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Hispanic Migrant Labor in Oregon, 1940-1990

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HISPANIC MIGRANT LABOR IN OREGON, 1940-1990

by

COLLEEN MARIE LOPRINZI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

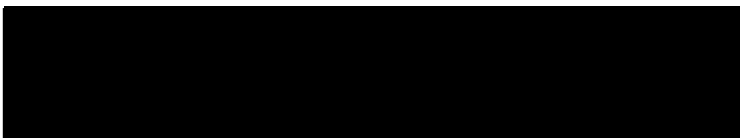
MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

Portland State University

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:


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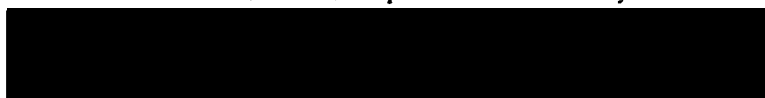


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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Colleen Marie Loprinzi for the Master of Arts
in History presented July 23, 1991.

Title: Hispanic Migrant Labor in Oregon, 1940-1990.

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Hispanic Migrant Labor in Oregon, 1940-1990, describes the history and conditions of Hispanic farmworkers migrating from the southwestern United States, Mexico, and Latin America after the 1940s. This paper uncovers the history and contribution of a people easily forgotten, but essential to the well-being of the economy and the cultural diversity of Oregon. Though much has been lost in the comings and the goings of these people, bits and pieces have been recovered from old newspaper clippings, occasional documents

recording the concerns and responses of the federal and state governments, rare articles tucked away in little known periodicals, and interviews.

A history of the migration and a general profile of the Hispanic migrant opens the paper, followed by a description of the health, housing, and work conditions. I then outline the migrants' attempt to advance through education and to settle out. I describe the poverty they lived in and the treatment they generally received in society.

The next chapter details the external factors which affected the recruiting, hiring, and daily conditions of work. I assess the role of the contractor, who was closely involved with the daily lives of the migrants and then explore the farmers and the economy in which they functioned in terms of the effect they had on the migrants. The government and its response to the migrants and its apparent philosophy and policies are studied. The efforts, as well of lack of effort, of some of the government's representatives are looked at as well.

In the third chapter, I describe the attempt of members of the migrant community to care for one another. This covers both the cultural cohesiveness found within the community and union activism. It also includes the concerted efforts made by ex-migrants, Chicanos, and religious and secular activists.

The information obtained came from local newspapers, regional government documents, and journals found at the libraries of Portland State University, Reed College, Lewis and Clark College, and the Oregon Historical Society. Interviews are also included as well as invaluable theses and dissertations from students of Northwest academic institutions.

This research found that Hispanic farmworkers played an important role in the agricultural economy of Oregon. They did not, however, receive fair retribution.

Farmworkers' wages and conditions remained substandard. They were not protected by the National Labor Relations Act and state government left their conditions unregulated as well.

The role of the growers and contractors also remained unchecked, leaving it to the discretion of each individual involved, whose monetary interests often dictated his decision-making, regardless of its effects on the migrants. The economic outlook for migrants did and will continue to remain glum as long as competition within the American system and with corporations in the Third World persists, encouraging farmers to keep wages and the costs of benefits and camp conditions low.

On the other hand, the migrants' culture, religion, and familial relations strengthened their ability to survive. Ex-migrants, community activists, and union activists also provided support, pushing for better conditions and rights for the migrants. I have concluded that without a drastic change in the performance of the government and in the economic system, the cause of the inhumane migrant conditions will not be eliminated.

DEDICATION

To the passing of time;

To the generations of people;

To my father, Philip George Loprinzi, who wrote "Report on Migratory Agricultural Workers" in 1947 to complete his Master's Degree;

To my mother, Beth Loprinzi, who always encouraged me in my education;

To my husband, Timothy Kurt Hardin, whose constant support, understanding, and love carried me through this; and

To my daughter, Rosa Maria, whose every crawl encouraged me to finish.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II THE MIGRANTS	5
Migrant Trends	5
The Migrants -- Numbers	8
General Characteristics of the Migrant	10
Conditions of the Migrant	13
Migrant Wages	13
Housing	16
Health	21
Education	24
Settling Out	28
III EXTERNAL FACTORS	31
Local Communities	31
Contractors	37
National Agricultural Trends	42
The Oregon Economy	44
Oregon Farmers	48
Profile	48
Political Actions of Oregon Farmers	50

		v
	The Government	58
	Policies	58
	Programs	65
IV	RESISTANCE	85
	Community	85
	Culture	87
	Union Activity and Labor Resistance	89
	Resistance Through Legal Action	97
	Activism	98
	Chronology of Oregon Activism in the Migrant Community ..	104
V	CONCLUSION	117
	REFERENCES	123

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The people of Oregon live in one of the most plentiful regions of the United States, where the soil is rich and the weather mild, making quality conditions for strawberries, pears, nuts and other crops. Although most don't work or live in the farmland they depend on the fruits and vegetables grown and picked there.

For most people, the food magically appears. If an image exists it is one of a family farm, with country people gathering to pick the fruit, just as on the television commercials, while the real people who work the fields are silent, hidden, lost, somewhere between the fields and the fruitbowl placed on the kitchen table.

History, however, reveals a different scene -- impoverished Hispanic migrants, stooping, picking, hoeing and sorting the crops. Hour upon hour, for up to twelve hours each day, they toil, often in the hot sun or the cold, driving rain. Images of the fields in which they work and live in do not come easily to mind for most Americans have never seen them. But the fact remains that the migrants play an integral part in the survival of each and every Oregonian.

What has been left behind in written form tells the story of the rise and fall of the number of migrants passing through Oregon, toiling in the fields without reaping the profits gained on the farms, enduring through their own ingenuity. Since 1940 the number of Hispanic migrants travelling to Oregon has risen consistently, outnumbering all others after the 1960s. What is written tells of conditions painfully hard to accept,

and of low wages few Americans would believe exist in the states. Recordings since 1940 show the distress of Hispanic migrants' daily lives caused by an economic system based on fierce competition. Under this capitalist economy contractors and struggling or corporate farms abandoned their responsibilities for housing and work conditions. For many reasons, including the stresses put upon them by the system they functioned within, those who used these people's labor provided only a miniscule opportunity for them to make any, let alone significant, improvements in their lives. Yet, there is no doubt that without them Oregon farmers would not continue to survive or profit under the existing economic structure.

Although diligent individuals, sometimes united in groups, pushed for government protection of Hispanic farmworkers in Oregon, little resulted. Local governments lacked finances, as well as concern at times, and state and federal governments felt the lobbying pressures from agribusiness, leaving little incentive to act. Even when other migrant workers and distressed farmers were aided, mostly during the New Deal and World War II, the government offered very little help to Oregon migrant workers.

Instead of vulnerable, "tradition-bound indolent" workers, many of the Mexican-American migrants travelling out of the Southwest had to be, and were, "risk-taking entrepreneurs who engaged in a geographically expanded economic occupation" (Wells 1976, 268). Initially many planned to make this merely a supplement to their regular income, to allow them to improve conditions for themselves and for their children. Some saved enough money to move out of the migrant stream. Others were able to provide their children with more training and education than they themselves had enjoyed.

Unfortunately many more were unable to climb out of the cycle of poverty. Most of those who ventured to the Pacific Northwest continued to struggle to make ends meet. Joined together in family units, most remained under the control of a contractor, which usually meant migrants lost even more money.

The history and contribution of Hispanic migrants in Oregon since 1940 remains largely untold. Though much has been lost with the comings and goings of these people, bits and pieces can be recovered from old newspaper clippings, occasional documents recording the concerns and responses of the federal and state government, rare articles tucked away in little known periodicals, and interviews.

It is important to view the history of the Hispanic farmworker in Oregon chronologically. A general trend of numbers and travel and recruitment procedures appears below. Settled Hispanic communities in rural Oregon and support systems that have helped the migrants have developed since 1940. Some change in the response of Oregon residents, especially in the rise of activists and volunteers has also occurred over time.

While some of this history fits into a chronological framework, much does not. That is to say, many aspects of this history have remained constant, persisting throughout time. Migrant wages, housing, work conditions, health, and success in education have all remained relatively consistent. As well, with few exceptions, contractors and farmers steadily maintained relations with the migrants that were destructive to the latter's well-being economically and emotionally. Government response to the migrants' plight was minimal throughout this time period. Because of the persistent trends in these areas a more thematic approach has been used.

The history of Hispanic migrant labor dates back before 1940. Contextual information for the period after 1940 proves most relevant to the understanding of their history. The history of the migration and a general profile of the Hispanic migrant opens the paper, followed by a description of the health, housing and work conditions. I then outline the migrants' attempt to advance through education and to settle out, leaving the migrant stream, describing their overwhelming poverty and the treatment they generally received in society.

The next chapter details the external factors which affected the recruiting, hiring and daily conditions of work. I assess the role of the contractor, who was closely involved with the daily lives of the migrants and then explore the farmers and the economy in which they function in terms of the effect they had on the migrants. The government and its response to the migrants and its apparent philosophy and policies are studied. The efforts, as well as lack of effort, of some of the government's representatives are looked at as well.

In the third chapter I describe the attempt of members of the migrant community to care for one another. This covers both the cultural cohesiveness found within the community and union activism. It also includes the concerted efforts made by ex-migrants, Chicanos and religious and secular activists.

CHAPTER II

THE MIGRANTS

MIGRANT TRENDS

The history of Mexican migration to the United States, and in particular to the Pacific Northwest, spans many generations. Although the decades following 1940 saw the greatest numbers of Hispanic migrants come through Oregon the earlier time period is necessary to cover briefly. Most of Oregon's Hispanic migrant workers have labored on farms. Mexicans came to Oregon as early as the mid-nineteenth century as *arrieros* or muleteers led their animals into the mining camps of northern California and southern Oregon. Later, Mexicans joined other shepherders, settling in eastern Oregon to tend some of the three million sheep grazing the plains. The presence of the Mexican *vaquero* can also be found in Oregon during the 1800s (Slatta 1979, 155).

Aside from the above mentioned, most Mexican, and later, Latin American, migrants who ventured to Oregon did so as a result of economic hardship. When the Spanish invaded the area now known as Mexico, creating haciendas and a rigid caste system, the natives suffered. The 1913 Agrarian Revolution, led by intellectuals, had looked hopeful for the landless and the poor. Land was seized and redistributed, but in 1918 Zapata was assassinated and survivors of the regime began to rebel. What proceeded was a bloody struggle between the powers that had previously existed -- the church, military, foreign capital, industrial powers, large rural landowners and those representing the agrarian movement. As fighting worsened, people left, some heading

north, crossing over the border to find peace and avoid the economic disaster the war was bound to bring (Galarza 1964, 40). Little had changed. In the 1920s, for instance, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, 96.2% were landless farm families and in the state of Veracruz 98.9% were landless, working the land that had once been theirs.

Simultaneously, an increased need for workers on the expanding cotton and vegetable farms further encouraged Mexicans to head for the Southwestern States. As the migration continued, the Mexican population of Texas increased from 71,062 to 683,681 between 1900 and 1930. The surplus of labor forced some to pick beans and hops in Oregon while others worked on the railroad labor gangs which built the Northwest rails (Gutierrez 1983, C9).

Wages in the Southwest remained low throughout the twentieth century compared with the rest of the United States, insuring the steady flow of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to the north in search of work steady (Wells 1976, 267). Some of those Mexicans, as well as Mexican-Americans who had always lived in what became the Southwestern United States, began to make it to the Northwest, becoming permanent residents (Gamboa 1984, 21).

The real thrust of migration of Hispanic workers to the Northwest began in the 1940s. During the war effort farmers were bent on keeping wages low and conditions cheap. The farmers were willing to try anything before they would give into the demands of domestic workers which included higher wages and better conditions (Gamboa 1984, 33). First Oregon farmers tried to organize a *woman's army* to pick the crops, but it wasn't enough. With the Anglo labor gone, the Japanese interned, and the farmers' fear of union activity and labor unrest, Oregon farmers turned to the *braceros*, which the government had already begun to contract from Mexico and transport to

California farmers. And though it was mainly the larger farms that used the *braceros*, most farmers liked the program because it kept wages, unionism, and, to some extent, labor unrest down (Gamboa 1984, 33; Robertson 1969, 5).

It was during this time that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, began playing a significant role as agricultural laborers in Oregon. Some were Mexicans migrating over the border while others were Chicanos, citizens of the Southwest. *Braceros* were hired on mostly as pickers, with some being assigned work as handy men, irrigators, pruners, tractor drivers and sorters. Under the federal government act between 1943 and 1947, 46,072 single men worked the fields in Oregon and were then sent home, a practice later expanded by the *bracero* program (Gamboa 1984, 99). Public Law 78, the *bracero* program, was enacted in 1951 as a two year program, but, with persistent pressure from the farm lobby, lasted until 1965. Under this program up to 1000 Mexicans worked annually in Oregon after 1947, mainly in the pear orchards of the Rogue Valley (Bianco 1963a, 15).

Most came from central Mexico, one of the poorest, most rural regions in the country. They heard of the opportunity through word of mouth, radio or ads, and then headed from their small towns or farms to the stadium in Mexico city, meeting up with thousands of others like themselves. Few would ultimately pass the health exams, which included venereal disease, x-ray and serological tests. Those selected were then photographed, vaccinated for small pox, had the work contract explained to them, and were put on a train which, 4 to 6 weeks later, arrived in the Northwest (Gamboa 1984, 154).

Once those few arrived, many experienced cultural shock. There was the new language; extremely hard work; cold weather worsened by inappropriate clothing;

tasteless, non-Mexican food; lack of culture; family and leisure activities; and, outside the camp, hostile reaction from local citizens (Gamboa 1984, 173).

When the government program ended Northwest farmers gave up the *braceros* because the government refused to continue covering the cost of transporting them, an expense of approximately \$135 per *bracero*. Instead, farmers began to rely on Mexican-Americans from the Southwest, who they estimated were cheaper (Gamboa 1984, 33). The largest numbers found their way from Texas, New Mexico and California through contractors or on their own. Industrial development after World War II and land consolidation reduced crops and agricultural jobs in southern Texas, while discrimination kept Chicanos from getting other kinds of jobs. Furthermore, the new absentee landlords in the Southwest left migrants without connections or the jobs they had once relied on, which forced them to search elsewhere (Wells 1976, 267).

Despite public opinion, almost all of these migrants were U.S. citizens. Between the end of the *bracero* program and the 1970s migrants came mostly from the Southwest. In the 1980s this would change as economic conditions in Mexico in the late seventies left many without a way to survive.

THE MIGRANTS -- NUMBERS

For a variety of reasons, estimates of the number of migrants, and the percentage of Hispanics among them, working each season in Oregon have been sketchy. Statistics found in newspapers, government documents and private reports conflict. Incomplete records kept by farmers or contractors due to tax reasons and the migrants' own fears of reporting their whereabouts to those they didn't trust, especially if they were illegal aliens, remained problems in collecting accurate numbers. Government

agencies conducting surveys experienced hostility from farmers, migrants and other government agencies, and, because of understaffing, only performed random samplings. The results also varied depending on the time of the summer because migrants moved from place to place, causing them to be left out of the count, or counted twice.

The most complete numbers came from the Migrant Health Project, an Office of Equal Opportunity funded program, but it only covered certain counties and only lasted from 1963 to 1971. Using the most accurate statewide estimates from the Oregon Department of Labor, the migrant population can be averaged at approximately 61,200 between 1958 and 1968, dropping off continually thereafter. During the 1950s and 1960s the counties containing 90% of the migrants were Clackamas, Hood River, Jackson, Klamath, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Polk, Jefferson, Deschutes, Crook, Umatilla, Washington and Yamhill. Within those counties most of the migrants worked in the Willamette Valley, the far southeast corner of the state, and the Hood River region (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1970*).

Several significant trends developed between 1950 and the present. Agricultural labor declined 50% in size, with each year's numbers rising or falling according to the need and to the previous two years' wage level and housing conditions. In the 1950s, almost all of the farmworkers, excluding the *braceros*, were U.S. citizens (Slatta 1979, 156; Smith 1966, 4). Later, Mexican-American and Mexican migrants increasingly replaced Anglo migrants. Between 1966 and 1970 Hispanic migrants rose from 28% to 70% of all migrants in the Northwest (Slatta 1979, 155). While some of the Spanish-speaking migrants became settled farm workers in Oregon over the years other migrants, mostly illegal Mexican workers, replaced them. By the 1980s only 12.8% of the permanently settled Chicanos in Oregon still worked primarily in farm labor, with 6

Oregon counties counting over 2,500 Hispanic permanent residents (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 110).

After the 1970s many more migrants came from outside the country. Eighty-five to 90 percent were from Mexico, with a disproportionate number coming from Mixteca, Oaxaca, Mexico where poverty and unemployment was higher than other areas (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIGRANT

The stereotype of the Hispanic migrant farm worker does not fit many, although one generalization has proven to be true. Economic hardship caused many to turn to or continue in this line of work. Some, once small landowners, lost what they had during one of the many bad economic times in Mexico or in another Latin American country. Others fled from political persecution, especially Central Americans after the 1970s. Some wanted to add to what they may already have had in their home country. This desire may have been to afford more land, to start a small business, to educate their children or to better support their extended family. Profiles of workers were reported after some were able to come out of hiding when they acquired citizenship after the 1986 Immigration and Reform Control Act. Enrique and Graciela Sanchez from Tomaltlan, Mexico, for instance, had previously owned a tortilla factory and a home and were wealthy enough to hire help. When the economy turned bad in 1979 they were forced to sell their home and resorted to paying \$1,900 to a "coyote" hired to smuggle them across the border. They and their four children lived in a trailer, working the fields of Oregon (Cowen 1987b, D1).

Indeed a state of economic desperation plagued most migrants. In 1987 it was estimated that 50% of all Mexicans in Mexico were underemployed or unemployed while 50% lived without electricity or running water (Cowen 1987b, D1).

Regardless of their previous state, as migrants they were forced to lead a different life, travelling from place to place, wherever needed, squatting, stooping or reaching on ladders, most likely with wife and child straining beside them 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. In the course of a year they might travel "as many as three to five thousand or more miles, working from six to a dozen crops" (Loprinzi 1947, 10).

Some conditions and trends have changed since the 1940s. In the 1950s and 1960s most Spanish-speaking migrants were either unmarried or without their families. While most arrived on their own as many had before them, some were recruited to the Northwest by the government (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 4).

Their trip to the north was grueling. They rode in old cars which often broke down, leaving them stranded. Many struggled to adapt to the unfamiliar cold weather, even as they rode in the back of a truck in clothes useful only in a warm Southwest. They encountered hostile aggression from local citizens as they passed through small rural communities (Gamboa 1984, 294). Often under contract with a crew leader or contractor, who usually had an unwritten agreement with a certain number of farms, the workers were loaned travel money at high interest rates or brought in cars or trucks by the contractor and assured of housing in a major camp. Once in Oregon, their contractor established credit with banks, stores and taverns, to be paid back with interest to both the contractor and the business providing services (Infante and Current 1958, C2; Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 11).

In the 1960s as farmers' associations took over the recruitment, more and more Spanish-speaking families arrived during the February to October harvest season, usually without funds and having no connections with a crew leader, contractor or workplace, remaining sometimes days or weeks. These families often failed to find steady work, even during the busiest part of the season. They struggled to find those who would sell them items on credit, relying on relatives to loan small sums of money, or, if absolutely necessary, on aid from religious, volunteer or government agencies where it could be found (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1964/65*).

Single young men and children continue to be a dominant group in the fields of Oregon. One study in the late 1950s documented that 50% of the children over the age of eight worked, and reports in the *Oregonian* regularly cited children not going to summer school because they were needed in the fields. One reporter quoted a worker as saying, "If the children don't work you cain't [sic] hardly make it" (Payne 1959). In 1971 an American Friends Service Committee report on child labor, surveying Oregon, Washington, Ohio, Maine and California concluded that 25% of all farm workers in the U.S. were under 16 years old (Berman and Aiches 1971, 1). In the 1980s young men and whole families continued to work the fields. One 15 year old said he migrated each year. He had worked in Los Angeles as a busboy, repaired cars for people referred by friends in Oregon and worked the fields of Oregon (Olmos 1983a, MWD2). Again in 1989 it was estimated that 25% of all migrant labor in the nation was still under the age of 16 (Frontline 1990).

CONDITIONS OF THE MIGRANT

The conditions the migrants encountered were symbolic of the overall attitude towards migrants that prevailed among farmers, local residents and government representatives throughout the entire time period from the 1940s to 1990. Though there was little intent to harm the farmworkers, there was also far too little intent to help them. The migrants were seen as transient and therefore temporary, and thus money was often not appropriated for their care. Another impression many had reinforced this lack of action. Some believed that the migrants were used to, and therefore satisfied with, the horrid conditions.

Migrant Wages

The extremely low wages that the farm workers endured can be traced to the lack of political protection awarded other workers in the United States. This lack of protection dates back to the loss of power experienced by domestic farm workers at the turn of the century. The loss of power was preceded by the strides industrialists and large farmowners made during and after the Gilded Age (Feise 1978, 79). Bankrupted farmers of this earlier time joined other migrants as farmworkers or urban industrial workers, and with their political and economic power stripped in Congress, they watched the legislative scales slant to protect large landowners' interests in direct opposition to their needs. While urban industrial interests became stronger in their representation in the government, rural concerns, especially landless migrants, were silenced. The rural problems resolved often involved the large landowners (Milk 1972). The belief that migrants of this time were only temporary and would fulfil the American Dream some day reinforced the justification not to aid them (Gamboa 1984, 333). These farmworkers

were incapable of establishing any law like the National Labor Relations Act to protect them. Nor were they able to direct the agricultural research which worsened the migrants' plight and was funded by the government.

