service, government financed self-help housing, legal counseling to farm workers, and a child care center. Their present activity consists in recruiting members and aiding them with form filling out in connection with their work and their claims on society. Facilities include a meeting room and an office. Branches are in Gilroy and Hollister.

Dr. Ben Yellen, office in Brawley

Dr. Yellen prints and distributes a muckraking newsletter on growers and their interests in the Imperial Valley. He has repeatedly exposed the corrupt water politics of the valley in connection with the 160-acre limitation. He is looking for short-term apprentices from the Los Angeles-San Diego area to help him and to export his methods.

Two additional groups which we don't have details on are Personnel Recruitment and Education Project (c/o the Migrant Ministry, 229 Naglee, San Jose) and UCLA Tutorial.

Thoughts on working in farm labor (i.e. among farm laborers, directed especially towards summer students.)

What should be the goals of a student working among farm laborers? What should SDS look for or encourage among students working in California this summer? How can the students' successes or failures be measured?

Of the programs described above, none necessarily politicizes or radicalizes students. Nor is the student working on any of them necessarily building a democratic society. In fact, the student, as well as many others, working on farm labor often works on the farm laborer rather than with him, alleviating the problems of the moment but leaving the system essentially unchanged (and, therefore, not really even dealing with those immediate problems). For too long a dependency on the good-will and know-how of others has been forced on the farm worker. His need is to build groups of farm workers which can effectively express and deal with their own needs. And it is to this democratic self-organization that a radical student's actions are keyed. His concern, no matter with what program he is working, is to build, within the groups with which he is working, the potential for social change. This implies several things. First, it provides guidelines for work on any project. Second, any program, no matter how well conceived or how well staffed, strays, in the process of maintaining itself, from the job of building democratic, effective groups among its constituents. (Many don't even have this goal in their conception.) Constant evaluation, criticism and change is needed within the program. Third, an important ingredient in evaluating and directing change within a program is research. The research can be done using the resources of the community as well as going

beyond them. It need not be sophisticated; time spent learning to bend accumulated data to the needs of the organizer is well spent. Fourth, research affords the student a better understanding of the forces arrayed against the farm worker. There are other ways, as well, in which this understanding can be gained. And finally, if lasting social change is our goal, many students working this summer in California ought to think seriously about remaining directly involved with the farm labor movement beyond this summer.

Guidelines for the summer.

In any program, there is a sense of urgency about accomplishing much within the always insufficient time limits. A premium is placed on efficiency; doing is emphasized over building. Helping, and soliciting help for, the farm workers rather than transferring our skills and know-how (such as they are) to them becomes the method of operation. And yet, this transference is crucial to building a movement. Familiarity with the basic tools of research, co-ordination, and communication must be passed on from organizer to organizee, who in turn becomes organizer.

This kind of transference does not come easily or without conscious effort. Suppose research needs to be done to determine how a water system might be set up, or what the legality of a certain action might be, or who the powers behind a freeway or an urban renewal proposal are. For each way you can get this done yourself, there is an alternative which would involve the participation of people from the community. If you know where to begin, you can do the research yourself. Or you could take a co-worker from the community with you through the process. If the job requires involving an outside expert, you can go to him and make the necessary arrangements. Or you could do this with several people from the community who are also interested in the question, involving them not merely in the step-by-step process you would go through but also in any decisions that might come up. If a lawyer has offered to help you but has imposed several conditions, will you accept his help? If an urban renewal planner asks you for suggestions, what will you tell him?

Or suppose one job in your program is helping farm workers handle complaints against their employers. How much quicker it is to do this yourself than to teach one or several farm workers to do the job. Suppose you are tutoring migrant children. You can tutor more children if you do nothing but tutor. Or you can spend more time organizing their parents so that the next time tutoring is needed, the parents can plan and arrange for it themselves. Similar alternatives of methods could be outlined for attending a conference, writing a paper, making a report, and so on.

Another tendency within many programs is to view the farm labor community as an agent to be changed socially, whether it be by poverty programs, tutorials, or union representation, rather than as an agent of social change. We must reverse this in our work. For instance, the Farm Workers Opportunity Project in Oxnard aims to create an educated, skilled labor force which can meet the growers' year-round needs for domestic

workers. To this end, participants in the program are taught English, math, tractor driving and servicing, form-filling, etc. They are being taught little of self-organization, of unionism, of legislation and how it affects or doesn't affect the farm worker. Discussions are not structured into the program on how they newly trained farm workers can help determine their wages and working conditions, or how they can formulate their own needs and change the program accordingly. In other words, the workers are taught to integrate themselves individually into a system already structured for them by others, and not to build groups among themselves, which can change that system.

Evaluation, criticism, and change within projects.

We need constantly to analyze the work we are doing, both within the context of the project at hand and within the broader context of the community at large. In the ERAP projects, we used to call this internal education. Structured discussion sessions were built, ranging from directed bull sessions to more formal "seminars." What will the good society look like? What do relevant writers envision? Or, what has been the history of CSO? What in it is relevant, negatively or positively, to what is going on today? There is no reason why these sessions can not involve more people than the program's staff. They might involve people from the community on such a topic as: is the program meeting the needs of the community? If not, how should it be changed? They might involve other volunteers in the area on: how is the work each person is doing directed (or not directed) towards building a lasting movement? The importance of these sessions must be kept in perspective; they are not meant to replace action with reflection, but rather to supplement it. Nor need tentative decisions that come from them be divorced from action. Projects today, as well as the new society tomorrow, should be democratically responsible to those whom they affect. If an internal education session among project and community members honestly decides a change is needed, it is incumbent on them to enact that change.

Research

The term research is frequently a forbidding one, conjuring visions of heavily-tomed desks and shelves. It need not be. Much research, directly relevant to program concerns, can be done with the resources at hand in the area. It can also provide another forum for drawing together volunteers from different projects and community people. For instance, in Salinas, a group might study the power behind the newly constructed trailer camps for farm workers. What connection, if any, does the developer, The Golden Bear Land Company, have with agriculture? Will the other camps, soon to be constructed in Fresno, Sacramento, and Concord be for farm laborers? Are the camps open to anyone who wants to live in them? How are arrangements made to live there? Through labor contractors? In Watsonville, a seminar might look into the government-sponsored 180-day housing for migrant agricultural workers. Who advocates it? Why? Would it serve to bind migrants more closely to their migrancy? What does it mean in human terms to construct 180-day, rather than permanent, housing? What criteria determine the rent in migrant

labor housing? In Stockton, a seminar might study the history of field labor struggles. What were the successes and failures of those struggles? What were the obstacles? Do they exist today? What were the turning points? What part did (could) legislation/government play? What could volunteers do that would better prepare the area for a unionizing attempt?

(Along these lines, we have been toying with the idea of a post-summer conference on farm labor. An outline of it is as yet non-existent. One function would be to give direction to those of us planning to remain beyond the summer. Do people have more ideas?)

Further understanding of forces arrayed against the farm worker.

In the summer, to experience dealing with power from a position of powerlessness, the student can accept certain disciplines in his personal life. He can live on a sharply limited budget; he can work part-time in the fields; he can depend solely on the resources available to the farm working community for his medical needs.

On the campus, too, the student can easily discover the role of agricultural interests in controlling his life. Who controls the colleges? The universities? What courses are offered and how is that determined? Are there, for instance, history courses in farm labor organizing? Does any political science course cover in depth (or at all) the workings of the growers' lobby in Sacramento? Does the cafeteria use S&W sugar?

Beyond the summer:

Much of the above leads to considerations of longer ranged plans. For, though a summer is long enough to tutor a few children and gain good experience, how long would it take to organize the parents of those children? A summer project can survey an area, talk to residents, and develop a picture of the needs of that area. But how long would it take to build an organization within the community, which could deal with those needs? Students can study agricultural labor laws and loopholes in a summer. How much more time does building a peoples' lobby entail? With good timing a strike for higher wages can be pulled off in a couple of weeks or less. How much longer must be spent in building a democratic agricultural union?

To get in on social motion means being at the right place at the right time; to build a movement means having what Henry Anderson calls staying power:

A strike is here today, gone tomorrow; a demonstration is here today, gone tomorrow, but a social movement worthy of the name is here today, here tomorrow. A viable social movement involves no illusions of quick success; it recognizes that its goal or goals necessitate a significant shift in many mutually reinforcing social institutions; it recognizes that any

Farm Labor, Students, and Civil Disobedience

In this paper we have considered what we feel should be the guidelines for student action in building a movement of farm workers—we have made few recommendations for specific projects. But there is one role that students can take this summer to significantly support the unionization of farm labor which deserves social attention. We are talking about civil disobedience.

