
The United Farm Workers Union:
From Mobilization to Mechanization?

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Introduction

Eight years ago, in 1973-4, the United Farm Workers union appeared just one step short of entering the history books as another valiant but failed attempt at farmworker organization in the United States. At that time, the giant Teamsters union had succeeded in burrowing its way into the fields through sweetheart contracts negotiated with a fruit and vegetable industry anxious to deter the tenacious UFW. Through adroit political maneuvering and a timely return to the business of organizing farmworkers, Cesar Chavez and the core of the union managed to repel the interlopers with secret ballot elections conducted under the newly christened California Agricultural Labor Relations Act. Now the "social movement" union faces another and perhaps more difficult battle: a battle against time and machines. Despite the UFW's phenomenal success against what seemed insurmountable odds, or perhaps because of that success, the union now faces the possibility that a large number of workers whom it so painstakingly organized will be displaced by machines engineered with one purpose in mind: lowering the cost of production by reducing "costly labor". The costly labor referred to frequently in lettuce, grape and citrus industry publications is almost without exception union labor. But, the cost of labor is not simply calculated in terms of wages and benefits; the best-paid harvest workers still earn less than 85% of the average wage in manufacturing industries. Rather, the cost of labor is calculated in terms of the loss of managerial flexibility: the time spent in answering grievance notices for contract infractions over issues such as pesticide overspraying, dangerous working conditions, arbitrary firings, sexual harrassment and other actions which employers had previously exercised without challenge. The decrease in management discretion has prompted a mechanical response: over the past fifteen years, more than \$20 million dollars has been invested

by Federal and State governments and industry to devise cultivation and harvesting machines sufficiently fast and dexterous to replace hand labor. Thus, the United Farm Workers union, after nearly a decade of transition from a social movement into a trade union confronts a future in which its core organizational base (primarily lettuce and grape workers) faces dismemberment.

The dilemma facing the UFW is by no means an uncommon one for trade unions; the proportions of the struggle seem much more dramatic when viewed in light of the epic contest between the understaffed and financially undernourished UFW and the well-heeled and prosperous agribusiness elite. The leaders of the UFW need not look far for historical examples of trade union response to the crisis it faces: the Longshoremen's Union (ILWU), backed into a corner by the introduction of containerization, chose to settle for a financial compensation and re-training solution (Larowe, 1975; Weir, 1973); the United Auto Workers and other industrial unions have consistently negotiated higher wages in return for increased productivity (Aronowitz, 1975; Serrin, 1972). Unlike the ILWU and the UAW, however, the farm workers' union has neither a massive membership base which can withstand job reduction nor a sufficiently secure foothold in the threatened industries to negotiate a compensation solution. With a membership concentrated in the lettuce and grape industries (both with functional mechanical alternative to hand labor) and with machines capable of displacing up to 83% of that membership (Friedland, Barton and Thomas, 1981: 139-43; and Friedland, forthcoming), the union cannot lose that many jobs without facing organizational bankruptcy. And, as the lettuce industry strike demonstrated in 1978-79, without the means to quickly and effectively strike a significant financial blow to the industries involved, the union will clearly be in a weak position to negotiate a major compensation package or re-training program for displaced members (Bernstein, 1982).

Against this background, the situation facing the farm workers' union appears none too optimistic. Yet, the strength of the union, and thus its trump card in facing an uncertain future, resides in the social movement base and ideology which helped sustain it through the frustrating years before its string of election victories. Although it has incorporated many traditional trade union goals (or trade union goals forged out of collective bargaining narrowed to issues of wages and hours), the UFW has also retained an organizational commitment to broader issues of civil rights for the Mexican-Americans, Chicanos and Latinos who have harvested the fruits of southwestern fields for the last half-century. For the union and many of its adherents, the struggle for legal and political rights, in addition to economic gain, has remained central; the right of Chicanos and Hispanics generally to decent education, political representation, legal protection, adequate health and medical services and access to public institutions remain fundamental objectives of the organization. These organizational goals and an organizational philosophy of communal equality, though often the target of external abuse (e.g., from employers seeking the predictability of a "business" union like the Teamsters) and the source of internal dissension (i.e., between and within staff and membership), potentially provide a key to the union's survival and a model for the future of the labor movement as a whole.

In order to uncover the importance and the potential of the the social movement side of the UFW, it is first necessary to analyze in some detail the historical construction of the union. This paper represents a beginning step in that analysis rather than an end product. It will be similar in some respects to the relatively sizeable literature which has already accumulated on the United Farm Workers union (see, for example: Baker, 1975; Brown, 1968; Dunne, 1967; Friedland and Thomas, 1974; Jenkins, 1975; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Kushner, 1975; Levy, 1975; London and Anderson, 1970; Majka, 1978; Mattiessen, 1971; Taylor, 1975;

Thomas, 1981a; and Walsh, 1978) in that it will attempt to sketch in the role of the UFW in contrast to the historical experience of other farm worker unions. But, in at least two ways it will differ from that past work: first, we will attempt to combine an analysis of the political economy of agricultural production in the southwest with an analysis of the strategies and actions which resulted in the creation of a successful movement. Thus, in contrast to the recent work by Jenkins (1975) and Jenkins and Perrow (1977) which focused largely on how the political atmosphere facilitated farm worker insurgency, we will argue that political and, more importantly, structural factors established important preconditions for mobilization but that they did not determine the character of the movement itself.

Second, we will examine the strategy and style of organization which the UFW undertook and assess their implications for the dilemma the union now faces. In other words, we will argue, the success of the organization in achieving a measure of stability previously unknown in agriculture cannot be fully understood without analyzing how it responded to the structure it encountered and, conversely, how those responses shaped its future possibilities. To do this, we will examine the phases of organizational change experienced by the union.

The paper consists of three parts. The first part will consist of an analysis of the political and economic organization of agriculture in the southwest and the obstacles it posed for the unionization of farm workers. The emphasis on political economy will underscore both the limitations and the opportunities which helped determine the fate of various attempts at unionization. In particular, the tactics which accounted for successful mobilization, even momentary action, will be linked to that political economy. The second part will focus on rise of the United Farm Workers union and will attempt to explain its success in terms of the structural changes which served as preconditions for mobilization and the organizational tactics

which responded to those changes. The third part will examine the dynamics of organizational change in the UFW and will consider the union's options for future action. It is in this final part where we hope to provide an integrated analysis of the organizational problems engendered by the politics of citizenship and the union's options for future action.

Political Economy of Agriculture and Unionization

Although the United Farm Workers union headed by Cesar Chavez is often thought to be the first successful agricultural workers union in the nation, it is more correctly termed the longest-running union. That is, as students of agricultural labor and history have shown, the UFW was preceded by a sizeable number of unions^{and} less formal worker organizations (Jameison, 1945; Morin, 1952; Glass, 1968; Galarza, 1971; McWilliams, 1971; London and Anderson, 1970; Pfeffer, 1980; Watson, 1977; and Weiner, 1978). The Industrial Workers of the World, a handful of socialist and communist unions, the Teamsters and a number of AFL and AFL-CIO creations at one time or another tried their hand in the fields. Among the AFL and AFL-CIO entrants were the following: the United Packinghouse Workers (UPWA), Fruit and Vegetable Workers (FVW), National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) and Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC). These and other organizations, while they may not have enjoyed the longevity of the UFW, nonetheless constituted important efforts to develop at least some measure of organization and protection for field workers. In addition to the groups that survived long enough (or had some official charter) to acquire a place in historical literature were the short-lived but significant collections of workers who banded together to mount a challenge to exploitation by employers.

The sporadic success of earlier farm worker unions, tallied in occasional wage concessions or momentary protection from bullying, cannot be understood without consideration of the obstacles posed to worker organization by the political and economic structure of agriculture in the southwest. One immediate and obvious obstacle was the intensely powerful and coercive political organization of agricultural employers. At the national level, the American Farm Bureau Federation, particularly in the period of the 1920s-60s, stymied the efforts of industrial labor unions to extend the umbrella of federal labor legislation to include farm labor. The Department of Agriculture, even during the New Deal era, was a virtual captive of the Farm Bureau it created (McConnell, 1977). Even when the Farm Bureau failed to develop a coherent strategy for overcoming regional and commodity cleavages in its national membership, it managed to organize a united front of agricultural employers implacable in their hostility to the unionization of farm labor (Fisher, 1953; and McConnell, 1977). Wielding the scepter of the Jeffersonian ideology of yeoman agriculture and republican democracy, the Farm Bureau pierced all attempts to include farm laborers within the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

At the local level, the Jeffersonian guise was invoked with less subtlety. Growers (as they refer to themselves) brandished the direct force of local police and vigilantes to quash refusals to accept meager wages and 19th century sweatshop working conditions. Strikebreakers were imported from other areas to replace the discontented; though often those who broke the strikes did so out of a fight for their own survival. When the opportunity arose, growers pitted ethnic groups against one another, exacerbating the antagonisms which already existed among equally powerless members of a split labor market (McWilliams, 1971). The outcome of such competition, most commonly, was the acceptance on the part of one group of lower wages or worse working conditions. The conflict between ethnic groups for work, a

recurrent theme in the historical accounts, derived not out of some myopic inability to grasp common interests but out of the fact that at the level of lived experience, categories of ethnicity were imposed upon competing groups and were used to shape their existence. Often, particularly when communist unions sought to intervene, local communities would drop ethnic or racial condemnations in favor of the equally powerful negative reference to Red or Soviet communism as a threat not only to agriculture but the entire nation (Kushner, 1975; and Galarza, 1971).

Where the Farm Bureau derived its leverage from its purported representation of agriculture nationally, local anti-union interests derived from theirs from immediate dependency of local merchants, politicians, schools and churches on the economic fortunes of growers. The rural towns of Salinas, El Centro, Delano and Bakersfield drew sustenance from agricultural economy just as much as southern communities were dominated by cotton plantations (cf. Goldschmidt, 1948, and Thompson, 1958, for an interesting contrast).

At both the local and national level, the concept of "agricultural exceptionalism" served as a short-hand rationale for the exclusion of farm labor from industrial legislation and for the direction of national agricultural policy (Friedland and Thomas, 1974). Exceptionalism, briefly, purported that agriculture by its very nature could not be equated with industry: farming was small business; farming was the cornerstone of a free polity; farmers were subject to the vagaries of God, weather and natural calamity. Fisher phrased it quite eloquently:

The California farmer, like other American farmers, is one of the principal audiences for the physiocratic legend. No matter whether he travels by private plane, employes a chauffeur, ships by air express and owns a produce market or two in Baltimore and New York, he is insistently a farmer engaged in society's most useful and necessary enterprise, and

entitled to the special consideration which the dignity of his occupation commands. He regards himself as a natural agent of the forces of freedom, which he is more likely to define as freedom to raise, harvest and market his crop than as freedom of speech and assembly for those whose stake in society is less than his own. He believes that he has a right as a farmer to an adequate supply of labor (1953: 94).

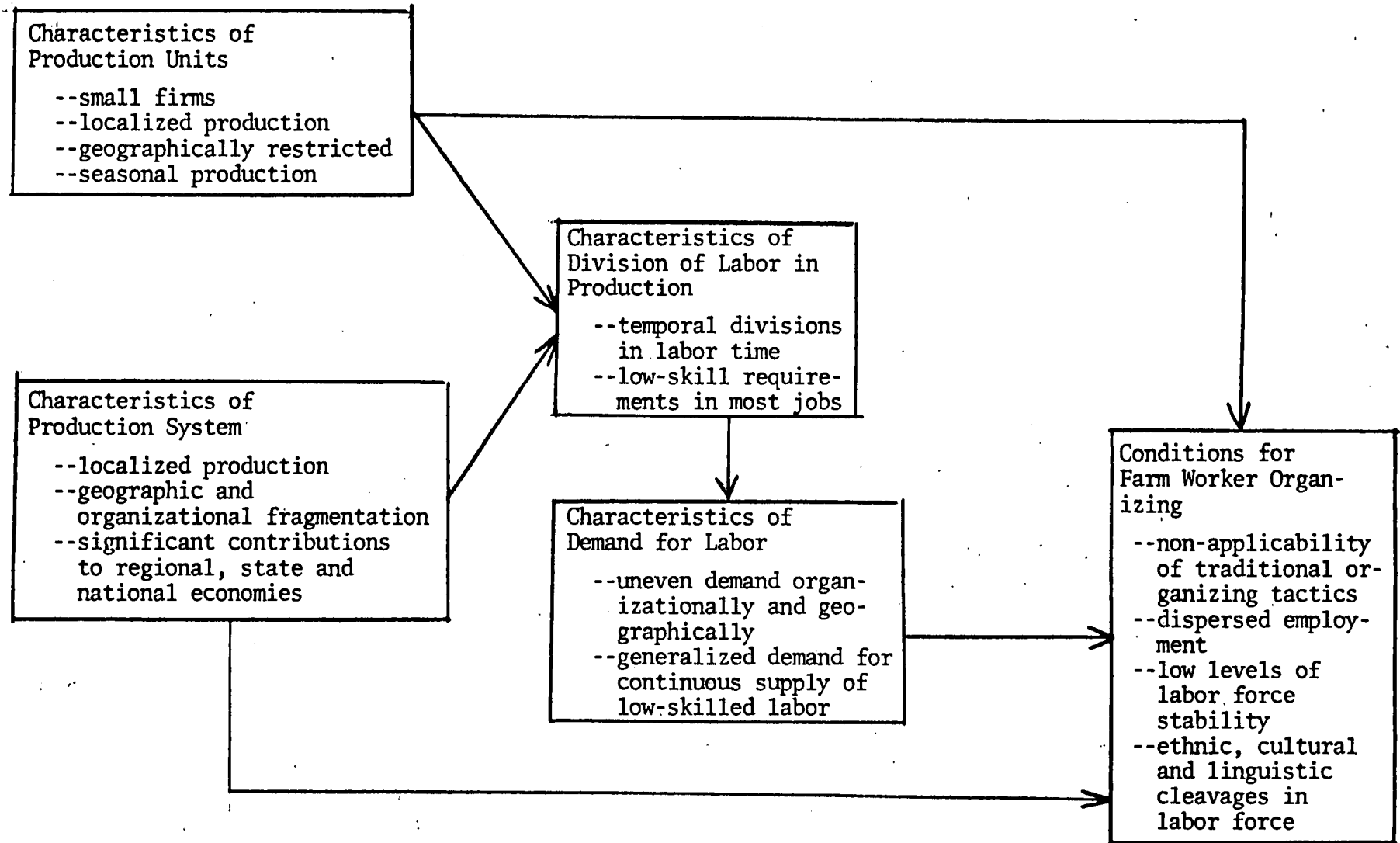
In other words, agriculture could not withstand the combined stress of upholding democracy, weathering unpredictable acts of God and nature and unions.

Though the temptation to dismiss these claims may be strong, particularly in light of the larger scale and greater intensity of agriculture in California historically, there is an element of truth embedded in the ideology of exceptionalism. In the figure below, we have laid out a rough and admittedly broad diagram depicting the structural features underlying the political economy of agriculture in the Southwest of the 1880s-1930s. The diagram is intended to chart the influence of the economic organization of agricultural production (beyond simple property relations) on the division of labor in production and demand for labor. In turn, these factors are used to explain the strategies of labor recruitment undertaken by agricultural firms and, finally, the conditions for farm worker collective action.