Because of the use of the machinery, often invented through this agricultural research, the number of all agricultural workers, many of whom were migrants, declined. The number of agricultural workers fell nationally from 3 million to 1.5 million between 1919 and 1967, dropping from 35% to 3% of the American population between 1910 and 1976. Later, with the use of foreign labor, farmworkers became an even more invisible and vulnerable group (Feise 1978, 76).

While in 1966 the national annual agricultural wage earnings stood at \$1,240, or \$935 if doing only farm work, in 1989 the average migrant *family* earned \$8,000 a year compared to \$24,000 for the average American family in all other areas of work (*Frontline* 1990; Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 115; Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990, 451).

The Department of Agriculture's job was to establish fair annual wage rates. These rates did not, however, maintain a fair wage because the seasonal crop production and the going rate of sale often convinced farmers and contractors to quietly pay the rate they chose. Meanwhile, the quoted wage rates put out by the regional Farm Bureaus were often higher than the actual wage rates because they were given by the farmers, who wanted to convince teenagers or the urban unemployed to pick. These wages were based on fast, professional pickers working full-time. For example, in 1965 the *Oregonian* sent a college-aged reporter out to pick, checking the hourly rate. He wrote, "In some cases growers have claimed earnings between \$1.25 and \$2.00 an hour for an experienced teenage worker." This reporter worked ten hours in a "good field"

and made \$8.50, equalling \$.85 an hour. Another staff writer sent his oldest son out who made \$1.75 all day (*Oregonian* June 27, 1965, 31).

Wages fluctuated slightly from region to region and from season to season, and, unless a complaint was filed, wage payments were rarely checked by the government inspectors (Gamboa 1984, 300). The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries was responsible for monitoring compliance of the minimum wage law but had "so far not extended the audits to agricultural employers" (Martinis 1990, D10). In 1990 the minimum wage required was \$4.20, but a study by the local union of Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United found that in 1989 farmworkers were underpaid by two million dollars (McCarthy 1990b, B1). The union announced to a Oregon Senate panel that all 18 of the strawberry fields it monitored in its study had broken the minimum wage law (Martinis 1990, D10).

When the migrants had been promised otherwise, or if they didn't like the rate, there was very little they could do that year, owing on credit, trapped without funds, away from their homes and lacking the knowledge from whom to seek help. There were indications that the number of migrants would decline for the next two years when they had been exceptionally mistreated or tricked in a particular county or region, but, by and large, the migrants were often forced to accept the conditions they found for that year (Infante and Current 1959, 40; Stein 1990, L1).

Once this low wage was paid, and credit and interest for travel, housing and food costs returned to stores and contractors very little was left. It was estimated that 75% of the migrants' income was spent in the region he worked in and that 22% of the businesses in the area increased sales by the migrant spending (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 10). Obviously, it was nearly impossible to save any money.

When the season ended in mid-October many returned home, most to the Southwest, with little, if any, money in hand, to family, friends, or winter work. During the winter time, whether they remained in Oregon or returned home, finding work proved difficult. If they did find work it might be farm work, odd jobs, part-time factory or mill work, auto repair, construction, babysitting, house cleaning, wood chopping or seamstress work (Bianco 1983; McDermott 1990; Oregon State Bureau of Labor 1959).

Housing

During the *bracero* program most housing was run by the government. Because it was considered to be temporary very little money was invested in it. The tents used were the bare minimum in quality. Developed by the former engineer of the Barnum and Bailey circus, they were made to be put up and taken down quickly, and to sleep up to 800 men. The men, accustomed to warm weather, never got used to the one wool blanket and woodburning space heaters provided for the cold and rainy spring nights. After the first few years the light-weight tents provided in these "farm labor supply centers," as the government called them, gave no respite from the wind, dust, bugs, rain or burning sun. The food, as well, was poor. So inadequate, in fact, that riots and strikes broke out regularly among the *braceros* (Gamboa 1973, 60, 147). As well, the chemicals used to sterilize the camps were poisonous, applied frequently and used without well-known necessary precautions. Open privies and garbage pits joined above-ground waste water to make a perfect breeding ground for disease (Gamboa 1984, 147).

After the *bracero* program, housing improved, but this proved to be only temporary, lasting just a decade. For this first decade after the *bracero* program ended, 85% of the housing for Mexican-American workers was located on the private farms

where they worked, allowing migrants the opportunity to plant gardens and live less restrictive lives.

Later, farmers became more paternalistic and controlling and thought of cheaper ways of housing the migrants, hiring contractors and builders of camps who used the issue of control as a main sales incentive. The first step was acquiring the government camps. No one foresaw the future better than the Secretary Treasurer of the International Longshoreman's and Warehousemen's Union when he said in 1947, "Turning these camps over to the growers is equivalent to a jail sentence against farm workers" (Gamboa 1984, 246). After the war farmers did purchase the old government camps. They often raised the rent without maintaining the upkeep, as the Yamhill County Farm Labor Association did in 1948 when it doubled the rent immediately after acquiring a camp (Gamboa 1984, 333). This new housing was designed for multiple use such as off-season garages or easy-access storage (Gamboa 1973, 63). Old converted and unconverted barns were also used (Lopez 1976, 3; *Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 20).

After the 1960s more families, instead of lone men, arrived to work the fields. But the old camps were still set up for single men staying only a short while. Bunkbeds lined the walls of the little rooms, units were not insulated for winter, and toilets and washrooms remained located outside the cabins (Stein 1990, L1).

An informal interview of migrants and a 1969 government study found that good housing conditions were a primary factor in obtaining and maintaining a stable labor force, with migrants queried stating that good housing was second only to fair treatment by the grower and was a deciding factor in their choice of work (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 25; Smith 1966, 4). One government study in 1962 stated, "the visits to the

migrant camps in the valley revealed that migrants prefer paying rent, and even board if the camps are tolerable" (Bianco 1962a, 16). Another found that "the camp visits showed that the migrant worked on farms where suitable housing existed. Also, the quality of worker was commensurated with the quality of housing available" (Bianco 1962b, 27). Regardless, conditions rarely climbed above a very low standard.

Several major studies of labor camps and housing were conducted: the 1958 Bureau of Labor study, and the 1962, 1966 and 1969 Governor's Report, conducted by the Oregon State University Extension Service, the OSPIRG study in 1978 and a 1990 study by the Commission on Agricultural Workers. What the studies found were atrocious conditions for expensive rates that were up to an estimated 50% of the migrants' wages (Infante and Current 1958, 20; McCarthy 1990a, B1). In 1958, 62.5% lived with their family in a one room dwelling with no plumbing, heating, cooking utilities or refrigeration. In the 1968 inspection of the camps in Clackamas County, 88% had no running water in sinks and 89% had no refrigeration (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1968, 25). Some lived in barns holding large numbers of men, and in other camps open sewers flowed past housing or into swimming holes (Bianco 1962c, 23). Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions caused one report to find that "odors from at least one of the camps could be smelled 100 feet from the nearest shack" (Lattie 1962, 1). There were always a few farmers who would make improvements in the hopes of acquiring the best workers, but for the most part things remained so bad that in 1970 one Bureau of Labor official announced, "there are places being used right now you wouldn't put a dog in" (Smith 1966, 4).

In 1968 the Labor Program Chief of the Oregon State Board of Health, Taylor Sandvigen, said that 10% of the state's migrant housing should have been abolished

immediately, and chances were that the number in that bad a state of disrepair was far higher, based on the lack of inspections done annually (Olmos 1968a, 17). Of the majority of camps, which regularly did pass inspections, Father David Zegar of Cornelius said, "most camps pass inspections . . . so obviously the standards are low" (Butterworth 1991, C1). As will be discussed below, even when inspections occurred, rechecking the farms even once to ensure corrections were made was nearly impossible with the small staff and funding the state departments received for this duty. One account describes this problem:

Tito Aguilar lives in a camp. . . . Officially the camp was closed because it did not meet state health regulations. Most of the cabin doors have been nailed shut. But when Tito and his wife arrived they said the labor contractor who leases the camp simply pulled the nails out of the door and let them move in on the condition they work for him (*Oregonian*, 7 July 1972, 24).

The Migrant Health Project's survey of corrections made in the years it functioned never found more than 40% of the corrections made in any of the regions they worked in for any of the following conditions: camp area, water supply, sewage disposal, living units, lavatory and laundry or garbage disposal (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1964-71). In 1976 the OSPIRG report concluded, "camp conditions often do not meet the state health and safety standards, and that energetic enforcement of the law by OHS is needed to bring the camps into compliance" (Lopez 1976, 25). In 1990 the Commission on Agricultural Workers found that Oregon housing for the migrants was worse than California's or Washington's (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

More recently other factors have worsened the availability of quality housing. After the enactment of IRCA illegals could not use federally funded housing and what they could find they could not complain about (McCarthy 1990a, B1). With sources

finding that between 60 to 75 percent of the migrants were undocumented, this was cause for alarm. "The illegal migrants are sleeping in cars or camping out. . . . A two bedroom house in the Polk County town of Independence is home for 52 migrants" (McCarthy 1990b, B1). Another account found "about 20 . . . workers living in parked cars in and around the large berry fields where others sleep on thin sheets of wood" (Chan 1990, C10). Also, in some regions of Oregon increased population allowed landlords to raise the rent.

Field conditions were no better, typically having few facilities for the workers. A study of another 100 Hispanic migrants in Oregon conducted in 1987 found 96% disliking the living conditions, but fearing repercussions which kept them from complaining (Cowen 1987a, A1). In one field only three broken-down toilets were available for over 300 workers (Lopez 1976, 8). In a study done in 1984 all 100 migrants said they had never been provided with hand washbasins, required by state law, and that drinking supplies usually meant one cup in a bucket of water to be shared by all employees. Only one of the 100 had ever seen toilet paper in the field, also required by law (Hogan 1984, B1).

The problem of housing and field conditions was constantly brought up by religious activists, health workers and a few adamant government officials. Farmers claimed that they were unable to afford improvements or keep the farms up to state standards, especially since they only used the labor for a short time each year. At the same time, however, they seemed to find the money to invest in expensive pieces of machinery which they used each year for an even shorter time. This method of farm improvement which funded mechanization instead of providing more efficient and

humane labor policies was regularly reinforced by banks who willingly loaned money for capital improvements (Hightower 1973; Milk 1972; Young and Newton 1980).

Many local residents were unaware of the migrants' predicament. Those who were often found it appalling. Some blamed the migrants themselves for creating the disgusting conditions while others, though concerned, felt that their communities should bear the brunt. It can be assumed that like Forest Grove's and Woodburn's citizens, local residents throughout Oregon rejected proposals, fearing increased numbers of migrants, the burden of becoming the hub for services and reduced land values (Joanne Jessel, personal interview, 10 August 1990). The resistance felt in small communities proved to be detrimental to change. In response, the 1989 state legislature passed a law which made it illegal for communities to create zoning laws to protect their areas from migrant housing. But this has not stopped residents from voting down levies required to fund such projects (Butterworth 1991, C1).

Few communities, on the other hand, found it more productive to solve the influx of migrants by providing permanent housing so that they did not have to spend annual local resources for housing or food, and other costs of supporting an unemployed group who often ended up under bridges, on streets and in fields before or at the end of the season. These few towns took matters into their own hands, building housing projects to settle the migrants. In 1982 Forest Grove constructed a 50 unit project and attempted to raise another, but the citizens voted it down (Stewart 1982, MW7).

Health

The health hazards of migrant labor made it one of the most dangerous occupations. Constant travel, poverty wages, stoop labor and exposure to cold and hot weather created troubling effects. Pesticides, herbicides and insecticides caused health

problems. The diet of the migrant was also inadequate. The migrants' diet was related to their labor. The wages kept their consumption low. And the camp conditions and work hours reduced their ability to cook nutritious meals.

When the government camps existed for the *braceros*, and similarly when the farmers took these over, food provided for the workers was in inadequate quantities and often spoiled, causing food poisoning, because of the methods and procedures the government and farmers employed. Preparation was hours early and the unrefrigerated food was set out in the sun-drenched field for up to eight hours (Gamboa 1984, 147; *Oregon Migrant Health Project 1964-71*).

At a Grants Pass hop ranch in 1943, 500 of the 511 workers got food poisoning (Gamboa 1984, 147). In 1945 it became such a serious problem that the Mexican embassy requested that Northwest labor camps improve the food quality and quantity or Mexico would consider cancelling its contract (Gamboa 1984, 148).

In 1947, when the feeding of the *braceros* was abandoned by the government and taken over by the farm association, things worsened. The private profit incentive caused a reduction in the quality and quantity of the food. Recently, with the food buying and preparation left to each family, the problem has taken another direction. Many camps did not provide refrigeration, stove or cooking utensils. The migrating family relied on a small portable stove and bought their food daily or used non-perishable food. Most of the protein foods were given up. As well, fresh food was hard to come by. The camp was far away from major markets and the workday too long and hard to have the time to drive the distance daily. Even when they did have the fresh food many were so exhausted after a 10 or more hour day that very little cooking occurred.

Infant mortality remained 125% higher for farmworkers than for other Americans (Kirchmeier 1980, B3). For those who did survive, the effects of migrant work and life were also devastating. The diet of both the adults and the children stayed far below the recommended daily requirement (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 29). A study of 60 children conducted by the State Board of Health in 1970 at the Independence Migrant Summer School found 38% low in vitamin A, 36% below normal height, 14.5% below normal weight, 17% low in vitamin C and 75% below the RDA in vitamin intake as a whole (*Oregonian*, 18 February 1970, 11). In a study conducted by El Centro Cultural in 1984, 50% of the migrants, compared to 20% of Americans, failed eye exams (Cargill 1984, B1).

Although migrants were far more afflicted by health problems than the average American, migrants didn't receive dental and medical benefits, and even when there were services available the cost and distance kept migrants from using them. Health worker Rebecca Hart found that "many said they don't have the money for a doctor or can't go unless they have someone to translate for them" (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1). One study found that farmworkers had 1.6 times more muscular problems from the stoop labor than the average American worker. Migrants were also very likely to be affected by herbicides, insecticides and chemical fertilizer use in the fields, which may cause birth defects, cancer and tuberculosis (Frisvold 1988, 876; Lopez 1976, 23). Migrants faced a 300% higher chance of dying from an on-the-job accident than the average American worker (Kirchmeier 1980, B3). Camp conditions led to a high rate of hepatitis, parasites, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems. Communicable diseases afflicted the workers because of inadequate and unclean facilities (Frisvold 1988, 877). Prostitution in the camps was rampant, with trucks of girls brought out to do business; therefore

venereal and other sexual diseases spread (Lopez 1976, 10; *Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 30). The consequences were disastrous. University of Portland Professor and researcher Joseph Gallegos stressed, "ask a farmworker who has been exposed to pesticides all his life what is elderly and you're likely to get an answer of 45 years of age" (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1).

EDUCATION

Hispanic migrants' access to education never equalled that of other Americans. This in part was caused by a combination of things. The migrants' culture and language caused them to be at a disadvantage. But, more so, their work conditions made it nearly impossible for them to take advantage of any opportunities offered them. The government lacked consistent effort in setting up programs which could have alleviated the migrants' loss.

At the same time, when success was found it was through the help of these programs, which were often demanded by local or state activists. But, the largest factor for student progress was the motivated parents who wanted their children to have the chance to climb out of the cycle of migration and poverty.

For both those who returned home and those who remained in Oregon, educating their children proved hard. When migrants did send their children to school, they encountered a two-edged sword. On the one hand they too may have believed in the American dream, supposedly realized through education. But those who sent their children lost their addition to the family income and ran the risk of their children losing their culture. They surely feared exposing them to the harsh world of unfriendly Anglos. Twice as many migrants as settled Hispanics surveyed in Yakima had difficulty

understanding the teacher, while 58% of the migrant students worried about the clothes they had to wear, and the poverty and cultural isolation their clothing showed (Gecas 1980, 591). As the majority of school administrators in one study found, this feeling of awkwardness led migrant children not to more disruptive behavior but rather to withdraw. Add to that the adjustment to each new school, unprepared for the special needs of the migrant student, and failure frequently met them just around the corner. Although many Hispanics persisted in sending their children to school, both those who continue to migrate and those who have settled, have found academic advancement difficult and far too rare.

For those who migrated, the average school attendance for their children remained low. The harvest season cut into both the beginning and the end of the school year, forcing the children to either miss several months or change schools frequently. Those who attended were expected to learn and succeed in an unfamiliar language. The children lost two to three weeks each time they moved, equalling 20 to 30 weeks a year. In one study of Yakima migrants and settled Hispanics, twice as many high school aged migrants, compared to the settled, missed school "often" (Gecas 1980, 590).

The Yakima study mentioned earlier found that both migrant and settled parents were very supportive and encouraging of their children's education and career advancement, and that instead of cultural barriers, economic barriers in large part caused the failure rate. The study was conducted in three towns with a population of approximately 5,000, similiar to the size of the Oregon towns of Woodburn, Gervais and Nyssa where many Hispanics reside as well. The study found that the aspirations of the children were high with many of their expectations of success stemming from the strong

encouragement their parents gave them. Christina Gomez, migrant and mother of four, explained her efforts:

They have a good education. I like them to do everything right. We talk before they go to bed. I tell them I want to hear from their teachers that they work hard. I push them to study so when they are bigger they will get a good job, not lead the same lives as their parents (McDermott 1990, K1).

As migrant students arrived at the teen years, their expectations dropped dramatically, because they became more realistic about their possibilities and limitations: "This represents a gap between desire and perceived reality, a reality which appears more grim as the child grows older" (Gecas 1980, 592). At least for the first generation of the settled, the alienation of the child, the cultural misunderstanding between the teacher and the children and the discrimination did not completely disappear because the family was settled.

The educational programs set up for migrants did little to help. The programs were conducted during the worst time of year for them -- the summer -- and thus they could not take advantage of them. Teachers had to be extremely determined and committed to get the young children to come, as the following account makes clear. At 4 A.M. the teachers had to help dress and load the young children on the bus which they would drive out to the different camps.

But the all-important thing is that you be there to get the children before their parents leave for the fields early in the morning . . . otherwise, the family takes all the kids, and those not old enough to pick a berry sit in the car all day (Guernsey 1969, 1).

A 17-year-old from Texas who attended the 1980 Hillsboro summer school described the difficulties and the commitment needed: "I start picking at 4 a.m. I pick until 4 p.m. I go home, shower, catch bus. Class starts at 6 p.m. and lasts until 8:50

p.m. Then I go home to be ready to pick again at 4 a.m." (Leeson 1983, B1). And, in their quest to learn English they found summer school classes extremely overcrowded, further reducing their chances of learning.

Although the settled fared better, many of those also had very low success rates. Those who had settled out still had more familial responsibilities than the Anglo students, losing the ability to participate in after-school activities or have time for studies. Very few role models were available for these Hispanic students with few Hispanics teaching in Oregon (Hinkley and Olmos 1983, B7). In 1970, 45% of the Hispanic adults settled in Oregon compared to 24% Anglos still hadn't finished high school (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 110). By the 1980s, little had changed for the majority, with the dropout rate remaining at 43% for settled Hispanics in Oregon (Hinkley and Olmos 1983, B7; Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 111). Another study done on Hispanic adults over the age of 50 in Oregon found that 82% of them had completed less than six years of education (Fitzgibbon 1991, MP1).

Other problems compounded the school experience. Discrimination has remained a factor. Although most educators have moved beyond stereotypes and slanted perspectives, this attitude allowed one state school superintendent to claim in 1960 that the migrants were "educationally retarded." This and other destructive perceptions have remained alive (Wentworth 1960, 3). Chicano students felt the tension over race. Many very isolated in Oregon schools, unlike in their Texas hometowns, which were often largely Hispanic. Their needed to affiliate with the few other Hispanic students in their high school in Oregon helped the isolation but further alienated them from the Anglos. In Forest Grove Hispanic students finally vented their frustration and anger with violence (Hinkley and Olmos 1983, B7).

SETTLING OUT

In the 1940s farmers contracted farmworkers from Mexico to work in Oregon with the specific intent of returning the workers at the end of each season. After the *bracero* program, Hispanics from the Southwest joined Mexicans in migrating. Although most returned home there were always a few who stayed on, settling in Oregon because of the better wages, job opportunities or familial ties. By the 1960s several rural Hispanic communities had developed throughout Oregon, providing impetus and support for other migrants who would attempt to make the transition of settling in Oregon. Living in these communities were those who would later push for better conditions for the migrants and Oregon Hispanics in general.

Many migrants lacked formal education, a firm knowledge of the English language, connections necessary to make a job change or seek help, or many savings. They suffered from low wages and had large families. Their reliance on their own culture and family network and their preference to remain in small towns, or return to their hometowns after the season ended, further removed them from the outside world, and from other lines of work, located in urban areas (LaGra 1969; Slatta 1979; Stream 1976; Wells 1976). All of these reasons discouraged migrants from staying in Oregon and from acquiring different work.

Though the effort required to settle out remained overwhelming, many migrants did attempt to move into urbanized areas or small towns to find alternate work. Mechanization encouraged this trend since jobs became scarcer. This was an easier transition for those who saw work in the fields as supplemental income (Bianco 1963, 14; Cowen 1984, C2). At the same time, increasing numbers of South American refugees and illegals, and the continuing economic decline in the Southwest and elsewhere, often

squeezed Mexican-Americans out of farm labor because of even cheaper wages (Wells 1976, 268).

Important studies of settled ex-migrants in Washington and Wisconsin provide information on the environment needed to encourage migrants to settle out. In Wisconsin, Wells found that if a migrant family regularly visited friends or relatives who settled out, then they had a higher likelihood of attempting it themselves, because of the familiarity and connections they gained. On the other hand familial ties also discouraged migrants from settling out, especially if as a family economic unit they had been successful. The loss of the earnings of the family member or family who left the migrant stream often meant suffering for the rest of the unit (Wells 1976, 269).

