

Chapter 5

CONTAINMENT OF THE UFW

In late July 1970, even as Chavez planned a march through the Salinas Valley, more growers were signing with the Teamsters.¹ In a quick study of the situation, the UFWOC targeted InterHarvest, a part of United Fruit of United Brands, Freshpict, which was owned by Purex, and Pic'n Pac, owned by S. S. Pierce Company, for its counteroffensive. To make matters worse for the UFWOC, on July 27, 1970, the Council of California Growers announced that 80 percent of the growers in the Santa Maria area had signed five-year contracts with the Teamsters.² Chavez had promised staff members working in the East that they could come home once the table grape growers signed with the UFWOC. Chavez felt committed to his promise. That meant replacing them with inexperienced people if the UFWOC planned to redirect its boycott activities against United Fruit, Purex, and S. S. Pierce. The UFWOC was in a very difficult situation. Strikes had never been successful against the growers and the union's boycott apparatus had to be reconstituted.

¹ "Salinas Agreement Ends Lettuce Strike," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1970, I-3; "Chavez: One Battle Ends, Another Begins," *U.S. News & World Report*, August 10, 1970, 49-51.

² "Chavez Protests Teamster Pacts," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 2, 1970, A2.

There were some hopeful signs for the UFWOC, however. Three thousand people participated in a four-day march through the Salinas Valley, at the end of which 659 Salinas Valley workers signed UFWOC authorization cards,³ two hundred strawberry pickers in Santa Maria went on strike and pledged their allegiance to the UFWOC,⁴ and the Franciscans, together with a number of other religious orders, loaned the UFWOC \$380,000.⁵

The UFWOC considered InterHarvest an almost-perfect boycott target for several reasons. United Fruit had expended a great deal of money to get name recognition for the Chiquita Brand not only for bananas, but for others of its agricultural products. The reputation of United Fruit had been badly damaged, at least among leftists and some liberals, because of the company's association with repressive practices in Central America. And bananas not only spoil quickly, but pop when overripe and tightly packed, as in the hold of a ship. The UFWOC, as a consequence, thought to launch a boycott against InterHarvest first, but events overtook it. Spontaneous work stoppages, as well as some orchestrated by UFWOC organizers, broke out in Salinas, Santa Maria, and Oxnard, and growers started firing workers who refused to support the Teamsters. In Salinas, 150 Freshpict workers were fired for refusing to sign up with the Teamsters. The workers met and determined to go on strike, and so Freshpict became the UFWOC's first strike and boycott target. The strike spread to include several hundred workers employed by Freshpict throughout the Salinas Valley.⁶

IBT opposition to the farm workers' cause had been inconsistent. Teamster locals in San Francisco and Los Angeles had supported the grape boycott, but in 1970, the IBT set a clear course in aggressive opposition to the UFWOC.

A bit of history must be recorded to put Teamster behavior in perspective. Food processing is the industrial base of the Teamsters union in California. When railroads made large-scale overland shipment of canned

³ "Farm Workers March in Salinas Valley," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1970, I-22; "Chavez March Against Teamsters," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 1, 1970, A6.

⁴ Harry Bernstein, "1000 Berry Workers Join Chavez Strike," *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1970, I-3.

⁵ "Catholic Group Hits Reagan, Murphy on Grape Strike," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 7, 1970, A3.

⁶ "Farm Workers Strike Salinas Grower," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 8, 1970, A3; "Chavez Calls Salinas Farm Strike," *San Jose Mercury*, August 8, 1970, 29.

fruits and vegetables possible, corporate food processing entered its modern period. The figures for 1925 and 1961 tell a story of impressive growth. Peak employment in the vegetable and seafood canneries increased from 23,000 to 72,000, the value of the product from \$181 million to over \$1 billion.⁷ The substructure of this formidable industry lay in the fields where, in the 1920s and '30s, radical unionists in the tradition of the IWW were active. Their activities disturbed the leaders of organized labor no less than the agriculturalists. The leadership of the State Federation of Labor viewed the threat of “soap-box” organizers with alarm.⁸ In 1937, the organizing drive to bring cannery workers into the ranks of labor began. It was swift, energetic, and successful, ending with the signing of a contract between cannery owners and the AFL-CIO. The direct beneficiary of that contract was the California State Council of Cannery Unions, affiliated with the Teamsters. The contract covered 65,000 workers and was signed, on behalf of all the major processors, by California Growers and Processors Incorporated, a consortium that represented the united front of the canning and processing industry.⁹ The Associated Farmers gave the historic event their blessing, approving the conservative record of the Teamsters Union and disdaining that of the radical Harry Bridges and the CIO. The Teamsters became the most powerful union in the state, and with a solid base among cannery workers and drivers, guarded their jurisdiction jealously.¹⁰

The Teamsters were favored by trends in corporate agriculture. Mechanization was driving many harvesters from the fields and into the ranks of the Teamsters, who claimed jurisdiction over any form of agricultural production or processing on wheels. But the Teamsters stopped short of organizing the crop-gathering farm worker, who was seen as migrant and poor, continually threatened by the advance of the bracero system. They were undesirables in whom the Teamsters had little interest. In October 1948, Teamster President Dave Beck, at a meeting called to plan the

⁷ Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-Business in California: 1947-1960* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

⁸ Cletus Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Harry Schwartz, “Organizational Problems of Agricultural Labor Unions,” *Journal of Farm Economics* (May 1941): 456-66.

organization of the fruit, vegetable, and produce industries, enunciated the following policy: “We want to go back to a certain point and organize . . . so that we can control [the produce row] from the packing shed . . . straight through the consumer.” But, he said, “We will not organize field labor. . . . Our union will not accept that jurisdiction.”¹¹

