NO MORE TEAMSTER DUES!

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Farm workers resist Teamster extortion

WE CAN STOP THEM AT

CALEXI与此，国—黑鹰黑旗在2月期间在私营员工中飘扬，作为对私营员工的常见欺凌的抗议。在伊米普尔·山谷，每天都有大量工人在田里工作。他们需要强大工会的支持。但目前这些工会的代表只能提供最低限度的支持。工会的工作重点是确保工人能够得到公正对待，但是低工位及工资、工作条件和安全标准仍然存在严重问题。这种不良待遇引起了工人们的不满和抗议。

CALEXICO, Ca.—Black eagle flags flew over empty fields in the Imperial Valley late February as thousands of farm workers held a one-day "paro" (work stoppage) and a week-long asparagus strike in a new major thrust against the Teamsters' Union contracts held by the vegetable growers of the area.

An estimated 8000 workers refused to work February 18 in response to a call by the United Farm Workers of America. After the paro, nearly a thousand asparagus workers struck with picket lines at labor contractors' buses at the fields, demanding higher wages to fight inflation as well as free elections to determine which union would represent them.

"This is the beginning of a whole series of strikes," said UFW president Cesar Chavez. "There will be no tolerance until such time as the growers and the Teamsters make up their minds that the workers are going to be represented by their own union."

"We can stop them!"

On the day of the paro, the fields were empty, the contractor buses parked silently in Calexico, the packing sheds quiet. Agriculture in the Imperial Valley came to a halt.

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Not a single instance of a worker being fired for not showing for work was reported after the paro, something UFW organizers had never happened before.

"How can it be?"

"Today we have seen the beauty of the organized power of farm workers. Chavez told a workers' rally on the afternoon of 2 El Malcriado March 29, 1974 families! Down with the Teamsters!"

Every time a farm worker joined the picket line, a cheer went up. "I just got here from Tijuana," Elpidio Ponce told picketers as he joined the line, "where I go every eight days to see my family. So I came by surprise to see that it's time to take up La Causa again."

"I don't have a pen, nothing, but I don't care. I can survive for a couple of days or so, somehow. You see, I came ready to work with my asparagus knife and all.

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The growers will offer you a much better wage to work for them now, but we ask you class brothers and sisters not to go. For as all farm workers know, they use their system to their advantage—paying higher wages when they are forced to do so and afterwards exploiting us again whenever they please."

-UFW leaflet

Picket the fields

At the hiring hall picket lines were organized from among the workers who joined the paro to fan out to the contractor buses in Calexico and talk with workers not reached by the picket line at the border. Most of those carrying any workers were soon empty.

At daybreak the picket lines moved to lettuce and asparagus fields in the Valley, where entire crews of 20 or 30 workers left the fields to join the paro.

17 workers were arrested in a field belonging to grower Ben Abatti as they left after convincing a lettuce crew to join the paro. They were jailed for three days because the Imperial Valley sheriff's department delayed in filing its reports. They were finally arraigned on Wednesday in a courtroom full of strikers and released on lowered bail on their promise to return for trial.

A holiday?

A number of growers and contractors didn’t even try to send out their buses for workers during the paro. Some said they hadn’t planned on working that day for a long time. Others claimed it was a holiday provided for in the Teamsters contracts for George Washington’s birthday. “If so, it’s the first time in the history of agriculture that Washington’s birthday is a holiday,” said UFW organizer Manuel Chavez. “Last year they didn’t even try to convince us. That’s Jesus Christ’s birthday!”

The Teamster contract for the Imperial Valley does not list Washington’s birthday as a holiday. A Teamster spokesman in Salinas said he didn’t think most of the people participating in the paro were farm workers. In early March it was reported in Calexico that the Teamsters were planning to ask growers for permission to try a work stoppage in the area for publicity purposes. A spokesman for the Bruce Church company, one of the growers, said he didn’t think the paro would stop any work. "They’re going to be like trees."
BORDER PATROL VAN CRASH KILLS 12 FARM WORKERS, SIX CRITICALLY INJURED

EL CENTRO, Ca. - Less than two months after labor contractor Jesus Ayala's bus, massacred 19 Imperial Valley lettuce workers in Blythe, a U.S. Border patrol mini-bus collided into a parked truck killing 12 farm workers and critically injuring six. The 61-year-old border patrolman driving the vehicle was also killed.

The farm workers were "Illegals", Mexican citizens in the U.S. without proper immigration papers, being taken to a Border Patrol camp near Chula Vista for deportation. They had been arrested in Oregon, California and Idaho.

The crash occurred March 7 in midafternoon. The mini-bus veered sixteen feet off Interstate 8, just 40 miles west of El Centro and slammed into the rear-end of a semi-tractor-trailer parked in a truck rest area.

Crowded van

Preliminary reports indicate that the driver may have fallen asleep at the wheel. No skid marks were found at the scene of the crash and, apparently, the mini-bus' brakes were working.

Two days after the crash, El Malcriado reporters interviewed Vicente Ramirez, one of the survivors, at the El Centro Community Hospital.

Ramirez said, "We were all squeezed together in that bus. I think there were seventeen of us. Since I was in the corner of the bus with my head bent over, well, I couldn't see anything. We were driving along peacefully, and all of us awake.

"Some of the companeros didn't fit so they went on top of the rest of us. The only thing that I can remember is that at the time of the accident they told me, 'Get down! Get down!' And so I got down by myself. But the pain and my desperation were so great that I lost consciousness."

