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New Migrants vs. Old Migrants: Alternative Labor Market Structures in the California Citrus Industry

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NEW MIGRANTS VS. OLD MIGRANTS:
ALTERNATIVE LABOR MARKET STRUCTURES IN THE
CALIFORNIA CITRUS INDUSTRY

by

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ABSTRACT

NEW MIGRANTS VS. OLD MIGRANTS: ALTERNATIVE LABOR MARKET STRUCTURES IN THE CALIFORNIA CITRUS INDUSTRY

Based on fieldwork conducted during 1981 in Ventura County, California, this study helps to explain the relationship between the relative abundance of Mexican nationals willing to pick citrus crops and the institutional forms which U.S. unions, employers, and governments have created to deal with Mexicans in California agriculture. The work should be of particular relevance to those interested in the mechanisms through which Mexican national enter U.S. jobs and in the impact that immigrants have on the work opportunities available to U.S. nationals.

The authors, a labor economist and an historian, utilized a combination of personal interviews, documentary research, and economic analysis to examine competition by Mexican migrants for jobs in the California citrus industry. Their research revealed that this competition--which has recently undermined attempts to stabilize the harvest labor market--involves virtually no U.S.-born workers. Rather, new waves of young, economically and legally vulnerable Mexican migrants have displaced older, more secure Mexicans who had won higher wages, improved benefits, and increased job security.

The citrus industry in Ventura County combined several factors, unusual in agriculture, that would allow for improved conditions of employment--a long picking season, a predominantly settled labor force, and institutional arrangements aimed at stabilization. The entrance of new subgroups of Mexican migrants with distinct characteristics, however, has resulted in the fragmentation of the labor market into distinct sectors with different working conditions and employee benefits. The authors' analysis thus reveals that underlying historical forces--especially a persistently abundant supply of labor--have tended to reverse the progress earlier achieved through the creation of institutions to improve the quality of life for harvest workers in the citrus industry.

FOREWORD

Employers offering jobs requiring tedious, arduous work often have difficulty attracting a secure long-term labor force. The employers in each industry needing such labor resolve this problem of labor scarcity or go out of business. Employers of Ventura County citrus pickers have resolved the problem using various approaches over the last 40 years. The citrus industry has created new institutions, put new techniques into practice, encouraged new waves of migrants: happily, it has survived and prospered.

This report details the evolution of the changing labor market structures in the Ventura county citrus industry. The conditions enjoyed by the workers have not shown an uninterrupted improvement. Instead, they have fluctuated according to historical circumstances. It is not the purpose of this paper to judge any group involved in this history. The authors have found all groups involved to be made up of overwhelmingly hard-working individuals engaged in an honest effort to make a living. Nevertheless, the report focuses on the changing role assumed by a labor force originating in peasant areas of Mexico and working in a thoroughly modernized and competitive U.S. industry.

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INTRODUCTION

The California-Arizona citrus industry produces the vast majority of the fresh citrus fruit consumed in the United States. It contributes at least marginally to the production of every variety in the national market for the fresh product, but it owes its predominance to three principal varieties--navel oranges, valencia oranges, and lemons. Of total U.S. production (domestic growers supply more than 99% of domestic consumption of every variety) in the 1979-80 crop year, California-Arizona navels and valencias accounted for 76% of all oranges consumed as fresh fruit; California-Arizona lemons made up 93.3% of total lemon production, and at least 86% of the lemons destined for use as fresh fruit. These three varieties, furthermore, dominate production within the region, accounting for 86.7% of total citrus bearing acreage and 87.7% of total citrus production by weight.¹

This study proposes to examine the people, markets, and institutions of harvest labor in the California-Arizona citrus industry since the Second World War. As its principal methodological device, this preliminary report will analyze labor in the citrus industry of Ventura County as a case study. The selection of Ventura County as an initial focus did not occur accidentally, but after careful consideration of several crucial factors. First, the level of citrus production in Ventura County remained an important part of total production in the

1. Sunkist Growers, Inc., Citrus Fruit Industry Statistical Bulletin, (hereinafter cited as Sunkist Statistical Bulletin), 1981, Tables 2, 3, 5, 6, and 23.