They had good reasons for this. The Teamsters held contracts with grower–shipper associations whose members were also employers of field labor. Low wages in the fields cushioned the costs of packing, processing, transportation, and warehousing. Organization of harvesters would have hardened the bargaining position of the employers against the Teamsters when their contracts were renegotiated. The labor pool that served the fields and orchards remained notoriously fluid. Teamster drivers depended on peak hauls during the harvest. Field worker organization would only introduce another uncertainty, that of potentially concerted action by the harvesters. Besides, their wages were lower by a wide margin than those the Teamsters had won in the other branches of the food industry, offering little incentive for costly organizing campaigns. Mechanization was making steady inroads into harvesting, demanding more skilled labor at higher wages, and thus creating the conditions which the Teamsters required for profitable organizing. The practical approach for them was to assimilate only those operations in which the harvesters tended the machines and to wait for farm workers to become upgraded technically and, thus, a desirable group to organize.¹²

Teamsters developed the concept of preventive organization, arguing, “if cannery workers can organize the fieldworkers they can prevent any stoppage at the cannery,”¹³ but up to the 1940s, prevention was approached negatively. It consisted in combatting rival organizations or keeping them firmly in the hands of the traditionalists in the AFL establishment. Left-wing unionism, however, never disappeared altogether. It held isolated footholds in packing sheds under contract with UCAPAWA, a CIO affiliate, and its successor, the United Packinghouse Workers of America.

¹¹ David F. Selvin, *Sky Full of Storm: A Brief History of California Labor* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of Industrial Relations, Center for Labor Research and Education, 1966).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

Against this threat, the Federation served the interests of the Teamsters through the control of charters, suspension of locals, and a rigid insistence on bona fide unionism as defined by Haggerty's predecessors in the state federation.¹⁴

The Teamsters' views on braceros evolved from hostility through tolerance to accommodation. In March, 1954, Dave Beck said that because of "the dismal failure on the part of the Federal Government of policing the border . . . this country is being flooded with cheap labor." He regarded the traffic in illegals as a threat to "the economic health as well as the security of this nation."¹⁵ In 1954, the International Teamsters sounded an alarm, predicting that the braceros would eventually move into the canneries and processing plants.

In 1954, however, it was evident that braceros were undercutting the UPWA and the NAWO but not the Teamsters, so the Teamsters began moving toward the industry's position on the issue. Absent from Teamster statements of that period were criticisms of the bracero operation. This set the Teamsters apart since criticisms were coming from all other branches of organized labor. In 1964, the reversal of Teamster policy was brought out into the open. Einar Mohn, director of the Western Conference of Teamsters, expressed the new view of the IBT's preventive strategy. Mechanization was proceeding at such a rapid rate that skilled workers would soon become "a backbone of the labor force." His union, he predicted, would move in on farm workers in "a big way."¹⁶ In an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on December 30, 1964, Thomas Harris, an analyst for the Western Conference of Teamsters, stated that the Teamsters had a direct interest in the prosperity of the agricultural industry. In related employment there were 500 field workers, several thousand drivers, and some 60,000 cannery and frozen food processing workers who were members of the Brotherhood. "Approximately one-quarter of the 170,000 Teamsters in California are directly dependent for their livelihood and well-being upon

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kirke Wilson, *A Brief History of the Bracero System and Its Impact on Farm Labor in California* (Pasadena: American Friends Service Committee, Farm Workers Opportunity Project, 1967).

¹⁶ Martin Roysher and Douglas Ford, "California's Grape Pickers Will Soon Be Obsolete," *The New Republic*, April 13, 1968, 11-12.

the prosperity of agriculture in CA. . . . [T]he abrupt termination of the bracero program confronts our agricultural economy with a crisis which jeopardizes the economic security of some 70,000 Teamsters. . . . As for now, many crops can neither be raised nor harvested solely by domestic labor.”¹⁷

Three years before the Harris testimony was given, the Brotherhood had worked out a model for the reorganization of the agricultural labor force. This model was set forth in a contract negotiated in the spring of 1961 with the Bud Antle Company of Salinas, the largest lettuce grower and shipper in California. On its own acreage the company harvested 8,000 acres of lettuce and 1,300 acres of carrots, apart from what it produced on more than 3,000 acres of leased land. The company recognized the Teamsters as the bargaining agent for all persons employed by it in growing, packing, and harvesting agricultural commodities.¹⁸

The Bud Antle Company had used braceros for several years before signing the Teamster contract. The Teamsters agreed “to assist the company in obtaining foreign supplemental workers for the Company in its harvesting operations.” In the contract, such supplemental workers were placed in a special category as follows: “Foreign supplemental workers are not subject to any term or condition of this agreement except as they may benefit from the wage provisions thereof and shall be governed solely by the applicable provisions of Public Law 78 and the Migrant Agreement of 1951.”¹⁹

In a model of inter-institutional coordination, the system of administered labor, proposed by agricultural businessmen and facilitated by a willing bureaucracy, now had the official endorsement of a powerful union.

To Antle, the contract meant a guarantee that his company would “continue to have available . . . an almost limitless supply of good, stable, competent, and willing labor.”²⁰ From the point of view of the IBT, it protected the job security of 450 permanent employees and Teamster members, by

¹⁷ Thomas Harris, “The Teamster Position on Bracero Issue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 30, 1964.