Another cover-up?

El Malcriado reporters found that the 18 farm workers were squeezed into three parallel benches, each six feet long, in a space less than five feet wide, along with 180 pounds of luggage. The U.S. Border Patrol says the capacity of the bus is 18 farm workers, but U.S. law permits only sixteen school children to ride in a similar bus.

The California Highway Patrol, the National Transportation Safety Board, the FBI, and the Immigration Service have all begun investigations into the accident. These investigations, however, are not expected to extend beyond the immediate details of the crash, and readers are advised to read the next issue of El Malcriado for a wider analysis of the situation.

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The growers in the Imperial Valley are equipped with the latest in electronic communications equipment. Ben Abatti drives a fancy jeep with a radio telephone. The jeep carries loudspeakers which Abatti uses to try to drown out the shouts of picketing workers.

John Jackson's office is in the center of a complex field telephone network and is equipped with a teletype machine that runs day and night.

In Mexicali, farmworkers don't even have telephones. The UFW in Calexico owns two old and beaten bullhorns and a minicomputer that sometimes works. Yet, although the paro of February 18 was not called and strikers didn't help a single farm worker, we would also talk about it. More and more people were coming to me saying, 'We want to strike!'... Two days later, the growers were organizing as well. 'We have committees on all the ranches that the people themselves have elected on their own,' according to Villalpando, 'so they could represent them if anything should happen.'

Such committees are provided for in UFW contracts but not in Teamster contracts.

'And they got together and came to us and assured us that they wouldn't work on the day we said we wouldn't work.'

'When the people were excited because they wanted to strike. The time has come,' they kept telling us. They knew that 12 years ago 1962 they were getting paid about $1.05 to $1.20 a box for asparagus and still they are being paid the same thing.'

'Back then we were told that the people were excited and we were going to make the other workers aware of the problems the Valley's 8,000 farm workers didn't even leave their homes to cross the border that day.

Worker-to-worker

UFW organizer Ricardo Villalpando says that real communication depends on people and not on technology. For weeks, he and dozens of other workers struggled to lay the groundwork for the paro, a worker-to-worker communications system. The system is based on reaching the people in their homes and on the labor contractor buses.

'The bus campaign began after the 4th of January,' he recalled. 'Those of us in the union began to look at the problems that exist in the countryside and the problems that workerson the ranches have with the other companies.'

'At first we just began to give out information, relaying messages among the workers. If the San Andreas Company wasn't paying checks correctly, we would make the other workers aware of it. If the Bruce Church Company charged a worker two or three times for Teamster dues, we would also talk about it. More and more we found ourselves with the responsibility of relaying this information.

Abuses and inaction

'And the more we found out about the problems, the more Teamster and grower abuses we discovered. People weren't getting any representation from the Teamsters at all. From that point grew the need to work harder, more strength and spirit for speaking, more unity among the people.'

'Not long after the campaign began, a labor contractor bus en route to a ranch with a Teamster contract crashed into a drainage ditch near Blythe, killing 19 farm workers. Immediately the energy of the Union went into caring for the injured and the families of the dead. (See edition Vol. VII No. 2 of El Malcriado)

'Afterwards,' said Villalpando, 'we asked, what did the Teamsters do for the fallen ones? People were really interested.'

Elect committees

Meanwhile, the workers at the ranches with Teamster contracts were organizing as well. 'We have committees on all the ranches that the people themselves have elected on their own,' according to Villalpando, 'so they could represent them if anything should happen.'

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'We want to strike'

At the weekly UFW meeting January 31, Manuel Chavez told the workers, 'A lot of people have been coming to me saying, you look at what the companies are doing to us, taking our money, firing us... we want to strike. But now is not the time to strike.

'The ranchers want us to strike now rather than later, but let's strike then when we want and not when they want.'

'The time came two weeks later when the asparagus harvest began and the growers were vulnerable. The decision was made several weeks beforehand but the decision was kept to the organizers. When you see the flags fly in front of the Botica Popular,' they told the workers, 'it's the sign to begin the paro.'

The committees on the Teamster ranches agreed that no publicity would be given ahead of time—no press, no radio, no television, no leaflets. Everything depended on the network that had been built over the previous weeks.

At 9 p.m. February 17, the network was activated and the word went out. That night none of the organizers slept. They went door-to-door in Mexicali and Calexico.

Six hours later at 2 a.m., the flags flew in front of the Botica Popular.

ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ

ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ is one of the reasons why the paro was a success. He believes in education, street education, communication between farm workers and during the paro he was one of a dozen Union members that spent hours talking with them in parking lots, aboard buses, in cafes and later on the picket lines. Early in the morning he was talking with workers who had just gotten off a Bad Ankle bus. 'What we need is to all join together, because we're not united. You are not united with me nor am I united to you. When they give you a job, there you are all alone. First let's build a Union and afterwards, we will have the strength (power) among all of us to ask for the wages that we want. Right now we can't because you don't help me and I don't help you.'

'When you see the flags fly in front of the Botica Popular, it's the sign to begin the paro.'
WELFARE FOR GROWERS...

Imperial Valley

Imperial County is said to be the sixth richest agricultural county in the United States. What is less often talked about is that this wealth is 100% dependent on a system of huge federal subsidies and upon the exploitation of a cheap and abundant labor supply from Mexico.