 Figure 1 about here

Although the time-frame for the diagram tends to truncate the historical analysis somewhat, the period of 1880-1940 is an important one for the argument. The organization of agricultural production was characterized by relatively small firms growing crops for local markets; selling their crops to brokerage agents (sometimes produce companies but mostly railroad companies) who, in turn, sold the crop at

Figure 1: Effect of Political Economy of Agriculture on Farm Worker Organizing in California (1880-1940)



larger metropolitan produce terminals; or growing commodities under contract with processing firms which transformed those commodities (e.g., wine grapes, tomatoes or canning vegetables) into finished products (cf., Thomas, 1981^b, for a more detailed discussion of the varying production and contracting arrangements organized in southwestern agriculture during this period). Most distinctive about agricultural production was its seasonal and localized character. That is, the agricultural economy was typified by independent firms tied to particular geographic areas by land ownership and constrained in their production cycles by the seasonal nature of agriculture. Few if any firms produced in more than one area even though most produced more than one crop during the time when weather permitted. Thus, there were no "mobile firms" (Thomas, 1981:48) producing lettuce or broccoli on a daily basis throughout the year by leasing acreage in scattered production areas.

This geographical and organizational discontinuity in production affected the degrees of freedom open to farm owners in organizing production. For most of it meant that the demand for labor was uneven at best. While highly skilled family labor could be called upon to maintain the farm in the hiatus between planting and harvesting and during the winter season, planting and harvesting chores often far outstripped the capacity of family labor. Hence, production was characterized by an uneven demand for labor with hired, non-family labor employed for relatively short but intense periods. Given the organizational and geographic discontinuity in production, few farm owners found it economically rational to invest in training hired, seasonal labor to perform more than a few relatively simple chores, e.g., how to weed a field without damaging immature plants, how to distinguish ripe from unripe fruit, how to properly cut and pack the crop. The intense market orientation of most farms, especially with the high cost of land and restricted access to capital for small firms, further diminished feasibility of a more continuous use of labor and

heightened the demand for unskilled, seasonal workers (Fisher, 1953). These two factors--a demand for unskilled labor and the uneven demand for labor generally--combined to generate a specifically agricultural labor market.

The agricultural labor market in the southwestern economy was thus one characterized by a demand for a highly elastic and mobile supply of low-wage labor. The actual construction of the labor market, however, was an overtly political process. In order to satisfy a generalized need for labor which would be continuously available, unskilled, willing to travel in search of employment, and willing to accept meager wages, employers banded together on regional ^{and} state levels (cf., Fisher's, 1953, discussion of employers' organizations and their efforts to influence local, state and national governments). Using their substantial leverage as food producers, major contributors to the regional and national economy, defenders of democracy, and guardians of traditional morals and values, employers and their representatives sought to construct continuous sources of "attractive" labor: a labor supply which would be available when needed for short periods but which could be externalized or jettisoned when unneeded. During the late 1800s through the 1930s, attractive labor was found: largely in a succession of alien, ethnic workers. Thus, as London and Anderson (1970) among others have noted: "Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and Mexican workers followed one another's footsteps into California's fields, there to find working conditions virtually unchanged since the initiation of commercial agriculture in the mid-1800s" (London and Anderson, 1970:39). The recruitment of alien labor created a politically-mediated labor market (Thomas, 1981: Chapter 2): one which gave to employers considerable power in determining wage levels and working conditions and which severely restricted the capacity of workers to negotiate the labor contract through the denial of the political protections of citizenship.

These factors combined to produce myriad obstacles to the organization of

farm workers. Differences in language, culture and aspirations among ethnic groups, along with the capacity of employers to set these groups in competition with one another, dampened the efforts of domestic labor organizers to create a common ground for organization. The elastic supply of labor curtailed the potential for any one organization to carry out a successful work stoppage: dissidents were replaced by other workers. The dispersed character of employment, with unmarked fields separated from rural communities by miles of meandering roads, inhibited traditional "factory-gate" leafletting and speech-making. Finally, the migrancy of the workers themselves posed major problems in organization: the short duration of employment often precluded development of real organizational commitments before workers had to pack their belongings and scatter in search of the next job.

Though a later development, the Bracero Program epitomized the politically mediated labor market. Begun in 1942 as a formalization of past labor recruitment practices, the Bracero Program established an open pipeline of Mexican workers to southwestern fields (cf., Galarza, 1964; Scruggs, 1960; and Craig, 1971, for more thorough historical accounts). The labor contract which brought Mexican workers north was negotiated between growers (through their labor supply associations) and the Mexican government^{and} stipulated wage levels and the duration of employment prior to the beginning of a season. Braceros (Mexican contract laborers), lacking any organized means by which to participate in wage negotiations, worked in the fields for the length of their certification and then were returned to Mexico to reenter the pipeline. The abuses of the Bracero Program have been well-documented elsewhere (cf., Galarza, 1964) but deserve brief mention here because they bear directly on the issue of farm worker organization. Because braceros were readily available at a price favorable to employers, domestic workers were forced to either compete with the contract workers or leave the fields altogether. Despite numerous attempts to

publically demonstrate the adverse affect of non-citizen workers on wages and working conditions, labor organizers (in particular, organizers supported by the AFL-CIO-chartered National Farm Laborers Union) could neither overcome the sheer political strength of agricultural employers nor could they begin to make even the most elementary advances in organizing the braceros themselves. The intransigence of employers was only bolstered by the increased importance of food supplies to the nation during the Second World War and the Korean conflict.

Thus, the political and economic structure of southwestern agriculture presented tremendous obstacles to farm worker organization. The structural and ideological features of "agricultural exceptionalism" created a minefield for union organizers and their supporters. Yet, impassable as it may have seemed, the minefield did contain some landmarks, some keys to safe passage. For, as we will argue in the next section, while the agricultural production system did foster tremendous obstacles to successful worker organization in unions, it also created a set of relatively diffuse, but overlapping, social networks among farm laborers which provided the potential for cohesion in a seemingly atomized labor force.

Bases of Farm Worker Organization

As we suggested earlier, union organization prior to the development of the United Farm Workers union ^{was} sporadic in character. But, rather than enumerate the long list of successes and failures, we will focus instead on the features of organizational strategy which were shared by the more successful groups. The three sources of organizational success to which we will point--informational networks, residential/organizational stability, and similarity in communal status--were much less the product of union action than they were characteristics of the production system itself. It was the capacity of some unions (whatever their life-span) to tap into these sources which accounted for their success.

Informational networks.

Among farm workers, particularly migrants, good information is a valuable commodity. In a setting in which work sites are scattered over hundreds of miles, jobs are unstable and short-term and employers and local communities are hostile and exploitative, the "grapevine" is more than just a source of gossip, it is a means of survival. For those who have studied agricultural labor (or participated in it), the grapevine is an amazing thing: it is a carrier of stories, warnings, legends and facts about jobs, employers and their reputations, the best and worst places to eat and sleep, as well as a human telegraph connecting distant friends, relations and loved ones. Even now, when formal employment channels have been set up by companies and unions in the major production areas, the fastest and most reliable source of information about where to find work is found in a local grapevine "station": usually a bar, grocery or streetcorner gathering place in the barrio (for a discussion of how one of the authors found work when researching the lettuce industry, cf. Thomas, 1981: Chapter 4).

Like the network employed by the professional workers described by Granovetter (1974), the grapevine among agricultural workers is constructed largely on a foundation of "weak ties," i.e., interactions between individuals which are usually momentary, limited and non-binding in nature. Informational searches generate contacts between individuals who may only know one another in passing or who are connected through a common acquaintance. Unlike the informational networks studied by Granovetter, however, the grapevine among agricultural workers is a durable network. It is created and re-created out of the conditions of employment imposed on the farm labor force and is, simultaneously, a critical precondition for the successful operation of the agricultural production system. That is, in order for employers to rely on the availability of enough hands for cultivation or harvesting, a

well-organized grapevine must exist to carry the news of work openings.

It is the importance of the grapevine to workers as a means of survival and to employers as a labor recruitment device which gives the informational network potential as an organizing tool. If the informational network can be tapped into or manipulated consciously, then those who rely upon it can be organized, too. Thus, for example, the IWW used the grapevine among bindlestiffs and fruit tramps (male migrant workers) in the early part of the 1900s as a device for relaying information about employers and worker rebellions. Even more powerfully, the Wobblies effectively dominated the railroad lines as a rapid means by which to dispatch organizers who carried information to distant places and to connect dispersed groups of workers. In other words, IWW organizers became nodes for information collected by the union and therefore centers of attention among migrant workers. Later unionizing efforts also capitalized on the grapevine in similar fashion.

Just as access to information proved a valuable asset for union organizers, the practice of gathering and manipulating information was not limited to unions. Individuals could also make themselves nodes of information and profit from it in monetary terms. In particular, some set themselves up as middlemen between employers seeking workers and workers seeking jobs. These middlemen, commonly known as labor contractors, were similar to what Bonacich refers to in other settings as "middleman minorities" (1973) in that they acquired a status higher than that of the workers they organized but lower than that of employers. Labor contractors based their position on a monopoly over information and used that monopoly to extract a living: by establishing contacts with employers and agreeing to furnish and supervise labor, they would charge a rate for their services, gather workers into a crew, pay the crew a wage and pocket the rest. For employers, the labor contractors provided a useful service: they reduced the uncertainties of recruitment,

spoke the language of the workers and saw to it that workers were removed when they were not needed. Though conscious of their exploitation, workers recognized the necessity of seeking out labor contractors. Since many could not speak the language of the employer or undertake the expense of searching for jobs, the labor contractor was a necessary evil (cf., Friedland and Nelkin, 1971, for a view of modern labor contracting and its similarity to past forms). It should not be surprising, therefore, that the destruction of the labor-contracting system became one of the first objectives of the United Farm Workers union. More importantly, it was the effective use of the grapevine (and subsequent attempt to concretize it in the hiring hall) which proved integral to the UFW's organizational development in the 1960s.

Residential/organizational stability.

Even in a production system which demanded migration among workers and enforced it through the denial of citizenship and legal protection, pockets of stability were formed and served as another source of organizational strength for some farm worker unions. The shanty-towns and dispersed neighborhoods served as the "wintering" grounds for many farm workers when they were not off in search of work. Unlike the camps found on ditch-banks or nestled in orchards where workers slept while on the road, farm worker settlements offered something of an anchor to migrants and union organizers. Areas like Hebron Heights (referred to as "Okie town" in the 1930s) on the outskirts of Salinas, Guadalupe (outside Santa Maria along California's central coast), Lanare (west of Fresno), and Delano (near Bakersfield) sprang up in rich agricultural districts which offered employment over relatively long periods of time. In those communities, a measure of residential stability could be achieved and with that stability a greater certainty that organizing efforts might be mustered to last more than just a few weeks before work ended and workers had to move on. The familiarity that comes with living in the same place more than just a

few weeks could serve to enhance the chances for developing cohesive organization. Because these communities were under the constant watchful eye of local police and growers, organizing efforts were often secret or at least low key, focusing not on overt issues of wages and hours but on mutual support, e.g., raising food and funds for families in need or pooling resources to ensure survival through long, moneyless winters.

Grasping the divisive potential of farm worker settlements, some growers sought to provide housing on their own property so as to maximize their ability to mount surveillance and to quickly disperse collective action. "Ranch" or "labor" camps were often little more than converted chicken coops or barns; but they served the dual purpose of tying workers and their families to the farm (making occupancy dependent upon obedience and stability in work) and containing the labor force isolated from the rest of society (i.e., union organizers).

To the extent that farm worker settlements did survive, however, they provided social centers into which union organizers could enter (often under the cover of night), find shelter and food, and slowly develop an audience for their message. Like their guerilla counterparts in the highlands of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Vietnam, union organizers for the IWW and other unions often used song and quasi-theater both to spread a message of solidarity and to highlight the foibles of the seemingly invulnerable enemy: employers. Songs written by Joe Hill and corridos (Mexican folk ballads) turned the enemy into a buffoon and attempted to turn the lives of workers facing hunger and deprivation into the stuff of heroic legends. The development of an understanding of the commonality of people's lives and of the destructive effects of labor market competition, while not easily translated into collective action, still provided a measure of solidarity which could be with time transformed into cohesive organization. Unfortunately, many organizing efforts lacked the time necessary to

move from the stirrings of common consciousness to cohesive organization. The beginning of the season (and the need to set out once again in search of work) and the fearsome raids of vigilantes often undid the careful work of many nights.

Another, often overlooked, source of stability resided in the work process of some agricultural industries. Though most harvesting required little more than a strong back or quick hands, some jobs demanded a fairly high level of skill. The pruning of grape vineyards at the end of the season and the harvesting of highly perishable vegetables like asparagus and lettuce demanded greater individual and collective skill than most other crops and the people who worked in those industries tended to become specialists in their jobs. Though their skills only netted them a few cents more than common laborers, grape, asparagus and lettuce workers could achieve greater stability in employment and could, potentially, form the core of union organization. Grape and lettuce workers, as we shall go on to demonstrate, were consciously chosen by the United Farm Workers precisely for these characteristics. But, even before the successful efforts of the UFW, Japanese and Filipino workers sought to achieve a monopoly over access to the grape vineyards and asparagus fields in order to assert union-like bargaining leverage with employers (cf., Fisher, 1953:Ch.3). As Galárza describes in his account of the NFLU's long struggle with the DiGiorgio Company (a major table grape manufacturer in the San Joaquin Valley of California), the skills of grape workers were the closest approximation the AFL could find to an aristocracy of agricultural labor (Galárza, 1971).

Such niches of organizational or occupational stability in the farm labor force were, however, few and far between; though, as we will argue later, differentiation in the agricultural labor process increased with structural changes in the political economy of agriculture. Many firms sought to centralize skilled jobs in locations outside the fields and in those locations to rationalize production when possible.

Thus, for example, the exacting jobs of trimming and packing head lettuce (critical to the preservation of a perishable commodity to be transported to distant markets) were, until the early 1950s centralized in packingsheds where work could be monitored and closely supervised (cf., Smith 1961; Glass, 1968; and Friedland, Barton and Thomas, 1981: 65-68 for a brief description of the packing process). Trimming and packing in the sheds was organized around conveyors and, in large part because the coverage of shed work under the NLRA gave impetus to unionizing efforts by the Teamsters and the United Packinghouse Workers, growers were constantly on the lookout for ways to reduce the need for labor there. It is important to note in this connection that when new technology for refrigerating produce became available (vacuum-cooling instead of the labor-intensive icing process), it was combined with the massive importation of braceros from Mexico to create an integrated labor process in the fields. That is, cutting, trimming and packing were united as field activities engaging crews of interdependent workers. The "en-skilling" of field harvesting was only undertaken when it became clear to employers that they could avail themselves of highly vulnerable labor (for an analysis of changes in the labor process in the lettuce industry, cf., Thomas. 1981b: Chapters 3 and 5).