¹⁸ A. V. Krebs, Jr., “Agribusiness in California,” *Commonweal*, October 9, 1970, 45–47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

keeping domestic harvesters under the discipline of the Teamsters and the braceros under that of the U.S. Department of Labor. On the Teamster side of the inter-union fight shaping up in the Salinas Valley in 1970–71 were William Grami, the Teamster executive who had negotiated the jurisdictional pact between the IBT and the UFWOC in 1967, Ted Gonsalves from the Teamster Cannery local in Modesto, and Einar Mohn, Director of the Western Conference of Teamsters. For the growers there were Herbert Fleming, president of the Grower–Shipper Vegetable Association, and an InterHarvest vice president, William Lauer.²¹

The UFWOC asked George Meany for AFL-CIO endorsement of its actions, but Teamster President Frank Fitzsimmons called him and got him to put it off by saying that the IBT didn't want to be in that "mess" out there anyway. Indeed, the Teamsters, despite their recent contracts, did sound as if they wanted to protect their interests in processing, packing, and trucking agricultural goods. On August 8th, Bill Grami contacted the UFWOC and asked for a meeting. At the meeting between Teamsters Grami and Pete Andrade, head of the IBT cannery division, and UFWOC leaders Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Manuel Chavez, Jerry Cohen, and Richard Chavez, Grami offered to negotiate a new jurisdictional agreement with the UFWOC.²²

The Teamsters said they were convinced that technological developments in agriculture would decrease the number of farm workers in the fields and increase the number of jobs within their jurisdiction. The two sides finally agreed to let a bishops' committee moderate discussions among the growers, the UFWOC, and the IBT.

Grami led the bishops and the UFWOC to believe that his strategy was to establish contracts with as many growers as possible, offering them terms more favorable than what growers elsewhere had gotten from the UFWOC, then to bargain with the UFWOC, get the jurisdictional agreement the IBT wanted, and try to persuade the UFWOC to accept the terms

²¹ "Is Chavez Union on Brink of Defeat?" *California Journal* 4 (September 1973): 297–98.

²² Harry Bernstein, "Chavez Union and Teamster Talks Revealed," *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1970, I-22; "Teamsters Seek Pact with Farm Workers," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 9, 1970, A4.

of the IBT contracts with growers in exchange for promising to bow out and hand IBT contracts over to the UFWOC.²³

Later events indicate that Grami did not have the power to deliver IBT contracts to the UFWOC, and it is not clear that Grami ever intended to do so anyway. He may have been using the situation in the Salinas Valley to establish himself in a powerful position so as to advance his own career within the Teamster organization, to score points against Einar Mohn, his immediate superior. According to insiders, Grami and Mohn were allied with different factions within the Teamster organization. Certainly, many of the decisions taken by the IBT in the valley reflect intra-organization Teamster intrigue more than they reflect an interest in the representation of farm workers.²⁴ The UFWOC did not mind leaving in-the-field processing jobs to the Teamsters, but they did not want to accept the terms of Teamster contracts with the growers, and they did not like or trust Grami and the IBT. Meanwhile, a temporary restraining order was issued by a local judge ordering a halt to picketing at Freshpict, and the San Francisco Court of Appeals turned down the UFWOC appeal of the Freshpict injunction.²⁵

After the UFWOC appeal was turned down, Chavez, in a move calculated to win public attention and support, drove to Freshpict headquarters to be served the restraining order personally. The press, of course, had been informed. When Chavez arrived, the doors to the company's offices were closed, but people were inside because it was a regular business day. Chavez wrote a note and held it up to the glass: "I am here to be served the order. Cesar Chavez." Chavez waited and the cameras rolled. The police arrived, then Freshpict President Howard Leach. Leach refused to serve the order, being a party to the action. Policeman Larry Myers refused to serve the order, saying it was the sheriff's job. Finally, Leach got someone from a business nearby to serve Chavez. Leach was extremely discomfited, as was everyone else at Freshpict. As a final public embarrassment, UFWOC

²³ "Teamsters Struggle with Farm Workers," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 8, 1970, A3.

²⁴ William H. Friedland and Robert J. Thomas, "State Politics and Public Interests: Paradoxes of Agricultural Unionism in California," *Trans-Action*, May-June 1974, 54-62.

²⁵ "Farm Workers Begin Salinas Picketing," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 9, 1970, A13.

attorney Cohen got Leach to officially witness the action by signing his name to a statement that the order had been properly served.²⁶

As to the negotiations with the Teamsters, Chavez recalled:

The Teamsters agreed we had jurisdiction over all field workers, and Grami agreed secretly to get out. We asked Grami to go to the ranchers who had signed up with the Teamsters to get them to negotiate with us.

In turn, he asked that we hold up the strike for a six-day period so that the ranchers would be able to tear up their old contracts and get together on the new one.

We also came to an understanding that if progress was being made during those six days, we would be willing to extend the strike moratorium another four days.

If there were any disagreements over the pact, the dispute was to be referred to the bishops' committee.²⁷

UFWOC attorney Jerry Cohen spoke of the many things that Grami and the IBT agreed to but would not publicly commit themselves to:

There were a whole series of secret agreements that were signed that Grami would not put into the pact for political reasons.

So those secret agreements went to the extent that the Teamsters committed themselves to giving us individual rescissions of their contracts and to helping us in organizational activities. They said they had guys who could help us, and they agreed to honor our picket lines.²⁸

Once the jurisdictional pact was agreed to, the UFWOC contacted growers, intending to use the six-day moratorium as leverage in its talks with them. UFWOC negotiations with growers were in the hands of Jerry Cohen, Marshall Ganz, LeRoy Chatfield, and Dolores Huerta. Chatfield immediately — in the middle of the night — called the chairman of United Brands Executive Committee who told him that Will Lauer, United Fruit's vice president of Corporate Industrial Relations, would be given two weeks

²⁶ Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1975).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 337–41.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

to settle with the UFWOC. Meanwhile, United Fruit had warned every union local involved in handling of bananas that they would be sued for not honoring their contracts, i.e., for supporting a UFWOC boycott. The UFWOC used the threat of a boycott against Chiquita brand to get InterHarvest to respond.