Rich man’s welfare

The construction of the All-American Canal in 1940 turned the Imperial Valley from a barren desert into an agricultural empire free of charge to the growers. The subsidy is calculated at over $100 million in taxpayers’ money.

In addition to the free water, the growers get money to build underground drainage tiles to leach away salt-laden water from their fields. From 1966 to 1970 alone, the U.S. Soil Conservation program paid Imperial growers $1.7 million.

- The growers get free land management and crop advice worth $490,000 annually. A University of California fields station spends $400,000 to speed farm mechanization and use of chemicals, at no cost to growers.

- The growers tap easy money from the federal budget for growing, or not growing certain crops. A worker then begins a payless wait in buses for the long ride back to Calexico, at the end of the day. Eight of every ten workers in the Imperial Valley also control token assistance from welfare. Twenty-four percent of the population in Imperial County is now on welfare. In contrast to the hundreds of millions doled out to the growers each year, a meager $7.8 million are set aside for the poor.

Before the asparagus strike began, harvest workers in the $26 million industry were paid $1.30 a box or less than 1 cent per pound of the 79 cents paid by consumers at the supermarket. When the strike began, growers upped the minimum to $1.40.

...EARLY GRAVES FOR FARM WORKERS

For most of the thousands of day workers who each day cross the border in the U.S., the years of toil in Imperial Valley fields have brought only subsistence living and bodies that give out after 10 years of the stoop labor. The day begins at 4:30 a.m. in El Hoyo ("The Hole") in Calexico, where contractors select the youngest and strongest from among the hundreds of farm workers. If lucky enough to be chosen, the worker then begins a journey to the fields, sugar beet or asparagus fields that may lie as far as 100 miles away. There is no such thing as pay for travel time nor a guarantee of any pay at all.

Dues rake-off

It is here in the fields that the Teamsters’ “coyotes” come around to collect signatures, promising imaginary benefits so that dues can later be deducted from their checks. It is the only time they are ever seen by the workers. Those that refuse to sign are fired, or have their paychecks deducted anyway.

When the day is finally over the farm workers return to El Hoyo, covered with dust and massaging their sore backs and arms. They may have earned $16 in hourly wages, or as much as $35 by piece-work for the day.

Wages don’t go far

Back in Calexico and Mexicali the days’ wages will not go far. A kilo of tortillas that was 12 cents in 1972 is now 26 cents. Bottled water that sold for 17 cents the year before cannot be found for less than 25 cents now.

The growers and bankers that keep a stranglehold on wages in the Imperial Valley also control food prices along the Mexican border. 50% of the canned goods made in Mexico are produced by American companies like Carnation, Del Monte, Kellogg’s, and Bordens.

This outside control is only mirrored in industry and agriculture along the border. Today there are 300 U.S. “maquiladoras” (“assembly plants”) that employ close to 40,000 workers in “sweat shop” conditions.

The minimum wage is $3.68 a day.

Eight of every ten workers in these plants are young women from 17 to 23 years of age, who are hired because they can be paid less than the minimum wage, sometimes as little as $2.24 a day.

“Listen, I’ve been to Mexicali and I’ve seen how things are there; but you knock on the door of an adobe hut there and you see that the people are happy! They’re smiling and laughing and enjoying life!”

--John Jackson, Imperial Valley grower

Recently, the workers of Mexicali, one of the maquiladoras, went on strike for a better deal. And they found ready support from the farm workers. Despite the hardships caused by the pan and asparagus strike, farm workers emptied their pockets at a meeting in Calexico February 22 to give $100–92 to their Mexican sisters and brothers’ strike fund.

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The Teamsters have not done to the workers. The Teamsters are in a bind because they can’t keep both sides happy - only one side or the other, and in order to keep the growers happy and maintain their sweetheart arrangement they just can’t afford to give the workers any representation. The moment they try to give the workers representation and take care of grievances and get an adequate contract, at that moment they’ll be thrown out of the street because the only reason the growers brought them in was to interfere with us and keep us from getting a legitimate contract. And so we’re in better shape than the Teamsters are.

--Cesar Chavez

Why do farmworkers reject all grower-Teamster agreements as “sweetheart” contracts? Because they are formed without farmworker approval. The growers admit the workers were not consulted. Imperial Valley grower John Jackson says, “The growers elected in 1970 to go with the Teamsters.”

William Grami, director of organizing for the Western Conference of Teamsters, says the Teamsters “signed” with the growers to protect truck drivers and packing shed workers from farm worker strikes. He says nothing about protecting farm workers from anything.

The California Supreme Court reviewed all of the facts in connection with a grower lawsuit (Englund vs. Chavez) stemming from the massive 1970 UFW strike in Salinas. The workers struck to protect the sweetheart contracts. When the Court issued its decision in 1972, it agreed with the farm workers.

Here is what happened: In July of 1970 the UFW was about to sign contracts with the major table grape growers of California. The UFW was already organizing lettuce workers and other farm workers in the Salinas and the Imperial Valleys.

On July 23, 1970, the vegetable growers elected to go with the Teamsters, to ratify a new agreement with the Teamsters covering their truck drivers. In an affidavit, Cal Watkins, personnel manager of the Inter-Harvest Company, testifies the growers decided on that day to appoint a committee to “feel out” the Teamsters and “explore the prospects” of negotiating an agreement for agricultural workers.