California-Arizona region throughout the years under consideration, and the county produces considerable amounts of each of the region's major citrus varieties. Secondly, the question of labor supply stabilization has long been a matter of great concern to the producers and marketers of the area's citrus crop, giving rise to the discussion and innovation that have provided abundant source material for historical inquiry. Finally, the current co-existence of several institutional forms of harvest labor in a process of dynamic transition casts Ventura County in the unique role of microcosm--not only of an industry, but of an historical era. Nonetheless, the focus on Ventura County will not be used as a pretext for excluding an examination of the rest of the citrus industry. To place the history of harvest labor in Ventura County citrus in its proper context will require a review of the industry-wide evolution of citrus picking in the California-Arizona region.

The production of citrus in California and Arizona takes place in three main growing districts. District 1, the Central Valley, includes the counties of Madera, Fresno, and Kern in California's San Joaquin Valley. District 2, Southern California, comprises the counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, San Diego, and that portion of Riverside County which lies west of White Water, California. District 3, the Desert Valleys, includes the California counties of Imperial and Riverside (east of White Water) and all producing areas of Arizona (see Figure 1). Each of these districts specializes to a considerable degree in the varieties of citrus it produces, but that specialization has not remained static over time. The history of the development of each district and the shifts in production which

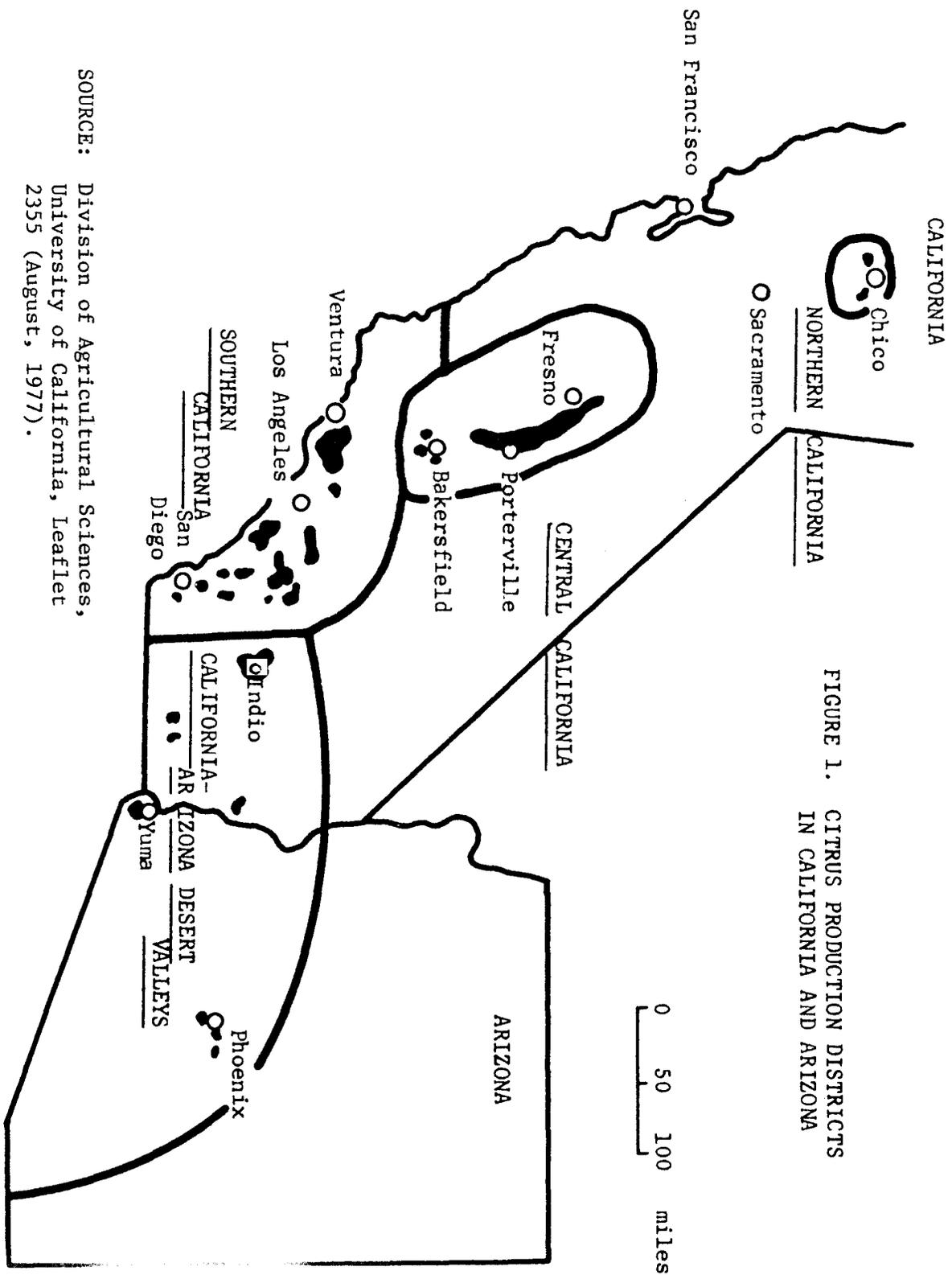


FIGURE 1. CITRUS PRODUCTION DISTRICTS IN CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA

have occurred form an integral part of the history of harvest labor in the citrus industry.

The changing specialization among the districts according to variety does not, however, reduce the significance of another sort of specialization, common to all the districts, all varieties, and constant throughout the history of the industry: California-Arizona citrus production is oriented toward the fresh fruit market. To this end, the region's citrus producers have cooperated in the administration of marketing orders which limit the flow of fresh fruit to the domestic market. In order to maintain profitable returns to growers, an administrative committee for each variety estimates the size of the crop which marketers can sell as high-priced fresh fruit