In the first meeting between the UFWOC and InterHarvest, the two sides disagreed on just about everything. LeRoy Chatfield had insisted on a meeting with Lauer immediately. Lauer had been called in the middle of the night and was in contact with Chatfield at 6 AM to arrange an afternoon meeting. Chatfield, Cohen, and Ganz were present. Lauer was under the impression that he was to meet with Chavez, but Chavez did not come to the meeting. Chatfield claimed that the Teamsters had withdrawn, but Lauer said he had no confirmation and insisted on meeting with Grami before proceeding with the UFWOC. The UFWOC wanted elections supervised by the bishops. Lauer agreed but said that InterHarvest wanted the Federal Mediation Service involved as well. The UFWOC asked Lauer to use his influence with the other growers. Lauer responded that there was “most passionate” opposition to the UFWOC and that InterHarvest would have little influence under the circumstances.²⁹ Marshall Ganz accused InterHarvest of bringing in the Teamsters in the first place. Lauer argued that the Teamsters had come to them. LeRoy Chatfield accused Lauer of lying, but Lauer maintained his position. Ganz complained to the InterHarvest representatives that workers were being intimidated by the company’s supervisors. Robert Nunes, InterHarvest vice president, asked for details and promised to take care of the complaints. Lauer asked if the UFWOC would refrain from strikes and boycotts during negotiations. Cohen responded, “For a time.” When Lauer asked, “How long?” Lauer claimed negotiations would take several weeks, perhaps two months. Ganz yelled, “That’s a lot of bullshit! You signed with the Teamsters like, boom!” and that two months would take it past harvest time.³⁰ Cohen angrily needled Lauer saying that if the workers were involved in negotiations rather than Allan Grant, the Farm Bureau president, a settlement could be reached

²⁹ “Freshpict Foods, Inc. Negotiate with Chavez,” *San Francisco Examiner*, August 23, 1970, A1; “Grower Breaks Ranks, Talks with Chavez,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1970, A1.

³⁰ Levy, *Chavez*, 346.

quickly because both sides would know just what the contract really meant. Lauer responded that InterHarvest expected to use the Teamster contract as a basis for negotiations, arguing that growers had made substantial concessions to its workers. Cohen responded that such an idea was an insult and that the Teamster contracts were sweetheart contracts. Lauer asserted that the growers in the area were upset with the whole situation, that some were preparing suits against the Teamsters, and that the Teamsters would probably sue InterHarvest if United Fruit were to develop a relationship with the UFWOC.³¹

The strike moratorium and especially the status of the Teamsters' secret agreements brought widespread confusion. The three parties to the negotiations, the UFWOC, the IBT, and the growers, responded as follows: The UFWOC refused to accept the terms of IBT contracts with the growers. The UFWOC discovered that the contracts had actually been signed before wage rates had been set, and as a consequence felt that the Teamsters had sold out the workers. The UFWOC used this to organize workers, turning them against the IBT's "sweetheart contracts." UFWOC strength among workers, however, was not as solid as it had been in the Delano area. There were many militant pro-UFWOC workers in the area, but a significant percentage of them were migrants and green-carders and by longstanding experience proved to be "soft" support, likely to disappear once a strike began to drag out.³²

The UFWOC disliked and distrusted both the Teamsters and the growers. Especially after its heady success in the San Joaquin and Coachella Valleys among the grape growers, the UFWOC leadership was militant and contemptuous of the Teamster and grower negotiators in face-to-face encounters with them. The exception was Chavez himself. Chavez had gone on a fast at the beginning of the confrontation with the Teamsters in Salinas, but after only six days had had to call it off because he was too ill to continue. He then left Salinas and went to a Franciscan retreat near San

³¹ "Rival Growers Lawsuit May Halt Chavez Talks with Biggest Packer," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 29, 1970, A2; Harry Bernstein, "Suit Stalls Chavez-Growers Contract Talks," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1970, II-1.

³² Harry Bernstein, "5,000-7,000 Strike in Largest Farm Walkout in U.S. History," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1970, I-1; "Farm Workers Continue Strike Causing Shortages and High Prices," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1970, 1.

Juan Bautista to recuperate.³³ Chavez was there during the moratorium. He received phone calls and consulted with those directly involved in the negotiations, but he had removed himself from direct negotiation. In retreat, Chavez did penance and tried to come to his own conclusions about the situation in Salinas. Chavez was dogmatic, but it would not be fair to say that he was self-righteous and arrogant. Chavez believed that the farm workers' cause was absolutely just and that it was a question of coming up with the right tactics to achieve the ultimate goals of *la causa*. He distrusted both growers and Teamsters and felt each was deeply implicated in the self-serving and unjust system that oppressed farm workers.

The growers' response was mixed. The day after the Teamsters and the UFWOC signed their jurisdictional pact, growers from El Centro and the San Joaquin and Salinas Valleys met with Grami and Monsignor Higgins. Herb Fleming, the president of the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association and head of one of the largest Salinas companies, was to try to get power of attorney from all the growers with Teamster contracts before the moratorium ended. At the end of the moratorium, Lauer and Higgins reported that there were still very severe problems among the growers. Some growers wanted legal action taken, against the Teamsters if the IBT rescinded its contracts, and against the Teamsters and UFWOC for conspiring to destroy the harvest in the Salinas Valley. Some growers were offended by the role of Monsignor Higgins and the Catholic Church and did not want to bargain through a priest. As Lauer stated it, the InterHarvest-United Fruit position was this: "Even if we get a release from the Teamsters we still take a risk of a suit from other growers. We're willing to take that risk."³⁴

The Teamsters, however, had not let InterHarvest out of its contracts with them. Grami tried to blame the IBT's failure to rescind its contracts on the growers. Some growers had threatened to sue the IBT if the IBT did not honor its contracts, or rescind all of them together. But growers hinted that the IBT had threatened to sue them for not honoring the contracts. Lauer confessed that he could not understand the Teamster position on

³³ "Chavez Ends Fast, Must Rest Three Weeks," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1970, I-2.