Teamsters receptive

On July 24, Watkins says, the committee reported back to the growers that the Teamsters were “interested and receptive.” The committee “announced that any farm interested in recognizing the Western Conference of Teamsters” could do so. 29 growers immediately did so. The rest followed later.

Negotiations began the next day. “The union (Teamsters) did not at that time claim to represent any agricultural workers,” says Watkins, “although they announced that they would take responsibility for signing up the workers.”

The California Supreme Court concludes, “In all cases, it is undisputed that at the time he reconized the Teamsters as the exclusive bargaining agent of his field workers, each grower knew that that union did not represent a majority or even a substantial number of field workers.”

Negotiations continued for two days. The Court says, “these workers were not consulted during the negotiations and were never given an opportunity to examine the terms of the contract or even indicate whether or not they wished to be represented by the Teamsters.”

InterHarvest signed a Teamster contract on July 26. Ten days later the Teamsters signed up only 108 of the company’s more than 1000 workers.

Workers refuse

The Court declares that during the first few weeks in August “most of the workers refused either to join the Teamsters union or to sign or ratify the grower Teamster agreements.” It appears clear that by mid-August at least a substantial number and probably a majority of the field workers desired to be represented by UFWOC rather than by the Teamsters.

Meanwhile, UFW launched a massive strike of over 7000 workers in the Salinas Valley. At the time the Los Angeles Times labeled the strike the largest in the history of agriculture. A committee of Catholic Bishops headed by Msgr. George Higgins conducted a poll of Inter-Harvest workers and concluded on August 23 that UFW represented a majority of the workers. On August 30 the company rescinded its Teamster contract and signed with UFW, as did D’Arrigo and FreshPict.

But the other growers decided to stay with the Teamsters and obtained an injunction banning the UFW strike on the grounds that there was a “jurisdictional” dispute between the two unions. They also obtained an injunction banning the lettuce boycott. Cesar Chavez was jailed for violating the anti-boycott injunction, which was later thrown out.

Then in December 1972 the California Supreme Court ruled against the growers. The Court declared the strike was not a “jurisdictional dispute,” because the growers had not maintained neutrality and knew that the Union had signed contracts with growers who had the right to choose their own union.
THE TEAMSTERS ARE JUST BANDITS WHO ROB THE PEOPLE OF THEIR MONEY!

During the past six years, more than 1,000 farm workers against the Teamsters' contracts making the United Farm Workers of America their exclusive bargaining representation. Many made formal declarations in support of the Teamsters Union. They accused the Teamsters of using threats, trickery, and fraud to make them sign up, even though they were not members. Here are excerpts from some of the declarations:

**Gildardo R. Perez and Francisco Cota Rivera**

On December 12, 1973, after we had finished our work for the day, and while we were returning to Calipatria, the foreman told us that we could not continue working for the Company unless we joined the Teamsters Union. We, along with about forty other workers in the crew, refused. After we said this, we were paid for the day's work and told that we no longer had a job.

**Benito M. Barcelo**

About two years ago I began to work for the ADMIRAL Company in the lettuce field in the Imperial Valley. The foreman came to me and said that I had to fill out a yellow card. When I got my check from the company, I noticed that in February, 1974, they had deducted $23 for Teamster dues. About three weeks before, while I was working at the ADMIRAL farm, the foreman told me that the workers had to agree to the Teamster membership or he would be fired. I told him that if he was going to fire me, he better do it right away, because I was not going to sign. The whole crew began to shout "VIVA CHAVEZ," and the foreman went out of the field. The supervisor and the foreman might want the Teamsters, but the workers do not.

**Guadalupe Acosta**

I would not have signed that paper which allowed them to deduct the Teamster dues and which made me a Teamster member if I had known what it was. The only reason that I signed was that they told me that I could not work without signing.

**Salvador Trejo**

During the time that I worked for (Danny) Dannenberg, there was approximately $80.00 taken out of my pay for Teamster dues. I do not believe that I ever signed a Teamster authorization card or any Teamster membership card. The foreman told me that if I did not sign, he would fire me. I signed the paper, but I never received a Teamster card or any Teamster dues. I have paid the Company. I do not believe that the Teamsters are just bandits who rob the people of their money.

**Dora Sanchez y Juan Jose Salas**

Our foreman, said that the people who signed would get a raise right away, up to $2.38, but that those who did not sign would only get $1.60. The foreman said that the workers who wanted to be part of the Teamsters would get the raise and those who did not sign would not get the raise. I told him that I did not want to sign because we wanted to be a part of the Teamsters Union. I was afraid to lose my job. We got the raise right away. Since I was signed, we have been pushed harder by the foreman.

**Maria Meza**

The foreman came to me with a paper in English and told me that it was just for the company's records. I did not understand the paper, but signed it. I would never have signed the paper if I had known that it was a Teamster authorization card. I am a strong UFW member and believe that the Teamsters are just bandits who rob the people of their money.

**Jesus Sandoval Sandoval**

I told him (the Teamster organizer) that I was a Chavista and not interested in being a part of his group. He told me that I had three days to sign up or I would be fired. I told him that if he was going to fire me, he better do it right away because I was not going to sign. The whole crew began to shout "VIVA CHAVEZ," and the foreman went out of the field. The supervisor and the foreman might want the Teamsters, but the workers do not.

**Camilo Castillo**

While we were working, one of the fellows put a staple through his hand. A Teamster representative was present, but he did nothing. He said the company should take care of it, that it was not the business of the Teamsters.