Everyone is aware that the law operates to exclude farm workers from collective bargaining rights and other protection, but few commentators have drawn attention to the way in which the law and the courts directly challenge the rights of the workers to organize. Those workers who live on the property of labor contractors, growers, or grower associations, are deprived routinely of basic human rights established for the rest of the population over thirty years ago. The rights of free speech and assembly, free movement, free association and communication, don't exist, at the present time, for those communities of farm workers who live in today's agricultural "company terms."

For the members of these camps, the possession of shelter is directly dependent on their ability to maintain employment. Like the braceros, who could be "repatriated" instantly if they spoke out for better wages or working conditions, the domestic worker who lives in company housing can be evicted instantly from his shelter for the same actions. Like the braceros, the camp workers provide growers with a captive labor system. Now that the bracero program has ended, the percentage of domestic farm workers who live in such camps will be increased. Many of those camps which formerly held Mexican nationals will now hold domestic workers, under essentially the same kind of intimidation. New camps are being built as growers are forced to deal with the reality of workers with families. It is possible that such grower-sponsored family housing will be built with government subsidies, and yet the issue of free speech within these camps has yet to be dealt with the government agencies.

A year ago, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors forecasted that mobile homes built by growers would be part of the answer to the loss of the bracero. One grower who quickly realized the potential for maintaining a captive labor system without imported labor was Harden Farms of California. Harden has built, initially, a twenty-nine unit mobile trailer park, and plans to get the bulk of his six hundred to seven hundred peak labor force from trailer camps he will own and operate. The California Farmer frankly boasts that tenancy in the camps will be used to intimidate workers from bargaining: "Thinking runs toward using housing in some form of an incentive program both to keep labor and to have them take better care of the units. This could take the form of a payroll housing deduction, all or part of which could be returned if workers complete the contract."

The Salinas Strawberry Association has completed construction of a two hundred fifty unit trailer park built by MobiLodge, is building another two hundred fifty unit, and

has had its plans for a third facility of five hundred units stalled by the Salinas Board of Supervisors. The Strawberry Association is planning to recruit tenant-workers from out of state. They will provide transportation from other states to Salinas, and will pick up the farm workers as they arrive at the bus depot. Such workers, most of them with families averaging five to eight members, will lose much more than a job if they attempt to bargain with the employer. They will lose the refunded portion of the one hundred dollars a month they pay, they will be evicted from their shelter, and they will have no transportation to seek work elsewhere. The system is foolproof. Behind the color and landscape of the casual, carefree, comfortable trailer park operated a system of economic compulsion no less rigorous than the kraals of South Africa.

Those who thought that the death of Public Law 78 would free California growers from their plantation mentality will resist having to concede that the battle has not yet been won. The New Abolitionist movement that Henry Anderson of Citizens for Farm Labor called for several years ago, to fight the bracero system, never really emerged.⁽¹⁾ There is a chance that the events of Delano may stir enough people to see that the building of such a movement is imperative if we are to eliminate captive labor systems in all of their guises.

One tool that could strike at the compulsiveness of such camps as Hardens is civil disobedience. The workers in such camps will not be members of a free labor system until they are free to exercise their rights of free speech and assembly without fear of reprisal. It is necessary that workers establish the independence of housing from employment, that there be a separate renter's contract that guarantees protection from eviction for the exercising of constitutional rights, and that the practice of indenturing the worker through exorbitant monthly deposits (that are returned only if the worker satisfactorily fulfills his employment contract) be declared illegal.

Since the rent is almost always deducted from the worker's paycheck, a simple rent strike is impossible. The worker would have to conduct a work stoppage as well. One possibility is that the workers would refuse to leave the camp for work until a renters contract guaranteeing constitutional rights was agreed to by the management. There is at least a good possibility that the Department of Employment would not view such action as a valid labor dispute, and that local law enforcement and courts would regard it as illegal. Growers might respond by attempting to physically evict the trailer residents, by trying to move the trailers to another area, or by arresting the tenants for trespassing. Such moves would be met by a sit-in of the tenants and hundreds of supporters, by an attempt to enjoin the camp owner from disturbing, vacating, moving, or re-renting the trailer units, and by an attempt to prove in the courts that evictions had taken place in the past of tenant-workers who had attempted to exercise their constitutional rights, and that the only way to guarantee such rights is through rent contracts and the abolition of rent-indentures.

Such a project would, of course, consist of much more than civil disobedience.

⁽¹⁾ Henry F. Anderson. Fields of Bondage. Berkeley, 1963. (mimeo)

Provisions would have to be made for feeding the strikers, for court costs, and possibly for liabilities. In addition, the project could be seen only as a middle step in the long-range organizing of the trailer camp residents. It requires the building of a movement—as Anderson called it, a New Abolitionist movement—to implement this proposal or any others concerned with the new patterns of captivity that seem to be emerging. When the bracero program was in effect, growers were well insured against tenant-workers demanding their rights. To preserve the same characteristics of this system now will require more vigilance by the growers.

Section 602(n) of the California Penal Code is the criminal trespass statute. Among other things, it establishes that labor camps are private property and prohibits unauthorized entry into such compounds. Through this law, large sections of the farm labor force—communities of hundreds of thousands of domestic workers—are rendered incommunicado. Although laws prohibiting unauthorized entry, soliciting, pamphleting, assembly, or speech within company towns have been struck down as unconstitutional, the inviolability of farm labor camps remains. It is an inviolability that also must be challenged by civil disobedience—and court action.

The only recent court challenges to the Trespassing Statute's applicability to farm labor camps took place in the closing years of the bracero program. In October, 1961, volunteer organizers working with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee tried to distribute handbills to braceros housed at the Perry & Locuca (labor contractors) camp. The braceros there had previously expressed grievances about food, medical care, and other conditions, and had expressed a wish to be represented by A.W.O.C.

As the volunteers appeared at the gate of the camp after notifying the management of their intention, the managers closed the gates. The braceros in the compound approached the fence and began accepting and reading the leaflets that the volunteers passed through the fence. The volunteers were ordered to leave, and then an owner and a bodyguard attacked the volunteers. They knocked one to the ground and kicked him. They were then dragged inside the compound while an owner phoned the county sheriff. The volunteers were charged with trespassing, and a charge of disturbing the peace was dropped later.

The Northern California branch of the ACLU decided to take the case, arguing that the arrest was a violation of free speech and that, because of the nature of the operation conducted at the Perry & Loduca camp, the property, although originally private in nature, had assumed a public or quasi-public character. In January, 1962, the defendant was found guilty. The judge's opinion, "This is in essence an attempt to compel the employer, whose views may be in sharp conflict with the non-employee organizer, to accept the weapons of economic strife selected by the advocate collective representation." The ACLU then appealed to the County Superior Court, but the three judges involved (one of whom was a grower and all three of whom had a record of ruling against A.W.O.C. in all previous cases) affirmed the decision. In 1963, the ACLU petitioned the United States Supreme Court to

review the records of the case. The petition was ultimately denied, apparently because the court thought the Congressional decision to abolish P.L. 79 made further decisions unnecessary.

The law has not been tested since. One union tried to arrange a test by having an employee within the camp send a letter to the union asking that a representative call on him "at his home." No employees could be found, however, who would accept the reprisals for sending such a letter.

A test of the law could be made again by students this summer in essentially the same fashion as that conducted by AWOC volunteers. Or such a test might be conceived of as part of longer range organizing projects. That test would attempt both to challenge the law which makes labor camp communities preserves from civil liberties, and to organize the farm labor force in making that challenge.

These examples are meant only to initiate thinking about the possibility of combining organizing work with civil disobedience. Transforming such ideas into reality requires patience, skill, and long-term commitment.