³⁴ "Freshpict Foods, Inc., Negotiates with Chavez," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 23, 1970, A1.

rescission.³⁵ Grami seems to have wanted to retain and exercise as much power in the situation as possible and that meant hanging on to the contracts and taking personal credit for having engineered them, or getting Einar Mohn to put his name to the rescission order and thus take the blame for “losing” them.³⁶ From Lauer’s comments and Grami’s excuses, the UFWOC inferred that Grami had gone to the growers’ meeting and conveyed the message that the IBT would not let growers out of their contracts with the union. Certainly, there were many growers whose animus for Chavez and the UFWOC was very strong and who did not want to do anything that would advance their cause.

Meanwhile, a new kind of trouble was brewing in Delano. The union hiring hall, one of the most important parts of the AFL-CIO’s contracts as far as Chavez was concerned, was creating problems. Workers who had been loyal to the union were given priority over other workers, while others, including green carders and relative newcomers who might have found work through labor contractors were passed over or placed low on the union’s priority list. Employers did not like it, and neither did many of the workers. The UFWOC was blamed. Labor contractors and foremen fought hard for their positions, which had been eliminated under UFWOC contracts, creating more difficulties. A plethora of administrative problems arose and not a few injustices were done.³⁷

There was more confusion to add to the confusion at the hiring hall. The workers had to come there to get a dispatch. We weren’t even smart enough to say, “Continue working, we’ll give the dispatches after all this is over.

There were thousands of people waiting, everybody wanted to get dispatched at the same time. No one could work because there were people just squeezed in there. We would be announcing all

³⁵ Levy, *Chavez*, ch. 4, “The True Teamster Position,” 352–57.

³⁶ Edward J. Walsh and Charles Craypo, “Union Oligarchy and the Grassroots: The Case of the Teamsters’ Defeat in Farmworker Organizing,” *Sociology and Social Research* 63 (January 1979): 269–93.

³⁷ “Chavez and Growers Experiment with Social Justice,” *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1970, A16; “Farm Labor Contractors Support Teamsters,” *The Sacramento Bee*, August 11, 1970, A6; “Farm Labor Fight Hurts All,” *San Diego Union*, August 28, 1970, B10.

day long, sign over here, and get dispatch cards over there. Then the hiring hall had to match the worker with the card already signed in the field. But there were so many cards, they couldn't find them

Finally things started getting better, They sent me two guys from Salinas who knew what they were doing. After about three or four weeks, it was down to normal.³⁸

Back in Salinas, workers loyal to the UFWOC were anxious to strike, but the UFWOC leadership feared that workers in the area were not well enough organized to sustain a long campaign. Both the AFL-CIO and the Church believed that the UFWOC could get contracts with the growers if it held off on a strike and continued negotiating with the growers. They had evidence that Fleming was working with the growers to try to resolve the situation, and Freshpict and InterHarvest were both involved in direct negotiations with the UFWOC, but despite everyone's efforts, on August 21, 1970, the Salinas Valley growers announced they would honor their contracts with the Teamsters.³⁹

The next day, however, Lauer contacted the UFWOC and, in a meeting with Cohen and Huerta, announced that the Teamsters had rescinded their contract with United Fruit. Lauer said that United Fruit would immediately arrange for an election to be held among InterHarvest workers to democratically determine which union would represent them. Cohen and Huerta then refused an election and demanded recognition of the UFWOC based on the number of authorization cards the UFWOC had gotten IH–United Fruit workers to sign. Higgins mediated once again and finally a UFWOC workers' committee and the InterHarvest representatives entered into contract negotiations. Bishop Donnelley flew in from the East to assist in negotiations.⁴⁰

At a big rally, the UFWOC finally called a strike, excluding United Fruit–InterHarvest as a target, of course. Chavez, still at the Franciscan retreat, was worried about the boycott. He had kept UFWOC organizers in charge of the grape boycott on the job by stalling their homecoming,

³⁸ Levy, *Chavez*, ch. 5, "Bedlam in Delano" (Richard Chavez recalls), 359–63.

³⁹ "New Chavez Strike Looms in Salinas," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 22, 1970, 4.

⁴⁰ "Breakthrough for Farm Workers," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 28, 1970, 1.

but realized that sooner or later he would have to honor his promise to let them come home and replace them with new people to run the boycott of corporations with holdings in the Salinas Valley.