The organizational possibilities in workers who were residentially and/or organizationally and occupationally stable were not overlooked by unions. Yet, the potentialities were not always realized for many of the reasons already described: farm worker settlements were often vulnerable to penetration by grower agents and intimidation through force; local organizers and sympathizers were generally easily recognized and singled out for punishment; skill levels were relatively high for some workers but few workers were indispensable.

Similarities in communal status.

The employer strategy of importing and manipulating workers from different

ethnic and racial groups proved a generally powerful deterrent to union organizers. ✓
But, at the same time, constant harassment and discrimination did tend to push members of the same ethnic group together: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Mexican workers banded together in a defensive posture, though they remained largely apart from one another. Where some unions interested in organizing these disparate groups found the ethnic enclaves difficult to penetrate, others actively sought to generate solidarity through similarities in communal status. For example, Japanese workers organized themselves internally, using overlapping family ties, the strength of patriarchal leadership within the family, and traditional cultural and religious values to protect themselves and promote family well-being (cf., McWilliams, 1971: and London and Anderson, 1970). In direct contrast to the Chinese (and perhaps consciously so), the Japanese prevented the development of an exploitative labor-contracting system in which certain members of the same ethnic group would use their knowledge of the language, their monopoly over information and their informal contacts with employers to their own profit. Familial and cultural ties were eventually elaborated into fairly powerful labor supply associations which negotiated informal agreements with employers (in lieu of written contracts) but which were nonetheless forerunners of union contracts. The success of the Japanese in securing control over access to certain areas and jobs (especially the more skilled jobs) made them a more influential force than many employers felt comfortable with; however, the objective of most Japanese workers and their families was not permanent employment as field hands. Instead, organization through extended family groups was designed as a device for pooling resources and purchasing land. Needless to say, though many Japanese families were eventually successful in acquiring land and becoming employers themselves, their popularity did not increase significantly as they entered into direct competition with other agricultural producers.

Filipino workers, many of whom emigrated as single men, achieved a similar order of organization, especially after the expulsion of the Japanese in 1917. Lacking the extensive kinship networks of the Japanese, Filipino men tended to aggregate in certain occupations, e.g., grapes and a variety of vegetable harvests. Firmly placed in skilled work, they would migrate with the season and use their leverage with employers to secure employment for their countrymen. As the small numbers of Filipino women and family members trickled into the U.S., isolated ethnic communities began to develop on the outskirts of agricultural production centers like Salinas, Guadalupe, Santa Clara and Los Angeles. Though those settlements never grew very large, they did become outposts of Filipino culture where street corner conversation swung with the various dialects of the islands and talk of unionizing could extend beyond the whispers permitted in the fields. The quasi-citizen status permitted Filipino emigres enhanced their position as community members, at least in terms of the claims made against them by local governmental representatives (e.g., to sign up for the draft). But, even with second-class citizenship Filipino worker associations were treated harshly by employers (Watson, 1977). Nonetheless, it was a predominantly Filipino union, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO) which later played an important role in spurring the development of a successful organizing effort in the grape industry in 1965-66.

Finally, the Wobblies sought, with mixed success, to combine similarities in regional origin among the Okies and Arkies who tramped the fields of the southwest with their common status as "Americans" to achieve a higher level of solidarity. By constantly summoning up the paradox of "Americans living off the sweat of other Americans", they would expound upon the injustices being perpetrated against citizens while, at the same time, using the music and the regional folklore of the workers to give organization a distinctly regional flavor. Though, as suggested earlier, this was

by no means the only tactic the IWW undertook, it had the effect of asserting a commonality of national and cultural heritage to bind workers to one another.

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Thus, the political and economic structure of agriculture simultaneously created obstacles to organization and bases upon which organization could be built. The ability of indigenous groups of farm laborers and organizers from outside to tap into the potential of informational networks, sources of stability and commonalities in status and ethnicity (singularly or in combination) helps account for success in the most hostile of settings. As we will go on to argue in the next two sections, the durability of organization found in the United Farm Workers union can be traced to its remarkable interlacing of these features of the agricultural labor force. Equally important, however, structural changes in the organization of agricultural production served to enhance the potential of collective action.

Structural Change in Agriculture and the Bases of UFW Success

Recent work analyzing the history and structure of the farm workers' movement in the Southwest has focused considerable attention on the role of environmental factors in determining the success of the United Farm Workers union. Jenkins in an extended study (1975) and in an later article with Perrow (1977) points to the helping hand extended by a liberal national elite as the critical factor differentiating the UFW from its predecessors. This "sugar daddy" hypothesis suggests that external political and social forces, acting through the Democratic Party and allied urban and labor powers, cleared the way for successful farm worker organizing by neutralizing Congressional opposition to agricultural unionism and by providing direct access to an urban audience sympathetic to the plight of southwestern campesinos (farm workers).

This argument, while capturing elements of the situation, misses the mark when it focuses its analysis at the level of national politics and largely ignores the unfolding of the story at the local level. In particular, two of the major "victories" secured for the farm workers by the national liberal elite--the end of the Bracero Program and the provision of access to sympathetic urban audiences--were not unmitigated blessings for the growing union. A third factor, underemphasized in Jenkins and Perrow, was nonetheless one which clearly affected the nature of the opposition the UFW faced. We refer here to the considerable changes which took place in the economic organization of agriculture (particularly in California) during the period of 1940-1970. In this section, those three factors--the end of the Bracero Program, the urban audience, and long-term change in the economic organization of agriculture--will be analyzed in light of their contribution to the success of the United Farm Workers movement.

End of the Bracero Program

Though the Bracero Program was officially brought to an end in 1965, the contract labor system had been under attack since the end of the Korean War (Scruggs, 1960 ; Craig, 1971; Galarza; 1971). The program had initially been designed as a stop-gap measure: its implementation in 1942 was aimed to fill a temporary void in the supply of farm labor at the outset of WWII caused by the internment of the Japanese, the enlistment of many Filipino farm workers and the movement of the remnants of Depression migrants into defense industries. Yet, in successive years the program was extended; Southwestern growers, in particular, had become quite accustomed to the availability of Mexican seasonal workers on demand and fought tenaciously against efforts to phase the program out. The flood of Mexican nationals not only guaranteed almost complete employer domination of the content of the work process and wages, it had the added benefit of actively deterring the successful

penetration of domestic unions into the fields. As in previous clashes, indigenous farm worker groups and externally-funded chartered unions battled locally powerful employers over wages and working conditions while capturing little attention at the national level, especially during the Eisenhower administration. When domestic workers did take jobs in the fields, they commonly worked alongside braceros and were forced to accept wages set at a prevailing rate by employers in their one-sided negotiations with the Mexican government (the ostensible, but largely silent bargaining agent for the braceros). Despite the practice of "wage-fixing" described by Fuller (1955), growers were never openly challenged by the judicial or executive branches of the federal government. Thus, even in protracted contests between unionists and employers, such as the strike by members of the National Farm Laborers Union against the DiGiorgio Company in the mid-1950s (cf., Galarza, 1971), bracero labor played a pivotal role in maintaining grower hegemony over production.

With the election of John Kennedy in 1960, the Congressional debate over termination of the Bracero Program pitched in favor of union and liberal forces. Two anti-Bracero arguments, in particular, gained a sympathetic ear: first, with rising unemployment in the nations' cities (a partial consequence of the massive northward migration of displaced black farmworkers and sharecroppers), the potential availability of thousands of unemployed urban residents as domestic replacements for Mexican migrants became a rationale for termination of the program; and, second, union backers of the new Democratic administration sought to extend their influence in the rapidly developing food industry (i.e., the growing corporate-dominated food processing and packaging sector) by establishing a solid foundation in the fields (Craig, 1971). The anti-Bracero campaign gained momentum in the first years of the Kennedy Administration and dismantling of the program began in 1964-5.

The termination of the Bracero Program, paradoxically, was not viewed with the

same fear across all agricultural industries in the Southwest. Although it would be naive to argue that any employer would welcome the removal of docile and manipulable labor, elements of several industries had found the Bracero system somewhat less than ideal even during its most popular period. As Thomas (1981b: Ch.5) notes in his study of the lettuce industry, for example, a number of lettuce growers had developed a strategy of employing braceros for the least skilled work while hiring undocumented workers or permanent immigrants (i.e., those with documentation testifying to their permanent residence status) to make up stable, skilled harvest crews. For these employers in particular, the short-term work certifications limited the utility of braceros for the newly developed "integrated" harvesting method described earlier; furthermore, there were few guarantees that the same braceros could be contracted on a year-to-year basis. Hence, lettuce growers hesitated to use braceros in the harvest. Some employers managed to arrange for the same braceros to be employed annually, but at a cost of healthy bribes to the Mexican bureaucrats who organized the recruitment and distribution of labor south of the border. With bribes factored into wage cost, many employers opted for non-bracero labor.

Ostensibly, the termination of the Bracero Program should have changed the composition and the structure of the agricultural labor market. As Jenkins and Perrow (1977)^{argued,} the success of the national liberal elite in removing this barrier did indeed enhance the prospects of the UFW. Yet, the end of the program did not signal the end of the problem. First, the termination of the Bracero Program was not accompanied by a major change in the legal status of farm labor: agricultural workers continued to work outside the protections of the National Labor Relations Act; equally important, individual states remained fully in control of the eligibility requirements for the receipt of unemployment and workmen's compensation, food

subsidies and transfer payments. Thus, farm workers continued to be deviled by "agricultural exceptionalism", on the one hand, and by the ability of local politicians to enforce their mobility between agricultural employers, on the other hand. Second, the replacement of the Mexican workers by the domestic unemployed failed to materialize. Agricultural employers, angered by the loss of their elastic supply of labor, did little, of course, to attract citizen workers into the fields. Wage increases were minimal and remained below those available in manufacturing; furthermore, no significant efforts were made to up-grade either the working conditions or the status of farm work. Many of the urban unemployed, on the other hand, either refused to accept agricultural working conditions (preferring to stay in the cities) or left the fields after a short trial period. And, third, the official demise of the Bracero Program was not itself complete: left behind as a loophole in the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act of 1952 was a clause allowing for the emergency certification of foreign immigration in case of a shortage of specific categories of labor. With the onset of the summer season of 1965 and the apparent shortage of domestic replacements, California growers petitioned the Secretary of Labor for emergency supplies of Mexican nationals to undertake the harvest (cf., Western Grower and Shipper, May, 1965). The importation of "green-cards" (workers on permanent immigrant visas) developed into an alternative labor supply in relatively short order.

While the green-cards had greater formal protection than their bracero predecessors (largely in the formal right to choose their own employers), they were not the only "new" entrants into the fields. A much larger loophole appeared as employers bemoaned the loss of the braceros: the accessibility of undocumented workers. In reality, the bracero pipeline was closed but the undocumented floodgate was opened. With little attention to border regulation in the years prior to 1965, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and its police arm, the Border Patrol,

were insufficiently prepared for the massive influx of Mexican nationals seeking to recapture the jobs they had occupied (or sought to acquire) as braceros. Some employers openly admitted offering jobs to their former braceros once they saw the approaching demise of the Bracero Program (Thomas, 1981b: Ch.5). Even with the infusion of tax dollars into the INS budget (partially stimulated by union lobbying), the Border Patrol proved woefully inadequate in dealing with the problem. Indeed, in light of the history of Border Patrol efforts since 1965, it would seem that, as Burawoy (1976) and others (e.g., Thomas, 1981a and 1981b; and Bach, 1978) have argued, the point has been to accentuate the political vulnerability of undocumented labor, not to arrest its flow.

The end of the Bracero Program was not, therefore, an unmitigated blessing. Far from substantially reducing the barriers to labor organizing, it created newer and more far-reaching dilemmas: the legal status of farm labor remained unchanged; Mexican labor was left in the fields; and undocumented workers came to occupy a distinctly important, and vulnerable, position in the labor market. These were hardly auspicious circumstances for farm labor organizing, even with the best intentions of a national liberal elite.

An Urban Audience

During what we refer to later as the "community organizing" phase (roughly from 1963-67) of the United Farm Workers union, the organization was less recognizable as a trade union and more directly resembled a broader assemblage of farm workers seeking to address a number of common needs. Though efforts to push for civil rights for the Mexican-American population in the Southwest were being carried on and dated back several decades, the movement in the west was not nearly so well organized nor as visible (especially to a national audience) as the struggle of blacks in the south. The movement in the Southwest had been characterized by

largely isolated campaigns to improve the plight of farm workers sponsored by various church organizations and unions but usually depended on the heroic, but often unsuccessful efforts, of a handful of clergy and union organizers (cf., London and Anderson, 1970; Galarza, 1971).

One of the first major media investigations into the situation of farm workers since the Dust Bowl era, Edward R. Murrow's "Harvest of Shame" in 1960 directed national attention to part of the "other America" largely forgotten in the country's vigorous pursuit of affluence. While "Harvest of Shame" quickly passed into the memories of many Americans, the film awakened others, particularly students embarking on a crusade of civil rights and a segment of the clergy which had ministering to the needs of less rural flocks. Many students who would otherwise have headed south to participate in the civil rights movement shifted their attention from Selma to Salinas; others, who gained experience in the organizing techniques of southern boycotts and marches, rushed to California to take part. Priests and ministers lobbied their national churches to create funds and ministries, such as the Migrant Ministry, to reach migrant farm workers. The American Friends Service Committee, long an advocate of farm worker rights, established outposts in rural California seeking to provide infrastructure for the movement.

There, ahead of the waves of students and clergy, a small but enthusiastic cadre of organizers had established the beginnings of a movement. Cesar Chavez, a former migrant employed as an organizer for the Community Services Organization, had banded together with several friends and relatives (including his wife, Helen, cousin Manuel, brother Richard, and close friends Dolores Huerta and Fred Ross) to create the National Farm Workers Association, the precursor to the UFW. In the early 1960s, the NFWA was a loosely knit organization supported by Chavez's salary from the CSO (an offshoot of Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation based in Chicago),

Helen's and other's earnings and the food and clothes the organization received in exchange for their services for farm workers. When Chavez eventually quit the CSO--in large part, he argues, because the CSO was no more committed to tackling the immense problems of organizing farm workers than had been the AFL-CIO--the NFWA lived largely off the occasional dues it received from its members and charity (cf., Levy, 1975; Taylor, 1975).

Yet, Chavez had a surplus of energy and a growing reputation among the farm workers with whom he came into contact. Up and down the vast San Joaquin Valley, through the radiant vineyards and orchards which are the state's livelihood, Chavez made human contact with his future constituency: a contact which among many stimulated such enthusiasm that even before the union's first successes there were some who called themselves "Chavistas" (followers of Chavez). Chavez's style of organizing broke the rules of trade union organizing: he insisted on the need to establish common bonds of solidarity among the farm workers before even considering launching a strike (Friedland and Thomas, 1974). Migrant workers had everything to lose from being ushered too quickly into a strike; the past history of farm worker organization in the Southwest was replete with story after story of strikes being quashed quickly and easily by a well-organized industry. Furthermore, as Chavez reasoned, campesinos had every right to be suspicious of outsiders--including himself--because every contact they had with the local community, especially Anglo landlords, shop owners, police, and vigilantes, reaffirmed the cost of being Mexican or Mexican-American and a farm worker. Chavez, though a Mexican-American, was suspect if he talked or acted like a union organizer; union organizers had proven themselves largely unhelpful when it came to doing something about wages and working conditions in the fields. Thus, Chavez saw the NFWA as a self-help community organization of farm workers and vigorously rejected traditional trade union

strategies.