and apportions, through institutional linkages, a share of the fresh market to each grower, proportionate to each one's harvest of high-quality fruit. Growers can receive high fresh-fruit prices outside this marketing structure only by exporting crops to a country other than Canada (which is included, for purposes of the marketing order, in the domestic market). Producers sell the fruit which cannot be marketed within this structure for juice, oils, cattle feed, and citrus by-products; prices for these products have not provided an adequate return to investment, and in many years have not even paid the costs of moving the fruit from tree to market. The economic necessity of producing specifically for the fresh fruit market has remained a crucial factor in the history of areas and acreages of citrus plantings, harvest seasons, and production levels, and therefore, in the history of the industry's harvest labor market as well.

Shifting Acreage, Yield and Production Levels in the Postwar Period

By the end of World War II, wartime demand and ingenious marketing techniques had driven California-Arizona citrus production to unprecedented levels, reaching a combined total for all varieties of 164 million cartons in the 1944-45 crop year.² The following year, farmland planted to citrus hit its apogee, unmatched since, at 350,000 acres.³ The end of hostilities and wartime food controls, however, cut sharply into demand, and production and acreage quickly contracted. Furthermore, the development in the late 1940's of frozen concentrate orange juice made from Florida juice oranges cut heavily into demand for fresh citrus, especially summer-harvested valencia oranges.⁴ By the early 1950's, production of all varieties had dropped off, and total acreage plummeted. In 1956, total acreage fell to its nadir of 250,000 acres, while bearing acreage and total production continued their downward spiral into the early 1960's, to about 210,000 acres and 90 million cartons, respectively, in the 1961-62 crop year.⁵

2. Sunkist Statistical Bulletin, 1975, Table 2.

3. Sunkist Growers, Inc., The Sunkist Adventure, p. 18.

4. The marketing strategy of the cooperative California Fruit Growers Exchange (which in 1952 changed in name to Sunkist Growers, Inc.) had long relied on marketing a large portion of the orange crop for fresh-squeezed juice, beginning in 1916 with the slogan "drink an orange" and the sale of a million juice extractors. For several decades this strategy enjoyed great success in generating demand, but it left the industry quite vulnerable to the development of a close substitute, which came along in the form of frozen concentrate. See Ibid., pp. 13-14.