The strike continued as talks with InterHarvest broke down and as growers filed suits against the UFWOC to restrain the UFWOC from picketing. In response, the UFWOC began to organize a sit-down strike among workers. Scattered violence erupted and became more and more commonplace. The UFWOC's general counsel, Jerry Cohen, was badly beaten on the Hansen Ranch by a man later identified as a Teamster.⁴¹

John M. Fox, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of United Fruit, flew in from the East Coast to meet with Chavez. Chavez talked tough and kept the pressure on. On August 26, 1970, Chavez initiated a boycott against Chiquita brand. Bill Kircher called Chavez to appeal for a delay of the boycott while IH-UF was still negotiating, but Chavez refused. Chavez also extended the strike to cover Bud Antle's farm. Antle had had a union contract with the Teamsters for ten years.⁴²

Just as InterHarvest and the UFWOC finally reached agreement on the terms of a contract, Lauer got word that Pic'n Pac had obtained a court order requiring InterHarvest to show cause why it should not be permanently enjoined from signing a contract with any other union. The AFL-CIO, however, interceded with the Teamsters on behalf of United Fruit and got the Teamsters to promise to release UF from its contract with them.⁴³

To actually get the rescission of the InterHarvest–Teamster contract that the Teamsters had promised, John Fox had to fly to California, cool his heels in Einar Mohn's outer office, and in general “come begging for it.”⁴⁴ United Fruit wanted very much to sign with the UFWOC. The Teamsters wanted to hang on to their contracts, but the AFL-CIO exerted pressure on the IBT to sign the rescission agreement. Mohn exacted his pound of flesh from Fox and then notified Pic'n Pac at which time Pic'n Pac filed suit

⁴¹ “Reports on Violence Mar Salinas Farm Strike,” *The Sacramento Bee*, August 30, 1970, A6.

⁴² “Chavez Seeks Support in Lettuce Ban,” *The Sacramento Bee*, August 27, 1970, I-A2.

⁴³ “Chavez Signs Pact with Large Salinas Farm Inter-Harvest, Inc.,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1970, 1.

⁴⁴ Levy, *Chavez*, 395.

against InterHarvest. But finally, on August 30th, 1970, InterHarvest and the union reached agreement.

One of the main things the company wanted was for Chavez to “clarify” statements he had made to the press about United Fruit, especially with regard to the company’s dealings in Latin America. Lauer freely admitted that United Fruit had a bad image in labor relations,” but asserted that it had been working hard to change the company’s image, especially in Latin America, and it wanted Chavez to make it clear to the press that United Fruit had negotiated a liberal contract and that the company was a friend to the UFWOC — in fact the only corporate grower friend the UFWOC had in the Salinas Valley. Chavez admitted that signing such a good contract with InterHarvest made it more difficult to organize other workers. In fact, Chavez hesitated to sign for fear that only InterHarvest would sign with the UFWOC.⁴⁵

Local grower reaction against InterHarvest’s signing with the UFWOC was strong. “They’re from Boston,” local growers were quoted as saying. “It’s a conspiracy to put the local growers out of operation. InterHarvest has no interest in the valley, just in making money.”⁴⁶ Some Teamsters and smaller growers started picketing InterHarvest the day after InterHarvest and the UFWOC reached agreement on the contract. InterHarvest was completely shut down for nine days. Other workers began to worry that if they were under a UFWOC contract, they would not be able to work.⁴⁷

As more rough-looking Teamsters began showing up in the Salinas Valley, members of the San Francisco chapter of the Seafarers Union were called in once again to protect UFWOC organizers. Threats and random, petty violence, bomb threats, rock throwing incidents, broken windshields, flat tires, nails dropped in driveways, were the order of the day. In early September the UFWOC was holding nightly rallies with Chavez in attendance most of the time, and Kircher was meeting Einar Mohn. Growers charged UFWOC pickets with intimidating their workers and engaging in violence. The Citizens Committee for Agriculture held a rally of its own

⁴⁵ “Chavez Signs Pact with Inter-Harvest,” *The Sacramento Bee*, August 31, 1970, I-A1.

⁴⁶ “Salinas Lettuce Strike in 9th Day,” *The Sacramento Bee*, September 1, 1970, A2.

⁴⁷ “United Farm Workers Contract Causes Inter-Harvest Plant at Salinas to Close,” *San Jose Mercury*, September 1, 1970, 1.

which attracted 2,500 people. Teamster caravans of men cruised towns, spoiling for a fight.⁴⁸

With regard to the other growers being struck, the UFWOC, AFL-CIO officials, Monsignors Higgins and Mahoney, and Teamsters Mohn, Grami, and Andrade met with inconclusive results. On September 11th, however, L. H. Delfino, an artichoke grower in Watsonville, recognized the UFWOC. On September 15th, Bill Grami told the press that the Teamsters were signing new workers and considering chartering a statewide farm workers local. Two more growers recognized the UFWOC, however.⁴⁹

On September 16, 1970, Superior Court Judge Anthony Brazil granted permanent injunctions against picketing to thirty growers, on the grounds that the situation in Salinas was a jurisdictional dispute between two unions.⁵⁰ The UFWOC was thus forced to switch from picketing to boycotting. The UFWOC had been trying to use the threat of a boycott to force negotiations with growers, knowing full well that its boycott apparatus was not strong and that it would have to recruit new boycotters.⁵¹ On September 18th, however, Pic'n Pac (S. S. Pierce) announced it was ready to recognize the UFWOC if its workers chose to be represented by the UFWOC. On September 21, 1970, a delegation of Salinas Valley growers met in Sacramento with Assembly Speaker Robert T. Monagan (R-Tracy) to ask for legislation on farm labor unions.⁵²

⁴⁸ "Teamsters Strike Grower Who Signed Farm Labor Pact with Chavez," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1970, I-3; "Chavez Calls Salinas Atmosphere 'Vigilante,'" *The Sacramento Bee*, September 6, 1970, A2; "Chavez Asked Attorney General to Take Over Law Enforcement," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1970, A-A; "Salinas Police Deny Chavez Charge of 'Breakdown in Law Enforcement,'" *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1970, I-1.