Corporate Agriculture In California

By Ken Blum

The Delano Grape Strike of 1965-1966 cannot be understood without realizing the power of agribusiness in California. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the strike in terms of the context of Corporate Agriculture in this state

Since The Grapes of Wrath the oppressed condition of the farm worker has been popularly recognized as a particularly Californian problem. There is a reason for this: the average California farm is about four times more valuable than the average farm nationally, with the average farm in California being more than 400 acres and worth about \$200,000 whereas the average farm elsewhere is worth about \$50,000. Since the initial division of land at the time of California's admission to the Union when the corrupt Mexican Land Grants produced tremendous land holdings, the land has changed hands but has essentially retained its original distribution. One present day land holder, The Kern County Land Company, acquired over 400,000 acres of California land by getting Congress to pass the Desert Land law during the administration of President Grant and by using all kinds of Fraud. The result was that California became the domain of what is today called agribusiness.

People all over the country eat Del Monte foods, usually unaware of the involvements of the company that produces them, the California Packing Corporation or, as it is commonly called, Cal Pak. This company, the largest canned fruit company in the U.S., has subsidiaries in Alaska, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Venezuela,

Japan, Puerto Rico and Italy. It sells more than \$400,000,000 worth of Del Monte products a year and has interlocking directorates with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Bank of California, Wells Fargo Bank, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph, New York Life Insurance Co., and Stanford University, to name a very few.

The Anderson-Clayton Company owns 15 cotton gins in Tulare County alone (one of the two counties where the grape strike is going on, out of a total of 51 gins, each installed at the cost of a quarter-million dollars. In California these gins go under the name of the San Joaquin Cotton Oil Co. Anderson-Clayton also owns great numbers of gins in Mississippi, which fact struggling Negroes in the South have found out. It owns plant in Latin America and even one in the Communist world.

The Transamerica Company actually owned over half of Northern and Central California in 1939 when the last governmental hearing was held. It also owns Occidental Life Insurance Company, Transamerica Title Insurance Company, General Metal Corporation (with foundries in Oakland, Los Angeles and Houston, and aircraft and missile part plants in Southern California and West Virginia), and the Transamerica Development Company with 400,000 acres of productive and prospective oil land plus interest in development projects in Palos Verdes, Concord, Hayward, Moraga and Sacramento, California, and on and on. Transamerica, until it was liquidated in 1952, owned the Bank of America outright. There is reason to believe it still owns Bank of America, through its subsidiary General Metals.

Other powerful forces in Agribusiness include Libby-McNeil and Libby—giant food distributor, Safeway Stores, Heggblade-Marguleas of San Francisco, California Fruit Exchange, Liberty Farms, and the Southern Pacific Land Company (which according to the president's son owns 5,000,000 acres of land in the west). Other large corporations with a direct interest in agriculture are Pacific Gas and Electric which supplies growers with power, the Bank of America which supplies them with credit, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads which bring their produce to market, International Harvester which sells them farm machinery and Crown Zellerbach which supplies them with wrappers for their produce.

Supporters of the Delano Grape Strike throughout the nation knew about the success of the boycott of Schenley liquors in bringing them to the bargaining table. Schenley is one of the nation's big three wine producers along with the Gallo and United Vintners. Schenley Industries made \$17,700,000 in profits last year, but this does not indicate what its salaried officials got. In 1961, Lewis Rosenstiel, the president of Schenley, made \$2,600,000 in salary. Schenley owns 53% of the Buckingham Corp., which produces Cutty Sark, the nation's number two whiskey. The grape pickers of Delano are now concentrating their forces against the Di Giorgio Corporation, often called the nation's largest grower. Its sales were \$132,000,000 in 1964. It owns S&W Fine Foods, a national line, Treesweet Products, a lumber and box company, and controls three auction terminals.

It has four interlocking directorships with the Bank of America, and others with Pacific Gas and Electric, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph.

Even the so-called “family” farmers being struck against are the most powerful in the Tulare-Kern County area. Whereas Di Giorgio of the Earl Fruit Company when the strike is going on produces 115 freight cars a year, all the Zaninovich Brothers produce 758 freight cars, Caratan produces 70, Lucich 55, Ed Merzoian 750 (apparently the greatest production in Tulare County), Divizich 375, Pandol 140, J. Badovich 50 and G. Radovich 50, for a total of 1590 freight cars. In Tulare County the average cold storage plant holds 93 cars, while the last seven ranchers named whom the strike is against average 227 freight cars apiece.

It is against this background that the strike must be seen to have a coherent picture of its importance to radicals throughout the nation.

Farm Workers And Agri-Business

Slavery and California

By Jon Jenkins

Agriculture and agricultural labor can be seen as parallel institutions, greatly dependent upon each other in order to maintain the status-quo. The growers in the State of California have always had a captive labor force of one ethnic group or another, beginning with the Indians used by Franciscan Missionaries until the Braceros of the present.

Most agriculture prior to 1869 was ranching and some local farming. In 1869 the transcontinental railroad was completed. The railroads, in addition to opening the eastern market to Californian agriculture, released nearly 50,000 Chinese coolies in the western US to the farm labor market. “...the availability of this cheap, culturally isolated labor force gave further impetus to the planting of huge acreages.”¹ The Chinese provided ideal workers for the growers; they were indeed isolated, used to hard work and long hours, and had no families to increase the cost to the growers. As the demand for laborers increased more Chinese were imported under contract due to the lack of immigration laws. In 1882 labor and other groups brought enough pressure on Congress to have the Chinese Exclusion Act enacted, “...and by the turn of the century the numbers of Chinese farm laborers had dwindled considerably.”² Within a few years growers had to find new sources of labor and once again turned east but this time to Japan.

“...Japanese contrast laborers were brought in by the thousands. Although excellent workers, the Japanese began the annoying practice of forming themselves into ‘associations.’”³ These associations at first were social and contracting groups, but soon

they became bargaining groups. They pressured growers into higher wages and better working conditions. Growers looking for a way of destroying these associations first turned to Congress without effect and then to the State which gave them the Alien Land Law of California. While this kept the Japanese in bondage by forbidding aliens to own or buy land, it didn't stop the harassment by the associations. The growers began looking for new sources of labor, and they found that their new slaves came as Mexican nationals.

“In 1910 the Mexican Revolution began, and many starving Mexican peasants began to cross the border to work in California, especially after World War I created an agricultural boom in the US. It became virtually a policy of the US government to allow these people to enter the country illegally to work on farms.”⁴ In spite of the Immigration Act of 1885, with its literacy test and head tax, the number of Mexican Nationals entering the US jumped from 30,295 to 105,787 for the next eight years.

In 1923 growers looking for a stable work force that could not be deported, as were the wetbacks at the start of the Depression, began importing Filipinos, at that time American citizens. Filipinos proved to be excellent workers but like many workers before them began to act against the low wages and poor working conditions and disastrous strikes were called. With enactment of the Philippine Island Independence Act in 1934 which not only limited immigration but also encouraged Filipinos to return to their homeland, once again a new group of slaves had to be found.

At this time nearly 200,000 poverty-stricken workers immigrated from the Dust Bowl, holding down wages and being welcomed to California by the growers. “But this new group proved to be more readily accessible to labor organizers and the 30's was the decade of the largest and most bitter agriculture strikes in the state's or the nation's history.”⁵

As the US began to prepare for war in 1940, many of the Dust Bowl refugees moved to various industrial areas in the state to work in defense plants and growers again needed a new work force. In 1941 and 1942 growers were forced to recruit domestic workers and they began to pressure the government for workers from Mexico, using the false claim that crops were rotting in the fields. In September of 1942 the fist of the “Braceros” were trucked into the state. The Bracero Program at that time was totally financed by the government; housing, food and transportation were provided by the government. In addition to Braceros, Jamaicans were tried and sent back; American Indians from Arizona were tried and found to be less favorable than Mexicans; prisoners of war and Federal criminals were used and one of the best liked groups of laborers were the Nisai, the Japanese-Americans whose property and rights were taken away and who were placed in concentration camps during World War II.

After World War II all of the war time measures were abolished with the exception of the Bracero Program which was modified with the exception of the Bracero Program which was modified so that growers assumed the cost of this program. With the start of

the Korean War, Public Law 78 was enacted on July 12, 1951, after considerable pressure from the farm lobby in Washington, making the Bracero program renewable every two years. “Under the Bracero Program, 200,000 to 300,000 workers a year came to the US to do work formerly done by Americans. These were augmented by an increasing influx of hundreds of thousands of wetbacks (95,000 were arrested in May of 1954 alone).”⁶

Every two years after 1951, Congress re-approved the Bracero Program until 1963. On May 29, 1963 in an unprecedented move, Congress turned down a proposal to continue the program for two more years. Although the Bracero Program is not in affect several thousands of Mexicans were imported in 1965 and the Department of Labor in May of 1966 approved the Salinas Strawberry Corporation’s request for 1,000 Bracero because of the “essential” need for workers in the Salinas Valley.