The early successes of the NFWA (described in a later section) provided some indication to Chavez that this strategy was indeed correct. Farm workers could be brought together to develop common means to satisfy common needs (e.g., with a cooperative gas station, burial insurance and a credit union). These advantages were often tenuous, dependent on the willingness of the NFWA members to continue in the face of great odds, but were real enough to convince Chavez to guard the organization against premature efforts to unionize and to continue to assert his particular strategy of organization. Since the movement, at this stage at least, depended on the herculean efforts of Chavez as leader, his desire to assert control over organizing strategy and to keep his finger in all activities was largely unchallenged.

However, the influx of a new wave of "outsiders" did pose a challenge to Chavez's command. The troops of clergy and students (which actually began more like a few scouts) arrived in California determined to do what they could to alleviate the plight of the farm workers. One early arrival described his entrance this way: "I came on a bus from Philadelphia with a couple friends in the summer of 1964. We got into Fresno and headed for the American Friends Office looking to see what we could do to help the farm workers. I'd spent the preceding summer in Mississippi and figured we'd just come into town and set things up. You know, a march, maybe a boycott or something. We had plans and thought we'd pretty much have to do it ourselves...because the farm workers didn't have the experience we did" (interview with former UFW staff member, October, 1978). Others, like the student above, also believed they would have to "build" the farm workers' movement. Many, directed to the NFWA through the AFSC and others aware of Chavez's organization were confronted by a small core of NFWA organizers suspicious of their intentions.

While it would be too extreme to suggest that Chavez and the others jealously guarded their creation, it is true that they tended to resist the implication that they needed guidance in their endeavor. One early member of the NFWA and a close associate of Chavez during that time explained that there was real concern as to how the organization would deal with the influx of Anglos, particularly young men and women, many of whom felt they knew better how to do the job than the indigenous organizers (Personal communication, June, 1971).

While this volunteer labor force clearly posed problems, it also offered benefits the NFWA sorely needed. Students and clergy provided a relatively good supply of cheap, enthusiastic and skilled labor. College students could be enlisted to perform myriad chores: setting up communication channels with local press, making sense of the increasingly complex books and accounts, doing the necessary but often distasteful (or at least boring) jobs of mimeographing, phoning, researching, cooking and cleaning. Many students came from urban areas outside the state and thus were potential conduits of information about the NFWA to urban audiences and links with financial resources and other students back to the organization. Ministers, priests and nuns could lobby their own church hierarchies for funds and publicity. They commanded respect from local politicians (at least initially) and often prevailed upon liberal members of local elites to plead their case in front of city councils and county boards of commissioners. They could also be quite effective in leaning on the growing bureaucratic apparatuses of Community Action Boards being set up under the auspices of the war on Poverty. Finally, as Chavez found when he began his tour of college campuses in 1965, students (and to a lesser extent, clergy) were a replenishable labor source. Those who left the NFWA to pursue their studies (or who were exhausted from the regimen Chavez established) were often replaced by half again as many others.

Chavez marshalled his supporters in the fields into a tight core of organizers and, in an effort to assert his leadership while capitalizing on the supply of outsiders, steadfastly refused to accept external assistance unless it was on his and the NFWA's terms. "It was going to be a farm workers' movement or nobody's movement as far as Cesar was concerned," Chavez's associate argued. And, fairly quickly, the issue was resolved: volunteers, though they might disagree vehemently with Chavez and his strategies, were nonetheless impressed with the commitment of NFWA members and staff to Chavez, to the record of success already established and to the discipline which Chavez instilled in the ranks of the membership. Furthermore, as a number found out, Chavez was not unwilling to swiftly discharge recruits who disobeyed orders or too frequently questioned commands. An important, though not directly obvious factor, also resolved the issue of leadership: most of the volunteers could not speak Spanish, much less quickly assimilate into the culture of the predominantly Mexican membership. Hence, their status as outsiders further diminished their capacity to lead.

Having resolved the dilemma of how to incorporate a potentially divisive but useful source of energy, Chavez and the NFWA then proceeded to undertake organization of a sympathetic urban audience. With a supply of volunteer labor well-connected to outside groups, there would be no diversion of funds or resources to other, non-farm worker organizations. Conversely, the ties between volunteers and those outside groups could be strengthened and extended to serve the purposes of the farm workers' association. In other words, not only could students and clergy do what needed to be done in the fields and rural communities, but they could become the organizers of that diffuse urban audience. This is no small point given the insistence by Jenkins and Perrow (1977) that the national liberal elite made possible the success of the UFW. In fact, as civil rights organizers in the south had already

discovered (cf., Morris, forthcoming), waiting for urban liberals in the industrial north to "rescue" the oppressed netted only a longer period of oppression! The point was that that audience had to be organized, to be directed in how to assist struggles outside the suburbs and the shorelines. Just as southern civil rights leaders turned white students back to the north to organize their own "backyards," so Chavez ultimately sent students and clergy back to the cities to lead the national liberal elite, e.g., in the later boycott campaigns.

Thus, the efforts of liberal legislators and union leaders, while stemming the tide of braceros into California fields, provided something of a step in the right direction. And, students and clergy certainly arrived at a propitious point in time. But, the termination of the Bracero Program and the infusion of volunteer labor were not unmitigated blessings. They had to be bent to serve the purpose of the local organization; but they did not make the local organization. Thus, while it would be incorrect to ignore political and ideological changes taking place at the national level, those changes provide only a partial explanation for why farm worker unionization finally achieved success.

To this milieu must be added another factor which has largely been left aside until now: structural change in the economic organization of agriculture in the Southwest. Here, again, we will point to an important pre-condition to organization: as before, a necessary but insufficient source of explanation.

Structural Change in Agriculture

Long-term changes in the political economy of agricultural production in the southwestern United States significantly altered the environment in which farm worker unions organized. Two general sets of changes are relevant to the analysis: concentration in production (particularly in what had traditionally been labor-intensive crops) and changes in the structure of the enterprises engaged in agricultural

production. In some cases, as we will attempt to show, those changes resulted in an alteration of the labor process in production; in others, organizational changes more directly effected the susceptibility/vulnerability of enterprises to challenges by farm workers for union representation.

To detail the extent of change in agricultural production in the southwest is far beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is necessary to consider the process of concentration of production in the period (roughly) from 1930-1975. As Fellmeth (1973), Villarejo (1980), Fredericks (1978), Hightower (1973), Zwerdling (1980) and others have documented, California agriculture has historically led the nation in terms of size of production units, percentage of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, and corporate ownership of land and product. During the period of 1930-1975, the production of major fruit and vegetable crops steadily increased in volume but decreased in total production units; as more was being grown, fewer firms were growing crops. Although few precise figures are available to document the process of concentration, a few examples provide evidence: prior to 1960, nearly 4000 farms produced tomatoes for processing, by 1974, however, less than 600 farms grew tomatoes (even though total production had increased significantly) (Friedland and Barton, 1975); in 1940, the three largest lettuce growers accounted for less than 20% of all the lettuce produced in California and Arizona, by 1978, however the top three produced nearly 50% (with individual contributions reaching nearly 40% at some points during the year) (Friedland, Barton and Thomas, 1981; Thomas, 1981); in the 1940s, citrus production in California was carried out on several thousand small farms, by the mid 1970s, however, less than 8% of all citrus producers accounted for 47% of the crop (Valvano, 1981:3); in the wine and table grape industries, similar processes were taking place (Friedland, forthcoming; and Moskowitz, Katz and Levering, 1980: 806-7). In segments of agriculture directly adjacent to production such as processing,

distilling, canning and brewing, processes of concentration were steadily reducing the number of firms and, not surprisingly, the degree of competition amongst consumers of "raw materials" from agricultural enterprises (cf., Frundt, 1981).

Many of the bigger firms engaged in agricultural production had roots in the more successful competitors who had survived the depression; many others, however, came in from the "outside" in the much-publicized corporate penetration of agriculture during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Companies like Tenneco (wine grapes, cotton, assorted vegetables), Santa Fe Land Company (grapes, cotton), United Brands (lettuce, mixed vegetables), Purex (lettuce), Coca-Cola (citrus, grapes and wine), Schenley, Heublein, and National Distillers (wine and brandy) joined large local firms like Bud-Antle (lettuce and vegetables), Gallo (wine) Almaden (wine), Maggio (vegetables) and D'Arrigo (vegetables) to significantly change the organizational shape of California agriculture. With the growth of extensive and durable marketing networks, linkages to key chemical and fertilizer producers, vast agglomerations of land and production capital, and advances in production technique, the costs of doing business skyrocketed, the market position of smaller firms further marginalized, and the sophistication of production technology intensified.

At the same time that corporate agriculture expanded its share of production, many large firms sought to establish and expand their market position through aggressive advertising. Major processing firms like Contadina, Hunt-Wesson, Heinz, Libby's, Gallo, Almaden, Christian Brothers, Campbells and others attempted to both fix their names in the public mind and to up the ante for entry into the highly lucrative processing and distilling industry (NACLA, 1976; and Frundt, 1981). Other firms, such as Bud-Antle, attempted to create brand-name identification with consumers by putting their company logo on the plastic wrapper found on lettuce in the supermarket (Fredericks, 1979); Sunkist expanded the use of ink dyes on the skins

of their oranges and lemons to cement a consumer association between the brandname and product quality.

These changes in the political economy of agricultural production—concentration, corporate penetration and brand-name advertising—each changed the stage upon which the struggle between agricultural labor and capital struggled. The concentration of production reduced the number of firms in competition but, at the same time, brought about a concentration of people in production. The larger firms came to account for a larger percentage of the man-hours of labor performed in the fields. As a consequence, the personal relations between employer and employee tended to be eroded in the face of a much larger labor force. Even though labor contractors continued to be employed by certain firms, they themselves came to be subjected to a much more standardized routine and treated as extensions of the company, rather than independent entrepreneurs. Increasingly, companies found it more rational (if only in budgetary terms) to directly handle their own employment and labor recruiting, thus removing the middleman labor contractor altogether (cf., Thomas 1981: Chapter 5). One major upshot of the concentration of production, therefore, was the de-personalization of employment relations and the agglomeration of larger numbers of workers within the same organization.

Corporate penetration into agriculture brought with it firms with experience in labor relations in union-dominated industries, many of which were outside agriculture. Surely one of the lures into agriculture was the lack of an organized labor movement, yet, confronted with a challenge from labor (as many were in the late 1960s and early 1970s) more were willing to seek an accommodation with labor (commonly with the Teamsters union) than face a protracted union-busting effort. A willingness to deal with labor unions resulted also from the diversity of economic activities in which most corporate enterprises were engaged. Since many were situated in other

industries besides agriculture and based their profitability on other products, they were in a better position to weather the vagaries of agricultural production in general--whether that meant oscillations in weather, market prices or labor unions. However, profitability in other product lines did not bring with it a complete guarantee of invulnerability; firms like Coca-Cola (Coke, Minute Maid), United Brands (Chiquita Bananas), Heublein (Smirnoff Vodka), Seagrams (Seagram's 7, VO), Purex (Bleach) and National Distillers (Gilbey's Gin, Old Grand-dad) all banked on other consumer items as their principal profit centers. The high visibility of these main-line products and their centrality to corporate profits also made them potentially susceptible to "negative" brand-name identification, largely in the form of organized consumer boycotts.

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Thus, far beyond the social and political machinations of national elites, important changes were taking place at the level of the enterprise and the workplace. Despite the significance of outside sympathy and help, the construction of a durable farm workers movement cannot be left out of the analysis. Most importantly, as we have tried to show, changes in the structure of agricultural production contributed substantially to the preconditions for success. To understand how the United Farm Workers union was forged out of an interaction with these changes, it is now necessary to look directly at the organization itself.

From Mobilization to Mechanization

Three overlapping phases in the construction of the United Farm Workers union can be distinguished: "community organizing" (1963-67); "union building" (1967-73); and

"union expansion" (1973-82). Each of these phases is marked by differences in organizational development and structure and, not surprisingly, by different sets of problems. They are linked, however, by a set of internal conflicts brought about by the structure confronting the movement itself. One general problem confronting the movement from its earliest phase through the latest is the conflict between communal organization, whether around ethnicity or class, and the seemingly everpresent need to develop an internal hierarchy to deal with the increasingly complex nature of contract negotiation and administration. The conflict internally has been a particularly virulent one precisely as a result of the heavy emphasis given by union leaders in the early phase on the communal nature of the organization, thus lending a social movement flavor to the union's efforts (especially in creating linkages to outside Latino and Chicano organizations and in defining the oppression of farm workers with the discrimination against Hispanic-Americans in general). Yet, with the success of the union in acquiring a relatively stable existence in agriculture, pressures have continued to mount from both employers and members compelling the union to bureaucratize the administration of contracts and the often complex benefit programs which those contracts have brought about. Thus, the union confronts the dilemma of how to service its contract partners and its members without allowing for the creation of a rigid bureaucracy—especially one which could distance the leadership from the membership in a fashion reminiscent of developments in other American trade unions.

The other major problem concerns the union's capacity to sustain organizational growth, increased wages and benefits, and more effective protection of farm workers' interests within a politically-mediated labor market. As suggested earlier, the conditions of employment in much of industrial agriculture are themselves fueled by the availability of politically vulnerable labor, especially undocumented immigrants

from Mexico, Central and South America. The UFW's organizational strategies have generally been directed toward mobilization of relatively stable (geographically and organizationally) workers, the majority of whom have been either citizens or documented immigrants. However, in many crops (including those most extensively organized by the union) a significant proportion of the labor force is undocumented. In the lettuce industry, for example, estimates of nearly one-third of the labor force being undocumented are common (cf., Thomas, 1981: Chapter 3). In other crop-industries, such as strawberries, estimates as to the percentage of undocumented workers is even higher. For the UFW, the presence of undocumented workers is a major problem: indocumentados tend to be the most easily manipulated workers; they are often forced to accept wages and/or working conditions far below union levels; and they are available in large supply to be used as strikebreakers. Despite the sentiment found among many undocumented workers that unionization is necessary for farm workers, the contingencies of employment and the needs of families living in poverty in Mexico often outweigh sympathies for the UFW and unionization in general (Thomas, 1981b: Ch.5). Yet, if the availability and vulnerability of undocumented workers acts to keep wages low, working conditions physically destructive and employment security negligible, it also acts to sustain employment for union members. In lieu of sufficiently entrenched organization to negotiate the terms of employment or, should it prove necessary, to extract a compensation/retraining program for workers displaced by mechanization, the UFW walks a tightrope with respect to the issue of undocumented workers. Indocumentados effectively undercut the union's ability to control the supply of labor and deepen organization; yet, the presence of indocumentados acts, ironically, to allay mechanization, job displacement and, ultimately, diminution of the union itself.

In the section which follows, the three historical phases in the development of

the United Farm Workers union will be discussed. In this presentation, we will attempt to link the process of union development and the problems which the union has encountered in organization with the structural characteristics of the agricultural labor market and industry. In the concluding section, we will turn to the more general implications of the overall analysis.