⁴⁹ "Purex Seeking Negotiations with UFWOC," *San Jose Mercury*, September 5, 1970, 29; "Freshpict Foods, Inc., Negotiates with Chavez," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 5, 1970, 3; "2nd Major Grower Will Talk with Chavez," *The Sacramento Bee*, September 5, 1970, A2; Harry Bernstein, "Large Salinas Valley Grower Agrees to Recognize Chavez," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1970, I-1.

⁵⁰ Nicolaus C. Mills, "Eagle over the Lettuce Fields," *Commonweal* (November 6, 1970), 140-41.

⁵¹ "Temporary Halt on Boycott," *America*, April 10, 1971, 362.

⁵² "Farmers in Salinas Area Have Little Defense Against Chavez," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 21, 1970, 1.

As the Salinas Valley harvest neared its end, the UFWOC had managed to sign contracts with InterHarvest, Brown & Hill Tomato Packers, Fresh-pict, Delfino, Pic'n Pac, and D'Arrigo, but the harvest season ended with violence and the jailing of Chavez. On September 23rd, in Santa Maria, three UFWOC members were arrested for shooting a Teamster organizer. The victim, shot seven times, recovered. Chavez in a public statement condemned the violence. Chavez, having violated the court injunction against boycotting Bud Antle products, was arrested and ordered to remain in jail until he had notified all UFWOC supporters to stop the boycott against Antle. Chavez refused.⁵³ The UFWOC organized a jail vigil, Coretta King visited Chavez in jail and, at the request of Paul Schrade of the UAW, so did Ethel Kennedy. After he had been jailed for twenty days, the California Supreme Court ordered Chavez's release pending a review of the case and later ruled the injunction unconstitutional.

After the violence and confusion of the fall 1970 harvest, the AFL-CIO engineered talks with the growers and the Teamsters the following spring. The UFWOC declared a moratorium on the lettuce boycott while the sides talked.⁵⁴ After five months of negotiations, the UFWOC leaders were convinced that the negotiations were not being conducted with an eye toward settlement. By November, 1971, the negotiations had collapsed completely.

In 1971, the UFWOC felt compelled to respond to a series of legislative initiatives sponsored by the Farm Bureau and other allies of the growers, not only in California, but in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Arizona, New York, and Florida. Jerry Cohen spent time in Oregon lobbying and organizing to defeat that state's bill. Chavez himself moved to Arizona to fight what he defined as repressive legislation there. He moved into the Phoenix barrio and went on another hunger strike. Senator George McGovern, campaigning for president, visited Chavez there as did Coretta King. Chavez ended a twenty-four-day fast at mass attended by 5,000 people, including Joan Baez and Robert Kennedy's son, Joseph. Then it was back to

⁵³ "Salinas Farms Quiet as Lettuce Boycott Begins," *San Jose Mercury*, September 22, 1970, 1A; Harry Bernstein, "Growers Open Drive Against Union Boycott," *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 1970, I-18; "UFWOC Pickets as Farm Talks Cease," *San Jose Mercury*, September 24, 1970, 55.

⁵⁴ Ron Harley, "Labor Unrest in the Salad Bowl," *Farm Quarterly*, November–December 1970, 58–60.

California to try to defeat Proposition 22, a ballot initiative written by the Farm Bureau.⁵⁵

In February, 1972, the UFWOC received its charter from the AFL-CIO marking its change in status from an organizing committee to a full-fledged union. The UFWOC became the UFW, the United Farm Workers union.⁵⁶

By 1972, the political climate outside California was beginning to take its toll on the UFW in behind-the-scenes maneuvers.⁵⁷ Three of the five members of the NLRB were Nixon appointees, and the NLRB's new chairman, Edward B. Miller, was strongly anti-labor. The UFW legal staff anticipated a federal effort against the union emanating from the Board. Cohen in particular suspected that the Board would try to prove that the UFW represented workers in commercial packing sheds in which case the NLRB could rule that UFW workers came under its jurisdiction and could outlaw use of the secondary boycott. When the UFW got involved in a boycott of nine small wineries in the Napa Valley, NLRB general counsel, Peter Nash, went after the UFW on just such grounds. The UFW's response was to attack the Republican Party, putting especially heavy pressure on Jacob Javits and Edward Brooke, two Republicans it thought would respond. Once again, the UFW appealed to its friends. Senator Edward Kennedy charged the Nixon administration with using federal agencies to harass the UFW, as did the Congressional Black Caucus, Spanish-speaking congressmen, and other liberals. Nash dropped the charges in exchange for a UFW agreement to stop the boycott.

The Teamsters had supported Richard Nixon in his 1968 bid for the presidency, and in 1971 Nixon, it is believed, worked out a deal with Frank Fitzsimmons to get Jimmy Hoffa released from prison. But to assure his release, Hoffa agreed not to participate in union affairs for a decade. A

⁵⁵ "Crippling Farm Workers," *The New Republic*, September 16, 1972, 10; Ron Harley, "The Furious Controversy Over New Farm Labor Laws," *Farm Quarterly* (September 1972): 26-27.

⁵⁶ "United Farm Workers Organizing Committee is Accepted as Member Union by AFL-CIO," *New York Times*, February 22, 1972, 22.