In the 1970 Federal Census of Oregon 66% of the settled Hispanics were urban, 30% rural, with 12.8% still working on farms (Slatta 1979, 156). And by the 1980s Slatta would contend that, "the migrant worker image, . . . though still valid for a minority, is inappropriate for nine-tenths of all Chicanos" (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 108). But, many of these Hispanics, although settled, still continued to resort to migratory labor, even if minimally. A 1973 study of migrants and settled Hispanics in Washington found that 63% of the settled ex-migrants still did some fieldwork. Those in urban areas at times joined others in the fields in order to make extra money. In this case the settled Hispanic migrants averaged only \$3,830 per family compared to \$2,760 for those who continued to migrate year-round (Gecas 1973, 590).

The impact on small urban areas in Oregon has been dramatic. In the 1980s seven counties had over 2,500 Chicanos, with the Oregon cities of Nyssa, Woodburn, Ontario and Independence leading the way with 40.2%, 18.2%, 13.6% and 17.1% Hispanic populations (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 115). During harvest time these and

other small towns bulged with up to three times more Hispanics, who might some day settle as well. Woodburn, for example, increased its Hispanic population of 5,000 year-round to 15,000 during each the summer (*Oregonian* 1 December 1983, F1).

For many of these migrants who settled out, poverty persisted. Since the 1970s the family income of Hispanics in Oregon declined. The settled made only a little bit more than the migrant, with many still working in the agricultural sector as a permanent or part-time employees. In 1984 21% of those Hispanics settled in Oregon still worked below the poverty line, with 26.4%, compared to 18.6% Anglos, making under \$10,000 per year. Another factor hindered the income and savings of Hispanics. Hispanics in Oregon continued to have larger families than Anglos, in part because of their strong faith in Catholicism and the *machismo* value, which stresses that the "man's worth is measured in part by his ability to father children" (Slatta 1979, 160).

While the disadvantages and risks of settling out were great, some studies found among the settled a slight increase in the education of the parents, a trend towards smaller families, a knowledge of the use of farm equipment or job skills and a slightly higher income (Gecas 1973; Lagra 1969; Slatta 1979). Some settled workers found economic stability. A total of 28.3% of the Hispanic families in Oregon made between \$20,000 and \$34,900, compared to 35.5% of the Anglo families (Slatta 1979, 160).

CHAPTER III

EXTERNAL FACTORS

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

While not all Oregonians treated Hispanic migrants unfairly, historically the reaction of many was negative. That response ranged from insensitivity to rejection. Many Oregonians surely preferred a quiet coexistence, but some vocally and physically insisted on keeping Hispanics out of their communities and counties once the season ended. Unfortunately this attitude and action has persisted to the present time.

One of the most important factors in the fair treatment and success of the migrants was the level of discrimination and intolerance Oregonians displayed. Oregonians' history of tolerance has not been strong. Unfortunately, Blacks, Chinese, Hispanics and other minorities have long been discouraged from settling in Oregon. During World War II it was seen as patriotic to hate and mistreat the Japanese (Gamboa 1984, 22). Later this attitude was extended to the Mexican *braceros* and Mexican-American migrants. Although the Japanese and Black workers were generally denied work because Anglo workers often refused to stay in the same camps with them, the farmers of the Northwest accepted *braceros* because they were cheaper and available (Gamboa 1984, 3, 22). Although most farmers wholeheartedly felt that the hiring of *braceros* was so good because they would help cut off an agricultural movement and keep wages down, it was easy for the farmers to justify their use by a stereotype stated by one farmer during the 1950s -- that Mexicans were biologically built to be "more adaptable to

squat labor" (Infante and Current 1958, 12). The attitude the farmers held about the *braceros'* worth was reflected in the inhumane way in which they cared for them, in the food and housing, in the horrid work conditions and in the purposeful attempt to send them back annually and to keep a new set coming rather than providing a smaller number with year round employment in Oregon.

The *braceros* and Mexican-Americans, along with other non-Anglos, were banned from pool halls, movie theaters, beer halls and liquor stores. Health authorities' refusal to treat the *braceros* was so widespread that the Office of Labor took up the issue in Washington D.C. An official letter was sent to the health department in Oregon, but this request did not quell the discrimination. Regardless of whether it was the *braceros* themselves they distrusted or their supposed inability to pay for medical fees, the health authorities' attitude was blatantly degrading (Gamboa 1984, 173, 181).

Most people wanted nothing to do with the *braceros*, and to keep them from visiting their towns, some banned the sale of liquor on Sunday, specifically because the *braceros* would come in on that day (Gamboa 1984, 173; Slatta 1979, 160). Similar to the harassment other minorities received in Oregon, violence was aimed at the Mexicans. One account tells of the seriousness of this: In Klamath Falls one *bracero* was attacked without provocation, and as he staggered away after the brutal beating he, not his aggressors, was falsely arrested for drunkenness (Gamboa 1984, 171). Things got so harsh and disillusionment ran so high during the *bracero* program that by 1945 desertion of the camps by the *braceros* became a noticeable problem. It was estimated that five percent fled the camps and hid in the Chicano community. Others feigned illness or declared a family emergency in order to be returned home early (Gamboa 1984, 157).

Most of the farmers or rural residents never got to know the Hispanic culture and "probably less even cared." While some of the *braceros* enrolled in English classes when they were offered, the farmers made no effort to learn Spanish. And after the war farmers were as "unprepared to relate to the *bracero* on a personal level as they were unable to house them adequately" (Gamboa 1984, 157). The five percent defection rate, when *braceros* hid in the settled Hispanic community, must be seen as a response to the often brutal and humiliating conditions (Gamboa 1984, 157).

Cultural misunderstanding, ethnocentricity and stereotyping persisted. While the system of power and politics continued to underrepresent the Hispanic and other minorities, many Americans scapegoated them for problems of which they were merely victims. In Woodburn and Nyssa the school board and city council consistently lacked representation of Hispanics, with only one Hispanic sitting on the city council in Woodburn and none on either the school board or the city council in Nyssa as of 1985 (Martinis 1987, D10; Ulrich 1984, C2). Racial tension, police brutality and violence continue in the small Oregon communities where many Hispanics live (Blackmun 1990; Browning 1990; Cockle 1990).

Anglo communities tended towards ethnocentricity, feeling intimidated at being outnumbered or having different cultures surround them (Butterworth 1991, C1). Agitation among the Anglos rose during the summers when more migrants arrived. This was accentuated by the Anglo communities' lack of awareness of Hispanic culture. Just as once they were termed educationally retarded by school systems in Oregon, Spanish speakers were assumed to be uneducated, ignorant, un-American or illegal (Cargill 1984; Coonrod 1985; Cowen 1987; Durbin 1981; Hilderbrand 1983).

Another example of this cultural insensitivity and misunderstanding can be seen in Woodburn. Although Salud Medical Center desired to help Anglo and Russian senior citizens they found that these people would not come to the clinic because of the Mexican men who congregated in the parking lot. They did not understand that these men were not out to intimidate, but just desired to gather as they would in a traditional plaza in Latin America (Martinis 1987; D10).

Although the signs declaring "No Mexicans, Blacks or Dogs" no longer hang in windows and on doors, stereotypes continued. Many believe that the Mexicans were all on welfare, received government benefits but didn't pay taxes, and were lazy, alcoholic, violent and not to be trusted. Their dirt-laden clothes were seen not as a condition of their work, campsite or poverty, but instead as carelessness (McCarthy 1990, B1). This was the obvious misconception when one school administrator and an *Oregonian* reporter early in 1960 described migrant students,

As for cleanliness, some children when they took their first shower at school required four scrubbing. . . . They hadn't known what keeping clean was all about. But once they caught on . . . they got to like cleanliness. The idea snowballed, and some of their new interest in hygiene even rubbed off on their parents (Wentworth 1960, 3).

Though the attitudes seemed harmless, in actuality the repercussions were disastrous. Because an accent was equated with a lack of education or because all Hispanics were seen as illegals by some Anglos, they often did not get hired outside of agriculture (Ota 1983, A1).

This lack of hiring also occurred because of the fear by many that the Mexicans were the ones who took jobs away from Americans. This ignored the fact that many Hispanics were Americans and that the jobs they took often offered less than minimum wages.

Instead of blaming a whole network, Americans pointed the finger at the victim. If migrants and other Hispanics were taking jobs it was because the economic and political system allowed and encouraged it. Employers were allowed to pay low wages and encouraged by the government to obtain foreign labor through government-funded programs. The government also systematically maintained lax border patrols and did little to prevent the use of illegal aliens. Chicano activists claimed that these Americans who pointed the finger needed to look at the fact that Canadians, who were never hassled, more often took the high-paying, skilled jobs in the United States (Cowen 1986, B1).

This cultural misunderstanding only worsened the treatment that Hispanics and migrants received under the legal system and the by police force. Many Hispanics were subject to random raids, which occurred increasingly after 1984 because of the new immigration law. Many police acted on the assumption that all Hispanics were possible illegals. They were not cautious because they didn't have to worry about the individual rights of Hispanics who had little political power. This procedure, performed by the INS and the local police forces, did not slacken until a suit was brought against them by a coalition of activists and farmers (*Oregonian* May 6, 1982, B3).

Migrants, along with other Hispanics, experienced injustice under the American judicial system. Until recently, it had been illegal for them to work but not for growers to hire them. The Reverend Richard Knusel, director of Portland Hispanic Ministry stated, "in the 10 years I've worked in this state I've practically never seen an immigration service raid during a harvest season. The raids come before the harvest, after the harvest or in the middle of winter, but never during the harvest itself"

(Kirchmeier 1980, B3). The new law under IRCA remained unenforced (McCarthy 1990a, B1).

Discrimination also occurred in the sentencing of migrants who had committed crimes. In Multnomah County incarcerated migrants arrested for minor drug dealing or found without documentation, 85% of whom had no prior felony conviction, were spending significantly more time in jail than non-Hispanic criminals committing felonies (Campillo 1990, B2; Moore 1990, C2).

A case that typified the treatment of migrants in the legal system concerned a young man named Santiago Ventura Morales. Arrested, he was tried and found guilty of the murder of another migrant. Several jurors complained of doubts they had about the results and the case was publicized. Aside from inappropriate court instructions to the jurors, other matters complicated this case. While his court appointed defense attorney appeared grossly negligent in his effort, the police interrogation remained in question. One of the prosecution's two witnesses, Juan Remegio Estrada, gave a deposition to Ventura's lawyers in 1991, which stated that Canby police detective Timothy Skipper coerced false testimony from Estrada. Estrada claimed that Skipper said, "you're all drunkards and you're all bad" (Stanford 1991, C1). Court recordings imply that racial slurs were made by the judge and defense attorney during the case. What showed further cultural insensitivity and personal negligence was that the case was heard in English and interpreted in Spanish. Ventura was proficient in neither language since he only spoke an Indian dialect (Ellis 1990, A23). Finally, after spending four years in jail Ventura was pardoned by Governor Goldschmidt in 1991.

Hispanic distrust of the police forces of local communities has remained very high. The police were seen as insensitive to the culture of the Hispanics. Verbal or

body language miscommunication created life threatening situations for the Hispanics who dealt with the police. Police misjudged latino body language as volatile or defiant. This resulted in more aggressive police responses. Other stereotypes led police to be unfairly suspicious and defensive. Hispanics in turn, became more uncooperative. During one violent incident in Woodburn there were 60 Hispanic witnesses, but none would speak to the police (Hilderbrand 1983, B3).

Both the Klamath Falls and Woodburn police forces were accused of police brutality, prejudice and cultural insensitivity by Hispanic migrants and permanent residents. In both towns unarmed migrants were killed in the act of arrest during non-violent crimes (Manzano 1987, B1; Mayer 1983, MWG1). Few Hispanic police officers worked in these towns. In 1984 one Spanish-speaking policeman was hired in Woodburn. Nyssa only had two Hispanic policemen (Cowen 1987a, A1; Ulrich 1984, C2). Recently, some improvements in police relations were made in Woodburn after community activists insisted on changes, but each step took determined grassroots' pressure (Coonrod 1985, B2).

Unfortunately, tensions have continued to rise. Many migrants began carrying weapons to protect themselves and establish their own justice since they did not feel that the police did that for them (Mayer 1983, MWG1). To them, the American police may not be much different than the dishonest and corrupt police in their own country.

CONTRACTORS

The migrants were in many aspects controlled and manipulated by a variety of groups and factors. Throughout the period from 1940 to 1990 little changed in the way the farmers and contractors treated the migrants. Contractors were the ones who were

most closely connected to the migrants and it is easy to see their effect. They were capable of doing great service or great harm to the migrants. Most often, while the farmer took their profits from the workings of the contractor, the contractor in turn squeezed the farmworkers for his profit.

The large landowning farmers, often organized into associations for recruiting purposes, relied on the contractors to be their right-hand men, managing the workforce and thus allowing the farmers to further remove themselves from direct contact with the migrants. Most often contractors were used by the larger farms, sugar companies in eastern Oregon and other food processing companies that purchase entire crops ahead of the harvest. With contractors, farmers could get large numbers of workers in the field at the exact time needed. Farmers kept up-to-date information on contractors so that companies could wire an agent in another state in the Southwest for labor at any given time (Gamboa 1984, 41).

Many workers discovered that if they were not with a contractor they could not find as much work because most large farmers preferred to use a contractor because it freed them from travel and recruitment and management responsibilities. In 1961 one reporter stated, "the labor contractors and their crews always seem to have first choice. If you are not with a contractor it is difficult to get placed" (Bianco 1961, 21). Small farmers didn't like the contractors because they were more expensive than hiring children, the urban unemployed from skid row, or migrant families on their own. But, without a contractor work was not as consistent or as easy to find. Employment without a contractor lasted a shorter number of days and required more travelling to each new site (Bianco 1962b, 27).

Contractors were the ones who recruited, hired, supervised and paid the workers much of the time. The contractor was most often of Mexican descent, with most unrelated to their crews. The average age of contractors was 40. The job was transitional for many, with their stay in this position averaging five years. Eighty percent were first generation Mexican-Americans, five percent were second generation, with 15% having lived 10 years in the States. Many spoke both Spanish and English and often "represents[ed] or control[led] virtually every phase of the life of his crew" (Cowen 1987a, A1; Infante and Current 1958, C2).

While some contractors are part of a family unit and make an honest living, with a few even providing real protection and support, much of the reporting and studies done by newspapers and government studies discovered contractors to have been a corrupt lot working within a powerful hierarchical system (Bianco 1958, Floyd 1968, Infante and Current 1958). In the 1950s the state was divided into territories, run by a few men who worked many subcontractors, handling the best farms with the best earnings and housing, guaranteeing labor to farms, recruiting in the Southwest, supervising workers, and maintaining, or claiming to maintain, payroll, tax, and social security records (Infante and Current 1958, C3). One contractor solely controlled a whole county and another owned 39 vehicles, handling 2,200 workers and 22 subcontractors (Olmos 1970, 8).

Many contractors took advantage of the fact that the migrants didn't know the system. Another contractor helped two men get free health care and then charged them, telling them he paid for it (Infante and Current 1958, C3). Some loaned money at high interest rates to workers, set up credit in local stores and taverns, and dabbled in markets of prostitution, drugs and gambling. Contractors were also known to force local

businessmen to pay a percentage of the amount spent in their business by the migrants. When one grocer refused to go along with this "deal" the contractors involved made sure that no one shopped there, bringing his profits down 90% (Bianco 1958b, 1). Some even paid them their wages in a tavern where they would proceed to spend it. The 1958 Bureau of Labor report stated:

There appears to be a hierarchy of powerful contractors who coordinate the criminal sideline of the subcontractor . . . punish[ing] those who do not submit. . . . This is not a hastily contrived pattern . . . but rather . . . well coordinated by a few people. There can be little doubt that the present contractors are a factor in suppressing the progress of the Spanish American migrant farmworker towards full citizenship and Americanization. There can be little doubt that these social conditions are a threat to the health of the communities and the agricultural industry, as well (Infante and Current 1958, C9).

It is interesting to note that this report by Infante was adamantly denied by growers' leagues and associations.

Many accounts of unethical recruiting and false promises and record keeping continued to be reported. Contractors paid their workers less than they earned, keeping the rest for themselves. The state Human Rights Advisory Council was told of recruiting in New Mexico with ads promising "free child care services, payment for transportation cost, pay advances upon arrivals, use of surplus foods and a guarantee of 3 months work." Similarly, posters promised free doctors, nurses, hospital care, dentist and daycare centers. In this case, when workers arrived farmers referred them to the community public health and child care agencies (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 10; *Rural Tribune* September 1978, 1). A study of 100 migrants reported 90% of them stating that they were cheated by employers on payroll deductions (Cowen 1987a, A1).

With the heavy recruiting in the Southwest, many of the workers sought after were non-farmworkers who, unaware of the realities, could be easily convinced to join because of the wonderful advantages and offerings. Other cases included recruitment of illegal migrants, bringing workers in weeks early to keep the wages down, supplying credit and then forcing them to work a lower wage than either first told or set by the government (Chan 1990; Infante and Current 1958; Stein 1990). In one case, a Medford-area contractor never paid them any wages at all (Hamilton 1990, C3).

Contractors set up a system of dealing with those who tried to get out from under them: taking away registration papers; threatening to turn in illegals; loaning money; getting workers drunk or loaded on marijuana; blacklisting them; or warning that he would tell other workers that the migrant was a government informer (Bianco 1962; Infante and Current 1958; Hamilton 1990; Stein 1990).

Laws regulating contractors remain lenient. Oregon statutes did not make any distinction between contractors and crewleaders, allowing for loopholes. Contractors were required only to register with the state, while crewleaders registered with the federal government. No written contracts were required and thus there was little way to enforce agreements. Inspections were rare and little verification was ever demanded to show that these contractors were paying for social security for the wages of his employees or providing old age, survivors' and disability insurance as required.

In 1989 the regulations on contractors were tightened. After the enactment of IRCA, which specifically limited funded services to legally documented workers, local clergy, health workers and government officials clamped down on contractors. They insisted that legal measures be taken so that contractors were required to begin providing housing and food for their workers who were being recruited early and were forced to go

without food or a place to lodge. Contractors must now provide those services until the jobs are available. Enforcement, however, is still minimal (Blackmun 1990, 4MEP8).

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRENDS

Ultimately, the economic system functioning in the United States has created unstable and fluctuating economic conditions that have required low-paying migrant labor. The churning of the capitalist system, founded on private property and competition for land and money, is reflected in the treatment and conditions of the Hispanic and other farmworkers. With profit as the goal, exploitation of labor has resulted. Fluctuations in the market due to overproduction, expansion and consolidation have caused great pain for farmworkers and for the small farmers who often employed them.

This trend of development began in the late 1800s. As the economy and position of farmers and farm laborers continued to change, the employer-employee relationship became increasingly impersonal, and the worker, unable to obtain farm ownership, suffered a low status in society, inducing many to migrate to the cities (Feise 1978).

It must be stated that the system at work, which encourages both the accumulation of land and wealth and competition between those trying to accumulate wealth, creates within agribusiness a fierce struggle for survival, especially among those at the bottom. Corporate farms producing food at lower costs in Third World countries added another level of competition (Hightower 1973, 80). And as the large farmers continued to strengthen and develop, they dominated small farm and farmworker interests when it came to influencing government policy making. Agricultural workers and small farmers found they could not depend on equal government support. Even

government support intended for the struggling farmers often ended up in the hands of those most capable of controlling political power -- the large farmers or investors, who lobbied for increasing government aid that directly helped them while hurting the small farmers and farmworkers.

Under this system, accumulation of private property on a large scale accelerated during the Gilded Age, a time of graft and corruption. Between 1862 and 1891 the government sold more land than was homesteaded, which led to massive land speculation and monopolization, ". . . contrary to the expectation of the democratic forces that had fought for free homesteads" (Feise 1978, 79).

As the decades passed, with each new economic depression, more and more small and average farmers could not sustain their incomes, selling out to those who had surplus capital to hold them over. The government and banks participated in this by foreclosing on those who could not pay taxes or loan payments.

In addition this large-scale emphasis has hurt small farmers by further increasing costs, making banks finance the bigger, "low risk" farms, which in turn has forced more specialization, which again in turn has led to the processor biting off a bigger chunk of profit. More recently, along with large farms loaded with government aid, natural elements, intrusion on land base by suburbia and increased taxes has caused further damage to small farms (Young and Caday 1979, 23). The end result can be seen by the drop in the number of farms in the United States from 6,812 million to 2,786 million from 1935 and 1976 (Feise 1978, 79).

THE OREGON ECONOMY

Before 1930 Oregon farmers experienced the same regular slumps and periods of prosperity that farmers throughout the nation did. In the west, land remained for a longer time cheaper and more available, with the same speculation trends occurring a few decades later. Small, self-sufficient farming prevailed, with larger-scale production beginning at the turn of the century when the railway and other transportation systems came to the Pacific Northwest (Blok 1974, 10).

In the 1930s the Depression, similar in consequences to the other slumps before it, hit Oregon hard. For example, Oregon farmers' inability to pay taxes led to the repossession of 1,150,000 rural acres in 1930 and 1,778,273 acres in 1936 (compared to almost none in 1915) (Gamboa 1984, 32). These lands were incorporated into larger farms, which were successful because they could expand or alter their crops as necessary (Blok 1974, 111).

For those who survived the 1930s the two following decades were prosperous. The wartime demand for food led to the rise in agricultural production. Now, the farmers had another sort of problem. The labor reserve that had existed during the Depression disappeared with labor shortages in the Pacific Northwest reaching a greater crisis point than nationally because of Oregon's record production. As in other parts of the nation, Anglo workers headed for the shipyards and aircraft factories, which in the Northwest was centered in Seattle, Portland and Vancouver. Worsening the agricultural labor shortage, the production increase in sugar beets, suddenly more profitable with new protection from tariffs, required tremendous amounts of labor, needed twice a year in eastern Oregon. The farmers were at a loss; they could no longer rely on the Anglos who could turn to government work projects or the war effort instead of the low wages

the farmers offered. The 1937 Sugar Act which prohibited children under the age of 14 from working, and children between the age of 14 and 16 from working more than 8 hours a day, further worsened the labor shortage.