**Amador Ibarra**

In September of 1973 a son of mine got sick and the Teamsters said that they would take care of it. They still have done nothing for me.

**Jose Diaz**

The foreman told us that we would be paid the extra two cents per box as soon as we signed with the Teamsters. The Teamsters tried to bribe me into signing with them, but I refused, so I never got the pay raise that they promised us.

**Pablo Ramos**

When I signed, the Teamsters promised medical benefits and unemployment insurance. However, when I go to doctors, they have never heard of the Teamsters' medical plan, and the plan won't help me with my bills.

**Brijido Zacarias**

On Jan. 31, 1974 I signed a paper which my foreman told me to sign. All the workers were there, and he told us all to sign the paper. I did not read it. I signed it because I did not want to leave the company. The foreman explained it to me. I would not have signed the paper if I knew it was a Teamster authorization card because I do not want to be a Teamster. If I were a Teamster, I would leave the company because the United Farm Workers of America can help me more.
Imperial County Sheriff’s Department:

THE GROWERS, PRIVATE ARMY

John Jackson was angry Feb-
uary 21. It was the fourth day of
the strike and his asparagus was
not getting picked. He was losing
$50,000 a day.

The day before he and three
other growers had obtained a
court order which limited pick­
ing by striking workers in the
fields and at the pick-up point for
his labor contractor “El Don Coyote.”

“We have an injunction,” he
told El Malcriado reporters. “We
get this injunction and the sheriff
doesn’t enforce it today! But that
will change, wait and see!”

Throughout the day, strikers
on the picket line overheard reports
on the sheriff’s radios that the
growers were unhappy with the
enforcement of the injunction. Ben
Abati himself had been on the
phone, they said, demanding
heavier action.

Don’t look to the police

Later that afternoon, a hundred
workers picketed the few El Don
buses that returned to El Hoyo
from the fields.

“Brothers and sisters,” a cry
floated over the line of police from
the picket line, “don’t look to the
police for protection. The Sheriff's
are here to protect the growers,
not you. We are the only ones
who can protect you!”

Minutes later, the sheriffs
arrested 18 workers for defying
the picket line several times,
pushing, shoving, and beating
the workers.

(Attack climaxed a week of
harassment by Imperial Valley
law enforcement officials. In all,
41 farm workers were jailed,
including seventeen who were
arrested during the paro
Monday after they convinced a
lettuce crew to leave an Abatti
field. Throughout the strike,
police escorted the few buses
belonging to scab contractor El
Don to the fields and frequently
stopped cars of huelguistas and
demanded to see their immigra-
papers.)

A planned attack?

“They pushed many people
with such force that men and
women were knocked to the
ground. The farm workers were
walking away from the sheriffs,
but not fast enough for them.”

At one point, Boone said, the
police were called back into line
and regrouped. “Then a single
dirty clot took the sidewalk about
five or ten feet in front of me and
at least 20 feet from the nearest
sheriff.”

“Immediately one of the offi-
cers yelled, ‘let’s get ’em!’ My
distinct impression is that the
sheriffs were waiting for this
signal, that they were standing
pinned for the charge.... Another
wave of sheriffs swept past me

officers knocking people down....

‘This again was a wild charge,
the faces of the men ferocious and
contorted, although they were in
no way endangered. I saw in
these actions a seemingly desper-
ate drive to intimidate and injure,
no matter what the age or sex of
the victim, so long as they had
brown skin.”

The temporary restraining or-
der obtained by the growers
limited picketing at each field to
one every 50 feet with a maximum
of 25 picketers, and at El Hoyo to
a maximum of 10 pickers at least
100 yards away from the buses.
(Two labor contractors initially
involved in the last withdrawal
have included them without their per-
mission.)

The growers want the injunc-
tion because we’re costing them a
lot of money,” Union attorney
Deborah Peetson commented.

“They fear the picket lines,
especially at the buses in the
morning, because they know the
asparagus workers are strong
with the union.

‘Getting an injunction and
having the police enforce it is a
cheap way to exercise their power
and try to influence the workers.
They use the sheriffs as their own
private army....’

‘I was there with a picket line for
half an hour when the police made
us move back 100 yards. We back up
and stood there another half an
hour...

Without further notice the police
tried to push us out of El Hoyo all
the way up the hill to the railroad
tracks. When we moved the second
time a policeman pushed me when
I was leaving. He wanted me to run.
I told him that I was walking, but
there was no reason for me to run.

A moment later I saw my friend
Francisco Reyes was being beaten.
It was then that the same policeman
that had pushed me before hit me in
the back of the head. Maybe seeing
the other policeman hitting Francis-
co made him mad, but he hit me.
I felt the blow and then began to run
away, but it was only a little later
that I felt the blood flow from my
nose.

I was on the sidewalk when they
hit me, about 20 yards from the
railroad tracks. Many persons fell
to the ground when the police shoved
them with their clubs.

The violence was not only done
to me, but to everyone there, includ-
ing the women and the Union
to...”

Ruben Gonzales
‘THE WORKERS DON’T UNDERSTAND’

John Jackson is a business executive. He runs the multi-million dollar agribusiness corporation called Jackson Enterprises, which grows everything from asparagus to lettuce to beef in the Imperial Valley. He is a young grower who considers himself part of a new generation of growers who will organize agribusiness into a unified industry and eliminate old rivalries. He is on the Board of Directors of the Western Growers Association.