5. Ibid., p. 18; Sunkist Statistical Bulletin, 1981, Tables 2 and 3.

Factors exogenous to the consumer market for citrus, especially the decline of the Southern California district, also contributed to the contraction of production. At the end of the Second World War, the Southern California district dominated citrus production, much as it had since the planting of the first commercial groves in the 19th century. Southern California accounted for production on the order of 90% for valencia oranges, 70% for navels, and in excess of 90% for lemons at that time. But the factors in its demise as production leader had already become evident. The tristeza virus, known locally as "quick decline" and first identified in Southern California orange orchards before the war, made steady inroads throughout the 1940's, attacking root systems and destroying groves. By the latter part of the decade, thousands of acres had been lost to the disease, and urban developers offering high prices for land began to find in the Southern California orange grower a ready seller.⁶ Of the 100,000-acre loss in total plantings in the 1946-56 period, Southern California oranges accounted for more than 75%.⁷

Yet the outlook in the early 1950's was not entirely gloomy, despite dire predictions of the industry's imminent demise. The favorable consumer response to frozen-concentrate lemonade (introduced on a large scale in 1950) raised average on-tree lemon prices in the

6. Citrograph, June, 1969, p. 334.

7. Robert C. Rock and Robert G. Platt, "California Oranges: Acreage and Production Trends, Costs and Returns," (University of California, Division of Agricultural Sciences, Leaflet 2355, revised, 1975, hereinafter cited as Rock and Platt, "California Oranges..."), computed from Table 3, p. 18.

California-Arizona region (at that time the only established lemon-producing area). This development stimulated new plantings in the old producing areas of Southern California and the creation of a new lemon-producing district in the District 3 Desert Valleys.⁸ In the Central Valley, the completion in 1952 of the Kern-Friant Canal opened for production vast areas in the San Joaquin foothills. New growers and many of those displaced from Southern California orchards began planting new Central Valley groves, often larger and more profitable than those of Southern California due to the higher yields of younger trees and lower costs for land, water, and taxes.⁹ In 1956, these new plantings, mainly of winter-harvest navel oranges on rootstocks resistant to the tristeza virus, reversed the trend toward declining overall acreage, and by the mid-1960's, they led a recovery in bearing acreage. Combined with a steady productivity per acre, this increase in plantings resulted in rising total production that lasted until a leveling-off took place in the mid-1970's.

The continuing decline of Southern California oranges, combined with the recovery of total production, underscored the significance of the shift of orange production to the San Joaquin Valley. Under pressure from urban development and despite efforts to preserve agriculture in the area, Southern California's harvested acreage of both valencias and navels has continued to decline to the present day. Only the

8. Sidney Hoos, "Lemon Industry in California," California Agriculture, 10:(1956), passim.

9. Interview with John Pehrson, horticulturist with University of California Extension Service (Visalia), December, 1980.

avored position of the Southern California valencia orange in certain export markets (especially Japan's, which was expanded through international negotiation in 1978) enabled producers to stabilize valencia production at slightly over half the California-Arizona total, beginning in the late 1960's. Increasing per-acre yields on the order of 50% (which valencia growers achieved in both producing districts between 1953 and 1980) allowed Southern California producers to steady average annual production despite declining acreage. By contrast, productivity of District 2 navel acreage has declined, showing only a brief recovery in the mid-1970's, which was insufficient to resist the district's trend toward decreasing production.¹⁰ Of all sectors of the Southern California citrus industry, only lemon growers have achieved production gains, however slight, in recent years.