The Community Organizing Phase: 1963-67

The remarkable success of Cesar Chavez and the core organizers of the UFW in creating a durable farm worker movement is noteworthy not only in light of the past history of violent but failed attempts at agricultural unionism but also in terms of the strategy of organization they employed. From the outset in 1962 when serious efforts to build a farm workers organization began, Chavez worked in a style distinctly different from traditional factory labor organizing. Using community organizing techniques he acquired from Alinsky organizer Fred Ross (then working for the Community Service Organization—CSO), Chavez applied an approach which, while sharing similarities to Alinsky's, represented a new departure in community organizing. Alinsky's key techniques involved the development of strong commitments by the receiving community, the creation of a coalition of organizations and Alinsky's own abrasive presence to serve as a catalyst in polarizing the community.

Chavez's approach was distinctly different. Although he targeted particular communities of farm workers (a point of great importance to which we will return), Chavez returned as a farm laborer and began quiet, unobtrusive organizational activities—instead of arriving as an organizer. Chavez correctly recognized that any attempt to become involved in economic actions/challenges to growers would be met with the same implacable hostility which had spelled doom to previous labor offensives. His upbringing in a migrant farm worker family also alerted him to the suspicion farm workers who often lived a precarious existence harbored for labor

organizers from "outside." Thus, economic action against employers would have to wait until the bonds of solidarity between the core of farm workers in the organization were strong. To avoid premature controversy, Chavez eschewed the term "union" in naming the organization (the National Farm Workers Association or NFWA); to have done so would have alerted agricultural employers to what was to emerge, all too soon, as a cancer from their point of view.

More important than the naming of the organization, Chavez sought in his initial undertaking to define the kinds of services that relatively isolated and individualized farm worker families needed and then began to develop those services through his own energies. Most of the farm workers with whom he dealt drove their own cars to the site of their seasonal work--most were not, in fact, migrants but traveled considerable distances to their work daily, in most cases within a 25-50 mile radius of their home. What they needed, therefore, was cheap gas, oil and car repairs. From these needs, Chavez worked to develop the farm workers' cooperative gas station. Similarly, due to the seasonal nature of their work and the rather harsh treatment many received at the hands of the public welfare bureaucracy, farm workers had to borrow money during the slack season. Traditionally, money was borrowed from loan sharks; Chavez worked to develop a farm workers' credit union. And finally, though this does not exhaust the range of farm worker needs, most farm workers lacked the savings to provide for a crucial family need: burial. (This is not to overlook the fact that few workers had medical insurance to cover even the most rudimentary health requirements.) In order to meet that expense, Chavez and the small cadre of NFWA staff formulated a burial insurance program based on the collection of small premiums from a large number of subscribers.

By serving genuine needs and developing organizations within which farm workers could develop trust in one another, Chavez and the founders of the NFWA created

the means by which to impart organizing skills. These several efforts created bonds of solidarity between workers which then became centered in the NFWA.

The community organizing phase of the NFWA was thus a period in which Chavez and the core cadre of organizers attempted to create reciprocal bonds among farm workers. It was a period in which the organizers traveled extensively throughout California acquainting themselves with farm workers in a human fashion, gaining access through personal contact to the grapevines which linked workers to one another and to employers, and using those grapevines to broadcast their message of action. With each stop in a farm worker community or barrio, organizational seeds were planted, local contacts made and strengthened and more extensive bonds developed. The extensive traveling which Chavez himself undertook, often leaving his home base in the rural community of Delano in the southern San Joaquin Valley for weeks at a time, was commonly fueled by contributions from families in the communities he visited. His visibility during this period proved important later for the strong ties of commitment which helped the organization survive attacks from employers and their police enforcers.

What has been described here as a community organizing strategy tells only part of the story behind the initial successes of the NFWA. Overlooked in many of the more macro-analyses of farm worker insurgency has been the significance of who was being organized. That is, while among the resources at the organization's command (or acquired as it grew) included external sources of financial and manpower support, national publicity, and a more hospitable reception in urban areas, local resources were also critical parts of the story. Local social, familial and informational networks predated the efforts of the NFWA and Chavez and were themselves the product of an historically constructed system of production and labor recruitment. In other words, the movement which Chavez initiated was founded upon preexisting

resources which were purposively redirected to serve the needs of farm workers in a collective fashion.

A reexamination of the first organizational efforts undertaken by Chavez and the NFWA is instructive in this regard. The first systematic and concentrated organizing efforts were directed toward farm workers in an area surrounding Delano, California. Delano is a community located at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley (often referred to as the Central Valley) in Kern County. The area is a rich source of fruits and vegetables but is overwhelmingly dedicated to the production of table and wine grapes and, therefore, the grape industry constitutes the principal source of employment for farm workers in the area. In addition to the concentration of production and employment, grape harvesting and vine-pruning offer employment over relatively long periods of time. Unlike, for example, the flash peak of harvest employment in the tomato or strawberry harvests, work in the grape harvest has been extended both as a result of the proliferation of grape varieties which produce a staggered harvest (allowing producers to stagger the marketing or delivery of their crops) and as a result of the concentration of production within an area suitable for commuting on a daily basis from a centrally-located home base. The availability of work, first in the harvest, then the meticulous process of pruning back exhausted vines and finally in other phases of production (e.g., weeding) or in other crops, made it possible for some workers to settle in local communities such as Delano and find employment for the bulk of the year. This is not to argue that all grape workers were drawn from local labor pools; up until the end of the Bracero Program, the majority of the labor force was drawn from Mexico under the contract provisions of that system of "managed migration" (Galarza, 1964).

It was, however, this relatively stable segment of the labor force which Chavez attempted to organize. Stability, as we argued earlier, was a key factor in

organizing. Grape workers (those who were not braceros) tended to be geographically and organizationally stable. For the most part, work in the grape industry constituted their major source of income. Many had developed a degree of specialization in the work--a specialization which helped to increase their earnings potential under a piece-rate system of payment and which involved the entire family in different phases of the harvest as a unit (some cutting, some picking up the bunched of grapes and others packing them in crates in the case of the table grape harvest; in the wine grape harvest, some cutting, others tossing the cut bunches into wire cages called gondolas, and one or two driving the small tractor which pulled the gondolas). Organizational stability came about as a result of the informal ties linking workers to particular or regular employers, foremen or labor contractors and, reflecting the political economy of the industry, the relatively-small number of employers (since the industry was dominated by large companies, wineries and brokers). For many of these workers, migration in search of work was extremely limited and often consisted more in long-distance commuting between home and various work sites. Again, given the nature of the work process and the structure of the industry, migration and commuting generally took the form of family movement or crew movement, rather than the migration of single men over long distances.

Combined with the organizational potential inherent in geographical and organizational stability similarities in status played an important role in NFWA strategy. In contrast to the braceros whose legal status was conditioned by the terms of their temporary labor contract, the workers Chavez organized tended to be either citizens or permanent-resident immigrants. Although the alignment of local governments--and police agencies behind employers generally acted against the protection of the legal rights of even citizen farm workers, the claims to the political and legal entitlements of citizenship of an organized group had great

potential importance as a resource for the fledgling organization. This was, of course, borne out by the victories of the civil rights movement (affirmed in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and later demonstrated in the political support of the Democratic Party in California and elsewhere for the farm workers movement. More immediately, however, the low wages and the horrendous working conditions which citizen farm workers had suffered as a result of the flooding of the labor market by braceros had created a long-standing, shared grievance amongst citizen and documented immigrants. The predominance of non-citizens in the labor market and the confounding effect of shared culture and national heritage among farm workers (both citizen and non-citizen) had muted the potential for solidarity along the lines of citizenship status. However, in the wake of the termination of the bracero program, the potential for citizen and documented workers to claim jobs formerly held by braceros and to assert their legal rights to organize unions appeared to increase significantly. This was especially important among citizen workers who had already "invested" in the industry geographically and organizationally and in terms of the long and rather violent history of attempts at unionization by localized workers which were undercut by the use of the braceros and other foreign workers as strike breakers (cf., Galarza, 1971).

Perhaps the most important shared status of the targeted group was (and remains) ethnicity. The negative privileges which had been imposed on Mexicans and Mexican-Americans as a result of the political intervention of employers in the labor market and the subsequent close association between farm work and low status acted to make jobs in the fields unattractive to most American workers. The restriction of employment to Mexicans and the restricted employment opportunities for Mexican-Americans outside of agriculture provided employers with a relatively captive labor force incapable of effectively negotiating over the rewards or status

associated with field work; at the same time, the acceptance of low pay, substandard working conditions and seasonality of employment accepted by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans was explained as a result of their own backwardness, lack of ambition and/or preference for a "peasant-like" lifestyle. The flip-side of repression, however, was the potential for ethnicity to serve as a basis for group solidarity. A solidarity of sorts was indeed expressed through the religious organizations such as the Catholic churches (those which allowed Mexicans or Mexican-Americans entrance), social and cultural events and observances (such as festivals and feasts on Mexican national holidays, soccer matches, and traditional practices for observing religious holidays), the clustering of Mexican-Americans into neighborhood bars replete with Mexican music and dancing, and symbolic gestures such as putting Mexican flag decals on family cars. Though it must be understood that the ostentatious display of national or cultural pride often served to stimulate ridicule, if not repression, by Anglo agents of social control, there nonetheless existed an underlying framework of ethnic solidarity--even without the capacity independently to transform that underlying framework into progressive action.

Consistent with the community organizing emphasis of the NFWA, Chavez and his cadre sought to tap ethnicity as a central symbol for the organization. Initially, ethnic solidarity, particularly as it came to be expressed in La Raza at a later point, was not the goal of the organization; rather, it was a device for facilitating the achievement of other goals, e.g., the creation of farm worker services and later union representation and collective bargaining. And, although the NFWA developed a symbiotic relationship with burgeoning civil rights organizations among Hispanics which were concerned with the level and quality of services they received, its principal concerns were far more immediate. Thus, cultural and religious symbols were employed to draw in Mexican-American farm workers and to help define the

commonality of their position and needs as farm workers. The flying of the Mexican flag inside NFWA offices, the posting of pictures of the Virgen de Guadalupe (a patron saint), Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, the conduct of most meetings in Spanish, and the later design of the organization's flag using an Aztec eagle all attempted to promote a consciousness of shared status in order to mobilize the energies of the membership toward group goals.

The community organizing phase of the farm workers' movement can thus be viewed as a period in which an extensive organizational infrastructure was developed, but developed with resources drawn as much from the local scene as from external groups. At this point it would be fruitless to weigh the relative contribution of local and external resources to the organization's advances; it should, however, be clear that the factors we have elaborated--the structure of the production system, the existence of extensive social and informal networks (or grapevines), residential and organizational stability among the targeted workers, and similarities in legal status and ethnicity--are important in understanding how organization was achieved.

The community organizing strategy employed by the NFWA gave the organization a distinct orientation toward self-help despite the infusion of financial resources from the outside. Chavez's desire to create overlapping bonds of cooperation among farm workers reflected the difficulties of facing any effort to develop collective action in the face of hostile employers and their supporters, the exceptional status of agricultural enterprises and agricultural workers economically and politically, the relatively low level of real financial support from the AFL-CIO, the suspicions held by farm workers of labor organizers from the outside, and his own fear of dependence on outside organizations turning into subordination. Thus, the organization took on a distinctly communal character: outsiders (most particularly Anglo students and clergy) who did join the NFWA were carefully inserted into positions of

responsibility but largely excluded from the exercise of authority; their labor as professional staff members, researchers, pickets, clerks, couriers and, occasionally, advisors was of great importance to the goals of the organization but their capacity to exercise leadership, direct the "real" membership, and undertake autonomous action were severely circumscribed. Those who could not accept their positions as privates in the NFWA army (and sometimes as highly skilled privates) were unceremoniously drummed out. The fact that few volunteers (even some who had spent time working in the fields) were accorded membership in the organization (honorary or otherwise) underscores their restricted role. To have fully integrated volunteers, however, would have undermined the principal philosophy of the organization. In many respects, to accord a lower status to those whose social and economic status was much higher outside the organization symbolically promoted the communal character of the NFWA.

Emphasis on the communal character of the organization was clearly an important factor in engaging and extending the involvement of farm worker members. And, as long as the activities in which the organization engaged were relatively localized, tasks and responsibilities could be shared and parcelled on the basis of need, rather than office or expertise. Bureaucratic organization was not only undesirable but also largely unnecessary. Yet, as the organization's range of activities and responsibilities expanded with the opening of direct battles for union representation and the successful acquisition of contracts, the tension between communal and bureaucratic administration mushroomed. That tension, as we will argue in the next two sections, was exacerbated by the need to exploit external resources--especially in organizing successful boycott campaigns--to facilitate the building of the union.

The Union-Building Phase: 1967-1973

The initial involvement of the NFWA in agricultural unionism, confronting the

growers as employers, was not the product of Chavez's desires. Unionism was thrust upon the NFWA when the former Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), an AFL-CIO creation with an active core of Filipino workers, shifted their strike as the season moved northward from the Coachella Valley (where the NFWA lacked membership and had no prior commitments) to the Delano area where the NFWA was concentrated.

In September 1965, Chavez was dragged reluctantly into the strike by his own membership which refused to cross AWOC picket lines. Chavez was uncertain whether NFWA had reached the level of strength necessary to win. The organizational test came when the strike was successful in bringing out workers to stand on the picket lines, but it was a failure economically. This strike's failure—in its inability to make employers hurt financially—originates in the dispersed character of California agriculture and, most importantly, the capacity of growers to effectively import strikebreaking workers from Mexico.

The boycott as an organizational weapon.

Confronted by the dilemma of being able to successfully organize workers and pull them into the picket lines but not being able to halt production because of the importation of strikebreakers, Chavez turned to a new technique: the boycott. Boycotts have been a traditional weapon of labor but have not always had outstanding success. Despite early attempts made by organizations like the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to educate the general public to the importance of the union label, boycotts have only been successful under two circumstances: the first is where a commodity is intended primarily for workers, and organized workers in particular; thus boycotts on overalls have relatively successful whereas those aimed at regular suits have not. The second has been that in which striking unions initiate secondary boycotts, calling on other unionists to refuse to handle merchandise that has been

designated as "hot" or nonunion. Secondary boycotts are now illegal under the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act and the primary (consumer) boycott has been recognized by most unions as a generally ineffective weapon.

Chavez changed this situation, resuscitating the boycott as a biting economic weapon. Through very effective public relations, an emphasis on nonviolence, dramatic peregrinaciones (pilgrimages), such as the march from Delano to Sacramento, and highly-publicized fasts by Chavez, the plight of the farm worker was made much more visible. While farm catastrophies—a bus run down by a train, the cremation of a family in farm worker shacks—had always created stirs of conscience, Chavez's effective use of the media brought this level of consciousness to a state of continuing and active guilt in the hearts and minds of America's urban, liberal population.