Attempts to organize the numerous groups that have functioned as slaves for California Agri-business began in the 1890’s with the Cowboys Union. The first organizing drive directed at California was attempted by the Industrial Workers of the World in 1910. The IWW began their organizing in the San Joaquin Valley where laborers were to be taught about the IWW, unions and history and were talked to about forming unions by the IWW “agitators.” The most notable strike conducted by the IWW was centered around the Wheatland Riot of 1913. After this strike little was done and by World War I the IWW had stopped nearly all of their activity.*

In 1911 the American Federation of Labor created the Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union, which within two years was dissolved after doing very little. For the next nine years almost nothing was done and no strikes were called due to the large numbers of deportable wetbacks in California.

The Trade Union Unity League began its organizing drive in 1930 reaching its peak in 1933 with the Cannery and Agriculture Workers Industrial Union, but due to pressure from growers and the public the CAWIU became defunct in 1934 and the TUUL soon followed suit in 1935. The AFL in 1935 began to support seriously a program to organize agriculture workers.

In addition to the AFL, the CIO, when it split with the AFL established the United Cannery, Agriculture, Packing and Allied Workers of America, creating jurisdictional disputes. UCAPAWA did meet with some success in the canneries and the sheds but encountered difficulty in the fields due to the above disputes with the AFL and a great deal of resistance from growers and contractors.

149 recognized strikes were conducted in California from 1930 to 1939 involving hundreds of thousands of workers and dozens of counties.** Two thirds of the strikes were grievances over wages, working conditions and hours; the remaining strikes involved the right to organize and representational disputes.

* The IWW is now organizing in tree fruit in Washington.

** The bulk of these took place in the following counties: San Joaquin (12), Alameda (11), Los Angeles (9), Imperial (8), San Luis Obispo (8), and Kern, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara (7) each.

1-4. Huelga, Eugene Nelson, Farm Workers Press, Delano, 1965, p. 16.

5-6 Ibid, p. 17.

Farm Workers And Organized Labor

Postwar Organizing Drives

When World War II ended, the industrial struggles that had been stilled by the war were expected to begin again with more or less the same intensity of the 1930's. For a number of reasons, that renewal was not very intense, and the renewal of the struggle for farm labor unionization was little more than a token effort. The current development of a farm labor movement closely allied with the civil rights movement, to a large extent reflects the frustration of farm workers with the post-war token efforts of an increasingly bureaucratized labor movement.

The exceptions to this pattern of tokenism took place where the war-stimulated expansion of agricultural imperialism had not been combined with any dramatic increase in the over all standard of living or by a vast exodus of field workers into industrial jobs. The two exceptions were Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

In Hawaii the organization of field workers came about as part of a successful effort to unionize the entire sugar and pineapple industries through a paralyzing strike by the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union. That strike, in 1945, had been preceded by a certain amount of organizational activity among field workers, but its success depended not on the patient recruitment of membership, the establishment of locals, and the servicing and participation of rank-and-file field workers. Its success was due almost entirely to the Longshore power to simply stop the loading of ships. Industry wide, collective bargaining contracts were in effect for both industries by the fall of 1946. California Packing Corporation, which had contributed heavily to the Associated Farmers in the 1930's and which remains violently anti-union in California fell to the I.L.W.U. as easily as did the other corporate plantations of Hawaii.

In Puerto Rico the drive was similar but it was conducted by a much less powerful union. The United Packinghouse Workers Union, a C.I.O. affiliate as was the I.L.W.U. at the time, organized many of the sheds on the island, struck them and brought field workers under the same contracts. The U.P.W.A. (it became U.P.W.P. when the AFofL and the C.I.O. merged) had its roots in an earlier CIO union which had been created in 1937, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers Association (UCAPAWA)

which followed the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Union (FTA). Both unions had operated respectively in the violent climate of California in the middle and late 30's and had been ideological and militant unions. In Puerto Rico there was more of an attempt to involve field in pre-strike activity, but as in Hawaii their organizability was not dependent on the creation of participatory associations. The same approach was successfully used during the period of UPWA in organizing field and processing plant employees, at the Fellesmere Sugar Producers Association in Florida.

In the States, where the conflict between the AFofL and CIO was more relevant, the organization of farm workers presented a far less attractive target to unions. There was, for many unionists of course, the question of color. Labor's post-war rewards for subordination during the war were not particularly seen as being something to be shared with radical minorities. There was also a very justified concern by the AFofL that if it spent millions organizing farm workers, the farm workers might decide to be ungrateful and split off and affiliate with the CIO. Within the CIO, another problem was being raised. The organization of farm workers in the 30's had been led by ideologues, Communists, and Socialists, and for the CIO to mount such a drive would raise new specters in addition to those being raided by the fall from grace of radical unionism.

The issue was pressed, however. One union of agricultural laborers had survived from the 1930's. This was the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, and its leadership and declining membership saw the need to expand in order to bring power to bear on the agricultural interests of the nation.

The STFU had begun in 1934 in the little town of Tyronza, Arkansas, as a spontaneous self-organization of Negro and White sharecroppers who saw several new AAA decisions by the New Deal administration as strengthening King Cotton. Under its leader, H.L. Mitchell, the STFU reached into Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as Arkansas.

In 1944, at its St. Louis convention, the STFU changed its name to the National Farm Labor Union and expressed its intention to organize all agricultural laborers into a national, multi-racial union. Two years later, it affiliated with the AFofL, after twelve years of independence.

At that time, August 1946, it was chartered to organize the major agricultural areas of the United States, including California. But possession of an AFofL charter was not to be mistaken for the determination of organized labor to see the job done and to pay the price for organizing the biggest open shop in the country. With only a handful of full time personnel and with meager and spasmodic monetary support, the NFLU began organizing.

In California, the drive was headed by Hank Hasiwar, Ernesto Galarza, and William Becker. Hasiwar and Becker had gone through college together, and Hasiwar had been active as a union organizer in the hotel industry. Hasiwar came to California to head the

drive by the NFLU, and was joined in 1949 by Becker. They were both quickly eclipsed by Ernesto Galarza; who came to this country as a farm laborer and became a doctor, and who had remained passionately concerned about the exploitation of agricultural workers.

During the first year of its existence, an NFLU strike erupted against Di Giorgio farms. At first, the chances for success in the strike looked favorable. The NFLU concern about building a stable membership in the pattern of the STFU gave it a strength which other drives had lacked. The Teamsters Union, although fairly weak on the West Coast, backed the strike in the beginning, and this raised hopes for strong support by organized labor.

But Di Giorgio proved capable of withstanding the strike. Strikebreakers, many of them wetbacks, were imported. Teamster support withered and the strike dragged on for four years. NFLU members drifted away until the strike became a mere formality. The action moved elsewhere, and the organizers followed it. A number of strikes, involving thousands of workers, were conducted or supported by the NFLU while the Di Giorgio strike dragged on. There was never enough support to sustain successfully the strike, and it was impossible to prevent the importation of scabs. The NFLU was never able to obtain a collective bargaining agreement with a California grower.

In the Kern County Potato Growers strike, the state attempted to establish conciliation procedures which avoided the obstinacy of the growers themselves. Meetings were held between the NFLU and labor contractors who supplied the labor to the growers, and some thirty-five contracts were signed with the contractors.

In 1951, a new law was passed, Public 78, which made the organization of farm workers virtually impossible. A new institution of captive labor was created as a "temporary, war-time measure". It was the importation of Mexican Nationals, Braceros. Before, growers had had to circumvent the law, smuggling illegal entries, wetbacks, across the Rio Grande, or bringing them in fishing boats up the coast. Now the days of shooting at the spotter planes of the Border Patrol, of expensive bribes, and the worrying about what to do if a worker dies, were in the past. The Bracero program was not only perfectly legal, but almost the entire cost of its management was provided by the federal government. Braceros, for many years, could be used with immunity as strike breakers.