The path of lemon production followed a trajectory quite different from that of oranges. The introduction of frozen concentrate products to the mass market did not force the dramatic changes in California-Arizona lemon production that it did with region's oranges.¹¹ Rather,

10. Orange Administrative Committees, Los Angeles, 1980 Annual Reports, tables showing "Acreage Harvested and Production by Districts." In the 1970's, per-acre productivity of Southern California valencia plantings exceeded that of Central Valley valencia orchards by about 10%, a relationship similar to that of the period immediately following World War II, with much fluctuation occurring during the interim. In contrast, since the expansion of production in the Central Valley, the productivity of its navel plantings has exceeded by at least 20% the productivity of older Southern California navel orchards. The latter have not been retired and replaced with new plantings, but rather are allowed to decline as they age.

11. In oranges, the competition between summer (valencia) fresh fruit and frozen concentrate juice contributed in large part to the shift to the Central Valley and the focus on production of fresh fruit for the winter market. In contrast, California-Arizona lemons producers faced

as we noted briefly above, the new market for frozen lemonade concentrate stimulated new plantings in both old and new growing areas-- including a new producing area in Florida--oriented specifically toward the frozen lemonade market. When some of this new acreage began bearing fruit in the 1956-57 season, on-tree prices quickly declined; in subsequent years, as even more acreage come into production and some of the young trees reached their productive peaks (at around 7-15 years), the downturn in prices accelerated. In the 1959-60 season, average on-tree prices for California-Arizona lemons hit 77 cents per field box, down from their 1952-53 high of \$1.97.¹²

These declining prices depressed lemon production throughout the 1960's, particularly during the first half of the decade. The decline in lemon production for the domestic fresh fruit market, which had begun with the introduction of frozen lemonade, continued steadily, and has done so ever since. In 1964, however, USDA and Sunkist negotiators succeeded in obtaining a liberalization of Japan's lemon import quotas, initiating an expansion of fresh lemon sales in export markets which leveled off total fresh lemon shipments in the late 1960's.¹³ The continuing expansion of exports throughout the ensuing years has not only

little competition; even at its peak production of the early 1970's, Florida produced only about 10% as many lemons as did California-Arizona. Consequently, California-Arizona lemon growers dominated production of the fruit for both the fresh and frozen concentrate markets.

12. Robert C. Rock and Robert G. Platt, "Economic Trends in the California Lemon Industry," University of California, Division of Agricultural Sciences, Leaflet 2357, revised, 1977, (hereinafter cited as Rock and Platt, "Economic Trends...") p. 3 and Table 9, p. 17.

13. Ibid., Table 7, p. 15. See also Citrograph, May, 1976, p. 255, and Sunkist Growers, Inc., The Sunkist Adventure, p. 80.

stimulated new plantings in all three producing districts, but has actually offset the continuing decline in domestic sales of fresh lemons, bringing about an increase in the total shipments of the fresh fruit during the 1970's.¹⁴

Trends in the distribution by district of lemon acreage in the 1960's followed a pattern similar to that of oranges in the previous decade. A drastic decline in the acreage of Southern California lemon orchards paced a decrease in the region's total lemon acreage, despite slight gains in the lemon-producing area of the other two districts. By the mid-1960's, a dramatic increase in lemon plantings in the Desert Valleys had reversed the trend toward declining overall acreage, counterbalancing the continuing downward trend in Southern California acreage throughout the decade. Desert valley growers, who increased their share of the region's harvest from about 7% in the early sixties to nearly 30% by the late seventies, accounted for most of the above-noted gains in production after 1960. Southern California lemon orchards did not, however, experience the continuous decline in acreage suffered by orange groves in the district; by 1970, new plantings stimulated by the growth of export sales reversed the acreage trend of the 1960's. Acreage recoveries continued until the mid-1970's, when severe, steady reductions in new plantings in all districts initiated an acreage decline which has not as yet affected bearing acreage.¹⁵

14. Rock and Platt, "Economic Trends...", Table 7, p. 15, and Lemon Administrative Committee, Los Angeles, 1980 report, Table 5, p. 9.