Besides a capacity for dramatic public presentations that won national media coverage, Chavez developed the ability of the UFW (the organization's name was changed from NFWA to UFWOC, signifying its status as an organizing committee when it merged with AWOC) membership to translate the farm workers' message into specific, local actions: he made it possible for urban populations to support the farm workers without any great personal cost. Dispersing the UFW core to dozens of cities, the plight of the farm workers was made meaningful through actual huelgistas (strikes) who could articulate their experiences to urban audiences. The skills they had developed organizationally through participation in the UFW now proved invaluable.

The importance of the boycott strategy as a device for applying pressure on employers when local strike efforts had only limited success in effecting production cannot be underemphasized (cf., Friedland and Thomas, 1974: 56-69), but it also tended to shift the organization's energies away from struggles at the point of

production. In the first place, the development of the boycott campaigns channeled much organizational energy into maintaining a highly visible presence in a large number of metropolitan areas. Not only was Chavez dispatched on exhausting national tours of churches, union halls and college campuses, but many of the secondary leaders of the union followed to coordinate or expand boycott efforts. Though throughout the most intense period of the boycott campaigns (1966-73) the UFW continued to assign organizers to the fields and rural communities, the boycotts were proving to be the most productive means for applying pressure to recalcitrant employers. The boycotts, though effective, did not bring about immediate results. The wine and table grape boycotts yielded fruit only after two years of effort. For the membership, the boycott strategy proved effective in the long-run but did not provide immediate income: support for striking families was limited to the outside aid it could muster. Many more workers sympathetic to the cause were asked to keep the faith but to keep working at non-struck ranches and wait out the boycott.

The difficulties of carrying on the battles on several fronts grew with the decision to extend the boycott to table grapes and, later, to lettuce. With Chavez and the core leadership of the union stumping the cities to make the boycotts work, local organizing efforts were erratic and often unsuccessful. Growers imported strikebreakers with impunity and sought to undermine the union's appeal through local "truth squads" and severe police harassment of strikers and their families. Though local officials of the union struggled to defend members and the organization's tenuous footholds, their efforts were often undermined by arbitrary commands emanating from union headquarters (usually where ever Chavez was) which would dispatch them from a field office in Salinas to a boycott office in Detroit.

The union's communal structure and strong leadership (in Chavez) greatly enhanced its ability to respond rapidly to the various contingencies it faced. The

college students and young people, in particular, proved quite useful in this way. Their commitment to the organization, reverence for Chavez and their low-pay enabled them to be shuttled from one locale or campaign to another at very little cost. But, the facility with which the union responded also tended to disguise the fact that its reactive orientation made it vulnerable to diversion by employers and other opposing forces. For example, the Proposition 22 ballot initiative in 1971-72, an employer-sponsored campaign to produce a law sympathetic to their interests, halted much of the UFW's organizing in the fields and drained resources from urban boycott campaigns. The initiative was defeated but disrupted the boycott and strike efforts.

Despite the problems it engendered, the boycott strategy did provide a significant lever in obtaining representation and contracts. During this period (1966-73) the UFW undertook boycotts in three commodities: wine grapes, table grapes and lettuce. In part, the characteristics of the political economy of these commodities account for the different successes and failures of the boycott actions. The UFW's initial boycott began in 1966 with wine grapes, a commodity grown by a mix of growers ranging from the giant Schenley corporation to many local growers. For Schenley, a vertically-integrated corporation that became involved in agriculture in recent years, wine growing was but a small part of a larger operation. More importantly, however, Schenley labels such as I.W. Harper were distinct in the public's mind--the product of decades of advertizing to develop brand-name identification. It is not surprising, then, that Schenley was the first of the grape growers to agree to a UFW contract when confronted by a boycott.

The other wine-grape growers were less vulnerable. Most were producers of table wines that they distilled, bottled and distributed under their own labels. Unlike Schenley, their economic success depended almost entirely on wines; unlike Schenley, while striving for brand-name identification, their advertising budgets were miniscule

in comparison and their labels had less prominence. The union's boycott therefore had to develop negative product identification. Although the process was lengthy, the boycott organization ultimately accomplished this purpose. This produced five contracts with the major wine growers of the southern San Joaquin Valley in 1968-69. Between then and 1973, the UFW extended its base with this type of grower.

The second commodity the UFW boycotted was table grapes. This boycott began in August 1967 when the union successfully organized workers from Giumarra vineyards, the largest grower of seedless grapes in the United States. Unlike wine grapes, table grapes are grown mainly by medium sized growers, few of whom are vertically integrated. Moreover, product identification of table grapes is negligible since the public does not buy table grapes by their label. Thus an initial boycott of selected companies spread to all table grapes as the strike against Giumarra extended to the entire table grape industry. Boycott organizations in every major metropolitan center were again called into action.

The table grape boycott involved a long and protracted educational campaign by local organizations with Chavez providing the dramatic national news to keep the issue before millions of urban residents. Within a year of its inception, it began to hurt the growers. The success of the table-grape boycott was determined by the special features of the commodity and the educative value that the boycott represented for urban populations. Grapes are relative luxuries until they become cheap in the peak season. Thus, when the price is low they are consumed in large quantities; when the price rises, consumption drops significantly. As the grape boycott was publicized through the efforts of the local boycott committees, housewives began to treat grapes as if they were expensive (e.g., foregoing them for other available fruits). This was facilitated by the fact that grapes come into supermarkets roughly at the same time as apples, peaches and pears. The boycott

proved, over several years, to be successful. Although a hard and bitter struggle for the UFW, once again the boycott proved its utility as a weapon of the union.

The situation changed significantly when the UFW was drawn into the lettuce strike. Lettuce, unlike grapes, is highly "inelastic"--few substitutes exist and consumption rates remain relatively stable within a broad price range. Thus grower reaction was mixed when Chavez and the union was drawn into the lettuce strike of the Salinas Valley in 1969 and threatened a boycott to make the strike economically successful. Among lettuce producers who were vertically integrated, with large corporate entities having strong product identification in other markets, the threat of boycott produced three contracts. Freshpick, the corporation associated with Purex (bleaches and detergents), felt threatened by a national boycott of its well-advertized products, not simply its lettuce. The same held for Interharvest (later know as Sun Harvest and owned by United Brands) and Pic-N-Pac (Del Monte).

The bulk of the Salinas Valley lettuce growers, highly specialized growers of lettuce and several related crops, resisted the threat of the boycott and refused to sign with the UFW. Only one locally based lettuce grower of any significance signed with the union. The UFW retaliated with a boycott against lettuce, but this proved largely unsuccessful, for the reasons described earlier. Its lack of success was only in part due to an on-again, off-again series of tactical errors by the union, harassment by the employers, alleged heavy purchasing of lettuce by the Department of Defense (during the Nixon administration) and other factors. The fact remained inexorable: lettuce was seen by most consumers as "necessary" and non-substitutable. The lettuce boycott failed.

By early 1973 the experience of the UFW had been one of being able to successfully organize workers and bring them out on strike, finding that strikes could only become economically effective through a boycott--at least in some cases. The

UFW had become reliant upon the boycott strategy and on the availability of external sources of support to buttress local strikes and organizing activities. Chavez strongly opposed any development which would legally impede the use of the boycott. For this reason Chavez, after initially supporting coverage for farm workers under the National Labor Relations Act, reversed himself. While coverage would have provided an electoral procedure through which farm workers could designate their union, it would have eliminated the boycott weapon. Moreover, reliance on the boycott strategy fostered a concentration of effort in those industries in which contracts had been won--wine and table grapes--and the one in which an organizing campaign had been initiated but stalled--lettuce. The tremendous organizational commitment to mobilizing external support, exacerbated by the tenuousness of the contracts it had won and by the continuing harassment from growers and their political allies, began to erode the union's capacity to do extensive community organizing prior to launching campaigns in other industries. With the onset of employer efforts to engage in "union substitution"--through the negotiation of sweetheart contract with the Teamsters Union--expansion was curtailed as the UFW sought desperately to protect the ground it won.

Contracts and union structure.

The successful acquisition of contracts by way of boycott pressure presented a paradox to the UFW: what had been a communal organization built around a relatively loose division of labor and an explicit opposition to hierarchical relations was now faced with a system of contract negotiation and administration which, despite the high level of member input into its goals, was structured along the lines of modern collective bargaining agreements. Employers insisted that, if they were going to be forced to contract with the union, the UFW had to behave in a manner consistent with trade union practice: e.g., provide a consistent and predictable

negotiating team with the authority to act on behalf of the membership, police its membership with regard to contract provisions, organize a reliable supply of labor, administer the complex provisions dealing with health, medical and seniority benefits, and establish and support the grievance-handling machinery which would effectively reduce conflict in the fields. The union contributed to the problem by insisting that it take over the task of recruiting and allocating labor through a hiring hall arrangement. Following somewhat on the model of the hiring halls developed in the longshoring industry, the UFW sought to replace the exploitative labor contractor system with a mechanism for more fairly allocating work assignments and for guarding the wage and seniority provisions of the contract. Although the union resisted the pressuring to model itself after other "business" unions (even in the face of AFL-CIO urging that it do so), it had mushroomed into an organization with multiple responsibilities, some of which were quite technical in character.

With the accretion of a broad range of responsibilities, demands for appropriate expertise and a barrage of lists, forms and claims to handle, the UFW turned initially to its most easily accessible source of inexpensive, skilled labor: volunteers. Lawyers, accountants, professionals of various sorts (including doctors and nurses), and students from college campuses were recruited to handle the mass of paperwork and to iron out the details of contract provisions under the general supervision of the union leadership. Volunteers were not, however, any less an issue than they had been in the UFW's formative years. They provided knowledge and skill at a low cost. But, they were outsiders culturally and linguistically; they sometimes resisted the authority of those less knowledgeable about the intricacies of paperwork; and they were not tied to the organization in the fashion farm worker members were; i.e., students could return to college and middle class life, professionals could go back to their previous pursuits, but farm workers had no such alternatives.

As the pressure to regularize contract administration increased (particularly on the part of members eager to make claims on newly-won benefits), the problem of internal structure intensified. Chavez and members of the leadership cadre railed against the bureaucratization of the union as a threat to the solidarity of the membership and to the openness of union affairs. At the same time, dissatisfaction mounted among members as the union experienced difficulty in handling contract claims and work dispatches and grower impatience trebled with the union's unwillingness to respond "professionally." An uneasy solution emerged with volunteers handling much of the paperwork but lacking any clear claim to bureaucratic authority and Chavez and the executive committee of the union maintaining authority over all activities in the union. Chavez, in particular, bore the weight of leadership in the organizing campaigns, boycott efforts and contract negotiation and leadership. Although the system functioned fairly well because of Chavez's energy and personal authority, it could only serve as a temporary solution to a complex set of problems. One thing was clear: the functioning of the union depended on Chavez's knowledge of all aspects of its operation and his presence to oversee their performance. In his absence—or in light of new developments—the system faltered.

As long as the range of activities in political leadership and collective bargaining contract administration remained relatively narrow, it was possible for Chavez to centralize his authority over all activities. However, as that range expanded, Chavez's ability to control diminished. Diminished control was on occasion responded to with a form of organizational housecleaning aimed at the nascent bureaucrats: on more than one occasion, Chavez or a representative returned to the national headquarters and arbitrarily shifted and/or dismissed departmental heads. Thus, for a time at least, the bureaucracy was kept in jeopardy. The housecleaning and the tension which accompanied it were often justified in terms of the need for

greater participation on the part of members in the workings of the union. There was also an undercurrent of insiders (members and Chicanos) vs. outsiders (Anglos), though Chavez never explicitly labeled it as such.

But, the motivating factor remained one of a resistance to the establishment of an entrenched bureaucracy. The resistance to bureaucracy was fueled as much by the immediate historical legacy of community organizing upon which the union was founded as its opposite, bureaucratization, was by the contract successes resulting from the boycott strategy. The official response to the problem, culminating this phase with the UFW's constitutional convention in 1973, indicated how severe the conflict had become: in a series of wide-ranging and occasionally acrimonious debates, the membership voted to establish oversight committees for each of the main functional departments of the union with a measure of authority wrested from department heads and vested in the committees.

The contention between communal and bureaucratic administration thus operated at two levels. On one level, the union sought to avoid the creation of a bureaucracy intervening between the leaders and the membership. The capacity of the union to mobilize its membership and shift its energies in the direction of one or another threat depended, it seemed, on a lack of distinction between (or vested interest in) hierarchical levels of the organization.

On a second level, however, the conflict was centered on the relative influence of the two developing "governments" (Cook, 1962) in the union: one associated with political leadership and process and the other associated with collective bargaining/contract administration. As long as contracts were relatively rare, the political leadership of the union remained foremost. Chavez and the core cadre effectively led and remained in close contact with the membership. Contract victories, however, demanded the creation of some structure to deal with the highly

technical but critical details of contracts. Despite the centrality of the political leadership and a communal ideology to governing the organization, it began to emerge, as Cook noted in her insightful analysis of the problem of dual governments in unions, that the administration of hard-won contracts was more immediately important to the membership.

Splits in the membership.

Despite the UFW's initial successes in bringing workers in the grape and lettuce industries out of the fields and winning contracts by way of effective boycotts, the union faced a dilemma in terms of the composition of its membership. As discussed earlier, the historically developed agricultural production system rested heavily upon the availability of a highly elastic and vulnerable supply of labor. The UFW's community organizing approach corresponded to the existing separation of the labor market into citizens and documented workers vs. undocumented workers. Though such an approach was rarely explicit, the emphasis on geographically and/or organizationally stable workers created a de facto split. Moreover, the active importation of undocumented workers as strikebreakers by employers served to further separate the labor force. Thus, the distinction came to have organizational and emotional significance.

At the same time that it attempted to wrest control over recruitment within a divided labor market, the union could not overlook the fact that at least some of its members in many bargaining units and industries were indeed undocumented and/or composed of former strikebreakers. In this connection, the boycott strategy was a principle factor in explaining how the most vulnerable members of the labor force—and, indeed, one cause of the low wages and destructive working conditions found generally in agriculture—came to be members of the UFW. In effect, boycotts and the pressure from already unionized firms succeeded in bringing into the union, by

fiat, many workers who had not been members previously. Since the union did not have a sufficiently large membership to replace all non-union workers many remained and had to be "organized" into the union.

The Union Expansion Phase: 1973-82

The four years from 1970-73 represented a period of great change for the United Farm Workers union. Paradoxically, it was in this period that the UFW was both enjoying the fruits of its boycott successes (in terms of the contracts won in the grape industry) and suffering its greatest losses (in terms of contracts subsequently lost to the Teamsters Union). The intrusion of the Teamsters and the weakening of the boycott weapon, we will argue, forced the union back into a strategy of community organizing which, with the passage of protective labor legislation in California, facilitated expansion through representational elections. Expansion has not, however, resolved the problems raised earlier. If anything, it has heightened the tension between the communal ideology of the organization and the ever-pressing need to deal with contract and organizational expansion. And, while resurrection of the community organizing strategy helped strengthen bonds of commitment between members and the union, it has also exacerbated the underlying split in the membership and the labor force between citizen/documentated workers and undocumented workers. Furthermore, the very successes of this period (1973-82) have created what presently exists as the most severe crisis the UFW faces: the loss of jobs through mechanization. In this section we will deal most directly with the issue of communal vs. bureaucratic organization and leave the issue of splits in the membership and mechanization to the final, concluding section.