By the end of the 1950s a different kind of crunch occurred, setting trends that have lasted to the present. Land prices, taxes and the cost of maintaining the new larger farm took their toll. With the introduction of chemicals, fertilizer and pesticides, costs skyrocketed. In Oregon, the percentage of the total costs of farming required by mechanization jumped 24% for Oregon farmers between 1950 and 1966, while the use of fertilizer increased 375% (Fabiya 1969, 51). And, nationally between 1965 and 1975 the substitution of capital for labor climbed 300% (Feise 1978, 72).

Thus, the need for a large labor force slowed as mechanization took its place, even if at a little slower pace than elsewhere in the nation, although in Oregon snap beans, strawberries, cherries, and pears would remain, much to the dismay of the farmers, persistently labor-intensive. During the 1950s and 1960s the use of labor by farmers dropped around 36%, with labor as a percentage of farmers' costs falling from 40% to 19%. Production per-man-hour also increased tremendously between 1950 and 1966, with vegetable production rising 74%, fruit production 23% and feed grains 300% (Oregon Governor Task Force 1969, 1).

This search for labor-saving, or as farmers felt more comfortable putting it, cost-saving, devices, on which the government spent so much time and money, worsened the plight of all but the large farmer. The kind of research prioritized was geared towards the larger farm, remaining unaffordable and inefficient for middle-sized and small farms. Smaller farms, unable to compete, found it harder and harder to survive.

When some chose to expand to keep up they often encountered an indebtedness they never imagined.

This was a time of continued consolidation, with many small farmers falling by the wayside. There seemed no other option, either expand or leave the market. Oregon farms fell in number from 63,000 to 43,000 between 1950 and 1966. Both the acreage and the number of farmers declined, although the average farm grew 150 acres between 1950 and 1960 and the total production increased 19% between 1958 and 1968 (Fabiya 1969, 30; Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 1).

For those who did expand to survive, the bank, the processor, and other middlemen in this increasingly specialized kind of farming became more and more controlling, setting requirements and taking a huge profit, especially in the refinancing of loans. In Oregon in the 1960's farmers only received 50% of the price paid by retailers (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 1). Thus, while productivity increased, more farms collapsed and the exploitation of labor continued to rise, allowing for the largest farms to reap a greater profit and invest in the cheap land of bankrupted farmers.

To further complicate matters, the debts that smaller farmers acquired in order to buy this labor-saving, production-increasing equipment forced growers to try to cut costs even more in other ways, and the labor variable continued to be their easiest choice. As well, for all farmers the unpredictability of the Northwest weather and its effect on the farmers' harvest required the need for short-term surplus labor. Though the farmers might agree that a permanent labor force would be better for the migrants, they could not afford to make this their responsibility (Interview. Jack Corbett 1990).

The large farms, more often family-owned than corporate farms in Oregon, raced further and further away from the rest of the pack. A study of the Willamette Valley in

the 1970s showed this trend. Farmers in this region with over 500 acres of land increased nearly three times, from 12 to 43 farms, while farmers with over 2,000 acres multiplied ninefold, from two to 18 farms between 1930 and 1970 (Van Otten 1978, 156). By the 1960s these top Oregon farmers made the public believe that all farmers were doing well because the large farmers represented wealth and power. In 1969, farmers were valued at 500 million dollars annually, and ranked as the second largest industry in Oregon. As well, Oregon ranked fifth in the use of migrant labor in the country (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 1).

Initially the 1970's looked like they would be good to more farmers. A growth in exports from global demand, coupled with the decline of the U.S. dollar, caused a rise in prices and led farmers, with the banks' encouragement, to see wisdom in expanding their size. But then, nationally land prices shot higher than inflation, taxes surged and the farm real estate debt tripled. The farmers were by now in seemingly irreversible debt (Sommers 1988, 54).

Consumers also began to demand that farmers drop their prices, eventually boycotting meat. More farmers went under, while those who remained converted to less labor-intensive crops and again tried to reduce the only cost they felt they had control over, labor (Sommers 1988, 54).

By the late sixties, much of the labor in Oregon was foreign and undocumented, which satisfied the farmers because few regulations covered them, and, out of fear of being deported, they were less likely to complain (Galarza 1964; Robertson 1969). The recession during the 1970s in the Southwest had pushed more Mexican-Americans who had tried their luck at other jobs to return to migrant labor, which allowed the farmers

to keep the wages extremely low (Wells 1976, 268). Small farmers, who couldn't afford the expensive machinery, relied heavily on the cheap migrant labor.

In the 1980's unfavorable conditions continued. Many large investors moved out of the agricultural sector and into the industrial sector or exported their capital to the Third World. The expansion of the foreign market for agricultural products from .57 to 23 billion dollars between 1969 and 1976 reflected this trend (Feise 1978, 100). The global demand that seemed so sure dropped, and while prices and real interest rates stayed up land value fell. Then, lenders, who assessed land values as constituting 75% of the total farm assets, backed off on giving more or renewed loans, and more small and middle-sized farms collapsed (Sommers 1988, 54). While a few *small* farmers developed a new philosophy on surviving, most middle-sized and small farmers, having attempted to expand, continued to struggle desperately. The fact that many have stayed in farming attests more to small farmers' commitment to their way of life and livelihood than to their desire for profit (Young and Caday 1979, 16).

OREGON FARMERS

Profile

Oregon farmers as a group represented wealth and power. And yet, despite all of this, approximately 80% of the farmers in Oregon remained deeply in debt, with many of them declaring bankruptcy each year, followed by consolidation of land by the larger farms or real estate investors, industry or sprawling suburbs. Between 1950 and 1960 alone the number of farms declined from 63,000 to 43,000 (Fabiya 1969, 24). This large percentage of small farmers, each grossing less than \$40,000 a year, grew 15% of Oregon's farm produce, did much of the labor themselves and hired farmworkers for a

short period of time each year (Young 1982, 209). Because small farmers lacked resources, however, they did not have access to as much machinery as the larger farms and thus used a far greater percentage of farmworkers than the larger farms. Their economic condition directly affected their ability to offer proper housing and fair wages to workers.

Social factors also played into the farmers' treatment of the workers. The preconceived ideas farmers held of the workers and the lack of direct contact with them because of the use of contractors often allowed small and large farmers alike to be unconcerned. But, economic conditions created the strongest responses. As the small farmer continued to struggle, and the larger farmer profit, farmworker conditions remained a low priority.

One study in 1977 in Polk County found that, on the average, small farmers received annual government aid equalling twenty dollars. In a 1974 study done on the small farmers of the Willamette Valley, the total gross income averaged was \$12,419 with the gross income from product sales \$1,230. Fifty-four percent of these farmers reported losses after calculating their net incomes (Blok 1974, 111). Forty-six percent in Oregon worked over 100 days outside of their farms, and in one study of Polk County small farmers 33% held full time jobs while many of their spouses also worked part-time (Young and Caday 1979, 17). In 1978 a study in Washington County found 50% of the 1,090 farms there grossed less than \$2500 the previous year. A few farmers thrived while the rest crept along. One hundred thirty-one sold over \$100,000 that same year (*Rural Tribune* August 1978, 1). Small farms continue to struggle for their survival, selling land, taking losses, or foreclosing. Many of those who did not foreclose tried to expand, leasing up to 55% of the land they farmed (Blok 1974, 156; Van Otten 1978, 63).

Although they watched the farm they grew up on crumbling, they remained rooted in the belief that it was the only way of life (Young 1982, 209).

Political Actions of Oregon Farmers

Farmers, united in growers' leagues, societies and associations often controlled by the larger farmers, lobbied and conferred in order to create a profitable environment for themselves. For example, the Oregon Horticultural Society, the states' oldest and largest agricultural organization, regularly lobbied in Washington for the farmers. Many associations in the Northwest were set up in the 1930s for the purpose of stopping communist and radical "agitators" (Gamboa 1984, 333). They attempted to maintain a surplus labor market to keep wages low and prevent unionism, to secure government aid, to keep unwanted laws from being passed while keeping the enforcement of existing restrictions lax, to replace disruptive government officials or discourage meddling volunteers, and to promote a positive image to the public and the government.

In order to maintain a positive image farmers often sought the use of the press, and warned that this law or that demand from the migrants would force them under, push prices up or destroy small farmers and let big out-of-state corporations take over. In some cases farmers feared that the profit margin would decline if a particular bill was passed. But small farmers would have been better off in the long run if they had not allowed the large farmers to regularly speak for them and promote large farm interests as their own.

Since the early 1900s, Oregon farmers pushed the government to help them. After 1900 farmers' associations organized into granges, alliances and farm bureaus, lobbied for improving the state of Oregon's roads. The Grange also actively involved

itself by pushing for agricultural education and research funded by the government through county fairs and state horticultural societies (Blok 1974, 1) .

Usually the farmers preferred that the government take a hands-off approach to most issues concerning the migrants unless they were being pressured to do something themselves, and this attitude hurt the migrants tremendously. If pressured, however, farmers demanded that the government fund any improvement in the migrants' conditions, refusing to take responsibility themselves. The large farmers, who could have afforded to house and pay farmworkers better, manipulated the plight of the small farmers by saying that it was the state of all farmers, justifying their position by claiming that they couldn't afford these costs and thus couldn't make improvements either. The following statement of one Oregon farmer is representative of those found regularly in the press: "If anybody is poorer than we are, I'd like to see them" (Oimos 1968c, 27). The use of we lumped all farmers together in the public eye, discouraging any knowledge of the division between small and large farms. Another example was when activists organized a "Poor People's March" which should have included small farmers. But, the plight of the small farmer was used to destroy the purpose of this march, as one farmer reported to the press that he was against "this march thing" because the government will get "too tough" with the small farmer and then "food prices will really go up" (Oimos 1968c, 27).

In reality, many small farmers saw corporate farmers as different from themselves. Their distrust was directed towards the large farms and the government who combined, it seemed, to the small farmer, to work hand in hand (Young and Caday 1979, 14). In fact, many small farmers perceived the government as one of their main problems, or put more clearly, as one of their main enemies. The small farmers' lack of

power or voice, however, left them no option but to go along with the growers' leagues, hoping that some of the farm lobby gains would help the small farmer as well.

Another approach the farmers took was to lobby for those government officials, politicians or activists who aided them and to oppose those whom they saw as disruptive. A fine example of this was the national battle that took place between the conservative American Farm Bureau Federation and liberal New Deal politicians in the USDA and the FSA in the 1940s. Though it is an early example it is useful in its representation of the farm lobby's tactics. Like others around the nation, the *NW Farm News* encouraged farmers to write congress opposing the New Deal "radical FSA policies" that would have set a minimum wage and other labor conditions for the farmworker as well as rehabilitation programs for the small farmer. The association was very aware that these rehabilitation programs would have kept the small farmers from being low wage earners. Not only did the farmers prevent such legislation, they also succeeded in getting Roosevelt to transfer the responsibility to the more conservative WPA and to weaken the FSA by slashing its appropriations to 70% (Gamboa 1984, 87).

This kind of unification occurred in 1970 when the potato farmers gathered in Klamath county as a growers' league to demand that the local Council of Churches volunteer group cease its investigation of migrants' working conditions. Claiming the volunteers had "caused us quite a bit of trouble," their representative went on to say: "We've never been happy with the Council of Churches. It has seemed more interested in bettering the laborers' social standards than their religious needs" (Austermann 1970, 31).

The farmers could destroy a politician's or a government official's career, as they did with Bureau of Labor Director Marcontonio Infante's when he began speaking up in

an almost militant fashion for the migrants and the conditions the farmers continued to impose on them, coming out with an inflammatory report that the press picked up in 1958. The Fruit Growers' League of Jackson County demanded to the state and to the politicians that he be fired, and that the report be withdrawn from the public library. And, as if that wasn't enough, they framed him on trumped up drug lord charges which they circulated in the press. In the end, one of the few government employed advocates for migrant labor was taken out of office (Bianco 1962c, 23).

But, one may ask, how could these farmers act this way? Partially, the drive for money and power is at fault, but the farmers' perspective also added and still adds to their ability to believe what they are doing is right. Gamboa states that the farmers of the 1940s and 1950s, "although conscious of their treatment of the Mexican and Mexican-American workers, cared more about production and profits and less about human value" (Gamboa 1984, 3). The more removed a farmer is from his workers or the workplace, the more out of touch he is with the reality of the workers' conditions or his impact on those conditions. His awareness of the conditions and his impact on them becomes in his memory more and more vague as he distances himself. It makes it easier for him to wash his hands of guilt and rely on stereotypes about the migrant, making it seem as though it's as much the fault of the migrants as his fault.

As the following example so clearly shows, the farmers' insights lose a sense of reality about these people they are so directly connected to: One writer for the *NW*

Farm News wrote in the 1940s:

Contrary to the morbid story told by John Steinbeck in *Grapes of Wrath*, harvesting the vegetables and fruits of Oregon is an aspiring industry. There's the job of being in the out-of-doors; working at top efficiency in the cool of the morning and slowing to a more languid pace as the noon sun warms the back and relaxes the spirit. There's

joy in handling the ripe round fruit either picking or packing pears, apples and prunes (Gamboa 1984, 242).

Instead of facing the fact that most of the housing and work conditions they provided for the workers were inhumane, some farmers felt that migrants deserved or should get by with that which was no better than what they had had in Mexico, claiming that if they replaced or improved it, the migrants would only ruin it again (Gamboa 1984, 333).

The farmers wanted the government to aid the migrants only as long as the control remained in their hands. This was often achieved through the use of the state extension service, which the farmers' associations controlled. During the *bracero* program, the boards set up to determine wages were controlled by the extension services and therefore the wages that farmers offered were often automatically accepted (Gamboa 1984, 234). Although occasionally the farmers demanded the state to solve, for example, the problem of migrant housing, they did not want government camps to return for fear of creating a meeting place for "radicals," which they believed they saw happening in the 1930s and 1940s. After the *bracero* program the farmers bought out the government camps, tore them down and replaced them with private camps which they could control more effectively. And the end result was that housing prices doubled for the migrants while the upkeep decreased (Gamboa 1984, 333). In reality, however, farmers may have actually worked against their own profit by not providing conditions that would promote commitment, dedication and harder work.

As stated before, farmers felt an urgent need to do whatever possible to manipulate and control the labor supply in order to keep wages low, using early recruitment, contractors, illegal aliens, government aid, and even scare tactics to prevent demands from the workers.

Farmers wanted to keep union activity from taking off, especially because they had seen the effects in California, and to a lesser extent in eastern Washington, both during the 1930s and 1940s and during the late 1960s with Cesar Chavez. They kept the labor reserve high with early recruitment and the use first of the *braceros*, urban teenagers, and then illegal aliens. The use of the *braceros* was detrimental to any improvement in the wages and conditions of Mexican-American and Anglo migrants, as the farmers were well aware. From 1941 to 1950 wages went down 11% for farmworkers even while the cost of living went up 23%. And while industrial wages dropped 34% farm wages slid 51%. Neither were benefits like those in the industrial sector gained (Gamboa 1984, 349).

When the farmers didn't like the contract they were forced to abide by under the *bracero* program, they did whatever they could to change it, such as they did when hiring a lawyer to change the provisions limiting *braceros* "to maintaining the work contract," which was vague enough to lead to the interpretation that they could not join unions (Galarza 1964, 46). They encouraged racial tensions, kicking out the Anglo migratory workers when the *braceros* arrived and later segregating the migrants in the camps (Gamboa 1984). Other times they set up false advertising in order to maintain a high reserve. One strong example of this occurred in 1957 when there had been a lot of labor unrest among the migrants. The following year workers were purposely recruited seven weeks early and encouraged to run up a bill at the grocery store. Then the wage was dropped, forcing them to work at a very low one (Infante and Current 1958, C7).

The farmers used the legislature to control labor as well. Not only did they stall many bills that would have restricted farmers, they also pushed through very biased laws, such as the anti-picketing law in 1969 (Kadera 1969b, 39). Any time these laws were

questioned, associations would arrive in Salem to stress their burden. In 1971, when the anti-picketing law was discussed, representatives from the Oregon Agricultural Association and the Oregon Farm Bureau joined the Oregon Hop Growers claiming that they couldn't afford strikes because of the vulnerability of the crop (Hughes 1963, 9; *Oregonian*, 27 April 1971, 2). Examples of lobbying by farm groups to block legislative action occurred on several occasions. Regularly they lobbied to prevent attempts to strengthen farm camp regulations in Oregon. They complained of VISTA and other government workers' efforts to improve conditions, resulting in the cancellation of funded projects. Farm associations united to stop IRCA and to halt raids conducted by the INS during the harvest season (Gamboa 1984; Hill 1982; Hogan 1982).

In an effort to prevent this inevitable labor unrest many farmers employed armed guards and demanded police support while lobbying the government for help in advancing more research on labor-saving machinery to help them eliminate the whole problem of acquiring workers (*Oregonian*, 2 August 1970, 38). One statement made in 1971 by an owner of a 250 acre farm in Nyssa, after four Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) workers-activists were fired, clarified the farmers' main tactics:

Each year each grower puts up several hundreds of dollars to bring farmworkers here and to help operate the workers' camps, but this year some of us are going to put the money into development of an onion combine . . . reduce the need for farmworkers. We're small operators and just can't stand the ruckus of strikes and strike threats each year" (Guernsey 1971, 1). And another farmer in Nyssa stated during one of the many periods of labor unrest, "We raised our right arm and swore that from now on any crop we plant has to be picked with machinery or can walk on and off a truck (*Oregonian* July 7, 1970, 14).

And with government aid in research, the threat was real.

When the workers did strike, farmers might merely starve them out of the camps until they returned to work, ship a few out, or have some jailed for trespassing or disorderly conduct (Gamboa 1984, 246).

But most importantly, farmers tried to avoid this by doing almost anything, except improve conditions, to maintain large numbers through early recruitment, deceptive attractions and government programs which allowed for a surplus of labor like Public Law 78. The President of the Jackson County Fruit Growers League in 1963 clarified with this declaration,

Our growers have time and time again, in fact for 20 years, proven that there are just not enough domestic workers available to harvest the crop . . . and to shut off the *bracero* program will hold thousands of workers in Mexico in a position of poverty, and that it may very well stimulate Communist activity (Bianco 1963a, 15).

One might question whether the treatment of the migrants by Oregon farmers wouldn't have "stimulated communism" nearly as much.

But farmers did not see things in this light. The Japanese, teenagers, a "Woman's Army," and then the *braceros* were summoned to work the fields. Everything was done to prevent a shortage which might provide the workers the means to demand better wages and conditions. And when the *bracero* program ended, farmers again pooled their efforts, recruiting and advertising for workers out of state, hiring contractors or agreeing upon certain levels of wages they were willing to pay that particular year. Recruitment was intensified so much that contractors began convincing Southwest Hispanics who did not usually migrate to begin. They offered steady jobs, modern housing and high wages. One year eight farmers were tried and convicted of deceitful recruiting in Texas and New Mexico (*Oregonian*, 7 July 1970, 14). In 1978 500 migrant workers joined in a class action suit against the Tankersley brothers. They

charged fraud, false advertising, breach of contract and minimum wage violations. The ads listed in New Mexico and Texas recruited Hispanics who had never worked migrant labor before by offering \$35 a day, three months of work seven days a week, quality housing with indoor hot water, color television, basketball courts, and washing machines. The ads also promised transportation to local stores. The reality turned out to be far from the offering. With the help of the Migrant Legal Aid Project in Clackamas County, the migrants won this suit (Rural Tribune September 1978, 1). But, labor unrest continued and was on the rise again in the 1980s. Farmers can merely reminisce about the time they had so much more control as one did by saying, "it hasn't been the same since the *bracero* program" (Kirchmeier 1980, B3).

THE GOVERNMENT

Policies

The American political and legal system did not hear all members in society equally. It is those who had the expertise, political contacts, and money who influenced those making government policy. In this case, the large land owning farmers dominated.

Many representatives of the government justified this support for the large land owning farmers by believing that it was in the best interest of the health of the state and agricultural economy. The government believed that if the farmers profited then Oregonians and migrants profited and attempted to help all three by providing aid to the farmers. Migrants were generally aided only when the government was pressured by citizens united in groups or when the farmers demanded it in order to avoid taking on the economic responsibility themselves. That same concern for a healthy economy kept

those few laws enacted which aided the poor farmers or farmworkers void of any solid "legal teeth" (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 1).

Public sympathy for the nostalgic past of the American farmer trying to carve out the American dream further heightened the government's efforts to help the farmer. Former Governor of Oregon Tom McCall reflected on this when he wrote in his 1969 study, "Mexican-American and White migrants need special attention, but growers and processors also have problems" (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 2).

This leniency towards regulating farms in reality did not help the farmers who really needed it. Instead government policies continued to assist the large farmowners, creating price supports and a tax structure which led to a regressive redistribution of income, raised food prices for the American public between 10% and 20% and gave substantial federal gifts to property owners. One example of this was seen in 1967 under the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Fifty percent of the payments went to eight percent of producers and nine percent of the payments went to 50% of the producers (Milk 1972, 23).

Another philosophical factor played into the motives behind what the government chose to do. Very clearly, helping some farmers earn a significant profit margin was a higher priority than trying to create employment and a livelihood for large numbers of people. The "trickle-down theory" was in effect. In 1972 for example 750 million dollars were spent on production research. In 1969, 6,000 man/years of research in experiment stations were funded with only 289 of those, less than five percent, aimed at "people-oriented research" (Hightower 1973, 1,6). This attempt, which specifically benefited large farms, was funded by public taxes, including those of the struggling farmer (Hightower 1973; Milk 1972).