⁵⁷ The Nixon Administration's first proposal for bringing farm workers under a national labor relations law was reported in: "The Wrath of Grapes," *Time*, May 16, 1969, 24. Chavez's response is recorded in: Cesar Chavez, "Nonviolence Still Works," *Look*, April 1, 1969, 52-57.

measure of the chumminess between the Nixon White House, the IBT, and Nixon's long-term backers, the growers, was the fact that the White House set up a meeting between Fitzsimmons and the Farm Bureau at a Farm Bureau convention in Los Angeles just after Nixon's landslide victory in 1972.⁵⁸

On December 29th, 1972, the California Supreme Court ruled that the UFW's Salinas Valley lettuce strikes had been lawful and the injunctions against the strike invalid. The language of the decision stated that it was an "uncontradicted" fact that it was the growers who approached the Teamsters, and that it was "undisputed" that the Teamsters "did not represent a majority, or even a substantial number" of the field workers.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, three weeks later, the Teamsters renegotiated their contracts with a total of 170 major vegetable growers including those under contract in the Salinas Valley. It was several weeks before George Meany denounced the Teamster action.⁶⁰

In December of 1972, it became clear to the UFW that the Teamsters would move in on the UFW's contracts with the grape growers in the San Joaquin and Coachella valleys when they expired in April 1973. On April 15th, all of the Coachella Valley growers but Steinberg and Larsen signed four-year contracts with the Teamsters upon the expiration of UFW contracts.⁶¹ Steinberg & Larsen signed one-year contracts with the UFW that provided for a hiring hall run jointly by the UFW and the company involved. The UFW called a strike April 16th, and the growers went to court to get injunctions against the strike. In five days, 300 UFW pickets had been arrested. The Teamsters were in the valleys and once again there were reports of widespread intimidation and violence. On July 22nd, there were reports that UFW supporters in jail in Fresno County were beaten. A few

⁵⁸ Ronald B. Taylor, "A Romance Rekindled," *The Nation*, March 19, 1973, 366-70; "Campaign to Boycott Lettuce," *U.S. News & World Report*, August 28, 1972, 51; "Boycott Report," *The New Yorker*, September 2, 1972, 20-21.

⁵⁹ Taylor, "A Romance Rekindled"; "Campaign to Boycott Lettuce," 51; "Boycott Report," *The New Yorker*, September 2, 1972, 20-21.

⁶⁰ "Farm Labor: New Phase," *The Nation*, January 29, 1973, 133; Taylor, "A Romance Rekindled."

⁶¹ Shortly after the agreements were signed, a packing shed owned by one of the growers who had signed with the Teamsters was burned to the ground. "Again la Huelga," *Time*, May 7, 1973, 79.

days later, Kern County deputies beat UFW pickets at the Giumarra Ranch, using billy clubs and mace as a confrontation between Teamster guards and the pickets broke out. Two hundred and thirty pickets were arrested. In all, 3,589 people were arrested including 70 priests and nuns who were jailed. Meany called the Teamsters' actions "the most vicious strikebreaking, unionbusting effort I've ever seen in my lifetime. We're going to do anything that's necessary to keep that union alive."⁶² On August 9th, the Teamsters agreed to meet with Chavez. A great deal of pressure had been applied by top AFL-CIO executives, clergyman, and others. AFL-CIO general counsel Al Woll and AFL-CIO Vice President Joseph Keenan were there, but in the evening of the first day of talks, twenty-nine Delano growers signed contracts with the IBT. This was after Fitzsimmons had given his word to George Meany that no more contracts would be signed until after talks were held to try to resolve the conflict. The next day Fitzsimmons and Einar Mohn repudiated the contracts signed by the Teamster area supervisors.⁶³

Violence ensued again. Two UFW supporters were killed, one of them shot. On September 1, 1973, the UFW called off its strike and dispersed 500 farm workers to cities across the country to participate in a boycott. The boycott was not a great success, and so Chavez and the UFW tried other tactics as well. During this very difficult period, the potentially divisive issue of race was raised in an aggressive and forthright manner by UFW staffers as a weapon against the Teamsters. Cohen began referring to the Teamsters as a "white man's union."⁶⁴

In the following year, in an effort to solidify their power, the Teamsters began to change their tactics. By 1973, the Teamsters had seven field offices in California staffed with well-paid, experienced personnel to handle grievances and to provide a wide range of services to Teamster members. Teamster organizers were also beginning to consult with workers before negotiating contracts for them. In 1973, workers covered by UFW contracts

⁶² "More UFWOC Members Arrested in San Joaquin Valley," *New York Times*, July 23, 1973, 21.

⁶³ "Teamsters Union Repudiates its Contracts with San Joaquin Valley Grape Growers," *New York Times*, August 11, 1973, 52.

⁶⁴ "Chavez Pickets Again," *Christian Century*, January 17, 1973, 64; "Chavez Strikes Again," *Newsweek*, January 17, 1973, 64ff.

numbered fewer than 5,000, whereas Teamster contracts covered 55,000 field workers during the peak harvest season. More and more, workers who had supported the UFW and “in spirit” continued to do so, came to prefer the Teamsters because the Teamsters could assure them work.⁶⁵ This was the context in which the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters continued to try to hammer out an agreement. The months of September, November, December, January, February, March, and April went by, the boycott continued, and the see-saw battle between Meany and Fitzsimmons over the UFW dragged on, punctuated by news bulletins that announced first an agreement, then a lack of agreement, then mutual challenges and criticisms.

On November 27, 1974, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the following:

Former Modesto Teamsters Union leader Theodore J. (Ted) Gonsalves has been sentenced to one year in prison for illegally soliciting and accepting payments from growers to combat the UFW’s organizing drive in the Salinas Valley four years ago. Gonsalves pleaded “no contest” to five charges of violations of federal laws concerning payments from employers to union officials.⁶⁶

In December, the UFW took another tack, filing suits against the Teamsters for damages totaling \$700 million, and the burden of UFW legal action against the Teamsters became a significant factor in the contest between the two unions.

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⁶⁵ Walsh and Craypo, “Union Oligarchy,” 269–93.

⁶⁶ “Teamsters Leader Gets Prison Term,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 27, 1974.