The Teamster challenge and revitalization.

When the UFW began its organizational activities in the Delano area, growers responded with their traditional hostility. This involved the gamut of techniques that

proved successful in the past: harassment by local police agencies, locally issued injunctions against pickets and, of course, the importation of strike-breakers from Mexico. These union-busting techniques were locally effective but could not come to grips with the boycott campaign that increasingly bit into the growers' economic position. Despite numerous defensive measures, including the attempted passage of prohibitive legislation on the state and federal levels, grape growers succumbed to the boycott and negotiated accords with the UFW in 1969-70. The grape contracts served to bolster confidence in ranks of the union and were regarded by the California Farm Bureau and the Salinas Valley lettuce growers as a betrayal of grower solidarity (although the lettuce growers never provided active or prolonged support to their counterparts in the grape industry). The signing of the contracts with the UFW produced staggering confusion in the Salinas Valley as growers sought to devise a new stance with which to defend themselves.

Salinas lettuce growers initially undertook the development of the traditional union-busting techniques but a second strategy evolved when the lettuce harvesters joined the UFW and made the strike take effect. This new strategy consisted of "union substitution" (Friedland and Thomas, 1974: 59). Just as a consumer can substitute apples, peaches or pears for grapes, the Salinas growers saw the opportunity to recognize the Teamsters union (with whom many had contracts covering truck drivers and warehouse workers) rather than the UFW. With no warning, growers signed dozens of contracts with the Teamsters in the spring of 1970 while Chavez concluded the second major boycott success with the table-grape growers of the San Joaquin Valley.

The UFW had not been inactive in Salinas; indeed, the union had organizational centers there and other places in California. However, as noted in the preceding section, the UFW's tendency toward a single-issue approach had somewhat

undernourished the Salinas organizing effort in order to feed their boycott campaigns. In the wake of the Teamster contracts, however, the Salinas organizing efforts suddenly became massive. In fact, the workers piled into the UFW. Lettuce workers, to an even greater extent than their counterparts in the grape industry, were organized into durable and cohesive work teams (called crews) which afforded the union access to already-constructed work units and an intense set of social and informational networks in the industry. For several weeks, the strike hurt production seriously. As the growers struck back, the harassment process was accompanied by the gradual importation of strikebreakers. Lettuce production climbed and, as the season drew near its end, it became obvious that the economic effect of the strike was declining. At this stage, Chavez again moved to the boycott strategy. While contracts were signed with a small number of vertically-integrated-corporations, the bulk of the industry resisted the UFW's attack and hid behind the Teamsters. As noted earlier, the boycott of lettuce failed to pack the economic punch of previous boycotts.

Finally, in the summer of 1973, a substantial number of grape growers—many of whom held contracts with the UFW that expired that year—followed the example of the Salinas growers and consummated hasty marriages with the Teamsters. The UFW, suddenly stripped of the foundation on which its union organization had been built, struggled fiercely throughout the summer and fall to regain the contracts it had lost. But, the grape strike of 1973 could not overcome the combined forces of the growers and the Teamsters. In the aftermath, Chavez resurrected the table-grape and wine-grape boycotts to run concurrently with the lettuce campaign.

Though Chavez alluded occasionally to the possibility of a protracted ("ten year") boycott campaign to regain lost ground, two sets of factors forced a return to the union's initial strategy of community organizing. First, the boycott strategy had

begun to lose some of its viability. Little had changed in terms of the visibility (and therefore potential vulnerability) of corporate firms with major investments in boycottable products, particularly among the very largest firms. Yet, the boycott had not proven universally successful—the case of lettuce remained unclear and was further muddled by the Teamster (and grower) claim that their's was, after all, "union" lettuce. Among the less visible firms, the intransigence of growers was greater and, having found alliance with larger firms through industry-wide agreements with the Teamsters, many hardened their opposition. Others suggested they would reduce their production of lettuce and other vegetable crops for a year or two (even if it meant some financial loss) in order to wait out the demise of the UFW.

At the same time, the boycott organizations in the cities began to weaken. Compounding the difficulty in understanding the rules and regulations of each boycott (cf., Friedland and Thomas, 1974: 59) was the stop-go, on-off again character of the UFW boycott. Within a period of several months in 1972, Chavez began the lettuce boycott, called it off when negotiations seemed feasible, restarted it, called it off, etc. On occasion, boycott organizations in the East were unsure of the state of the boycott; even for knowledgeable UFW sympathizers, it was hard to know when to consume which products and when not. Furthermore, the resources available to the urban boycott organizations—especially the critical labor of volunteers--began to dwindle as the student and anti-war movements lost steam. Though this is not the place to analyze the decline of those movements, it is clear that their diminution reduced ~~the~~ supply of labor from which the UFW had previously drawn.

Second, the loss of contracts to the Teamsters dealt a severe blow to the already beleaguered UFW membership. Though few outward signs of lower morale were evident, the costs of strike efforts mounted. Even with substantial financial contributions from individual unions (such as the UAW and ILWU) and continuing

support from the AFL-CIO, the union could neither adequately support striking members nor expect to weather a long boycott campaign. With workers shifting from picket lines to work in non-struck fields, the fear of lost momentum and declining membership triggered a renewed emphasis on the kinds of social and support services the union could provide in lieu of work or strike benefits. Service centers located in centers of agricultural production shifted from being appendages to the hiring halls and became loci of organizational outreach (El Malcriado, Oct., 1973). Union staff renewed their role as counselors and advocates for families seeking welfare, food stamps and housing.

In response to collusion between the Teamsters and employers and the weakening of the boycott strategy, the UFW embarked on a political campaign to outflank its opposition. The campaign consisted of two parts: strong backing for Edmund G. Brown, Jr., liberal Democratic candidate in the 1974 gubernatorial elections and a staunch supporter of the UFW, and advocacy of legislation which would establish in California an independent Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) to supervise secret-ballot representational elections. Though the UFW-backed legislation (which was eventually enacted in 1975 with considerable help from the victorious Brown) left the union's right to boycott virtually untouched, the direction of the shift was clear: the union would have to devote the bulk of its energy to organizing workers if it was to reclaim lost ground in the rough elections.

The shift back to organizing workers--with the express intent of winning elections--and extending the base of the union--proved remarkably successful. In the first six months of the ALRB's existence (September, 1975, to February, 1976), elections covering nearly 50,000 farm workers were conducted. The majority of these were initiated by the UFW in its attempt to recover contracts from the Teamsters. Over the first year, the UFW obtained a success rate of 82.5% in recertification

elections (against the Teamsters) and new certification elections (Fuller and Mamer, 1978: 144-5). Though a number of elections were stalled by court contests and continued grower intransigence, the union had proven its point: given the opportunity, workers seeking unionization would overwhelmingly choose the UFW. Backed by victories at the polls and a change in Teamster leadership, the UFW negotiated a five-year jurisdictional "truce" with the Teamsters in 1977.

The dilemmas of expansion.

The electoral success of invigorated the organization and provided fresh testimony to the importance of maintaining contact in the fields. Nonetheless, community organizing could not by itself overcome the difficulties associated with administration of contracts covering some 50,000 (and more) members. After the first-blush of victory, the difficulties became apparent. By 1977, the union had some 180 separate contracts to administer in the grape, lettuce, vegetable, tomato, strawberry and nursery industries. Bargaining units ranged in size from 20 to 2000 workers. Some firms operated seasonally in a single production area; others operated on a year-round basis with ranches in several states. A small number of companies grew one or two different crops in which UFW members worked but others produced a mixed bag and thus needed a variety of workers with different skills. Beyond the variety of conditions effecting contract terms, each unit had its own particular history of grievances and complaints. Thus, the contracts, hiring halls and grievance procedures had to be initiated and developed to suit local conditions as well as conform to general rules. Across the range of contracts, the union faced the problem of creating some uniformity in the practice of contract administration, if only to simplify the enormous headaches associated with contract violations; seniority; medical benefits and pension claims.

The pressure for centralization and bureaucratization of contract administration

increased with organizational expansion. Employers, while pleading special conditions as a defense against the establishment of a master agreement, demanded a greater degree of continuity from the union. Most have, at one time or another, railed against the "social movement" character of the union, especially its appearance of lacking an appropriate chain of command capable of providing a predictable set of actors and policies with which to deal. The inefficiencies of the hiring hall, especially in the early years of its operation, were constantly pointed to by employers as an indication of the inability of the UFW to act responsibly. More generally, growers have fought to constrict the terrain of negotiation to more traditionally accepted issues--especially wages and hours--while union representatives (in and out of contract negotiations) have sought to open talks to a much broader range of topics, including: pesticide use and protections, changes in work organization, employment preference for seniority workers, supervision and management rights with respect to the introduction of new production technologies.

While some of these problems may be simply the product of the "newness" of unionization and the relative ignorance of both sides in the practice of labor relations, a dilemma underlies the union's situation. On the one hand, the range of contracts and the complexity of contract provisions have compelled the union to centralize the administration and negotiation of contracts in its national leadership. This has been built upon the key role played by Chavez and the core leadership of the UFW during the early period of mobilization and during the far-flung boycott campaigns. With Chavez and the core leadership serving first as the directors of these campaigns and later, when contract talks followed union certification, as the principal contract negotiators, the union could effectively present a uniform set of demands to employers, as well as establish at least a modicum of the predictability in negotiation which employers demanded. Similarly, Chavez's penchant for wanting

to maintain strict control over the administration of union affairs—albeit to protect the interests of the membership from the creation of an intervening bureaucracy—translated into a further centralization of the administrative apparatus. Because the new contracts covered such a broad territory and the new programs created such a plethora of paperwork, handling matters at the level of each local presented significant problems of staffing and training.

On the other hand, however, the importance attached to an ideology of community and to the practice of community organizing combined to promote an orientation toward more thorough membership involvement in union affairs. Here, too, precedent had been set: in establishing local representation, an elaborate structure of ranch (company) committee had been created to invest as many members as possible in debates over local and national union policy. Prior to contract negotiations, marathon meetings were held at the local level to inform negotiating committees of member's goals and needs. On numerous occasions, particularly in the early rounds of negotiation, Chavez would expand negotiating teams so that fifty or one-hundred workers could confront company representatives directly with their demands.

While it would be premature to suggest that the UFW has veered from its social movement origins into a more traditional trade union organization, indications are that the union has suffered many of the growing pains experienced by older unions. Efforts to diminish the gap between leadership and membership have increasingly been partitioned into the political government of the union through an emphasis on member input just prior to contract negotiations: symbolically in the form of members as advisors to negotiating committees, and intermittently as representatives to the national convention. Contract administration and the day-to-day business of union affairs, however, has come to constitute the "other" government of the union—through

an increasing specialization of records, and a greater emphasis on the ties between local union staff (the equivalent of business agents) and the national headquarters.

If the UFW has been the subject of increased reports of dissension, part of the explanation for inner turmoil rests with Chavez's efforts to stem the movement toward more traditional trade unionism. Chavez, paradoxically, has helped stimulate the turmoil: his efforts to diminish the importance of the bureaucratic apparatus has led to arbitrary dismissals and purges in both local and national leadership and staff which have alienated some staff and impeded the functioning of the union. His tendency to intervene at all levels of administration in order to insure its consistency with the goals of the union has also created an aura of autocracy and a belief among some rank and file that the locals are not to be trusted by the national union.

The dispute between local autonomy and the tendency toward centralization, a major issue in the most recent lettuce strike (1978-79), has led one purged local official to complain: "The United Farm Workers is the only union I know of where there is no concept of a union local; everything comes from Cesar" (cited in Lindsey, 1979). Another former UFW staff member (now with an independent farm worker union in Arizona) added: "In the UFW, everything is very centralized, very dictatorial" (cited in Lindsey, 1979).

The dilemma of centralization versus local autonomy thus has its origins in two sets of factors. First, union expansion in a highly variegated industry has created a set of administrative problems which far outstrip the capacity of a communal organization to manage effectively. In an effort to fulfill its responsibilities with respect to its membership and with respect to its contract partners, the UFW has attempted to locate contract negotiation and administration in a quasi-bureaucratic, centralized apparatus. But, second, the union has committed itself to an organizing approach which emphasizes the communal characteristics of the organization as a

means by which to successfully expand into new enterprises and industries. In light of diminished external resources--financial and human--the strategy of community organizing has proven immensely important. The resulting conflict between these factors has at times been tempered by the force of Chavez's symbolic and historical importance to the union; at other times, however, Chavez's efforts to close the gap between UFW, the trade union, and UFW, the social movement, have only worsened the situation.

The Present Challenge: Undocumented Workers and Machines

Two fundamental and related problems pose the greatest challenge to future farm worker organization, particularly for the United Farm Workers: undocumented workers and the threat of labor displacement through mechanization. On one side, a principle obstacle to the regularization of employment and increased wages resides in the union's inability to restrict access to employment to citizen/documented workers--those who have some measure of protection under existing labor laws. On the other side, the elasticity of the supply of undocumented workers and their vulnerability to exploitation make it possible for employers to maintain highly labor intensive forms of production and to augment their control via the manipulation of undocumented workers. To the extent that the union finds a means by which to strengthen its control over the supply of labor and thereby increases its efforts to decrease employer control over the terms and conditions of employment, it increases the possibility that employers will turn to mechanized production, which for many crops is either available or on the drawing boards. The dilemma is graphically illustrated by a juxtaposition of quotes from interviews conducted by one of the authors during a study of the lettuce industry in 1979: When asked what problems undocumented

workers presented for the union, one worker (a UFW member since 1970 and an ardent supporter of Chavez) replied:

When you ask what I think about the indocumentado (undocumented worker) thing, I have to be honest. We cannot get anywhere--with the contracts, with seniority, with good representation--until the indocumentados are out of the fields. As long as you have guys trembling because they are afraid of being deported, you can't expect to protect jobs or make the work more human

From the other side, a representative of the Western Growers Association, the principle association of vegetable growers in labor affairs), summarized the issue this way:

The state of California has to choose between two things: low food costs or unemployment. The only way we are going to keep food costs down--if we close off the border--is through mechanization. ...You can mechanize harvesting and double your output per hour and reduce your labor force to about 25% of its present size. But, to do that, you've got to eliminate the illegals.

Though few union or employer representatives link undocumented labor and mechanization so explicitly, it remains clear that the availability of vulnerable labor affects the character of labor relations and the options faced by the UFW.

The case of lettuce.

The lettuce industry provides a significant case in point. Though this analysis will necessarily have to be brief, there are three reasons why the lettuce industry case is suggestive: first, the UFW has made substantial gains in the industry (roughly 7 out of 10 lettuce workers belong to the UFW); second, previous research indicates that a significant chunk of the harvest labor force is undocumented (Thomas, 1981, estimates that perhaps as much as one-third of the labor force lacks documentation); and, third, the lettuce industry has at its disposal the technology necessary to undertake a relatively rapid shift to harvest mechanization (cf., Friedland, Barton and Thomas, 1981: Ch. 3, for a detailed description of the technique and its history). Though the union made inroads through its capacity to win representational elections, it has been forced to strike a precarious balance between challenging employer

control over labor recruitment, work organization and earnings and bowing to the threat of mechanization and large-scale displacement of its members.