It is not surprising, then, to find that the government, as a whole, did not create laws and restrictions to allow for the small land owning farmers or the migrants to have an equal standing with the large farm holders. While the larger land owning farmers, who lobbied long and hard, were seen as an important link in Oregon's prosperity, the small land owning farmers were encouraged to abandon farming and pushed into the urban areas while the migrants remained, in the eyes of the government, cheap labor and an economic burden (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969). Ignored and invisible, migrants crowded "into shacks in rural areas, hidden from public view." Legislators and activists fought an impossible battle trying to allocate money to those who supposedly didn't exist (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1).

The plight of the migrants was not helped since they were seen as one of the major expenses, and therefore troubles, of the small farmer, who was already in economic trouble. The cost of migrant labor, instead of the economic system or the result of previous government actions, became the scapegoat for the collapse of the small farmer. When they were not seen as the blame, the transient migrant workers were still not an issue the government felt it had to contend with, especially for politicians who saw them, in particular in later years, not only as a racial minority but also as largely foreign-born. Since migrants did not have the power to pull political strings, they could be safely ignored (Hightower 1973; Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990; Tomar 1988).

Another belief reinforced the lack of incentive the government held in helping migrants, and more specifically Hispanic migrants. While Anglo migrant workers were given infrequent opportunities through government programs before and during the recovery of the economy after the Depression of the 1930s, the government most often

saw the Hispanic migrants as a permanent, impoverished group, incapable of being helped. No land grants, farm aid or settlement efforts were offered to Hispanic migrants as they were to the others during the New Deal. And no effort was made to understand or make adjustments to the varying culture of these Americans, whom they often considered outsiders (Gamboa 1984, 3, 131). This further reduced any effectiveness the government had when it instituted policies to provide for the migrants.

The message the government received as to what the farmers needed came almost solely from the large farm owners. The wealthy farmers, and businessmen representing farm interests, led the farm bureaus, the agricultural councils, the marketing cooperatives and the college extension complex (*Oregonian*, 10 April 1973, 22) Organizations lobbied through "a network of private and semi-official users' committees, county and state advisory boards and employment services" (Hawley 1966, 163).

Rural congressmen who came from politically safe, one-party districts and who often supported the farm lobby had by the 1950s accumulated seniority, placing them in key committee chairmanships in Capitol Hill. These rural representatives and senators were often assigned to agricultural committees, insuring that "farm pressure groups receive[d] a highly favorable hearing" (Hawley 1966, 164).

The result in many rural areas was an axis of power that ran from the growers' organizations to the processing companies to the local chambers of commerce, and it was only natural that local officials, county agents and state administrators should go along with the established order, especially when it was reinforced by rural over-representation and backed by the conservative orientation of most of the agricultural colleges and state farm agencies (Hawley 1966, 163).

The forming of the Commission on Agricultural Workers is an example of farmers and representatives of farm organizations being regularly assigned positions on

government agencies, committees and bureaus, and thus the biased support government gave to large farm interests. This commission, formed under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, held the responsibility of assessing whether agriculture should continue to remain outside the realm of modern labor-management techniques, given special attention by the government in finding labor sources, and be void of the regulations of the National Labor Relations Act (Hancock 1990, B7). Typically, its twelve members represented almost solely the farmers' perspective, with seven being large farm growers or representing grower organizations. On the other hand only one member was a labor representative and none were Hispanic (Hancock 1990, B7).

State legislators, heavily lopsided in their alignment with the farm lobby, carefully directed any funding that did come the way of migrants. If an agency did not spend monies as deemed appropriate, its program would be discontinued. In 1979 Oregon Rural Opportunities, a non-profit agency, got so frustrated with this that they successfully sued the U.S. Department of Labor for its loss of money without apparent reason (*Rural Tribune* January 1979, 1).

The government also poured money into the research complex and set up legislation to maintain labor as it best benefited these farmers. P.L. 78 served this purpose during the 1950s and 1960s while the Immigration Reform and Control Act fulfilled the same during the 1980s. Lax border patrols and INS raids occurring after the harvest allowed farmers cheap labor. Within this effort to aid the farmers the government also purposely aimed to destroy unionization, consequently eliminating the chance for improvement for the migrants. When the 1969 Oregon Governor's Task Force wrote in its Report to the Governor that "the danger of unionization is not very

great," the implication was that unions were a destructive force to be prevented (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 2).

Government funded agricultural research began in 1887. This ran under a state agricultural college system through the Hatch Act, and after 1914 via the Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service. The agricultural extension colleges attempted to reduce the migrant problem by minimizing the need for migrants, driving ahead at full force to invent mechanization (Hightower 1973; Milk 1972). The thrust of the research was to perfect specialized, one-crop production, hybrid crops picked by machine, rather than self-sufficient farming. The research complex envisioned large farms as perfection. This effort proved successful, eliminating the need for many of the migrants while destroying small, labor-intensive farms. Though not everyone supported this vision of the government, those who had the most money, resources and power became the loudest and directed this push along. Whether this was ultimately "success" for Oregonians is altogether another question (Blok 1974; Van Otten 1978; Young and Caday 1979). Critics claimed that the research complex misspent the public's investment for the needs of the average farmer, "undertaken with a focus on profit, without concern for those hurt, and . . . accountable only to private interests" (Feise 1978, 5).

This agricultural research complex also participated directly in finding the easiest ways for farmers to solve their labor problems, allowing them to avoid dealing with the demands of a smaller workforce. Very succinctly, Jack Hanna, breeder of the hybrid hard tomato developed for mechanical harvesting, states the reasoning behind this government-funded research: "I've seen nationality after nationality out in the fields and I felt that someday we might run out of nationalities to exploit" (Perelman 1977, 73). One UC Davis engineer, who had worked 13 years improving the lettuce harvester

within the government-funded agricultural extension service, described the chief advantage of the machine, saying, it "won't strike, it will work when they want it to work" (Perelman 1977, 75).

Researchers emphasized the great "social benefits" of the new machinery such as the new employment in processing and the money put into the market generated by increased production. They did not look at the fact that farmers were paid to produce less, that the machinery was far too expensive for 80% of the farmers to use, and that it allowed a few large farmers to profit while smaller farmers went bankrupt and migrants jobless.

Though many have been encouraged to believe the course that agricultural economy took, of bankrupted small farms and the expansion of a few, was inevitable, this is questionable. After looking at the direction the agricultural colleges and extension services advised the government and farmers to pursue, it becomes clear that farmers were influenced to take a particular, and in many aspects, destructive path. Indeed, the research complex "played an ever more important role in the creation of circumstance which caused farmers to change their strategies of agricultural resource use" (Blok 1974, 1). Futhermore,

The greatest failing of the land grant research is its total abdication of leadership. At a time when rural America desperately need[ed] leadership, the land grant community had ducked behind the corporate skirt, mumbling apologetic words like "progress," "efficiency" and "inevitability." Overall, it is a pedantic and cowardly research system, and America is less for it (Hightower 1973, 85).

Programs

P.L. 78, the *bracero* program, is the best example of how the federal government aided the farmers in acquiring cheap labor, simultaneously preventing domestic labor from establishing government protection or improved conditions. Just as the government had forced 50,000 Mexicans across the border during the depression, during the post-war period they contracted with the Mexican government to hire *braceros* (Galarza 1964, 47; Gamboa 1982, 175).

Farmers liked the *braceros* for its obvious advantages: Cheap labor with few obligations. During the *bracero* program, 1953 to 1963, migrant wages rose from 83 cents to \$1.03 while *bracero* wages remained at 80 cents. If transportation, loss of money to the U.S. economy because of the contractual agreement to send 50% of their wages back to Mexico, meals, association dues for farmers to get them, contracting fees, and camp supervision costs were all counted, the real expense would be known. But farmers and the government supported this more expensive labor because they didn't have to concede to higher wages and other demands for improved work conditions. The use of the *braceros* put pressure on the majority of farmworkers, who were not *braceros*, to work for a lower wage (Gamboa 1984, 22). These Mexican nationals were also effective strikebreakers, used, for example, to end the 32 month old strike in California against the DiGiorgio Fruit Company by the National Farm Labour Union (Robertson 1969, 18). The *bracero* program ended only when American unemployment rose again due to mechanization, though activists had to fight against the farm lobby to the very end to terminate this.

After the *bracero* program the government continued its services for Northwest farmers with the extension service paving the way for the use of Mexican-Americans

from the Southwest. The extension service planned conferences, contacted contractors, designed advertisements, and set up centers as stopping places so Mexican-Americans wouldn't stay in towns where they might disturb Oregonians (Gamboa 1984, 294).

The government also encouraged the use of cheap labor from Mexico by maintaining a vague open door policy at the Mexican border from the end of the *bracero* program until the 1980s, pretending migrants weren't coming across for jobs. Recently, however, with American unemployment on the rise and many Americans accusing Mexicans of taking American jobs the border issue heated up. Senator Alan Simpson went even further when he introduced his immigration reform bill (IRCA) in 1982, saying that the illegals from Mexico "threatens to harm American values, traditions, institutions and . . . our way of life" (Tomar 1988, 197). Labor unions and liberal democrats, who saw undocumented workers destroying legal migrants' opportunities, aligned themselves with the conservatives such as Simpson to support IRCA (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

Farmers, however, did their part to prevent IRCA's implementation, insisting that if it were passed legalized immigrants would be able to look for year round and higher paying jobs. Even the state Department of Agriculture chimed in, clarifying, "We've got two choices, either have an adequate supply of labor . . . or allow growing fruit (to be produced in) other countries" (Durbin 1981, C1). Though activists also organized to defeat this bill because of its discriminatory implications, it was to no avail.

In 1986 the Reagan administration pushed IRCA through. Once enacted, IRCA lost its usefulness to all but a few undocumented workers trying to become citizens. IRCA both controlled the movement of the migrants and reduced their ability to acquire anything but farm work. IRCA also took the strain off of the government to provide

services for them. While the administration implied that this law was meant to provide a better life for the illegals, this was so for only a very few. Instead, IRCA effectively limited the number of illegals who could apply. Any migrants who had committed felonies or more than two misdemeanors, had received public assistance, or had been deported and returned illegally were disqualified. Those who were eligible for temporary residence status had to prove their past year's stay within a very short and strict time period. Extensive documentation, which was nearly impossible for migrants whose survival depended on hiding any evidence of existence, was also required. Family members of a worker who qualified had to wait up to ten years before they could become citizens, and visa permits would remain hard to acquire. The costly application procedure, which was extremely taxing on migrants, totalled \$285 (Cowen 1987, A1). While only a very few were allowed temporary residency status, most of the rest lost their invisibility by applying.

IRCA also affected the social services available to illegals. Now, workers had to have documentation before any state or federal agencies were allowed to aid them. Undocumented workers couldn't even be told where jobs were available. Migrants who could have previously been housed were sleeping under bridges in Portland, in cars and in "worse-than-normal unsafe and unsanitary conditions." Families of newly documented workers remained here illegally. But, they could not obtain help from government services. Of the 3,800 migrants who applied for legal status in 1988, 41% were married (McCarthy 1990, B1). Multnomah County also experienced a rise of drug activity among workers who could no longer get winter work permits (Campillo 1990, B2; Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990). INS representative, David Beebe clarified his stance on the predicament of illegals:

It's a problem of their own creation. They have to be responsible for their own actions and obligations. We feel no responsibility for taking care of them. . . . There are charitable organizations that may choose to help them, but that is not done at taxpayer expense (McCarthy 1990, B1).

Many families of legal status workers who continued to live in the United States remained hidden and without support.

In some cases IRCA seemed to actually have the opposite effect it was intended to produce. Critics contended that it encouraged some employees to hire undocumented workers because they were cheap and, now with the threat of deportation, couldn't complain.

Despite new "get tough" rhetoric, it became clear that . . . the law may have actually created incentives to hire them . . . Many immigration attorneys claim IRCA has stripped migrants of their rights, in turn creating a new class of immigrants so desperate for work that they will accept increasingly substandard wages and working conditions, since employers used IRCA as a means of withholding paychecks, denying vacations and refusing to pay minimum wages and overtime salaries (Tomar 1988, 196).

In Oregon mistreatment of illegals by contractors was believed to have increased, encouraging clergy, health workers and legislators to unite and pass several bills in 1989 to force contractors to provide for their workers (Campillo 1990, B2; McCarthy 1990a, B1). Federal and State officials estimated that 40% of the migrants coming into Oregon were still undocumented; many merely paid \$500 to \$800 for false documentation (McCarthy 1990a, B1).

While laws and aid reinforcing the power of farmers was provided regularly, government provisions for the migrant were, on the whole, ineffective. Programs, when they were set in motion, lacked funding and therefore enforcement, and were so temporary and superficial that they accomplished far less than they could have (*Oregon*

Migrant Health Project 1969). During times of dire need such as a bad harvest, inclement weather, or early arrival of far too many workers, a cry of panic would occasionally be heard, but most often it fell on deaf ears, already committed to the large farm lobby. Though there was concern at times, the issue of who would pay for the migrants' improvements always plagued any progress.

Laws that applied to farm labor were passed in 1939 and 1959, then revised in 1969, 1984 and 1989. Oregon statutes did cover sanitation, contractors, special school provisions, transportation and field conditions, but the state laws were less stringent than the federal ones and rarely enforced. The 1959 Farm Labor Codes "were at best, a poor compromise between what constituted good camp housing and sanitation and what the farmers and camp operators felt they could comply with at the time." The stronger federal standards in existence were finally adopted in 1969 (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1969*, 24).

This lack of government protection left farmworkers excluded from the most protective worker law in the U.S., the National Labor Relations Act. Farmworkers remained without the right to bargain collectively, legally picket, gain the national minimum wage, or have the right to apply for workmen's compensation, unemployment compensation, or public welfare. Nor were migrant workers protected by many child labor restrictions that were granted to other workers. In its effort to protect the farm owner the state government made sure farmworkers' ability to strike was effectively limited with the anti-picketing law enacted in 1962. Legislation to protect the right to organize has yet to encompass the farmworker. Although something similiar to the NLRA arbitration, which covers all other workers, could help to neutralize the dominant position of the owner, the U.S. and Oregon government continued to deny these basic

rights. The Oregon legislature tried to enact an arbitration board in 1971. Its onesidedness caused Oregon AFL-CIO spokesman Ed Whelan to proclaim that it would have "stack[ed] all of the cards against the agricultural worker" (*Oregonian* April 27, 1971, 2). Oregon politicians extended a farm picketing law in 1963 that restricted workers. Previously, anyone who had worked three or more days could legally picket the farmsite. In 1963 they extended it to require protesters to have worked 15 days at the same farm. This law was revoked by the state supreme court in 1990.

Until 1984 farmworkers were also the only occupational group not covered by federal sanitation standards. And, as with most other standards imposed, it took organized activists like the Migrant Legal Action Program to sue in 1987 for these OSHA regulations to adequately cover farmworkers in the field (Frisvold 1988, 885).

What was regulated was often detrimental to the migrant. Initially, Mexican-American migrants couldn't get any aid under the 1939 Oregon Statute because they had to live in the state from one to three years. Migrants were not given many services allotted to other workers. Most were not covered by Social Security because they were required to work with the same employer for at least 20 days during the year and because their contractors didn't file the paperwork. Employers who had a certain payroll or over 500 man days in any quarter were required to pay the minimum wage, but not overtime. Yet, migrants continued to pay taxes for services that they were unable to receive. That included illegal aliens working in Oregon who often paid taxes to avoid suspicion while still not receiving benefits (Cowen 1987b, D1).

Some restrictions prevented others from helping the migrants. Federal regulations prohibited private agencies dedicated to servicing the migrants like the Valley Migrant League from filing complaints about camps, allowing only those who had

an employer-employee relationship to complain, which basically implied that the employer must turn him or herself in. In Oregon, even a contractor could not complain since often there was no written verification of employment. The government did not prioritize the enforcement of the few laws that did intend to protect the migrants. The legal system did not punish those who broke the few laws that were instituted to protect the migrant. When camp conditions were not met, camps were often either allowed to stay open or charged a nominal fee. When contractors were corrupt they were rarely prosecuted and when they were the punishment was unfairly lenient. In 1962 two contractors found guilty of mistreatment were given the option to spend 60 days in jail or leave the state immediately (Bianco 1962b, 27). This is in contrast to the time and money the government spent to deport illegals after the season had ended (Gamboa 1984, 150).

Migrants were occasionally helped when the government thought it would be more damaging for the state's economy not to give help, or if the conditions looked as though they would either cause a national emergency for the farmers or create a food shortage. For instance, in the 1969 Governor's Report, the government stressed the need for retraining of the migrants as mechanization caused unemployment because otherwise the "welfare system will be burdened" (Kadera 1969, 6).

Although the government often did little for the migrants, it was capable of acting with speed. The government's ability to respond quickly was seen during "Operation Harvest 1974," when a gas shortage threatened to reduce the labor force because of long gas lines and high prices. The farmers, fearing a reduction of workers from the Southwest willing or able to make the long trip, demanded immediate action from the government. Many agencies united, setting up 24 hour gas stations, maps in

Spanish and English and providing recruitment services. Agencies involved included the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor, the Federal Energy Office and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (*Oregonian* 9 April 1974, 2).

Although the government could move quickly when it felt it to be necessary, much of the time the government dragged its feet in aiding the migrants. Ex-migrant and activist, David Aguilar of Chicano Cultural Centro expressed his frustration with this when he declared, "people in the state government are just trying to stall, hoping machines will replace the migrant before the state has to do something" (*Oregonian*, July 7, 1972, 24). Although it was certainly more complicated than this, action was slow when it occurred at all.

The response of the government was instead limited to conducting studies. Rarely were the recommendations followed. Several major studies of labor camps and housing were done: the 1958 Bureau of Labor study, and the 1962, 1966 and 1969 governor's reports, conducted by the OSU extension service. What the earlier housing studies found were atrocious conditions for expensive rates estimated at up to 50% of the migrants' wages (Infante and Current 1958, 20). Governor McCall's study called for "immediate improvement of migrant education, housing, health services, nutrition, working conditions and contractual arrangements" (Kadera 1969, 6). But, again, no further action was taken. Bills might be proposed to study the situation further or even change the laws but they rarely survived. For example, a Senate Joint Resolution in 1957 was passed to study the corruption among contractors and House Bill 435 was proposed the same year to strengthen the law "so that they cannot dump workers after

promising them certain periods of work at an agreed rate of pay," but nothing ever came of it (*Oregonian*, 14 May 1957, CI12).

While politicians often gave lip service to seeking improvements for the migrant, their voting record instead outlined support for the farmers and for their ability to acquire a cheap and steady supply of labor. For instance, when the Javits Bill, attempting to prevent youth under age 12 from working farms other than neighbor farms up to 25 miles from home came up in 1966, Oregon Senator Wayne Morse helped defeat it, claiming that it was "nonsense to suggest that Oregon children are being exploited" Instead, he claimed, farmwork was productive for children, saying, "it taught them more than their parents could teach them about the value and importance of work" (*Oregonian*, 27 August 1966, 8). Senators Wayne Morse and Mark Hatfield steadily supported the *bracero* program throughout its existence. Senator Morse declared his support stating, "American labor is not hurt one iota. The reason for this is that there isn't an American worker who would do this type of stoop labor" (*Oregonian*, 3 September 1963, 19). Hatfield said that the program helped Mexicans, U.S.-Mexican relations and was a deterrent to communism (Bianco 1964a, S13).

When funds were destined for aid to farmworkers, decisions as to how they would be spent were made at the top by people who were not familiar with the daily needs of the migrant. Because of this agencies' programs were funded or cancelled regardless of progress made (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1971, 5).

New plans and progressive insights were created to solve the problem and then cancelled because of lack of funding. The new plan was implemented, and yet something else had to be cut, even if it was successful. Regardless of the results of a program, it could never be an ultimate success because it always lacked enough funding

to fulfill the need. Though during the *bracero* program the government agreed with the Mexican government to a set wage and promised to prevent any discrimination against the *braceros* the government did not fund the enforcement of these rules and so they were not followed. There were only two inexperienced Mexican inspectors for the whole Northwest, including Utah, Idaho and Montana, who were given their jobs because they were friends of the Minister of Labor (Gamboa 1984, 203). In 1970 the Migrant Health Project, the best program that had thus far existed for the migrants, was cancelled to make way for programs with that would follow a newly proposed idea "so that migrants could have the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding their own health problems." It was unclear how the Project had failed to do that except that it had not been created under this new banner (*Migrant Health Project* 1971, 5). Another example of the lack of funding affecting the implementation of a program occurred under IRCA. While IRCA ordered that employers were to be fined or imprisoned on their second violation if they were caught knowingly hiring illegals, farmers had little to worry about since the INS' budget was simultaneously cut in half that same year.

In 1987 an injury-from-pesticides system was instituted under the Health Division Office, ordered by the new federal standards. The system required employers to provide information and training on hazardous chemicals used in the workplace. But again, no effective means of enforcing it was used because of lack of funds (Rosemary 1989, G2).

The funding war left local governments on the frontlines without state funds to provide for local health care or other services, leaving those most capable empty-handed, unable to handle the migrants' most desperate needs. The 1971 Oregon Migrant Health Project stressed that since there were few funds set aside

the small communities or counties will bear the financial loss. Local governments do not receive state funds to

provide local health care services and their local ability to finance such services does not meet even the need of the residents, let alone the migrants (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1971, 5).

Funding was not the only problem. Most of the actions of the government were performed by separate agencies, uncoordinated and unorganized as a whole, leaving duplications or huge holes in service. This lack of cohesiveness was seen early on. Because of the decentralization of the Office of Labor and the autonomy given to the state extension service during the importation of Mexican nationals, *bracero* contracts could easily be circumvented or ignored, with the distance between the *braceros* and the Mexican consulate making it nearly impossible for the Mexicans to even lodge a complaint (Gamboa 1984, 204).