He is tied into the other giant agribusiness corporations in the Valley. Its produce is packed by Freshpict Foods (owned by Pur-Ex) and through Heggblade-Marguleas-Tenneco. (two of the largest food corporations in the U.S.)

Jackson Enterprises owns at least 2,200 acres of land in the Valley, worth nearly $3 million, and it rents as much as 7,500 more acres. Imperial County records indicate that the corporation has purchased much land in recent years, part of the trend towards the concentration of land ownership in the Valley into fewer and fewer hands.

“Efficiency” is John Jackson’s favorite word. He speaks of investments, overhead management, and “the industry.” “We farm pretty large scale,” he says, “it seems to be most efficient.”

In 1970 he signed a contract with the Teamsters, as he admits, without consulting any workers. The contract allows him to use his labor contractor “El Don” to keep the workers unorganized and under control.

Recently, though, the foundation of Jackson’s empire has begun to crack as his workers practically shut down the asparagus ranch for an entire week during the paro and strike of late February.

“They don’t understand!”

One day during the asparagus strike he had a length/flexed with some workers as to what their best interests are. Afterwards he told reporters, “I know how to communicate with them, you know, I speak Spanish. They want higher wages and I sympathize with that. We’ve worked out responsible wage negotiations which will allow for the cost of living expenses they are talking about. I don’t think they understand this, though.”

“We worked out a sliding wage scale that was increasing ever year, but we were going to pay the workers in a different way than they were used to getting paid. We were going to pay them on a pack-out basis instead of a field-box basis, which is the traditional method.”

“Pack-out” means a worker is paid only for that part of what he picks, which is actually used by the company. “Field box” means he is paid for everything he picks. Farmers generally feel that growers use the pack-out method to cheat them.

“If this keeps up, we’ll have no choice but to bring in machines,” John Jackson said on the first day of the asparagus strike. “Each one replaces 100 men. We don’t want to because the hand-picked crop gets a better price, but we will if we have to. And if we do them, we might like them, right? And then the workers will suffer, and Chavez will be to blame.”

UFW organizer Gilberto Rodriguez laughed when asked about the machines. “That’s the first thing you always hear from them when there’s a strike — they’ll bring in the machines, or they’ll plough it under. It’s gotten so that we’re surprised if they didn’t say it.”

“We workers know that the machines don’t work. If they did, the growers wouldn’t wait for a strike to bring them in, they’d have them here already.”

Several days later Jackson was fuming. “I’ll have to put up with disrupted operations I will, but I can still make a profit! The workers are not involved enough to see down the road, and one man is a hell of a lot easier to manage than 100, and it’s your cross to bear!”

“We worked out a sliding wage scale that was increasing every year, but we were going to pay the workers in a different way than they were used to getting paid. We were going to pay them on a pack-out basis instead of a field-box basis, which is the traditional method.”

“Well, the thing that we didn’t see,” he says, “is that it’s going to be a very long term project and very difficult to educate the worker as to why this is better for him.”

“The growers met two days ago on this, the asparagus growers, and we said maybe we’re rushing into this, so let’s go back to the field box rate, which we did. And we decided to go ahead with a 10 cent a box wage increase that we had been planning for a month or so.”

Jackson denies that his empire in the Valley exploits farm workers. “You people have to be careful,” he told El Malcriado reporters one day, “and not wish for what you think they want instead of what they really want.”

“They’re smiling and laughing and enjoying life! Why can’t we be like that?”

‘THE PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER AFRAID’

MACHINE THREAT FAILS TO STOP STRIKE

“The workers know that the machines don’t work. If they did, the growers wouldn’t wait for a strike to bring them in, they’d have them here already.”

“If they can get the people to go back to work, they’ll just park the machines, and even if they bring in the machines they know they won’t bring good results. But the people aren’t afraid any more. They no longer fear the growers.”

Jesus Gomez, a tractor driver, tells Pedro Baird, a reporter for El Malcriado, why the asparagus machines don’t work.
It was not yet light when 150 farm workers carried their homemade red Union flags across the railroad tracks and down into El Hoyo to stop the remaining labor contractor buses from leaving for the fields.

Rosa Jaime watched the empty buses leaving one by one and was visibly distressed. There would be no work for her this Monday, no money for the daily needs. It seemed unfair.

It did not seem unfair to Lupe Leon, one of the 8,000 farm workers firmly behind the paro. In fact the issue was crystal clear to her as she approached Rosa Jaime with her flag in hand.

"The Teamsters are making the rich even richer, and stealing our money to fight against us," she told her.

Lupe is a member of the United Farm Workers of America and works under the UFW contract with the InterHarvest Co. Her working day in the lettuce begins at 7:30 in the morning. Most workers under Teamster contracts must be at El Hoyo to "shape up" from 3:00 a.m. on.

The buses she rides are equipped with toilets and cold water and are subjected to safety inspection by a committee of farm workers. The buses used by Teamster ranches are old, crowded and dangerous, such as the one that killed 19 farm workers in the Blythe massacre. (See Vol. VII No. 2 of El Malcriado)

These are but a few of the reasons why Lupe Leon and the other UFW members wanted the same kind of benefits they receive for all farm workers in the Imperial Valley. As much as anyone else that day she knew how things were for farm workers before the Union was born, before the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee staged a massive strike in 1962 and before the Bracero Program was ended. "I have been working here since 1957," she told Rosa Jaime, "when I worked with contractors that paid me 65 cents an hour. Then the contractors wouldn't even give us water. There were no toilets."