Thus, the union's very success in organizing lettuce workers has, ironically, put it in a very sticky position. The union cannot seek to regulate labor supply without splintering its organizational base in the harvest labor force and weakening the relationship it has fostered with other elements of the Hispanic community. Regulating labor supply, in terms of limiting membership to documented and citizen workers would enable the UFW to increase its ability to police contracts and to make legal claims against employers based on the political rights and entitlements of legal residents. The UFW has had some success in convincing the ALRB to apply the principle of treating workers as union members first and national citizens second. However, interviews with workers and lower level union staff make it clear that the vulnerability of undocumented workers continues to act as a powerful deterrent to their filing of grievances and unfair labor practice charges (cf., Thomas, 1981: 140-45). More importantly, efforts to screen out undocumented workers would increase tensions between documented and undocumented workers. As suggested earlier, undocumented workers constitute a significant portion of the labor force and, therefore, of the union's membership. Many are relatives, compadres or comadres of union members. Should the union seek to deny membership and work to undocumented workers, it would directly challenge those ties and, in the process, contradict the union's historical solidarity around ethnicity and national heritage.

The impacts of the UFW's actions with regard to undocumented workers extend beyond the immediate organizational boundaries of the union. Two outside groups must be considered in relation to the question of regulating labor supply: non-union and non-UFW workers, on one side; and other Hispanic and Chicano organizations on the other. A pivotal set of events can lend some insight into the significance of these

groups. During the late spring and early summer of 1979, Chavez and representatives of the UFW made calls to Immigration and Naturalization Service commissioner Lionel Castillo and Carter Administration staff in an effort to deal with employer importation of strikebreakers. In partial response to pressure brought from the Carter Administration, the Border Patrol (which falls under the jurisdiction of the INS) beefed up its staff in the southern and central valleys of California and increased raids of fruit and vegetable ranches (Salinas Californian, 5/7/79). The immediate effects of this quite dramatic action were pronounced: several firms suffered near-complete (though temporary) work shutdowns. During the month of March (1979), nearly 52,000 undocumented aliens were apprehended in the state (Salinas Californian, 4/18/79). Although the raids were temporary and ceased before the strike ended, the consequences for the UFW were important: employers' illegal strikebreaking tactics were publicized nationally and several firms experienced painful financial setbacks.

However, many workers outside the UFW ranks reacted negatively to the union's action. On several occasions, workers with whom one of the authors worked in the fields expressed their dismay that the UFW would work hand-in-hand with la Migra (the Border Patrol). While UFW organizers sought to justify the strategy as a temporary measure, the negative consequences were quite clear. As one former UFW sympathizer (who worked at a company still under Teamster contact) told me:

Most of the guys who have been scabbing have never heard of Chavez. They come from way down south (in Mexico) and just come here to make a few bucks. But can you imagine what they are going to think of a guy who gets you deported one minute and then wants your union dues the next?

A relatively small sample of interviews and observations cannot provide a sweeping generalization about the extent of such sentiments, but it may be safely assumed that the Border Patrol incident will not quickly be forgotten among potential UFW

members. As the UFW enters a period after the expiration of its "peace settlement" with the Teamsters, the Teamsters can be expected to exploit the incident for their own ends should they decide to reenter the competition for representation of farm workers.

Equally important, the UFW's dealings with the Border Patrol in the summer of 1979 drew fire from other farm worker organizations. Two of those organizations, the Texas Farm Workers Union and the Maricopa County Organizing Project (MCOP), both of which were developed by former UFW organizers who left or were purged from the California union, have sought explicitly to create liaison between documented and undocumented workers. The UFW action deepened the long-standing rift. In response to the Border Patrol raids, an official of MCOP wrote to Chavez:

We must urge you to stop all actions that would create a greater division among the workers. If the United Farm Workers Union has problems with undocumented workers being brought in as scabs, the answer is to organize these scabs, like we do any other scab that comes in to break our strike (Salinas Californian, 5/1/79)

While the vehemence of MCOP's response can be partially attributed to the extremity of the UFW's action, this highlights the extent of the organization problems facing the UFW (or TFW and MCOP) in their efforts to extend beyond regional farm worker organizing.

Employers, not surprisingly, have been quite adept at whipsawing the UFW with the issue of undocumented workers and the threat of mechanization. Wrapping themselves in the cloak of agricultural exceptionalism and riding the crest of the resurrected *laissez faire* ideology of the present Administration, many have attempted to lay the responsibility for dealing with undocumented immigration at someone else's feet. The executive director of Western Growers Association argued in an interview that:

I don't think that the responsibility for handling the issue of illegal aliens should

be put on the grower's back. It's not our fault that there's high unemployment in Mexico. It's not our fault that the state and federal government can't keep them from getting across the border. It's not our fault that they can get fraudulent documentation. Why should we be the only ones responsible for them?...Hell, we get most of our workers through union hiring halls. Why doesn't Chavez clean up his act?

Just as they portrayed themselves as the hapless victims of a jurisdictional dispute between the UFW and the Teamsters a decade earlier, employers now disclaim responsibility for the operations of the labor market—while lobbying to ensure that legislation which seeks to penalize employers for hiring undocumented workers is defeated.

At the same time, the mechanical lettuce harvester is kept visible on the sidelines, pictured as available at any moment to replace recalcitrant labor. A study carried out recently by Friedland, Barton and Thomas (1981) focused directly on the question of mechanization and its consequences in the lettuce industry. Their major conclusions are significant: if employed in an economic fashion, the mechanical harvester would displace between 50% and 83% of the harvest labor force in lettuce within five years of its introduction; mechanization would drastically alter work organization in the harvest (including a significant de-skilling of most harvest labor); and that the loss of jobs would directly affect the viability of the UFW, especially given its concentration in the lettuce industry. This projective analysis of the social consequences technological change and a more explicit analysis of the labor process conducted by one of the authors (Thomas, 1981) argued that the principle obstacle to mechanization was the sheer efficiency, productivity and, most importantly, adaptability of the present system of labor recruitment and utilization—one organized around the availability of an elastic supply of highly vulnerable labor, undocumented workers.

The threat of mechanization is not, however, limited to lettuce production. Over the past twenty-five years, research and development of mechanical devices for

various phases of production (cultivation, planting and transplanting, weeding and harvesting) have been carried out for a wide range of crops. At present, mechanical harvesters have been tested and/or implemented for the following crops: processing tomatoes, fresh market tomatoes, wine and table and raisin grapes, lettuce, cauliflower, onions, apples and citrus (Cargill and Rossmiller, 1968; Hightower, 1973; and Scheuring and Thompson, 1978). In other words, harvest mechanization could conceivably eliminate more than half the demand for agricultural labor in the next decade. Equally important, the threat of mechanization as either a negotiating or a union-busting device is by no means an abstract entity for the United Farm Workers union.

Alternatives for the United Farm Workers.

At the surface, it would seem that a bleak future awaits the United Farm Workers union. Despite the relatively strong position the union has achieved in the lettuce and grape industries and the advances it has made through secret ballot elections in other commodity groups, it is confronted on one side by the potential loss of jobs to mechanization and, on the other side, by the continued debilitating role played by undocumented labor. One major alternative consists of efforts to negotiate some form of compensation for workers displaced by mechanization--an alternative which presupposes that the UFW continues to press for higher wages and greater control over access to employment. The other major alternative consists of efforts to widen the organizational base of the union by establishing durable linkages to other-action groups, most notably civil rights (Hispanic), consumer and labor organizations, in order to generate support external to agriculture and to attempt to nullify the present tension between citizen/documentated workers and undocumented workers. The relative advantages of the two alternatives need to be elaborated.

Compensation for mechanization.

Under present circumstances and within the structure of agricultural production, the UFW has insufficient leverage to extract from employers, in the lettuce industry or elsewhere, a negotiated compensation and/or retraining package. The consumer boycott, a major lever in the past, has lost much of its potency. Even in those situations in which "substitutable" commodities exist, the UFW will have great difficulty in developing a powerful set of boycott organizations and making a boycott work. Though it could come to pass that urban audiences may once again become accessible as a result of economic depression and political protest, at the present time the union cannot expect to be able to resurrect the boycott action with as much vigor as it did in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The shortcomings of the lettuce boycott of 1978-79 provides sufficient evidence for that argument (Bernstein, 1982). While the boycott has proven less than satisfactory, strikes have proven more effective; but, in order to make a strike work, the union must somehow close off grower access to alternative supplies of labor. Such an end can only be achieved through a much stronger position with respect to undocumented workers. Though the UFW has allegedly attempted its own form of border control in the past (Lindsey, 1979), there is no reason to expect that the union can accomplish what the Border Patrol cannot, i.e., effectively closing off the 1000-mile border with Mexico. It would necessarily mean a stronger liaison with the INS and the Border Patrol and backing for the already unpopular "random" Border Patrol raids on businesses, stores and private residences.

The costs of alliance with the INS would be staggering. The rifts which already separate the UFW from other groups, particularly other farm worker organizations and Hispanic civil rights organizations, would undoubtedly grow wider in a period in which the growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S. has accelerated and social and economic discrimination against Hispanics has increased. To actively take a stand for

more restrictive immigration policy (and, necessarily, for more enforcement of immigration laws) would only contribute to the mechanisms through which Hispanics are set apart socially and economically (particularly in terms of employment opportunities). It would also support the argument made by conservative politicians (and, unfortunately, some trade union leaders) that illegal aliens are taking jobs from Americans when, as we argued earlier in the paper, those jobs have been predicated on the availability of disadvantaged workers. Besides distancing itself from potential allies outside of the labor movement in agriculture, the UFW would diminish its own chances for expansion into regions where farm worker organization has only just begun. If the reactions of the TFW and MCOP are any indication of the opposition to the UFW's tactic of rooting out undocumented strikebreakers, then the obstacles to successful organization outside the confines of California and corps employing large numbers of documented workers will likely be quite large. The skepticism of workers outside the UFW (epitomized by the remarks of the worker quoted earlier) would undoubtedly make organizing rough going for the union should it attempt to distinguish between "acceptable" (citizen/documented) and "unacceptable" (undocumented) workers.

The potential consequences of an explicitly anti-indocumentado strategy for internal affairs of the union have been discussed somewhat in earlier sections but deserve some additional attention. Given the fact that a portion of the UFW's membership in key industries (especially lettuce, but more crops as well, particularly during periods in which the immigration of undocumented workers increases, e.g., in the wake of economic downturns in Mexico and other Latin American nations) is ~~undocumented~~ or is tied by family or social ties to undocumented workers, a move to close-off access to indocumentados would widen splits in the membership. Acceding to the wishes of that small segment of the membership which feels itself threatened

by undocumented workers might shore up their support, but it would also lead to a contradiction of one of the major bases of solidarity in the union: ethnicity and common cultural heritage.

An alternative to negotiation with employers over compensation for job displacement might consist of appeals to the state and federal governments to provide an equivalent package of ameliorative programs. This has been a rather visible avenue already undertaken by the UFW: particularly in the form of the introduction of legislation in California to create a fund for compensation and retraining for displaced farm workers (Salinas Californian, 2/17/79). Basing their argument on the importance of agriculture to the state's economy and the importance of farm workers to agriculture, the union has sought to circumvent its weakness in dealing with employers by trying a political route. Thus far, the union has not been successful in its efforts: increased grower lobbying in the state legislature and the declining influence of the union's principal supporter, Governor Brown, have stymied UFW-backed proposals. One particularly powerful argument, especially in an era of wage concessions, business failures and "tax consciousness", used by growers and their allies has centered upon the role of Mexicans, documented and undocumented, in the California economy: that any effort to force compensation (either through individual employers or through a compensation pool created by a tax on farm equipment) would only increase subsidization of foreign nationals—including those who "take" jobs from Americans. Beyond the specific case of agriculture, employers generally have balked at political efforts to ameliorate the effects of technological change. An action with regard to farm workers would undoubtedly be seen as establishing a dangerous precedent.

Widening the organizational base.

Rather than increasing the risks of broadening cleavages within its membership

over issues of citizenship and mechanization, the UFW can seek to broaden its organizational base and, therefore, its capacity for political action through a combination of aggressive organizing among farmworkers and strengthening alliances with other ethnic and labor groups. One potentially divisive factor--the issue of undocumented workers--can no longer be skirted. Rather than maintain a double standard with regard to indocumentados, the UFW must actively join with Hispanic civil rights groups and unions, such as the ILGWU (cf., Los Angeles Times, 11/14/78; and Early, 1982), first to actively draw indocumentados into the organization and, second, to combat the ideology and practice of discrimination against Hispanics generally.

In following the lead of the Ladies Garment Workers Union, the UFW can seek to protect the workplace rights accorded indocumentados under the existing ALRB and capitalize on their right to vote as a means by which to win contracts. Until such time as the union, rather than employers, comes to be recognized as the protector of indocumentados, the same sort of paternalism which enables employers to appear as benefactors ("..giving jobs to illegals and protecting them from the Border Patrol" as one foreman put in Thomas's study (1981: Ch. 5)) will continue to operate against the union. The UFW, with its past experience in the organization of a broad range of social services, would be ideally suited to provide the support needed by undocumented workers in their relations with employers, primarily, but also with landlords, police, storeowners and public bureaucracies.

But, because the issue of undocumented workers extends far beyond agriculture, the union would necessarily find its goals consistent with the array of Hispanic civil rights groups and unions operating in the cities and in other industries. As the Hispanic population in the United States has grown over the past two decades, the proportional representation of Hispanics in secondary labor markets and urban ghettos

has also increased. Civil rights groups seeking to protect the rights of Hispanics have found themselves whipsawed by employers and politicians in much the same fashion as the UFW. - "Illegal aliens" are pointed to as a clandestine invasion force which steals job opportunities from the unemployed while draining community resources through the unauthorized use of social services. While few studies have actually documented the extent of job loss or resource drain (much less accurate estimates of the number of undocumented aliens), the ideology has posed a significant obstacle to progressive action for Hispanics. Most dangerously, it has served to create a suspicious, if not antagonistic, view on the part of public officials, the media, some unions and Black action organizations with respect to Hispanics generally.

The creation of open and durable alliances between the UFW and Hispanic civil rights groups cannot, by itself, dismantle the ideology of parasitism, but it can help to focus the debate more clearly on relations between unions and civil rights, on the one hand, and employers, on the other. By combining energies to support and defend aliens who are drawn into the U.S. as workers, the UFW and other groups can actively stress the interdependence of the U.S. and Latin American economies and populations. By portraying indocumentados as they actually are, employees of U.S. firms, the UFW-Hispanic alliance can shift the debate to one of employer abuse and away from alleged parasitism and indolence on the part of Hispanics.

Widening the organizational base of the UFW would also have significant advantages for dealing with the issue of mechanization in agriculture. As long as the union cannot bargain with employers from a position of strength, it cannot hope to extract an advantageous compensation/retraining package. And, as long as its efforts to establish a political solution are seen as posing a threat to employer rights, little headway can be expected through legislation. Given these conditions, the only option

open to the union is one of aggressive organizing in the fields. A strategy of encirclement, intensive efforts to win representational elections, can enhance the UFW's bargaining leverage only if the union can draw in the indocumentados. Again, a return to community organizing would lead the way.

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