Galarza's union singled out the bracero program as its paramount target. It was realized that unionization was virtually impossible while it was allowed to exist, but beyond that it had to be attacked as a slave labor system that made a mockery of democratic pretensions. The task of building and servicing locals had to be neglected in order to concentrate on exposing braceroada. Galarza and Mitchell were appointed to a joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee, which sponsored investigations and reports. Galarza traveled the state talking to braceros about contract violations, intimidation, repatriation, sanitary conditions, food-poisoning, employer violence, safety conditions, housing, and transportation deaths. Again and again he filed complaints, gave

testimony, and compiled evidence on the occupation of the bracero system. And again and again, year after year, the program was renewed.

The NFLU, which had been renamed the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU) in 1956, saw its membership dwindle to about three thousand, and locals ceased to function outside the Salinas Valley by 1959.

In Louisiana, H.L. Mitchell, the director of NAWU, began organizing the field workers on the large sugar cane plantations simultaneously. The NAWU received assistance and encouragement from several rural priests of the Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans, setting a precedent that would be followed later in California. The employers refused to negotiate, and the strike became a threat against a whole system of society. Police violence became routine. Strikers were evicted from their homes. Their credit was cut off at all the stores. Bills suddenly became due, and sheriffs came to collect. Injunctions were issued against the strikers, and the strike was broken. Two years later, the Supreme Court over-ruled the injunction, but by that time the union local had disintegrated in the face of overwhelming terrorism.

In California, several rural Catholic priests had, over the years, become concerned about the need for organizing farm workers as the only answer to the social injustice of corporate agriculture. In 1947, Father Thomas McCullough had arrived in the Stockton area, and by 1950, was developing ideas about organizing farm workers. He met with individuals who had done organizing, studied their mistakes, refined his own ideas about democratic organizing, and began pre-organizing. By November of 1958k he had been joined by three other priests, Father Dugan, Father McDonnell, and Father Garcia, and had begun a circuit of house meetings. By this time, the NAWU had become moribund and the priests, along with other organizers like Dolores Huerta of the Stockton C.S.O., had developed the concept of a labor union built upon community organizing. Dolores Huerta had been recruited to the CSO (Community Service Organization) along with Cesar Chavez, by Fred Ross of the Industrial Areas Foundation of Saul Alinsky, and had been influenced by Alinsky's book, Reveille for Radicals.

The program of house meetings resulted in the decision to form an organization, the Agricultural Workers Association (AWA). A cell structure was sponsored within AWA in which leadership was directly responsible to pyramiding constituencies. All authority in the AWA was seen as flowing from the bottom up. The AWA emphasized the building of meaningful bonds among members rather than loyalty to an abstract organization, but as it grew, it took on more and more of the functions of a union. So much so that the Church intervened to proscribe the activities of its priests.

In February, 1959, the AWA and the NAWU were affected by a decision made by the Executive Council of the AFofL-CIO in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Industrial Union Department (IUD) of the AFofL-CIO had voted to recommend to the AFofL-CIO Executive Council that "an all-out drive to organize farm workers" be launched that year.

Pressure on the Executive Council of the AFofL-CIO was being applied by individuals like Eleanor Roosevelt and Herbert Lehman, and by groups like the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor. The AFofL-CIO leadership, particularly George Meany, remained unconvinced that farm workers could be organized. They preferred, if a drive were launched, to see it pay its own way. Others on the Executive Council preferred to see any money spent applied to organizing white-collar employees. But the pressure was on.

The Council could have decided to give meaningful monetary and organizational support to the dwindling NAWU, but that would have provided little drama. The Council was more interested in impressing its liberal friends with the sincerity of their “social unionism.” No doubt, old CIO rivalries with past AFofL farm-labor drives played its part in the decision to dump the NAWU.

With great flourish, the convention announced the formation of a new organization, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), which would unionize farm workers in all states, beginning in California.

John Livingstone, Director of Organization for the AFofL-CIO, selected Norman Smith to head the drive. The choice was enigmatic. Smith had been an auto workers organizer in the 30s and 40s and before that had been a supervisor in the Kaiser Steel plant in Fontana for many years. He was two years away from retirement.

Smith came to Stockton in April 1959 with a vague authority to coordinate the NAWU and UPWA division of field and shed workers. Galarza took a leave of absence from his union to assist in the selection of AWOC staff, but did not conceal his disappointment at the selection of Smith as director.

The Agricultural Workers Association, with McCullough and Dugan about to be exiled (Dugan was sent to Brazil; McCullough to Berkeley) voted to merge with AWOC. Dolores Huerta joined the staff that Smith and Galarza, not too harmoniously, were assembling. Raul Aguilar and DeWitt Tannehil were hired from the NAWU as organizers. Lou Krainock, formerly the Public Relations Director of UFWA, was hired as Director of Public Information. Henry Anderson, who had prepared a study which had been suppressed on the health and living conditions of braceros for the University of California School of Public Health, was hired as Research Director.

The AWOC conducted no strikes during its first year of operation nor did it attempt to build a large membership. When some small protest strikes broke out among the peach pickers around Gridley (north of Sacramento), in September, Smith told the organizers that it was premature and made them call off the strikes.

In early 1960, the National Agricultural Workers Union, directed by H.L. Mitchell, made plans to merge the dwindling union into the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen of North America. This union, as the successor to the West and Cannery

Workers Union (AFofL), had field and processing plant employees under contract in the Seabrook Farms in New Jersey, and theoretically possessed jurisdiction over the organizing of farm workers.

In Louisiana, the remaining membership of sugar cane workers became part of a special division of the Meatcutters called the Agricultural and Allied Workers Union No. 300. Mitchell became head of that division and has remained with it, organizing Louisiana fishermen and dairy and rice workers. No net drive has as yet been undertaken among the sugar cane workers, who face job attrition by mechanization.

In the other twenty-five states in which NAWU had scattered membership, the merger meant simply dissolution. In California, Galarza left his advisory position with the AWOC to return to his membership in the Salinas and Santa Clara Valleys. There he continued performing services like legal counseling until the merger in August of 1960. The union had less than two thousand members in California by then. After twelve years of battle, Galarza retired, and until only recently, remained bitter about the role of the labor movement in organizing farm workers.

Dolores Huerta, quickly disillusioned about the sincerity of the AFofL-CIO leadership, left AWOC to become lobbyist for the CSO and to work with Cesar Chavez in extending CSO activity among farm workers.

In May of 1960, the AWOC entered its first strikes against the John Cerri Peach Ranch in Stockton and the Fred Podesta Cherry Orchard in Linden. This represented somewhat of a departure from past organizing drives, which had concentrated on some of the largest corporate farms. The Podesta strike was met by a combination of intimidation of strikers (cars were run at them at high speed), by a Memorial Day Holiday strikebreaking crusade (over a thousand anti-union residents turned out to "save the cherries"), and by an injunction limiting the pickets to two parades. The union still was able to prevent massive strikebreaking. Podesta refused to yield and lost a large part of his crop.

In June of 1960, the AWOC was officially chartered by the AFofL-CIO as a pilot project and its membership drive on its own behalf was sanctioned and its jurisdiction was established. During 1960, the AWOC reached its peak in the collection of dues, with over four thousand five hundred dues-paying members at the time. The union had begun to impress growers as a force that would have to be dealt with in the near future. They contributed two million dollars to the Council of California Growers' anti-union war chest.

In August of 1960, DeWitt Tannehill, a former NAWU organizer who shared Galarza's bitterness about the Bracero program, led forty AWOC pickets into the Tom Bowers Pear Orchard where eighty-two braceros were picking. They tipped over ladders and fruit boxes, and the Mexican government ordered that the braceros be removed from all of the local orchards as a safety measure.

A pattern began to emerge in AWOC's early organizing. The tree crops were dominated by Anglo farm workers, many of them transients. The skid-row shapeup in the early morning hours gave organizers a chance to reach thousands of men quickly who worked in the fields and who relied on the Farm Labor office for referrals and on labor contractors for transportation to the fields. The bulk of these men were Anglos, homeless, many of them alcoholics, and usually without cars. They were willing to strike, usually willing to respect someone else's picket line, but they were not the material from which a stable union local could be drawn.

Although some of the organizers realized, and the research director, Henry Anderson, argued strenuously, that the job of building a stable organization required that top priority be given to organizing the residential seasonal workers, AWOC continued to direct too much of its energies into reaching the day-haul workers.

The shapeup, although it was composed of peripheral workers, was the only equivalent to the factory gate familiar to industrial organizers. The organizers were well known to growers and could easily be arrested for trespassing onto fields to talk to workers. The camps were almost exclusively bracero, and anyway were usually well guarded. The leadership of AWOC remained unconvinced that home visits and house meetings had any place in a labor movement.