Lupe was also part of the massive strike in the Salinas Valley in 1970 that won the UFW contract she now works under. She knew that victories like these are not won without expressions of unified strength like the Paro General. (Days later Lupe Leon was arrested for defying the growers' injunction.)

"Now with the United Farm Workers of Cesar Chavez we are demanding higher wages for all farm workers. So join our cause, sister. Take my flag."

Still Rosa hesitated as many others with their red flag drew closer, sensing the drama that was unfolding.

Finally Lupe made a decision, smiled and said, "Take my flag. I give you my job—you go to work there."

Then the woman who had never known what the Union was really about took the Union flag and held it high with Lupe, as a cheer went up, "Viva la Causa."

From that morning Rosa Jaime became one of the most active workers behind the paro and following asparagus strike. She joined the picket lines, braved arrest several times and by Thursday she told El Malcriado reporters, "Now I'm with La Causa all the way!"

"The Teamsters are making the rich even richer..." -- Lupe Leon

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"Now the scabs are thinking, That times haven't changes, So they join the growers, Saying. 'Oh, what the hell!'"

Whoever had a pretty daughter Couldn't even let her rest, He takes her out in the early dawn To work like an ox."

--Ramon Herrera

Luis Moreno: When Cesar started - and we all know the long story - he started with very few workers. His convictions have been very strong to have gone forward to sow what he is now reaping.

I think we should not let Cesar sow alone, without all of us, like good unionists, working together with him. Because the more laborers there are in our movement, the richer the harvest will be for us and our children."

--Manuel Chavez

"We are not going to stop striking until the growers get tired, until we break them, until they sign Union contracts with us...." --Manuel Chavez

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12 El Malcriado March 29, 1974
Friends of MIKE KRAKTO (Maintenance and Grounds) will be happy to know that he is back from the hospital good as new... and a broken ankle hasn't slowed Service Center Administrator ANNA PUHARI.

Leading a mass demonstration in front of SafeWay in Houston is UFW First Vice-President, DOLORES HUERTA, who helped dedicate the new boycott in Houston...The Commission on Human Rights of the St. Louis Catholic Church has endorsed the UFW boycotts with the approval of Cardinal Carberry...Cleveland announces a march and rally on April 6th with Cesar Chavez in tow for the occasion. Looks like a big day.

Two new huelgistas are welcomed to the union staff: MAXIMO JR., son of DOLORES and MAXIMO HUERTA of the Coachella Field Office, born January 23rd, and JOSHUA, son of HEIDI URICH and GRAHAM FINCKE of the California clinic.

Boston isn't forgotten with 42 grape growers there from California out to make a major grocery chains for cooperating with the boycott; Trying to scare the smaller chains? Bullies!... We of the LA PAZ staff called upon readers to intensify the campaign for the boycott. "Farm Workers Week" April 28 and May 4th. and all three unions on the picket line.

The CATHOLIC WORKER has sent its 1,400 priests, endorsed the UFW boycott... the Los Angeles County Museum presents work by Chicano artists ROBERTO SORIA (Security), GILBERTO DE LA ROCHA, GILBERT LLIJAN, and FRANK ROMERO, along with our famous convention mural and other works by Carlos.

Finally in Southern California, the murals of CARLOS ALMARI- AZ are on exhibit this month at the Los Angeles County Museum of Arts. The show "Los Four," presents work by Chicano artist ROBERTO DE LA ROCHA, GILBERT LLIJAN, and FRANK ROMERO, along with our famous convention mural and other works by Carlos.

In Seattle, 550 UFW supporters picketing Teamster president Frank Fitzsimmons at a $25 a plate dinner February 23rd honoring U.S. Secretary of Labor Peter Brennan turned away more than 100 diners. AFL-CIO King County president Jim Bender arriving in taxes refused to enter the banquet.

The staff of the Santa Maria Campesino Center helped reunite farm worker OCTAVIANO CANAVA with his mother and sister.

About 50 El Malcriado organizers from California, including 25 MECHA students from Oxnard and Yuba City, met recently with Cesar Chavez and the El Malcriado staff at La Paz to plan a new door-to-door distribution campaign in California.

Chavez urges organizers to read each edition of El Malcriado carefully and talk to the people about the articles, to organize city supporters as well as farm workers.

Cesar said the union decided against individual subscriptions to the paper, because of rising postage costs. Also, he said distributing El Malcriado door-to-door makes every distributor an organizer who personally takes the union message to people, something which cannot be done through the mails.

The El Malcriado staff at La Paz thanks the MECHA students, and El Malcriado organizers for their contributions of food and money and the National Farm Worker Service Center for its fine work in making the Conference a success.

UFP DISPUTE RESOLVED

Misunderstandings which had developed as a result of the United Front Press (UFP) publication, "Si Se Puede", were cleared up at a meeting between Cesar Chavez and UFP representatives.

After lengthy discussion, Chavez acknowledged that UFP had been overly critical of UFP in its evaluation of the publication, and UFP representatives conceded that consultation on the publication with UFW could have avoided the misunderstandings.
A MESSAGE TO FARM WORKERS FROM SAN FRANCISCO SUPPORTERS:

WE PLEDGE OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE UNITED FARM WORKER'S STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION.