In later years the same problem persisted. For example, although four state agencies inspected migrant housing, not one oversaw the efforts. In the case of overseeing the camps, the State Board of Health wrote the guidelines, the County Health departments notified camps of their lack of compliance, but the Bureau of Labor had to be the one to close a camp down (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 7). To organize the Migrant Health Project seven federal and state agencies and 14 local service organizations had to be unified (*Migrant Health Project* 1970-71). Funding for adult migrant education programs also functioned in this fashion, with the 1976 program requiring support from the State Welfare and Education departments, three school districts and three county welfare agencies (Lopez 1976, 29). Another fine example of this division of responsibilities. was the Bureau of Labor, which could regulate camp facilities for women and minor children but could not involve itself in matters relating to other workers (*Oregonian*, 14 May 1957, CI12). Though many times it was recommended that these separations should be mended, "no state agency has [gained]

the responsibility of viewing the problems of seasonal agricultural workers in a general integrated basis" (Oregon Governor's Task Force 1969, 7).

This separation of responsibilities had two consequences. First, agencies' hands were tied, because they each had the ability to perform only one of the many steps necessary to complete an action. If these two agencies were not working together neither could complete the process. For instance, the Oregon Bureau of Labor had the jurisdiction to put closure notices on farms, but the county sanitarians had to close them within 24 hours (Olmos 1964b, 24). This stopped even the most committed workers. Ismael Barrera, a Bureau of Labor inspector voiced his frustration about this lack of cohesiveness in 1960: "When I see things like this I get angry. I get even angrier when I think that I've already told the county sanitarian about this and nothing has been done to correct it" (Olmos 1968a, 17).

The second consequence was that it encouraged departments to lobby and battle one another for the same money. Out of desperation duplicate regulations drawn from different departments developed. These policies often conflicted, further confusing farmers as well as state agencies who, in turn, declared that they couldn't follow government regulations because they didn't know to which department's to adhere. One reporter wrote: "Growers contend they can't upgrade their camps until the problem is resolved" (*Oregonian*, 7 July 1972, 24). Another farmer stated that "there are so many people involved in checking camps -- three or four agencies -- it's become a matter of politics" (*Oregonian*, 5 July 1970, 14).

When concerned individuals working for a specific agency did decide to set forth programs to help in ways for which they saw a direct need, they were told they were out of the agency's legal jurisdiction (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1970, 4). This

immobilized government workers since many agencies would stop themselves from acting, fearing that they would be reprimanded for acting inappropriately. An example of this was the State Board of Health, which in 1970 was attempting to revise some of the health standards for camps. They wanted to change the requirement for the number of toilets to include the children the migrants inevitably brought with them. But they didn't "because the board decided it did not have the power to change the law on this point" (Floyd 1970, C3).

When departments and agencies weren't battling each other they could plan on a battle with the very uncooperative farm bureaus. One account of this was in Marion county in 1970 when the local farm bureau wanted to be lax on the camp health regulations. It took the local health department, the Board of Health and the Bureau of Labor, nudged by the Migrant Health Project, to finally assign a lawyer to notify them to get in compliance or have the camps they ran be closed down (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1970).

Another aspect of the programs kept them from improving the conditions for the migrants. Government programs and workers by and large failed to recognize cultural and community pressures which discouraged the migrants from using their services (Fitzgibbon 1990; *Oregonian* 23 May 1969; Swan 1990; Wentworth 1960). Mexicans, for instance, have a tradition called *guela gueltza* which promotes reciprocity and exchange of goods and assistance. Thus, they rely on each other for help and do not comprehend the government's services because they feel they will ultimately owe back (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

Government officials and health and social service agents finally began to comprehend the cultural barriers that limited them. Police in Woodburn, Hillsboro and

Portland as well as elsewhere only began in the late eighties to understand the importance of training their forces in Spanish and in cultural body language in order to reduce tensions between themselves and the Hispanic community (Coonrod 1985, B2; Ulrich 1984, C2). In 1990, Multnomah County employees urged the county to hire more Spanish-speaking and culturally sensitive personnel to work with the Hispanic inmates, who by 1990 occupied 20% of the jail beds in the spring months (Moore 1990b, E1). In 1990 Portland, at the request of policeman Sheridan Grippen, also sponsored a class for government workers and police on the Spanish language and cultural awareness (Campillo 1990, B2). And in Washington County in 1990 approximately 80 personnel were trained in Spanish (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

The lack of trust or comprehension the migrants had for the government workers who tried to make contact with them seemed insurmountable. Migrants, at best, felt they could take care of themselves. At worst, they often feared that referrals for medical care were just ploys for more business for the physicians (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1964-65*, 8).

The government functioned on the assumption that if they provided a health service, announcing it in written form, then it was up to the individual to come and use it. Professor Joseph Gallegos, a researcher at the University of Portland, expressed this assumption:

Historically, there has been an institutional lack of sensitivity to the needs of minorities in the state. It was as though institutions said, 'Our services are out there but it's up to you to come to us'" (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1).

The effort to cross this barrier required tremendous spirit, initiative and careful thinking. This was accomplished by private, non-profit organizations. Health workers at *El Nino Sano* Health Clinic in Hood River, a nonprofit private agency functioning on a

federal grant from the U.S. Bureau of Maternal and Child Care, found that a two contact system was required to develop trust. The workers showed that trust could, with persistence, be established. They found that waiting for the migrants to come to them was a mistake. First, a Hispanic lay health worker would go out to visit and then the doctor would come. They also effectively connected with the migrant community by taking seven of the migrant women and training them as the contact health persons. The doctor, Tina Castanares, who founded the project, was trained under the Health Facilitators, a national organization designed to train lay health workers to work in low income, rural areas. She in turn proceeded to instruct the seven other women, all of whom speak Spanish, with four speaking only that language (Stein 1990, L1).

Throughout this general state of inaction some government workers and politicians repeatedly made concerted efforts. Those who stood out included Senator Don Willner, Representative Edith Green, State Senator Maurine Neuberger, State Representative and Chairman of the Kennedy Action Committee Vera Katz, and more recently State Representative Les Aucoin. They spoke out against the farm lobby and laws that were unfair, and on behalf of the migrants, recommending and proposing the implementation of funding for various services that would aid the migrants.

Representative Edith Green was the only Oregon delgate in 1963 to vote against the extension of the *bracero* program, claiming that while it hurt the family farm it disproportionately helped corporate farms (Franklin 1963, 22). When SB 406, the anti-picketing law, was on the floor to be extended in 1963 Willner opposed it, stating: "It discriminates against the group in our society least able to protect themselves" (Hughes 1963, 9).

Willner, Katz, Aucoin and others joined marches and spoke at meetings. Some offered their expertise, such as Willner who provided legal counsel as a lawyer for the UFW in 1967 (Hearing Schedule, Commission on Agricultural Workers 1 June 1990, 1; Olmos 1967, C2). Government workers joined together in committees, pushing for stricter enforcement of farm and field codes, speaking on panels, or testifying about discrimination and tense community relations between police and Hispanics. These government representatives also promoted the development of culturally sensitive and bilingual programs (Moore 1990a, C2; Pederman 1982, C2) They supported surveys and studies which allowed policies to be made (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1; Moore 1990a, C2).

The politicians spoke to the press to give support and information about the conditions of the migrants and the lack of protection the government provided. Willner, in his concerted effort to push for minimum wages, unemployment insurance and collective bargaining for the migrants, put it succinctly:

We are not really being fair so long as migrants are excluded from workmen's compensation, unemployment compensation, most of public welfare, the state labor-management law and much of the minimum wage legislation (*Oregonian*, 29 January 1967, 24; *Oregonian*, 18 March 1967, 21).

There is no doubt that the programs that were implemented, however temporary, sporadic or ineffective, can be credited to the sincere effort and dedicated work of those few legislators who concerned themselves with the farmworkers.

The state and federal agencies most commonly involved in programs for the migrants included the State Departments of Agriculture, Education, Employment, Health, Labor, Welfare as well as the federal Workmen's Compensation Board, the Office of Equal Opportunity, and the Farmers' Home Administration (Kirchmeier 1980, B3; *Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 10).

A few special education programs and acts were developed by the government. Pilot summer school projects occurred sporadically in various locations, depending on the year. Vocational training and adult education were occasionally funded by the OEO and carried out by the Valley Migrant League (VML), a quasi-government agency (Guernsey 1967; Olmos 1976; Sansregret 1983; Wentworth 1962). In 1966 California, Oregon and Washington united with the intention of maintaining pocket-sized student records, containing grades, special needs, and ability levels.

Health and housing programs were sporadic at best. An average of 700 camps filed notices of usage each year, but until the 1960s only a self-inspection system was used (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 6). Even after an inspection system was in place the same relaxed attitude persisted, with a State Sanitation Division representative in 1984 being quoted as saying: "The farmers know what the rules are and I think they comply with them" (Hogan 1984, B1). Later when there were inspections, power was so scattered among the agencies and so little funding was provided that ineffectiveness persisted.

Only five percent of government inspectors' time was spent the farm labor camps (*Rural Tribune* May 1978, 1). On the average only 25% of the farms were inspected each year. Statistics in 1970 bear witness to the lack of enforcement that occurred even when camps were inspected. Although 506 camps met the lenient standards when inspected 315 did not. Of those 315, 165 were still allowed to open (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1971, 29). Between 1979 and 1984 no camps were inspected (Hogan 1984, B1).

Even when inspections were made, many farms with defects were allowed to stay open without fines or corrections made. The limited number of inspectors forced the government workers to be very superficial, as one set of inspections in 1978 by OSPIRG showed, finding 66 violations compared to the 23 violations found by the state inspector

(Lopez 1978, 25). Only a \$100 fine and possible closure were the penalties for not complying with state regulations on housing. And, as OSPIRG stated, if the fines were not more than it costs to correct the problem, then the fines were not going to be the incentive (Lopez 1978, 25).

The standards by which inspections were rated were very low. Farmworkers were the only occupational group that was not covered by the federal sanitation standards. After being challenged with lawsuits since 1972 by the national Migrant legal Action Program, twelve years later in 1984 the State Workers' Compensation Department's Accident Prevention Division reported that it would begin a mandatory, scheduled inspection policy that would hit every camp in Oregon over a 3 year cycle (Frisvold 1988, 885; Hogan 1984, B1).

The OEO Migrant Health Project provided the best government funded health care the migrants would receive in Oregon. This project displays an overall view of the functionings of the government when it provided aid to the migrants. The MHP was an excellent example of the potential the government had to better the conditions of the migrants. At the same time this project showed the inadequacies caused by the requirement for annual renewal of funding, the top-heavy decision-making and the lack of long-term planning ultimately caused by the lack of funding (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1964-71*).

As was the case here, aid was most often offered only through special programs. Projects were understaffed and temporary, creating immense inefficiency. Programs were given minimal power to make changes and cancelled if they tried to use regulations that were not being enforced. Resistance was met at every corner, and programs were cancelled just as they became effective. And, even with the committed staff that was

acquired, ineffectiveness persisted because of the lack of cultural training provided to them (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1964-71*).

The MHP lasted from 1963-1971. By 1970 the MHP serviced migrants in up to 13 counties, where 90% of the migrants resided. It averaged about 18,000 patients a summer, equalling approximately 20-30% of the migrants, and provided home visits, physicals, minor medicinal aid, referrals to partially funded doctors and pocket-sized health histories (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1970, 10*). Camp conditions, which the project at first did nothing about, gave rise to the spreading of disease and long recoveries. Lack of heat, clean or hot water, modern toilet or cooking facilities, combined with overcrowding and rodents, made it hard to keep things under control. Soon the MHP added sanitation checks to clean up the migrants' environment.

The MHP was troubled with hiring and rehiring each spring, forced to begin anew each season as it regained its annual funding. As soon as the staff had gained the trust of the migrants, the season would be near its end, and, because of the workload and low pay, most would not return the following season. The problem of gaining the trust of the migrants proved enormous, especially since few of the workers spoke Spanish or understood the culture of the migrants.

Lack of coordination among agencies also hurt the effort. Transportation costs, use of local clinics and extended services all had to be funded from different departments, and the time required to apply and receive the funds could be years later. The health workers, who became most familiar with the camp conditions, were repeatedly told that their concern for the effect the camps had on the health of the migrants was beyond their jurisdiction. When they insisted on more power and pushed through the inspections of camps the whole project lost its funding. The government employees were told that they

were performing functions out of their jurisdiction. In effect, the most successful government program that provided services to the migrants was cancelled for essentially becoming more effective (*Oregon Migrant Health Project 1971, 5*).

CHAPTER IV

RESISTANCE

COMMUNITY

Against the many odds, migrants and ex-migrants maintained and developed support systems that allowed them to care for each other, retain their culture, and fight against the oppressive forces they encountered. Most importantly, Hispanic migrants' familial, religious and cultural strength provided refuge. Over time this support has expanded in Oregon, centered in the small rural communities where many Chicanos have settled. Union activism also flowed out of this cultural and familial affiliation. This community spirit also produced activists among the ex-migrants committed to improving migrant conditions. As time progressed these Chicano activists directed Anglo activists, moving from purely religious guidance and charity to legal and legislative resistance and the creation of self-help organizations.

Forced to respond to oppression by farmers, contractors, and local communities, migrants in Oregon banded together to protect each other. The continual changes of the seasons, its effect on crops and thus the amount of labor needed, added to their distress and helped the migrants maintain a strong community and support system based primarily on the extended family to help them during hard times. This unification consistently remained the strongest form of resistance to outside forces the migrants had.

Though the conditions of their living remained difficult, the migrants as a whole were able to sustain a higher level of pride and independence than would be expected.

They retained a strong sense of family, which included extended members, villagers, and long-time acquaintances. With the little money they made, many supported their families and friends, especially through hard times when work was scarce. Many regularly remitted money to those family members left in Mexico or other Latin American countries (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990). When lack of housing existed migrants were often taken in by others in an already overcrowded house, tent, trailer or car (Lagra 1969, 40).

This strength of community spirit and willingness to help each other kept them surviving under horrid conditions. A fine example comes from a study of migrants in nearby Washington state. One migrant, Jorge Mena, gave a good steady job which he had held for four months to a friend who arrived from the Southwest because, "I did not have a alternative, I give to my friend my job because I can find me other job much faster than he" (Lagra 1969, 93).

The tremendous pride and desire for independence these migrants held led to a general distrust of others outside of their community. A nurse from Portland's Nurse Practitioners' Community Health Clinic described this in one migrant family:

The Gomezes are independent. They don't ask for help. They want to do for themselves. They didn't come right out and say they had these [health] needs, but they kept coming back with the same kinds of illnesses" (McDermott 1990, K1).

Another volunteer who interviewed elderly Hispanics in Portland told of one woman living on \$99 a month,

She was distressed but very proud. . . . There is a sense of suffering with dignity among many of those I interviewed. A sense that "We are poor but we can take care of ourselves" (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1).

Hispanics were successful in maintaining their religious and cultural traditions with this familial closeness, reinforced by constant movement and a rural environment. Studies have shown that they had a stronger sense of culture and self-esteem than those who had settled out (Gecas 1973; Wells 1976).

CULTURE

The strength the Hispanic migrant families held lay in their deep cultural and religious roots. Each of the twenty-three different Hispanic cultures found in Oregon has maintained its identity (Perschiera 1990, 4M EP1). Men gathered in associations according to the area or particular culture from which they come. This is especially true of the Mexteca Indians who felt an affinity with each other. Their Benito Juarez Association is centered in Salem (Jack Corbett, personal interview, 8 August 1990).

The migrants' expression of these cultures was reflected everywhere in their communities. Migrants regularly celebrated holidays such as *el dia de las madres*, made ethnic food, and, when possible, grew gardens full of jalapenos, cilantro, and tomatillos. Chickens, pigs, and other farm animals were kept when they were able to stay year round or winter in one location (Gamboa 1984, 158).

Music and dance clubs were opened in many towns. During the *bracero* program men pooled the little money they could spare and bought jukeboxes, purchased or brought up Mexican records, gathered for dances and music, and rented nationalistic, pre-revolutionary films about rural heroes which they showed in large tents on county fairgrounds (Gamboa 1973, 60). *Tejano* or *musica nortena*, a combination of south Texas, Mexican, and German bohemian could be heard (Gamboa 1973, 60). Many local

bands played weekly throughout the state. Radio stations broadcast weekly and daily Hispanic music and news shows in Portland, Woodburn, Salem and Hillsboro.

Ex-migrants attempting to settle out congregated in small towns such as Nyssa, Cornelius, Woodburn and Gervais. Migrants, too, who worked in the outlying areas, gathered there in the summers. In these smaller towns Hispanics did not lose their community or culture as they would have in Portland (Gecas 1973; Gutierrez 1983; Slatta 1975). In these towns with large Hispanic populations Chicanos have attempted to keep alive many traditional ways. Spanish signs and posters line the streets and businesses, and bakeries and restaurants serve Mexican and other Latino foods. In Woodburn the dance club posted its signs first in Spanish and then in English. Parking lots took the place of the traditional Mexican plaza, with men gathering to socialize there (Martinis 1987, B2; Slatta 1979, 160).

In Woodburn, Nyssa, Cornelius and Gervais where, Hispanic culture was strong, the Chicano community struggled for power in city councils, pushing for more culturally sensitive school and policing policies. Though Chicanos remained under-represented in most political positions, even where a large percentage of the community is Hispanic, they did make progress (Hinkley and Olmos 1984, B7).

Despite the sustenance migrants gained from their culture, as this settled minority grew in population many remained voiceless and invisible. In 1964 the Oregon Migrant Health Project, a government agency working directly with migrants, noted 330 Spanish-speaking farm labor families in Malheur County who had permanently settled, still working the fields and still quite poor. It stated, "some of these people have been in the area for 20 years and do not feel a part of the community" (*Oregon Migrant Health*

Project 1964, 9). And in 1990, a health worker said: "They're isolated and they're lonely. . . . They want to talk to someone" (Stein 1990, L1).

Religious faith helped the migrants survive their conditions. Of the 100,000 Hispanics now residing in Oregon 71% were Catholic (Butterworth 1991, C1). Many were devout. Some recruited Catholic priests to say mass at 5:30 a.m. before they worked the fields or to perform such religious ceremonies as blessing a truck before they ventured the long journey to and from home (Gamboa 1973, 58; Kadera 1969, 6; Martinis 1987, B2). Oregon Catholic dioceses with large Hispanic congregations have incorporated Hispanic religious ceremonies and began to say Masses in Spanish. Hispanic migrants responded by attending Mass in great numbers. When migrants arrived in the spring, Catholic communities bulged. Ceremonies such as *Mananitas*, a traditional Christmas pageant, *Los Posada* a recreation of Joseph and Mary's search for lodging, as well as celebrations on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and All Souls Day were included in the churches' traditions (Blackmun 1990, 4M EP 8).

UNION ACTIVITY AND LABOR RESISTANCE

Labor unrest in Oregon among Hispanic migrant farmworkers expressed itself in the forms of camp vandalism, the refusal to work at particular locations, lack of cooperation with local police, violence and small strikes (Gambao 1984; Mazano 1987; Robertson 1969). As one migrant said, vandalism was "the migrant's only way to leave a message, to ask for better housing" (Floyd 1968, 29).

Migrants also avoided areas where they had been previously mistreated for as long as they could afford. It was not uncommon to have a loss of labor for the next two

seasons in an area due to low wages or bad conditions (Bianco 1958; Guernsey 1971; Infante and Current 1958; *Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969).

The attempt to unionize was dangerous and therefore naturally sporadic. After the union activity of the 1930s and 1940s the Northwest farmers stepped up their efforts through alliances to control labor unrest (Newbill 1977, 83).

Failure of the International Workers of the World in Yakima is easy to explain . . . the wobblies could not hope to match strength with the farmers whose allies were many. In addition to the chamber of commerce and local newspapers, farmers enjoyed the support of city police, county sheriffs, state patrol and National Guard. These law-enforcement groups went well beyond what was necessary to maintain law and order (Newbill 1977, 83).

During the post-war period farmers had beaten unionism, and they were intent on not suffering through another bout of it. Even though they had the police force and political machine behind them, they knew the power and the trouble union activism could create (Austermann 1970; Guernsey 1971; Newbill 1977). Farmers turned to foreign labor, such as the Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans. This had proven useful before because foreign labor was isolated, desperate for jobs, and could be shipped out when the job was done. The use of *braceros*, and later illegal Mexicans, seemed to the farmers to make good sense (McWilliams 1939; Robertson 1969).

Even though the farmers used foreign labor in Oregon to quell the possibility of labor unrest, outbreaks of dissent still occurred among the *braceros*. Gamboa found that during the *bracero* program the Northwest was a "hotbed of labor unrest for over four years." The *braceros* struck because of discrimination and the uncompromising attitude of the farmers over conditions such as wages, food, or camps. The improvements that the farmers had to make to stop the rebellions were still far less than what was

demanded by domestics during the thirties. And the *braceros* could be sent home at the end of the season (Gamboa 1984, 345).

Many other factors further reduced the chance for unionism. Workers were constantly on the move and had very little money, and thus it was hard for organizers to be financially supported or to get to the workers, who lived on private farms where farmers restricted their entrance (Lopez 1976; Olmos 1965; Penny 1957). In 1969 alone 60 affidavits were filed in 20 weeks in an effort to force farmers to allow government workers onto the camps (*Oregonian*, 12 August 1969, 11).

The unions, unaided by membership dues, had financial troubles. They were forced to rely on donations from industrial unions, which, by and large, were either unreceptive to the conditions of migrants or unable to fund them when they were sympathetic because of their own financial woes (Robertson 1969, 18). Although the industrial unions provided advice and support at times, essential financial support was not forthcoming.