Another part of the pattern was established by the demonstration at the Tom Bowers orchard, that of attacking the bracero program. The AWOC was led down the same inevitable path that Galarza had followed. Energies had to be diverted from building a stable membership to attacking the Bracero Program. Anderson turned out irrefutable evidence of the meaninglessness of the agreements that protected the domestic worker from "adverse effect" on wages and working conditions, or that protected the foreign worker from intimidation and abuse. AWOC organizers, over and over again, demonstrated that domestic workers were available in sufficient quantities at a decent wage.

The concern about attacking the bracero system led the AWOC, in January of 1961, to travel five hundred fifty miles from its home base to the Imperial Valley. In cooperation with the UPWA, the AWOC struck the entire winter lettuce industry. Norman Smith later explained, "Most of the fruit workers and lettuce workers were concentrated there, and they were mostly braceros who were doing all the work at seventy cents an hour, and that rate had not changed for ten years. Americans could not get in. We made this a focal point. We had to go to the Imperial Valley."

Although Smith had agreed to merge this membership in the area with the UPWA, which could enforce a contract in the area, H.L. Mitchell objected and insisted that the field workers were under the jurisdiction of the Amalgamated Meatcutters. The jurisdictional dispute exploded in the midst of the strike and George Meany called the

contending union leaders to Washington in January and threatened to “cut the whole thing off.”

But the strikers faced more than the jurisdictional disputes of their union leadership. The braceros not only remained in the fields, but were supplemented by more. The AWOC petitioned for removal of the braceros, but Secretary Goldberg ignored the demand. Finally, the Mexican government requested that braceros be removed from struck ranches after a dramatic sit-down in front of the gates of a bracero camp operated by Danny Danenberg. But for over a month, the Labor Department refused to comply with Mexico’s demands “pending study.” By the time the Nationals were removed in March, virtually the entire lettuce crop had been harvested and the strike, the costliest and one of the most violent since the 1930s, had been broken.

Several of the staff, Lou Krainock and DeWitt Tannehill among them, left the salary of the AWOC. Those who remained knew that the future was uncertain. In June of 1961, the AFofL-CIO announced the withdrawal of funds from the AWOC and authorized it to transfer its membership to “an appropriate international or national union of the AFofL-CIO.”

Although AWOC’s few locals were tenuous and beset with problems, the announcement of the dissolution of the union was greeted by resistance in most areas. Members of AWOC’s staff generally reacted with a determination to stay on for some time, even if it meant working without salary. Norman Smith granted permission to the staff to seek financial support from any source, and the AWOC began a voluntary phase.

A group of students from Berkeley and Stanford established a project called Harvest House in Stockton to aid the organization. Some of them attempted to do what the union had neglected to do in the past, to go to workers’ homes. Others helped solicit funds from student groups, churches, unions, and political organizations.

Area Councils were established (they could not be called locals under the AFofL-CIO rules) in an attempt to decentralize the organization and democratize decision making. Plans were made for a convention of farm workers from all over the State for December 2, 1961, and the AWOC began preparing for that Convention.

The resistance to dissolution by AWOC members created a sense of participation and mission which had not existed while money and decisions were controlled by the AFL-CIO Executive Council. When the Convention was held in December, the Strathmore Area Council’s hall was packed. Norman Thomas addressed the gathering as he had addressed conventions of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in the 30’s. Father McCullough explained the organizing principles on which the AWA had been based. Farm workers chaired and controlled the meeting. The Stockton Area Council had drawn up the agenda.

The AWOC, as an organizing committee, was entitled to send two delegates and two alternates to the AFL-CIO Convention. The Strathmore Convention elected two Mexican-Americans and two Anglo farm workers, and the team left immediately after their convention. The AFL-CIO Convention, meeting in Miami, Florida, listened attentively to the farm labor delegates and voted overwhelmingly to reinstate support for the AWOC.

Meany, however, was unconvinced. He appointed a new director of the AWOC, C. Al Green, who had been director of Western COPE for the last twelve years. Green had been in Washington for much of that time and was viewed as a cautious and loyal AFL man. He had been with the Plasterers' Council in Stockton before his COPE job. Green could be counted on to implement Meany's decision to place AWOC directly under the authority of the California Labor Federation and to rely on the resources of the Labor Councils of the State.

Green's reorganization of the AWOC was far-reaching. Henry Anderson, who had been the main staff member attempting to democratize the union, was relieved of his job. No new Research Director was hired. Franz Daniel had conducted an investigation of rumors that AWOC had received support from the Socialist Party, that radicals had been on the payroll of AWOC, and that some of the student volunteers were subversives. It was decided that in the future there would be no volunteer assistance from outside the labor movement.

Green then abolished the decision-making power of the locals as the next spot in centralizing authority. To a meeting of the Strathmore Local, he said, "according to members of that local, you are the union—but I am the boss. I'll make the decisions and you'll carry them out."

Several organizers were removed from the payroll. One of those removed was Maria Moreno, the woman who had addressed the AFofL-CIO Convention, and who had been the most militant and moving farm worker spokesman of the AWOC. Several months later she was reported to be back in Texas, where she had come from, with her husband and family of twelve a few years ago, and once more was chopping cotton in the fields.

The effect on the rank and file of the union was immediate. Locals began to collapse; former activists became embittered and withdrew; and AWOC members communicated their confusion and despair to other farm workers throughout the state. Green had created an effective force of "disorganizers" in the fields.

Green brought two concepts with him from his trade union experience. The first was his conviction that the farm worker had to seek changes through political action and high level lobbying. In 1962, Green reorganized AWOC in order to throw all its resources into the COPE section of the Governor Brown campaign. Green attempted to win loyalty by convincing members of his ability to get action done in the corridors and cloak rooms.

His approach was to tell members that he could organize farm workers with or without them and to convince them that they needed him more than he needed them.

Green's second conviction was taken from his experience in organizing the building trades. This was the conviction that labor contractors were as vital to agriculture as they were to the building industry. As an organizer for the plasterers, Green had spent much of his time organizing plastering contractors. When he reorganized the AWOC in 1962, he redefined the union's task as one of unionizing the farm labor contractors. Green had made the same mistake as Smith, viewing the entire farm labor force as simply an extension of the shapeup, and he grossly exaggerated the role of day-haul contractors in the farm labor market.

AWOC's flurry of strikes before 1962 had served only to raise wages without obtaining collective bargaining contracts with growers. AWOC's new style was to ignore the growers as a bargaining agent and to seek contracts with the middlemen, the farm labor contractors.

AWOC began holding organizational meetings with the contractors. Many were persuaded in this fashion to raise their wages to \$1.40 an hour and to ask that much from the grower. Those that balked at signing a contract with the union found their day-haul buses picketed when they parked them at the shapeup. Few workers would cross the picket line to sit alone in a struck bus, and contractors could make no money without a load of human cargo every day.

Those that did sign with the union conducted the union's check-off dues collection as workers boarded their buses. During the five years of its operation, this technique has succeeded in unionizing one hundred thirty-six farm labor contractors and there have been only seven major labor disputes with recalcitrant contractors.

Yet the AWOC is now farther away from union recognition, a table membership, or real collective bargaining than it was six years ago.

Lou Krainock, who had left the staff of AWOC early in 1961, had always been convinced that farm workers could only be organized as they had been in Hawaii. In the fall of 1960, he had arranged a meeting between AWOC officials and IWW and Teamsters officials to discuss such a possibility. After he left AWOC, he began planning a union campaign to attract their support.

The decision of lettuce grower, Bud Antle, in May, 1961, to sign a sweetheart contract with the Teamsters Union covering several hundred field workers added fuel to the speculation that the Teamsters would launch a drive of its own. On July 4, 1961, West Coast long-shore leader, Harry Bridges, joined Krainock in arguing that "Farm workers in California will not be organized successfully until the Teamster Union joins the campaign." Speculation that a Teamster entry was imminent culminated in October 1961 with the

announcement of Einar Mohn, Chairman of the Western Conference, that his union was planning to organize farm workers and knew how it was going to be done.