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'This is just the beginning,' says Chavez

ORGANIZED FARM WORKER POWER

Today it was clearly demonstrated, as it was demonstrated in Salinas in 1970 and is demonstrated each time there is a strike, that farm workers want a more decent life, that farm workers want to be free and will never again let themselves be treated like they were before. This morning we saw the beauty of the organized power of farm workers.... Right now, the news of the paro is spreading across the nation, for it is something that causes admiration. People say, "How can it be that workers that already have a contract are out on strike?" And the answer is: Because these contracts are not valid contracts. Also, they only came into existence due to the plotting and the conspiring between the growers and their puppets.

Many of you made complaints against the Teamster dues.... but the biggest complaint that we heard today, according to the reports, is that a large percentage of you say that the union of puppets (Teamsters) is for the growers and the United Farm Workers is for the farm workers.

The clergy from Canada here with us today on an independent investigation went to visit the Teamsters, but when they got to their office in El Centro, they found it closed up, with no one there.

Brothers and sisters, we find ourselves with the huge problems of scarcity and the rising cost of living. Even though wages may rise, in actuality, we are growing even poorer. How is it that wages can rise yet we stay just as poor? What happens is that they give us a raise with the right hand and take it away from us with the left. This means that in order for us to come out even, we must have a wage increase that is greater than the rising cost of living. And 10 or 15 cents or whatever isn't a raise, because it doesn't even equal the cost of living increase.

For example, beans were 59 cents a pound and they used to be 23 cents. And rice—a voice form the crowd: "It's more expensive than chicken!" And meat? Well forget it, because it's so expensive that the only time we see it is in pictures. But the vicious growers and the Teamsters sit down and eat steak, while we don't have enough to eat. Brothers and sisters, rent, water, electricity, gasoline, everything is sky-high and you are bound to a yoke by a worthless and illegal contract that doesn't let you even lift your heads.

We know, as you all know, that everything has gone up except salaries. $2.25 and $2.50 is no decent hourly wage. What do we gain if we get even $4 and $5 an hour if when we go to the store it costs twice as much to provide for our families? So the wages must go up along with the cost of living—if not, we are taking two steps forward and three backward.

We are poorer in 1974 than we were in 1964.... The only solution to this problem is for there to be economic pressure, strike pressure so that the growers cough up a little more. But before we can get to this we find ourselves with the result of the plot—that in order to get to the growers we've first got to nail the Teamsters. So compañeros, remember that every time that you pay Teamster dues, those same are being used against you. We cannot win or make progress until all of you, beginning tomorrow, say with one voice, "We will pay no more dues, and if they force us to pay dues, then it's better to go on strike...." than have the Teamsters make poison out of our own medicine.

They get your money and then they use it to fight against you. But if they didn't get that money, if there were no dues, then the Teamsters would have left all by themselves long ago, because they are used to the good life, to fine cars, and fat salaries, to fine liquors and suits.

Instead of working in the interest of the people, they work in the interest of a bank roll. If you don't pay them the dues, then we'll be rid of them. But while you keep paying the dues, they will stick to you like tape-worms and suck your blood. Throw them out! They can fire a few, but they can't fire you all....

The wages for the brothers and sisters who work in the asparagus are very low. Asparagus is extremely expensive when you buy it in the store .... The crime is that the man who works in the asparagus fields can't afford to buy it to eat....

Sisters and brothers, what has happened here today is spreading over the entire country. It gives us and our sisters and brothers on the boycott just what they need in their struggle to stop the sale of lettuce. It gives us the spirit, it gives us the information with which to approach the labor unions, the churches, and the entire population of this country and ask them not to eat lettuce.

Rights are won with good plans. They are won also with the consciousness and education of all farm workers, and in this case, today's paro is the beginning, the prelude to what's to come.... In 1970 we had a strike in Salinas that many of you participated in and the only reason that we lost it was because the judge brought down an injunction that forced us to return to work. But now we are ready for the next harvest in Salinas, to strike like in '70. Meanwhile, right now it is necessary, sisters and brothers that you rekindle strong and not fall back. It is crucial that there be organization. We don't have time to do it, but you can do it in every field crew, at every ranch, like we did in 1970, build and organize. Do it quietly, but do it. From each field crew, a representative, from each ranch a ranch committee. Do it clandestinely, but do it. Do it silently, but do it. And so that you can know what is happening, to keep informed, read EL MALCRUADO.

We have two opponents, we have two plagues that are making our lives hell. The puppets and the growers. We've got to join together and throw one to one side and the other to the other side. We've got to get the Teamsters off our backs. To do this there's got to be pressure to make them leave, and the best pressure is no more money. They don't do anything without money, and for one month there is no more money, they'll be gone.

Now to close, tomorrow at five o'clock in the morning... we must talk with those of you who are asparagus workers. We are going to meet with the asparagus workers first because they are the very poorest now, they are the one of us with the lowest wages. If the asparagus stalks are high today, by tomorrow they are going to look like trees....

Sisters and brothers, we all know that this struggle is necessary and important. We have to fight very hard to better our lives, and the only struggle that doesn't work is when we lose, and the only time we lose a struggle is when our people don't have the courage. Here among the farm workers at the border, there is always always great courage and spirit to improve our lives, a courage that can never be lost. VIVA LA CAUSA Y ADELANTE!

Excerpts from Cesar Chavez' speech in Calexico February 18, 1974.