Migrants usually distrusted anyone but their contractor and family, which added to the woes of the already overburdened organizer (Robertson 1969, 5). Unfortunately these contractors did the work unions would have done, except that the benefits didn't go to the workers. Divisions between full-time migrants and part-time farmworkers as well as racial or ethnic conflicts existed.

Those who saw farm labor as only part-time supplemental work, perceiving their stay in this kind of labor as only temporary, could not afford to commit to sacrificing their daily wage for long term improvements. Furthermore, some farmers paid the migrants with a bonus for staying the whole time, in effect lowering the wage and then

making it up with a bonus, which meant that if workers struck they lost even more of their income.

The sacrifices needed to battle the farmers proved too much for most. Conditions remained so bad that despair often set in, with many holding the belief that change could not take root. Their poverty level also reduced their willingness to strike.

As had been seen in California, unionization was most feasible when there was a sense of oneness, of commonality, and that seemed to be most likely in areas where one crop was grown and where skills involved in farming were common among a large segment of the labor force. Corporate farms in California had been easier to bargain with because they had a greater profit margin. Neither of these conditions have been prominent in Oregon, where crops varied greatly and farms were relatively smaller (Robertson 1969, 20).

Strikes, the strongest tool for industrial unions, were largely ineffective in the struggle to organize farmworkers. During the 1960s and afterwards farmworkers found that when they struck they couldn't control the entry of large acreage farms and that consumers were often unwilling to boycott basic foods. Oregon laws left them unprotected since the NLRA did not cover them as it did other workers. Thus farmers were not legally required to allow or bargain with unions. Farmworkers were also not legally protected when they struck. Furthermore, the potential of a food shortage allowed farmers to contend that striking was a national security issue, justifying the creation and implementation of an Oregon law which prevented picketing near farms. This law remained until 1990 (*Oregonian* 27 April 1971, 2; *Oregonian* 5 March 1990, C5).

Strikes occurred regularly throughout the *bracero* program when they had a contract. Later migrants did not have a contract and were unable to rebel without grave

repercussions. Although many migrants worked through a contractor the agreement was purely oral and usually covered only a place to work and live. These migrants of the 1970s and 1980s merely had a chance for work under a contractor. While the *braceros* had guaranteed work, other migrants competed for their jobs. Mechanization increased the scarcity of jobs even more.

Regardless of the great odds, activists in the late 1960s continued to try to organize the farmworkers, with the UFW leading the effort. They were encouraged by events in California. In 1959 the AFL-CIO Organizing Campaign of Agricultural Workers in California (AWOC) attempted to gather momentum, striking in 1965 in the grape fields of Delano, only to find that the farmers replaced them with *braceros*. Soon after, AWOC merged with the National Farm Worker Association to create the United Farm Workers. They then began a series of very successful consumer boycotts. The union was finally recognized by the farmers. Wages increased by 25% and some fringe benefits were included in a contract (Robertson 1969, 18).

Apparently, inspiration was gained from the California movement because during this same time resistance heightened in parts of Oregon. As early as 1961 discussions about joining up with the UFW occurred among the migrants. Different from the past, this new activism was led by migrants and ex-migrants rather than by activists outside of the field (Robertson 1969, 8).

In the late sixties, migrants and ex-migrants joined the UFW, no longer wanting the old, conservative charity organizations to continue the same way. They demanded that the Valley Migrant League, the largest non-profit agency acquiring funds from the government to aid the migrants, improve wages and permanent conditions instead of funding day care centers. The UFW and the local union VIVA tried to provide

settlement aid, legal counseling, health care and career advancement. They understood that their effort must be to create a sense of community to prepare Oregon for unionization (Olmos 1967; McNulty 1968; Robertson 1969). At this time they began the plan to set up cases which would allow them to fight the anti-picket law enacted in 1969. Their victory would be finalized 21 years later in 1990 when this law was declared unconstitutional (*Oregonian* 5 March 1990, C5).

Farmers feared what they saw as Chavez-inspired infiltrators and united against this activism (Austermann 1970; Guernsey 1971; Kadera 1970; Olmos 1969; Robertson 1969). In 1971, farmers nearly succeeding in enacting Senate Bill 67, which would have forced one-way binding arbitration. Although this law was never enacted, it is valuable to observe to show the anti-union attitudes of farmers and politicians. The proposal was to hold elections early enough so that migrants couldn't participate, allowing only permanent employees to vote each year. It would have established wages and conditions, with a three member labor relations board appointed by the governor, who usually stood firmly on the farmers' side. At least one representative from the state Board of Agriculture, another conservative force would be reserved a spot on this arbitration board.

S.B. 67 would have authorized farmers threatened by a strike or lockout to invoke fact finding procedures binding upon both parties if accepted by the farmer. The farmer would have had the sole right to reject the facts or call for as many new fact findings until the farmer was satisfied with one. Under this law workers would not have been able to strike until the facts had been accepted by the farmer, allowing the farmer to stall until the crop had been picked. This passed the senate. Finally, it was defeated

after a rallying cry from industrial and farmworker unions, church groups and political activists put pressure on legislators (*Oregonian* 27 April 1971, C5).

In the late eighties one union was able to develop strength. The *Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos Del Noroeste*, the Northwest Tree Planters and Farmworkers United (PCUN), had the advantage of having members who were covered by federal reforestation laws that allowed them some security in minimum wages and conditions. PCUN originally grew out of community service dealing with raids and deportations in the early eighties. They continued to expand their efforts to all farmworkers and also became active on the political and legislative scene. Presently, 65% of the union members are settled Oregonians in the Willamette Valley.

PCUN's successes offered encouragement. This union united the workers against IRCA, helping to reduce its destructive nature before it was enacted. In 1990 they won a suit against Governor Goldschmidt and the state of Oregon striking down the 1962 Oregon statute that prohibited picketing at Oregon farmlands (*Oregonian* 5 March 1990, C5). In 1990 they also won a case against radio station KBEY located in Woodburn when a Spanish music and news program funded by the union was cancelled for describing a conflict with growers. Although the owner of the station claimed it was anti-grower in nature the courts found this to be illegal. The court decision declared that the owner must allow the show back on his station (*Oregonian* 27 July 1990, A23).

Union members gained the support of the UFW and Cesar Chavez, who toured through Oregon with them. They also have been aided by the AFL-CIO in their battle against the anti-picketing law. Its membership has risen from 400 in 1986 to over 2,700 in 1990 (McCarthy 1990a, B1; *Oregonian* 5 March 1990, C5).

One reason PCUN was initially able to survive and unify farmworkers was because of the protection of the federal regulations under the deforestation legislation which covered some of its members. The deforestation legislation provided for a minimum wage and the right to organize (Kirchmeier 1980, B3). PCUN also aimed its membership drive towards Mexican and other Latin American migrants who had come from areas of political activism and had received amnesty under the new legislation.

PCUN organizers had another advantage. They gained the trust of their fellow workers because they lived and worked among them. PCUN was organized and led by Hispanic migrants, most of whom came from Latin America and spoke Spanish as their first language. They were able to use the loyalty that existed among themselves to empower the union. They functioned as a family, very cautiously screening whom they allowed into their ranks. This cohesiveness was reinforced by the history of government and farmer harassment they had experienced in Oregon as well as in their previous homelands. Suspicion extended even to sympathetic Chicanos, who were at times seen as anglicized (Francisco J. Rangel, personal interview, 5 July 1990).

PCUN was able to usurp the contractors' role on some farms because the farmers have seen them as more reliable and as a fair deal. Most recently, president Cipriano Ferrel and the union began organizing to start a pesticide assistance program to help enforce safety regulations in the field with the help of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (Rosemary 1989, G2).

The problems that farmworker unionism confronted led PCUN, along with other activists and migrants, to seek solutions in legislation. Future legislation to protect the migrant and prevent the use of illegals was seen as essential. They wanted to eliminate the farmers' constant use of illegals for strikebreaking and for lowering the wage.

RESISTANCE THROUGH LEGAL ACTION

Historically, an important tool for improving conditions for migrants has been the legal system. Suits have been brought against the farmers and powers that be to improve conditions and wages as well as to stop the mistreatment, violence and dishonesty of the employers and the police force. Suits in the late 1960s and early 1970s were brought against farmers to stop them from preventing activists and government health officials from entering the camps when the migrants requested help (Bustos 1969; Cowley 1970; Floyd 1969; Kadera 1969; Mayer 1983; Olmos 1982; *Oregonian* 18 March 1969; Pederman 1982, Stewart 1982 Wentworth 1960). In the 1970s the first successful class action suit brought by migrants against farmers for breach of contract was filed. In this case 8 residents of New Mexico paid \$2,000 for a lawyer to demand the \$8,000 owed them by the Tankersley farm (*Oregonian* 14 December 1971, 12; *Rural Tribune* September 1978, 1).

In 1983 Hispanics demanded that a committee be formed to deal with the tensions and mistreatment of migrants in Oregon. An incident during the suit of the farmer who had assaulted a worker over a wage dispute was used as leverage. In order to testify in this case several migrants returned from Los Angeles, having spent their own money to return. They could afford only to stay a short while. Just after they arrived, the defense attorney requested to postpone testimony of the preliminary hearing in. This was seen as a tactical move to prevent the arriving migrants from testifying. This blatant attempt to limit the ability for the migrants to give testimony and the immigration raids that had been occurring regularly led to the development of a conciliation board established by the U.S. Department of Justice to review the treatment migrants received within the judicial system (Hilderbrand 1983, B3).

As stated before, the Tree Planters' Union sued the state of Oregon and its governor for the use of the picketing law enacted in 1963, which they claimed was a violation of freedom of speech. That law was found unconstitutional in 1990. The effect of lawsuits like these were invaluable to the migrants. The actions of PCUN and the help of activists in and outside the Hispanic community advanced the rights and protection of migrants in Oregon.

ACTIVISM

Activists provided what the migrants' own community could not. They understood the workings of the government and knew how to voice the needs of the migrants. Where the government or farmer left gaps these volunteer groups rushed to fill the holes, a process much like digging from here to China. They pressured the government and tried to check the power of the farmers. They marched on Salem in 1968 demanding better conditions, lobbied for better laws and services, set up day care centers, vocational training, credit unions and information centers, and chaired workshops and advisory committees. They charted the direction for aid and support, protection and advocacy.

In the 1950s and 1960s Anglo religious volunteers dominated this area. Later, as Chicanos settled in Oregon, they became activists for their community and for their own people, which included the migrants. These Chicano activists, included among them ex-migrants or children of ex-migrants, paved the way for a new self-sufficiency and cultural movement. They provided essential resources for the few migrants who have been able to settle, helping those in poverty struggle to survive a little easier. They sponsored newspapers, radio stations and programs and television shows. Some

campaigns for representatives of la raza for city council positions or county seats, providing a further sense of community and support for migrants far from home. Those Chicanos in Oregon in positions of power brought migrant concerns to the courts, the press and to the city and government.

Examples of Chicanos who have made the condition of all Chicanos their business through activism are numerous. Ismael Barrera, the first Chicano to be hired as a Bureau of Labor inspector, regularly risked his career by protesting the conditions of the camps (Olmos 1969, 24). Ex-migrant Daniel Santos, president of The Political Action Committee united successful Chicanos to lobby in Salem. His ability to acquire donations for this fight proved invaluable as well (Olmos 1983a, MW D2). Jose Salano, director of migrant education for Washington County followed the course his parents set for him. When he was young he was kicked out of school when his parents inquired about his education. Now he watches the education system to be sure migrant students are adequately served (Olmos 1983b, MW B1).

David Loera, another Hispanic runs *Mano a Mano*, a Salem based non-profit service organization committed to providing unemployed migrants with essentials. Joseph Gallegos, a University of Portland professor, also an ex-migrant, co-founded the now defunct Collegio Cesar Chavez at Mt. Angel. More recently he committed himself to research which will help migrants gain access to public resources. He reflected on his studies, used to provide documentation of the needs of elderly Hispanics in Oregon: "It shows how an academic institution can be actively involved in the community. I honestly think it's our responsibility to be directing projects like this" (Fitzgibbon 1990, MP1).

Anglo activists needed their Chicano peers to act as liaisons. Migrants were extremely reluctant to receive aid from anyone, volunteer or government, Anglo or

Hispanic. Many factors reinforced this hesitancy. They did not know or trust most of these people. The migrants, from past experience, feared the "something for nothing" service, constantly suspecting that someone was trying to trick them. Frank Ojeda, an ex-migrant stated the sentiment well: "We have been used too much, been promised too much" (Floyd 1968, 29). This was heightened by the fact that many could not read pamphlets given to them by volunteers describing services offered. Other migrants feared authorities, especially the government which played a dual role of helping them and deporting them. Those who were born or lived previously in Latin America may have found their own country's authorities untrustworthy, and naturally acted with caution. Migrants also had a tradition of pride and independence, encouraging them to rely on themselves for their needs (Lagra 1969; *Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969). Chicano activists could sometimes break the barriers, establishing trust.

Many activists also confronted another barrier. They lacked knowledge of the Hispanic language and culture. Activists and government health workers tended to see the Hispanic belief system as superstitious or invalid. The following 1969 account of the medicinal belief and ritual system of the migrants shows the complexity of the situation. One health worker described just one important aspect called *mal de ojo*:

Apparently when we admire something about another person, we, in effect, put a hex on them. The child will become ill with elevated temperature, vomiting, sometimes convulsions, unless the person doing the admiring cancels out the "hex" by touching or holding the admiree! The nurses and the aids learned to touch any child about whom they were discussing, if possible (*Oregon Migrant Health Project* 1969, 181).

Chicano activists also often played the role of guiding other activists to cultural sensitivity.

Obviously Hispanic activists could break through this wall far easier than others. As ex-migrant health worker Irma DeAnda from *El Nino Sano* Clinic in Hood River said: "They receive us because we are brown faces. We speak their language. We explain things to them" (Stein 1990, L1).

Though most of the organizations' activists set up in Oregon were non-sectarian their staffing was often filled with religious activists who held strong beliefs. These Oregon activists, like others around the nation, sought to provide the basics so that individuals could strive spiritually instead of being obsessed with survival (Oregon State Bureau of Labor 1959; Ruether 1970; White and Hopkins 1976). Both the 1958 report of the Migrant Ministry and the direction of leading activists today point out this intention (Freedman 1989; Marx 1989; Oregon State Bureau of Labor 1959).

Though Protestant activists were prominent in social service agencies in Oregon that worked for the Hispanic migrants, because of the religious convictions of most Hispanic migrants, Catholic activists functioned in a more intimate way within the migrant community. Catholic priests lived among them and Catholic Chicano activists knew them, spoke their language, understood their culture and were more often trusted (Blackmun 1990; Cockle 1990; Freedman 1989; *Oregonian* 23 June 1964). This daily commitment helped to create communities of activism located in Woodburn, Cornelius, Dayton, Nyssa, and other small rural towns where migrants stayed or worked nearby.

A transformation in the direction of many of Oregon's religious activists occurred after the 1960s. Through their trials and tribulations Christian activists in Oregon have gained a stronger conviction and clarity of purpose since the 1950s. Many moved from part-time charity to direct and constant involvement at the community level. Some also moved away from direct church involvement because their convictions were more radical

than the churches could tolerate (Marx 1989, 1). They became politically active after living among or seeing the conditions of the migrants. These later activists sought to change migrant conditions, desiring to help more than the spiritual needs of the migrants to which the Migrant Ministry of the 1950s and 1960s had confined itself (Austermann 1970; Freedman 1989; Marx 1987).

A new national Catholic movement strengthened Oregon Catholic activists and clergy. Their purpose was to "give the people hope, to educate people in how the system works so they can confront that system with *their* power" (Jones 1987, 9). They believed that the oppressed in the United States were worse off than the oppressed in Latin American because the poor had no hope or faith in the chance for liberation (McCarthy 1988, 19). In San Antonio, Virgilio Elisondo, religious leader and director of the San Antonio Cultural Center, expressed this new faith in his "Galilean principle" which proposed that Mexican-Americans and other marginal peoples in the United States could and must, through their pain and rebirth, help others create a new society (Shaull 1984, 99).

Their philosophy included providing encouragement and faith because "so many of the poor are so angry, so broken, so inhumanly discouraged and desouled" (McCarthy 1988, 17). These Christian communities developed a strong grassroots emphasis, with self-sufficiency for the downtrodden as their main goal (McCarthy 1988, 18).

Jose Jaime, David Zegar and Rodney Page exemplified the religious leadership of this activism in Oregon. Jose Jaime, one of the founding members of El Centro Cultural in Woodburn, was particularly representative of Chicano activism and of the Catholic grassroots community activism.

Page, a middle-class Protestant, attended seminary, worked in several low-income

communities, arriving in California in the late 1950s to work with the migrant farm community under the Migrant Ministries. He described his experience there as a turning point:

To see kids with arms twisted out of shape because they'd been broken and left untreated, to see such grinding poverty in the camps, the kids drowning in irrigation ditches--it was the most earth shaking experience in my life. I became sensitized forever to the social issues of our time (Marx 1989, 9).

Page later established the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, which now encompasses 17 denominations and over 2,000 congregations (Marx 1989, 8). While EMO provided daily services throughout the state, its real power lay in using its prestige to lobby for those in need.

Jose Jaime, born and raised in Mexico, was sent to the states to be educated and ordained. Afterwards Jaime taught migrants at Mt. Angel. Later, one suspects, in order to work more directly with his community, Jaime left the priesthood to work and live as a lay person, and his "commitment to living in the religious community began to take a different perspective." Jaime attempted to unite the Hispanic and Anglo forces. His words reflect the new Catholic activism, "I still strive to feed my faith with their faith" (Freedman 1989, 1).

The Reverend Zegar of St. Alexander' in Cornelius represented a new breed of Catholic Anglo priests. These few priests were extremely committed to their Hispanic congregations. They were usually bilingual and familiar with various Hispanic cultures. Zegar fought for migrants in the workplace, the legal system, in social services agencies, and in the legislature. He helped pass two bills in 1989 which strengthened the footing of the migrants. One requires contractors to provide for migrants when they are brought up before work is available and the other bill gives migrants better access to social

service agencies. As vicar for the Hispanic Ministries for the Catholic Archdiocese of Portland, Zegar made sure that priests serving in Hispanic communities were equipped to provide for the Hispanic community they work in (Butterworth 1991, C1).

Alongside the religious activists in Oregon there stood sectarians who felt that these migrants deserved better treatment and a stronger representation, and so they cried out as the voice of the oppressed, lobbying for government money and new state labor and housing regulations, successfully increasing funds and drawing attention to the treatment of migrants (Cargill 1984; Guernsey 1971; Hill 1982; *Oregonian* 20 July 1958).

CHRONOLOGY OF OREGON ACTIVISM IN THE MIGRANT COMMUNITY

Volunteers, both political and religious have been actively aiding Hispanic migrants since the 1950s in Oregon. These activists, many religious, began in the 1950s to organize themselves and, with a small fund, 30 seasonal staff and 300 lay workers, they set up health clinics, organized recreational activities, offered religious services and funded a priest to come from Mexico (Olmos 1964, C10). In 1955 the Oregon Council of Churches sounded the first organized statewide concern (Slatta 1979, 31). Meanwhile, in 1955 The Migrant Ministry, sponsored by the Portland Archdiocese, was set up to research and provide, at this point, purely spiritual guidance for the migrants (Austermann 1970, 31).

In their 1955 report the Migrant Ministry clarified its position, documenting that their members were only there to conduct research and provide religious services, not change conditions. Previously the Migrant Ministry had worked in California, and possibly they understood the dangers of crossing the farmers or even appearing to be doing so. However, it is also possible that initially they were not concerned with altering

the farm or work conditions of the migrants, since some of them may have been the wives of the farmers who hired these workers (Austermann 1970; *Migrant Ministry Report* 1955).

The Migrant Ministry found college students from Linfield College, University of Portland and Pacific University to live year-round in the camps and to organize picnics, sewing circles, fiestas. They set up nurseries for the children while the parents worked (*Migrant Ministry Report* 1955). They also hired priests to come up from Mexico to serve the migrants. Father Bravo, from Zamora, Michoacan, Mexico had been sent yearly since 1952. His services represented the purely spiritual direction the MM promoted. In 1964 Father Bravo served 642 families, 192 single men, saying 353 First Communion, 49 marriages, 25 baptisms, 173 confirmations, and tutored catechism to 642 children (Olmos 1964, C10).

In 1964 the Migrant Ministry, later named the Oregon Friends of the Migrants, started the Valley Migrant League (VML), which successfully monopolized government resources throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It was at this time that the "second organized major manifestation of concern" occurred when legislators, clergymen, labor contractors, and citizens came together to apply for an OEO "demo grant" to fund adult education, summer school, day care, and health programs (Slatta 1979, 161). This initial grant sent 80 VISTA volunteers and nearly \$700,000 to Oregon (Schulz 1965, 10). This grant was the first of many. Lobbying annually for relatively large sums of federal money under the OEO's "war against poverty," the VML ran VISTA, the Migrant Health Project and most summer education programs.

This was a united effort by some of the religious volunteers and the farmers. In 1965 the VML had 12 growers on its 40 member board of directors (Olmos 1965, 26). It

served the purposes of both groups: The farmers could influence the government to fund the improvements needed instead of paying for these themselves while the religious activists got the improvements they felt the migrants desperately needed. The VML existed as a non-conflict, friendly, quasi-government agency which gained a lot of power. It used its money in non-controversial ways, and lost few supporters among those in power. As one priest said in 1964 about a health grant that the VML acquired: "The program will help growers because it will offer advantages to migrant workers and will be an inducement for them to come to Oregon this summer" (Schulz 1965, 10).

Because of the VML's superficial goals and the annual cycle of grants that needed to be renewed, these programs remained temporary and caused a high turnover of staff, further reducing any significant or permanent improvements. As the VML grew, it also became consumed with governmental regulations connected to its funding, losing much of its creative initiative (Floyd 1969, 29).