Despite these pronouncements, Lou found it impossible to get the Teamster organization to commit itself financially or to agree on the role that the union was to play in the proposed drive. In August, 1962, a Teamster Cannery official, Ted Gonzales, declared, "We are not interested in farm workers now or in the future. We never have been. They are mostly transients and we could not keep up with them if we wanted to." While the rumors flared and faded, Lou continued his field stumping and report writing for his supporters in the two unions.

In December of 1963, the Teamsters and Longshoremen finally agreed to sponsor a one-year experimental project. The project was launched with the aim of exploring what kind of welcome the unions would receive if they did decide to organize farm labor, what kind of workers would gravitate towards them, and what the minimal budget would be for a successful drive. On January 6, 1963, Lou Krainock convened a conference at the Motor Hacienda in Bakersfield. About a dozen farm workers attended this conference, along with several representatives from the two unions, including Lou Goldblati and Bob Robertson from the ILWU, and a proxy from George Mock of the Teamsters. At the meeting, Krainock announced the formal launching of the California Agricultural Workers Union (CAWU), revealed that it would have the full backing of the two independent unions, and predicted that the AFofL-CIO would pull out of the field. Lou criticized the lack of membership participation in the AWOC and told the group that AWOC was incapable of organizing. He spelled out the kind of union he wanted, emphasizing the need for rank and file control and the necessity of building the union from the bottom up rather than from the top down. He saw no conflict between this and his insistence that farm workers could only be organized through "another Hawaii."

The Teamster Union put Lou Krainock and two other experienced organizers on its payroll and rented an office in Porterville for the CAWU. Floyd Quick became the union's representative in Porterville while Chris Monsalves was assigned the Stockton area. In October, a second office was opened in Stockton, the home base of the AFofL-CIO's organizing drive. Friction immediately developed between the elder and more established AWOC and the new union. Several AWOC activists joined the new union and others began to carry both union cards. At one point, there was open conflict between the rival unions when CAWU members were denied the use of an AWOC-contracted farm labor bus.

Although the CAWU was forbidden to carry out strikes, its seemingly more militant attitude began to make inroads into AWOC membership. AWOC particularly began to feel an encroachment into the Filipino base it had been building for years. Although CAWU stated that it was building an interracial union, the growth of CAWU membership entirely in the Filipino camps brought criticism from Mexican, Anglo, and Negro farm workers. Floyd Quick admitted that he had concentrated his activities on

Filipinos but insisted that he had concentrated his activities on Filipinos but insisted that it was only because they are the most easily organized segment of the farm labor force.

Another point of conflict between the two unions was the definition of an acceptable contract wage. The CAWU pointed out that the AWOC had been signing asparagus contracts for \$1.00 an hour, and insisted that it would not contract for less than \$1.25. The AWOC maintained, however, that CAWU was hypocritical, that at least one organizer had said he would sign contracts in cherries for \$.30 a bucket if it meant swelling his membership rolls. (Cherries were running \$1.10 a bucket at the time.)

CAWU never succeeded in signing any contracts, and the criticisms that it made of AWOC's lack of democracy were equally applicable to itself.

The CAWU bid was based entirely on the gamble that the Teamsters could be persuaded to take over the union before it exhausted its funds. The union spent \$24,000; \$4,000 of which was apparently contributed by the ILWU and Teamsters, and the balance contributed by a private party. After these funds were exhausted, the union's officials found other jobs, and the small membership was abandoned.

In February of 1963 the AWOC News ran an article headlined, "Beware of Phonies." It warned, "Farm workers, there are several groups in California trying to establish 'farm labor organization...Beware of phony people and phony organizations who would take your money and give you nothing in return.'" One of the organizations that AWOC was attacking was the CAWU. The other was the Farm Workers Association of Cesar Chavez.

The FWA had grown out of the Community Service Organization, a Mexican-American political and civic organization founded in 1947 by Fred Ross of the Industrial Areas Foundation. Ross had heard reports of a Mexican-American radical named Cesar Chavez who was working in a lumber mill. Chavez had participated in rallies and strikes as a farm worker in his 20's, and was described to Ross as a potentially good organizer. Ross found and hired Chavez. The CSO began with one chapter and a few hundred members in Los Angeles in 1974. By 1960, it had 28 chapters in California, several in Arizona, and was approaching the 10,000 member mark. At the time, Anthony P. Rios, the founding President of CSO, described the gains it had made.

"Before CSO less than 10 percent of us were registered to vote in the Spanish-speaking neighborhoods of California. The great majority of our parents weren't even citizens of this country.

....Then, with the full time organizing help of Fred Ross and Cesar Chavez, under the direction of Saul Alinsky of the Industrial Areas Foundation, we started to move ahead. In the brief span of 13 years, the Spanish-speaking people in a large section of the South-west have joined together in CSO. Besides helping 40,000 of the parent generation obtain their citizenship we

have registered over 227,000 members of the group to vote and sent that vast reservoir of voting strength streaming through the polls.”

During that time, Rios pointed out, over 100 Spanish-speaking leaders were elected or appointed to public office. That gain proved to be, at best, a mixed blessing. CSO became more and more tied to the Democratic Party, and found that its chapter building and community work was losing ground to local Democratic Party political work. The gains of breaking down barriers against Mexican-American political candidacy were more than matched by the loss of much of the leadership that the community relied on.

From 1952 until 1962 Cesar Chavez was a full time organizer for CSO. During that time he saw some of the early metropolitan chapters of CSO becoming weaker and more conservative even as he organized new rural chapters. In 1960 Chavez became the National Director of CSO in Los Angeles. There was growing opposition to his militancy, however, from those who felt that CSO should model itself after MAPA, the Mexican American Political Association, and should not become a specifically working class organization.

CSO's approach to farm labor had ranged from political lobbying (often with farm workers doing the collaring of legislators) to working with farm labor contractors (“to get them to set a decent minimum wage and then stick to it”) to leading hundreds of local farm workers in Oxnard into the fields to replace Nationals, and to attaching corruption in State agencies (CSO activity and its filing of 250 complaints brought about the dismissal of the Director of the State Farm Placement Service). In 1960 CSO launched a massive voter registration drive that brought thousands of farm workers into the Democratic Party. But Cesar and others in the CSO began to realize that voter registration meant very little in the absence of a real movement of farm workers with a program of its own.

In 1962, during the gubernatorial campaign, several CSO officers openly used their position to campaign for Governor Brown's re-election, and several chapters abandoned CSO work to operate within Mexican-American Democratic clubs. A crisis had clearly arisen in the CSO. The cooperation of CSO leadership by the Democratic Party was symptomatic of the organization's drift from its grass roots community orientation. Now much of this doubt was due to the attraction of the new middle class Mexican-Americans to CSO as a vehicle for upward mobility and how much was due to the premises of the Alinsky method of organizing is difficult to measure.

Another indication of CSO's drift from its grass roots orientation was its refusal to support the organizing of farm workers. In 1961 Cesar Chavez had organized a large CSO chapter of cannery workers in Oxnard. Under an agreement with the UFWA, which was paying his salary, Cesar had promised to turn this membership over to the union when it came time to strike. Cesar did so, but at the cost of breaking down group loyalties and identification. The community organization he had built ceased to be viable in the UPWA setting, and the CSO chapter dissolved. Convinced that the job of organizing farm

workers had to be done as one piece, with the same organization filling community, economic, and political needs, Cesar turned to the CSO and asked that it become the vehicle for such a movement. The CSO refused.

At its 1962 convention, in Delano, the “grass-roots caucus” of CSO found enough support among the delegates to pass a resolution aimed at preventing CSO’s cooperation by the Democratic Party. The resolution established CSO as a non-political organization, prohibited CSO officials from endorsing candidates or running for political office, and prescribed penalties for violation of the provisions.

However when a final move was made by this caucus to force CSO into committing itself to organizing farm workers, the delegates retreated. The caucus then announced the formation of an independent Farm Workers Association, unveiled its thunderbird flag, and expressed the hope that CSO would lend it active support.

In many areas it did. In Delano itself, however, the CSO was dominated by farm labor contractors and has fought FWA since its inception. Recently it publicly and bitterly attacked the grape strikers for “delving in lies, fabrications, false propaganda, intimidation and harassment of the responsible farm worker.”

In April of 1962 Chavez quit his job with the CSO in Los Angeles and brought his family (wife and eight children) to Delano where he had relatives who could help support him. His wife and older son worked in the fields to support the family while he organized.

Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gil Padilla, and other founders of the FWA began their organizing by conducting a survey of farm workers felt needs. Chavez spent six months traveling up and down the San Joaquin Valley from Stockton to Sacramento, working in sixty-seven different communities to get an accurate conception of the services that farm workers wanted. The leaflet explaining the reasons for the Farm Worker Census asked the worker to “lend us your help in completing the form which is attached to this leaflet.” It included the following paragraph.

What Is The Farm Workers Association?

The Farm Workers Association is a group of workers who have come together for the purpose of conducting a survey among farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley.

THIS IS NOT A UNION AND WE ARE NOT INVOLVED IN STRIKES

The census pointed out a desire for 1) services such as a group life insurance, a credit union, and co-op services, and 2) membership in an organization which would genuinely represent farm workers.

The census had another use as well; it was the beginning of recruitment. A worker who expressed real interest in the ideas of the FWA would find himself accompanied home by Chavez, and would end up having Chavez as a house guest for several days. When Cesar finally left the worker, the two parted as close friends, and as trusting co-workers in the movimiento.

In September of 1962, Cesar called all the workers he had talked with together in Fresno for the Founding Convention of the National Farm Workers Association. The workers elected Cesar, Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla, Julio Hernandez, Tony Orendain, and others as their officers.

If Cesar had learned much from the Alinsky school of organizing, he had also modified it greatly by 1962, and much of that modification had come about by watching the growth and style of the Agricultural Workers Association led by Father Thomas McCullough.

From 1962 until 1965, the FWA was sustained and built by patiently involving the membership in the communication of skills and services and in decision-making. Few large meetings were called. The officers went to the homes of members to attend house meetings small enough to involve all participants in the direction of the organization. In 1965, the Delano FWA members felt strong enough to carry off two small strikes, neither of which resulted in contracts, but did raise wages.

The decision to join the Filipino workers in Delano in a strike of the grape fields threatened to destroy much of that patient work. The FWA organizational concept had been one of an inkblot spreading slowly out from Delano. With the excitement of the strike, and the feeling of farm workers that now is the time, the temptation to leap-frog into other areas is proving irresistible.

The strike has changed other concepts as well. Mass meetings and rallies have had to replace the house meeting as the vehicle for decision-making and their inadequacy for this is being felt. The success of FWA in pulling strikebreakers out of the fields and converting them to La Causa has tended to shift the membership base—certainly the activist base—of FWA away from the family farm workers (with an average standing of five years in the Delano community) to the more militant single men (who have been in the area for less than a year and who often come from other states.)

Such changes are largely unavoidable, however. The future success of FWA will depend on its ability to train leaders from this new base to organize effectively among the home guard of communities that will be unfamiliar to them. The difficulty of training this leadership in the house meeting style of organizing and the values that underlie it (to say nothing of providing for a democratic choice of secondary leadership during the crisis of the strike is immense. There would seem to be no alternative, however.

The pressure for a massive, critical organizing showdown with corporate agriculture comes not only from the demands of farm workers throughout the state. (Cesar and the FWA have had to turn down dozens of requests for providing co-op services or leading organizing action from workers in other areas.) It also comes from forces that the FWA has even less control of.

On May 25th, it was reported by FWA organizers that Di Giorgio supervisors have begun circulation a “request for representation” form for its workers to sign. The union named on the form is the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. So far, the Teamster officials have refused to comment on the charge.

Whether it is true and what it will imply if it is true are moot questions at the moment. Certainly if a collective bargaining law for agriculture is passed, as is expected, in the next session of the Legislature, farm workers can expect to hear more about the Teamsters.

Another pressure on the FWA is that of the temptation to accept chartering in the AFofL-CIO as an international union. To be eligible, the FWA must build several locals. These locals would join the AFofL-CIO separately and they join together inside the AFofL-CIO as an International. As such, the FWA would have a good deal of autonomy and would be financially independent. William Kirscher, Director of Organization for the AFofL-CIO, is currently removing obstacles to that chartering. The decision on affiliation will be made by a referendum of the FWA membership.

Hopefully, the forces that compel the organization of farm workers today will continue to operate when and if the FWA is incorporated into organized labor. If incorporated, the FWA could provide a rallying point for insurgent voices within the AFL-CIO.

The support for FWA in the AFofL-CIO comes at a time when relations between AWOC and the AFofL-CIO have been somewhat strained. After the demise of the CAWU the AWOC had decided to approach the Teamsters in turn. Al Green had a calling card, in that he had helped organize the first Teamster cannery in 1947 in Stockton. In August of 1965 Green concluded an agreement with the Teamsters that provided that both groups would respect each other’s jurisdiction and picket lines. In addition it was agreed that the two unions would conduct a joint campaign in the citrus industry of the Porterville area. Both unions would share an office in Porterville. The Teamsters would organize the sheds while the AWOC organized field workers. Green explained that “The Teamsters have organized the cannery workers and we organize the fields. It was only through my long standing that we were able to keep them from moving into the fields.”

The Teamsters struck and won NLRB elections in three out of four canneries in the area. AWOC tried to sign up members and found that it simply could not. It had used up its capital of good will in the Strathmore-Porterville area over many years. The rate for

oranges was raised from the 18 to 20 cents a box rate of last year to between 30 to 40 cents a box, and no one this season felt compelled to turn to a union that had AWOC's reputation.

The coalition was brief lived. Even before the citrus season of 1966 was over the AFofL-CIO moved to break up the pact. William Kircher, Director of Organization, informed Green that the agreement had to be ended. Green said, "the National AFofL director, Mr. Kircher, told us that we couldn't work on that type of set-up because the other locals, other nationals in the AFofL-CIO had the same jurisdictions in the packing sheds."

AWOC over the years had experienced almost every kind of failure that it is possible for a drive to experience. It had won a NLRB election overwhelmingly at V.C. Britten Alfalfa Hill in Firebaugh in 1961 and it had been unable to force a contract. It had built locals, good stable, participating locals, and it had driven them out of the union with its abuse and neglect.

It had raised wages substantially through its early activities and it had eventually come to define itself in those narrow terms, and then its leadership grew to feel that it was being abused by farm workers because they only saw fit to call on the union to scare higher wages out of the growers and then to dismiss it. And what may be the final failure of the AWOC is what could have been its first real success, the Great Delano Grape strike of 1965 and 1966.

That strike, as is well known by now, was initiated by the Filipino membership of the AWOC. Filipino farm workers, it must be explained, are never "organized" by a union. They are a well-organized and self-disciplined subculture within the farm labor force and they have always been capable of unified economic action. What AWOC did among the Filipinos, as other unions have done, was to provide outside support in exchange for membership dues and to slowly develop group loyalties to the union. AWOC was well assisted in this through its principal Filipino organizer, Larry Itliong, who has always maintained a great deal of independence from the AWOC leadership. AWOC provided the initial impetus for that strike and for the first few months fed not only its own membership but the FWA's as well.

AWOC could have responded to the issues raised by the National Farm Workers Association's acceptance of support and assistance from the civil rights movement in terms of reinvigorating the AWOC. Instead it deplored the acceptance of support and complained that the trade union issues were being lost in the "hollering to the people about civil rights."

AWOC could have thrown its efforts into a joint campaign with the FWA to create an effective grass roots political voice for farm workers. Instead it is currently planning to again direct its energies through COPE to fight for the re-election of Governor Brown.

AWOC plans to go as hard for Brown this year as it did in 1962 when it registered over 7,000 farm workers to vote and probably delivered over 15,000 votes to the Democratic Party. During that campaign, Green toured AWOC locals warning them not to initiate strikes in order not to embarrass the Brown campaign.

AWOC could have responded to the growth of the Delano movement by publicly demanding and receiving both an adequate budget and autonomy from the AFofL-CIO Executive Council and used those to at least rebuild what it had lost since 1961. Its only reform was to borrow the idea of group insurance from the FWA. The decision on that, however, has been stalled for months by the AFofL-CIO Executive, and its enactment is dubious. AWOC is still only dimly aware that events have passed it by, and that it has evolved from a token gesture made to labor's liberal friends into a somewhat embarrassing liability.

With these reactions, the AWOC has probably sealed its doom, and it can only become more isolated in the future. Farm workers have not yet made their peace with organized labor, but they have certainly pushed it beyond tokenism.

<u>Written</u>	<u>by</u>	<u>on</u>
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	Walter Sheasby	civil disobedience
	Ken Blum	agribusiness
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	Walter Sheasby	history