Meanwhile, the direction of some of these religious and political activists within the VML continued to change. The difference between the stated goals of the Migrant Ministry written in the late fifties, and the actions of some religious activists in Klamath Falls in the 1970s expressed this change. The *Migrant Ministry Report* purposely clarified its intent to help only the spiritual needs of the farmworkers. In 1970 the chairman of the potato grower's league stated the increasing division between the farmers and the local church council in Klamath Falls when the Growers League ordered the volunteers off of their farms for political activity. In this later confrontation the league told its old ally that they were no longer welcome in the farmer-built community hall, complaining that the Council of Churches representative,

. . . caused us quite a bit of trouble and was just not good for us. We had adverse reports from people in the camps,

farmers, a county health officer and others. . . . We've never been happy with the Council of Churches. It has seemed more interested in bettering the laborers' social standards than their religious needs (Austermann 1970, 31; *Migrant Ministry Report 1959*, 4).

As these activists sustained their efforts over the years they realized that little seemed to change. The existing statutes were not as strong even as the federal regulations, and government funding and commitment to enforcement remained low, allowing for continued mistreatment of migrants. In the sixties and seventies churches and activists united to enter the political arena, lobbying for stiffer Oregon statutes and federal grants to protect migrants.

By the late sixties action mounted. In May of 1967 the Poor People's March on Salem for 1968 was planned to grieve to Governor Tom McCall for better housing in labor camps, for state codes to be enforced on showers, fresh water and toilet facilities, to have crew leaders licensed as contractors, to stop contractors from busing workers long distances in overcrowded and ill-equipped buses and to push for the NLRA to begin covering farmworkers. The march was also a protest against farmers' continual refusal to allow activists onto the camps located on farmers' property. Participants included the National Council of Churches, VIVA, VOCAL, UFW of Oregon, the AFL-CIO and local church groups throughout the state (Olmos 1968b, 17; *Oregonian* 29 January 1967, 24). The march led to some revised legislation (Olmos 1968b, 27).

As pressure was levied on the government to enforce old laws and health officials leaned on the growers to improve conditions, opposition by the farmers began to rise as well. Farmers, backed by their labor contractors and guards, began to leave the volunteer organizations, continuing to force the religious organizers off their premises, locking their gates which surrounded the homes of migrants, and intimidating workers

into silence. As this change occurred conflicts between the bureaucratic charity agencies and the more radical activists arose (Kadera 1969, 6).

As the battle pressed on, turmoil rose from within these organizations as well. A stronger spirit awakened and persisted as Hispanic migrant workers who had climbed out of this labor, backed by concerned citizens and others, became involved, demanding a voice in their own lives and those of their people. It became obvious that a bureaucratic organization with some questionable motives had mushroomed and that those who made decisions were not and had never been migrants. The ex-migrants pointed out that theirs was a different culture and experience and that they best understood the migrants' needs and concerns. Ex-migrants and children of ex-migrants established the *Collegio Cesar Chavez* at Mt. Angel to begin the process of self-education among *la raza*. These younger activists began to see the VML as maintaining the system instead of changing it. At one UFW meeting in 1969 this sentiment was expressed. The ex-migrants were not enthusiastic about a VML grant for nurseries, instead wishing to direct the effort to improving wages, "so they could hire their own babysitters" (McNulty 1968, 13).

Many were tired of the charity-oriented, top-heavy hierarchy which kept activism confined. A 1957 account in the Portland *Oregonian* tells of the limitations the charity organizations instituted. A Red Cross disaster representative had been reprimanded for helping migrants in need. He had entered a Gresham farm to provide food and transportation for 200 farmworkers who were tricked into coming up in a year when there was already a large surplus of labor. After one worker complained to the county sheriff, the workers had been evicted and left stranded in a hard rain on the roadside. When the Red Cross worker drove them to the Portland Hotel, a homeless shelter, the farmer claimed he had trespassed and the Red Cross officials reprimanded him. He,

like other activists during this and later times, felt as though the organization had failed him, and quit after 10 years of serving as a disaster representative (Penny 1957, 18).

As ex-migrants and more militant members within the VML raised their voices they were checked. At first the VML accepted bits and pieces of these demands, hiring more Hispanics at lower levels until by 1968 75% of the VML were ex-migrants. "In most of the VML's opportunity centers throughout the Willamette Valley, however, non-farmworkers continue to hold the operational reins as the transition takes place" (Olmos 1968b, 17). More tension rose as several employees told the press that they were forced to sign agreements that forced them to not involve themselves in UFW activities (McNulty 1968, 13).

Then in 1969 the VML funded the Farm Workers Home (FHF), a self-help organization which the VML allowed to run at the grassroots level. But the FHF had very little real decision-making power. Almost no top positions were held by ex-migrants. Neither were there any ex-migrants or Chicanos on the VML board (Olmos 1968b, 17).

Pressure ran high, tensions mounted, the Home struggled with its new-found power for nine months and then collapsed in conflict. The ex-migrants failed miserably at their first attempt to run a program. Lack of decision-making and resolution skills hindered the ex-migrants and mere lip-service support on the part of the VML led to internal battles. The press ran a story of a fight that broke out at one of the Farm Worker Home Board meetings between a VIVA member and a Farm Worker Home member (Kadera 1969, 6). In response, the VML withdrew funding, tightening its grip and justifying its top-heavy procedures.

At a UFW meeting in the Willamette Valley in which Senator Willner volunteered his legal services for the union, one ex-VML member proclaimed the sentiments of many Chicano activists: "We want to help ourselves and be treated as equals." As another one stated: "We feel we understand our problems and we can find jobs ourselves, providing we get help from industry" (Olmos 1969, 24). Tension between the conservative, charity-oriented volunteers and the ex-migrants continued. Senator Willner stressed that if it was not resolved, "the migrants will be the losers" (*Oregonian* January 29, 1967, 24). An important process of self-determination had begun.

The terms of employment at the VML continued to force employees to sign agreements not to work for the UFW. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and many quit (Kadera 1969, 6) Consequently, as VML chose to keep its funding, its more radical members left, setting up VIVA and VOCAL.

VIVA (Volunteers in Vanguard Action), VOCAL (Volunteer Oregon Citizens for Agricultural Labor), the United Farm Workers of Oregon and the Campesinos Forum tried to organize. These groups had more of a self-help attitude and a stronger desire to radically change the economic system. Efforts were also made to set up a cooperative credit union "in which farm laborers could invest part of their earnings" (Olmos 1967, C2). These other groups' power also depended on government funding and its political expectations, and most of that funding had already been taken up annually by the VML, which by now was extremely efficient in acquiring grants (Bustos 1969, 137; Kadera 1969, 6).

Similar battles were being fought elsewhere in the state by Chicano and other activists. Some hired on for OEO projects in Nyssa came into conflict with the existing institutions which ran these programs. Activists were working under an

OEO migrant education project at Treasure Valley Community College. The educational content they were teaching perhaps included some spirited lessons about fighting back for what they felt the migrants deserved. The TVCC administrators reacted with fear; they wanted to maintain a clear division between political philosophies and government services, not seeing that their own perspective was based on a different, equally molded, political agenda. Several of these Chicano activists were fired, with the head of the TVCC claiming that these "outside radicals," supported by Cesar Chavez, were instigating the migrants. Later, after the press took hold of the story, the fired were reinstated, with a local Chicano activist of Nyssa replying,

It won't be called or led by Cesar Chavez and his people.
He has all he can do in California. The people involved
and in command will be the Mexican-Americans from right
here (Guernsey 1971, 1).

The drive towards independence would not be easily forthcoming or painless. Even within the Chicano contingent some activists supported working within the system while others chided those "coconuts," brown on the outside, white on the inside, for selling out (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 114). They preferred to maintain their cultural identity, and wanted their pride back. The feeling existed that those "other" volunteers were part of the system that had gotten Chicanos and migrants in this mess in the first place and that the whole system needed changing, a concept the VML could not accept. The need for the ex-migrants to learn how to hold and use their own decision-making power was at hand. And it seemed as if there were no stopping this process of empowerment.

The division of the Salud Medical Clinic and the Virginia Garcia Memorial Clinic in Woodburn was an example of this conflict. The 1979 separation stemmed from political differences over the lack of control the Chicano representatives had in Salud.

As well, they felt that Salud did not let them make their own decisions since Salud held the monetary strings (*Rural Tribune* February 1979, 1).

Throughout the state many religious and political activists moved away from the VML, joining to support what those in *la raza* were doing. Now, when a farmer refused to let a volunteer on the farm to see a migrant who had requested help, instead of just walking away as in the past, that volunteer would be more likely to go through the legal system. In 1969 alone sixty affidavits were filed contesting the refusal to allow volunteers to enter farms where the migrants lived (Guernsey 1971, 1).

On a larger scale, the National Council of Churches and other grassroots organizations united and protested. This time their voice was beginning to be heard. Ultimately, their efforts led to the ending of the *bracero* program. As well, in 1969 Oregon governor Vic Atiyeh set up an Advisory Committee on Chicano Affairs to monitor state laws and programs affecting Hispanics. Even though this committee had no real power it symbolized the response of the government to this new force (Slatta 1979, 161).

Since the 1970s grassroots groups more inclined to take risks have taken a front seat to the old non-political charity-oriented organizations run by wealthy donors. The new volunteer agencies were led by leadership which had more direct hands-on experience. Decisions were made with less top-heavy control, and fewer of the "bosses" (farmers, landowners) to run these agencies. Hispanics, ex-migrants, the sons and daughters of ex-migrants, religious, and political activists were the new organizers. They replaced the old top-heavy style of decision-making which farmers and wealthy do-gooders controlled. One example of this is the Portland based Women's Foundation of Oregon whose rules required that at least 51% of the board represent its target

group. One of its programs attempted to help Guatemalan migrants become self-sufficient by helping them to establish markets in which the women sold and profited from their own handwoven fabrics (Dettman 1990, N2).

This new kind of organization dedicated to helping the migrant become self-sufficient flourished in the Chicano community, located in Woodburn and Gervais, where the effects have been spellbinding. The House of Zion, El Centro Cultural, the Salud Medical Clinic, and El Aguila Federal Credit Union along with other community agencies helped Hispanics to maintain their own culture as well as speak out against mistreatment (Cargill 1984, B1; Cowen 1986a, B1; Durbin 1981, C1).

El Centro Cultural exemplified this new concept of self-help and cultural independence. El Centro was founded in Washington County in 1972 by twelve immigrant families who had experienced the people's problems first hand. They originally called themselves *Las Guadalupanas*, meaning the people devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The members of El Centro have maintained their integrity to the present by remaining grassroots, relying on volunteers who collectively serve 1,100 hours per month and adhering to their two main goals: education of Hispanics, and preservation of their culture. With Jaime acting as liaison between the Church and the community, uniting Hispanic and Catholic activists, "there appears to be an ongoing connectedness between the Catholic Church and El Centro Cultural, though neither direct funding nor guidance is provided by the church. It is a connectedness, rather, of spirit and purpose" (Freedman 1989, 1).

El Centro greatly aided the migrant and Hispanic communities. In the seventies El Centro provided a police-community relations class, arts and crafts classes, and a

monthly newspaper (Slatta 1979, 162). In 1989 El Centro fed between 400 and 1,000 people and served 225 people per day from Cornelius in legal aid, health care, job services, and other programs aimed at creating self-sufficiency. They also started two economic projects, one of which made and sold tamales. The other was Ormetex, a non-profit piecework company working with Tektronix. Sister Mary Louise, who lived and worked at El Centro explained, "This is an opportunity to both become self-sufficient and to create jobs for our people" (Freedman 1989,1; Rural Tribune February 1979, 1).

Salud Medical Center, originally named Salud de la Familia, was also started in 1972 by ex-migrants and seasonal workers. With a bilingual staff, it cared for clients from both the Hispanic and Anglo communities. The Center also visited migrant camps, bringing health care, distributing condoms, and informing the migrants about the hazards of pesticides. Along with its other services Salud ran the largest government Women, Infant, and Children Project in Oregon (Martinis 1987, D10).

Activism in Woodburn did not end here. In 1984 volunteers set up a 24 hour beeper service for Hispanics in need. Their bilingual staff provided services for the Washington County Community Action Shelter in the hours when it was closed. They were there at night to serve the political refugees who often arrived in the dark. They did the little things that were horribly hard for a migrant or a non-English speaker: collecting a repossessed car, filling out an employment application, buying insurance for a car, or caring for someone who has been attacked at night (Cargill 1984, B1).

Recently others in the Woodburn community began to insist on fair treatment. Parents united, demanding that their children receive what they needed in the Woodburn public schools. They organized, clearly understanding the use of effective

tactics, requesting specific programs such as advanced Spanish oriented for Spanish-speaking students, and bilingual school handbooks for parents. Some of the parents created a parent advisory committee, and when that was suspended for investigating complaints of discrimination, these same parents continued the battle, joining together under another name (Ota 1984, A1).

Hispanics united in 1983, after a shooting death of a migrant by police. Hispanics all over Oregon demanded that a court certification program for interpreters be instituted. Hispanics in Woodburn also challenged the local police department, attempting to create a police review panel, and when the city rejected the plan, they declared they would demonstrate. They forced the city to comply with its agreement to hire a Hispanic policeman and to train officers in Spanish and cultural awareness. Statewide, the police began using a new Spanish "Miranda card," which previously had been stated in English or in a broken Spanish that literally made little sense to Spanish-speakers.

Following this ordeal, the city tried to appease this force by setting up a panel consisting of 12 members, including four Hispanics. Although this was still only advisory it indicated that the Hispanics were a power to be contended with (Ota 1984, A1). The city also fired a conservative city administrator who had proved to be highly insensitive to the needs of the Hispanics in the city and, after a national search conducted by six lay persons, a more conciliatory administrator, Mike Costine, was hired (Conrood 1985, B2).

The Hispanic community in Woodburn, centered around El Centro Cultural, the Salud Medical Clinic, and the House of Zion, remained the most thoroughly committed community in Oregon. Their grassroots efforts, community involvement and self-help emphasis express this. But, elsewhere in Oregon activism has also thrived, with Chicanos

still leading the way. Since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 private organizations have had to provide services that government funded agencies were no longer allowed to do. Following Woodburn's example, other Catholic churches developed programs to help migrants and Hispanics, their involvement often directed towards empowering people through self-help programs. The following congregations had especially strong services for the migrants: St Patrick's in Portland, St. Luke's in Woodburn, St. Joseph's in Salem, St Henry's in Gresham, the Sisters of the Holy Names at Marylhurst, and the Abbey at Mt Angel (Sansregret 1983, B3). There are six Catholic Community Service Hispanic Programs in Oregon each helping between 300 and 600 families each month in the summer (Perschiera 1990, 4M EP1).

Chicano activists encouraged the press to give coverage to the positive aspects of the growing Chicano population in Oregon and to the plight of the migrant. When this was not effective Spanish publications were created, including *La Voz Unida* (El Aguila publication), the *Rural Tribune* published by the Washington County Community Action Organization in Hillsboro, the bilingual paper, *Informa*, and the *State Concilio* (Slatta 1979, 162).

Job training programs were started, with funding from local businesses. And Chicanos who have risen to good positions have continued to set up committees to mentor and foster relations with the business community and Hispanics for their people (Slatta 1975, 340). In the seventies the Chicano-Indian Study Center of Oregon acquired 10 buildings in Corvallis to begin a job-training center (Slatta and Atkinson 1984, 116).

In the 1970s and 1980s numerous other Chicano organizational groups sprang up to deal with, among other things, migrant conditions, police relations, high school dropouts, and public relations. These groups were persistent in battling discrimination

by local communities, the government, and the courts. Some of these groups include the Oregon Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Hispanic Political Action Committee, the Human Relations Commission, a Northwest chapter of IMAGE, (Incorporated Mexican-American Government Employees), COSSPO (Commission of Spanish Speaking People of or from Oregon), and the Human Rights Action Council. These groups continue to provide leadership for Hispanics in Oregon. They will no doubt continue to lead the way in this most important mission.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Hispanic farmworkers played an important role in the economy of Oregon, especially after the 1940s. They came in large numbers, increasingly replacing Anglo workers since the 1950s. As many Mexican-Americans were able to settle out, undocumented migrants took their place. Young men without their families outnumbered families in the fields, although children and spouses working beside some of the men were not an uncommon sight. In the 1960s mechanization reduced, but did not eliminate, the number of migrants.

The farmworkers' wages were substandard and their survival generally a day-to-day struggle. Work conditions and wages remained unregulated under the NLRA, which helped workers in other jobs better their lives. Even the low wages the migrants were supposed to receive by law were not always given.

The same lax government regulations that allowed farmers freedom to pay whatever wages they wanted also perpetuated horrid living and working conditions. These conditions were adverse to the health of the migrant. During the *bracero* program the government assembled temporary barracks which were inadequate for the weather. After the 1940s, when farmers took over the camps, living arrangements worsened.

Housing was crowded, unsanitary and inappropriate for the cold, wet springs and falls and hot summers. Workers were not protected from the chemicals sprayed on the

crops and toilet facilities most often were non-existent. The work hours and location prevented the migrants from eating enough healthy food.

Migrants' ability to improve their lives was also hindered by their lack of education. Many factors reduced the chance for this opportunity. For undocumented workers' children this was an impossible task. But even for farmworkers who were U.S. citizens, work hours, travel, cultural differences, and prejudice worsened their chances for success in the school system.

Migrants who have ventured to Oregon over the last century in an effort to improve their lives have taken risks at every turn. Despite the great odds, some migrant families were able to encourage and help their children to succeed. Many of these same families moved out of the migrant stream, settling in small towns in Oregon. Although many have come only for the season, others have been able to stay, developing communities and struggling to retain or adapt their culture to their new needs.

These families created dynamic communities in Woodburn, Nyssa, Ontario, Cornelius, Gervais, and Hood River. A few of those who have stayed in Oregon have led the way in organizing the fight for those settled out as well as for those who are still migrating, whose living conditions have improved very little. Some of these ex-migrants' children have in turn committed much effort to helping other migrants better their lives.

Ex-migrants and other community activists, both Chicano and Anglo, struggled to help these proud and independent peoples. But other groups resisted this effort. Contractors, who made a living from the migrants, usually had a detrimental effect upon their lives. It is unfortunate that contractors and crewleaders were not completely banned, as they are in Wisconsin, where it has been one of the underlying reasons why

families have been able to become more self-sufficient, and why unionism has had a better opportunity to spawn (Wells 1976, 272).

Farmers' profits also were made from the backs of these migrants. The cheaper they could keep this variable factor the better. And as the wealthiest farmers became more removed from their workers, they lost perspective on their effect upon the worker and the inhumane conditions they put upon them in exchange for the efficiency and profit they deemed necessary. The poorer farmers struggled hard to survive, blaming the cost of the migrants instead of the economic system.

The government, largely influenced by the desires of the large farmers, continued to retain weak laws with insufficient legal punitive actions enforced by uncoordinated agencies. Overlapping authority within the government bureaucracy created limitations and confusion among those agencies responsible. And on the local level the small rural counties in which the migrants worked remained financially unable to fund programs which might have compensated for what the economy, and more specifically, the farmers' low wages and housing conditions caused.

The role of the growers and contractors also remained unchecked, leaving it to the discretion of each individual involved, whose monetary interests often dictate his decision-making, regardless of its effects on the migrants. The economic outlook for migrants did and will continue to remain glum as long as competition within the American system and with corporations in the Third World persists, encouraging farmers to keep wages and the costs of benefits and camp conditions low. Though some of the Chicano population will move out of migratory labor, others will take their place, sweating and struggling in the brutal heat of eastern Oregon and the thick, damp mud of

the Willamette Valley, moving through camps void of much comfort from harvest to harvest, from year to year without any fair return for their labor.

If the government had not played a role in protecting the farmers one might imagine the possibility of the farmworkers having a more equal footing and far greater power. Farmers might have been forced to contend with the needs of the migrants in order to attract them to work if the government had not regularly stepped in to assure the farmers of cheap labor. But this did not happen. This lack of protection and lack of government support kept the migrants from obtaining any political, social or economic power.

A new approach should be taken that allows farmers and workers to join together, realizing that the health of one is the health of the other. Farmers would do well to follow the lead of the farmer Urban Eberhart in eastern Washington. On his 500 acre farm he has initiated a more environmental approach to farming, using fewer chemicals and more natural controls. He helped to develop a new worker right-to-know program in cooperation with the state Department of Labor and Industries in Washington, Washington State University and the Farm Bureau (Rosemary 1989, G1).

If even a small percentage of the amount of money that is allotted to agricultural research was redirected with this emphasis, solutions might be forthcoming. Government research could be directed to find more efficient ways to remain labor intensive while providing a better life for workers. Research could center on labor intensive efficiency and self-sufficiency, emphasizing organic methods of production, which would further improve work conditions for the majority of the people.

But, what must occur to set the improvements for migrants in motion is direct government support. The government must also, at bare minimum, provide protection

to the farmworkers as they have for all other workers. This should include fair labor practices, including wages, the right to organize and strike, and safe field and housing conditions. The government or a union could set up a "hiring hall" to recontract out as they do in the seasonal building trades. Very stringent laws, or the elimination of contractors and crew leaders, should be put into place as well.

As it was, the best resistance the migrants had was their culture, their religion and their familial ties. Settled Hispanic communities located in the small towns nearby the fields the farmworkers picked across Oregon regularly refueled these bonds. Union activism and Chicano advocates also aided the migrants, often through legal cases they pushed through the courts. Religious and political Anglo activists added their political influence and know-how to this effort. They improved legislation, insisted on programs and provided services for the migrants.

Without a drastic change in the performance of the government and in the economic system, only some of the symptoms, instead of the cause, will be eliminated. Whether this type of restructuring will happen depends on so many factors, but persistence by Chicano and other activists as well as by the migrants themselves is the answer. Maybe this should be Oregon's new plan for "economic success."

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