15. Lemon Administrative Committee, Los Angeles, Annual Reports, 1977-1980, Tables showing "Acreage."

While Southern California lemon acreage never recovered to the levels of the late 1950's, lemon orchards, like orange plantings, did achieve higher per-acre yields; by the 1972-73 season, the Southern California lemon industry began a trend of matching the production levels of the late 1950's with only about 70% as much bearing acreage--a productivity increase on the order of 40%. By comparison, the quickly expanding Desert Valley lemon district increased bearing acreage more than fivefold over the same period but achieved an increase in per-acre productivity of only 20%.¹⁶ In recent years, the per-acre productivity of lemon orchards in Southern California has exceeded that of San Joaquin Valley groves by 55% and of Desert Valley plantings by 35%. Thus, while lemon production in the 1960's shifted markedly to the Desert valleys (and, to a lesser extent, to the San Joaquin Valley¹⁷), shifts in producing areas have recently stopped, with the Southern California district remaining the dominant area of lemon production.

In summary, almost all navel orange production and half of the valencia output have shifted to the "Orange Belt" of the Southern San Joaquin Valley from Southern California. Meanwhile, although about a third of lemon production has moved to the Desert Valley district, lemons are still grown predominantly in Southern California, especially

16. Rock and Platt, "Economic Trends...", Table 6, p. 14, and Table 2, p. 10, and Lemon Administrative Committee, Los Angeles, Annual Reports, 1977-1980, Table 5, p. 9 (each year), and Tables showing "Acreage," p. 4 (each year). A similar comparison across time for the Central Valley reveals declining productivity, but the 1950's acreage involved was so small as to render dubious the value of such a statistic.

17. District 1 producers increased their share of total production from less than 4% in the mid-1960's to about 10% by the late 1970's.

in Ventura County.

Effects of Production Changes on the Harvest Labor Market

The shift of orange production from Southern to Central California has resulted in a shift in the location of harvest activity. On the average, in the 1945-51 era, Southern California producers harvested 80% of the California-Arizona orange crop, while 15% came from the Central Valley. In the years 1976-80, when the average annual crop almost exactly equaled that of the earlier period, Southern California's harvest averaged only 33% of total regional production, while San Joaquin Valley growers averaged 62%.¹⁸

Secondly, shifts in production tended to shorten the orange-picking season and have changed the season of the principal variety from summer to winter. Although the average length of the harvest season in Central Valley navels has gradually increased over time (from 20 weeks in the years 1945-52 to 33 weeks in the period 1973-80), it has never equaled in length the average harvest season in Southern California valencias, which grew from 37 weeks in the former period to 39 weeks in the latter.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the growth of Central Valley citrus production contri-

18. Rock and Platt, "California Oranges...", Table 4, p. 19; Beatrice M. Bain and Sidney Hoos, "California Orange Industry: Changing Production Patterns," (University of California, Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics, 1966, hereinafter cited as Bain and Hoos, "California Orange Industry..."), Table 1, p. 15, and Table 14, p. 42; and Orange Administrative Committee, Annual Reports, 1977-1980, Tables showing "Acreage Harvested and Production by Districts."

19. Bain and Hoos, "California Orange Industry...", pp. 92-111; Sunkist Statistical Bulletin, 1975-1981, Tables showing "Weekly Shipments" of navel and valencia oranges.

buted to the attraction of a large, semi-settled population of harvest laborers. The irrigation projects which occasioned the boom in citrus production also opened the area to summer crops, such as peaches, plums, and grapes; since the peak labor requirements for the navel harvest now extend from November to May, orange pickers have been able to supplement their incomes and lengthen their season of employment by securing pruning, spraying, irrigating, and harvest jobs in these summer crops.

Furthermore, changes in peak-season harvest patterns tended to further stabilize the Central Valley's force of orange pickers. Production levels during the peak of the Central Valley navel season have, in recent years, exceeded in size and the peak season has equaled in length the corresponding figures for Southern California's valencia crops of the 1950's. Moreover, since the growth in the 1970's of the Central Valley valencia harvest to a significant proportion of total valencia production, orange growers in that district have sustained peak production over a longer continuous period than did the Southern California industry in the earlier era.²⁰

Finally, the growing importance of export markets, especially for valencias and early-season navels, has had profound effects on the har-

20. In recent years, peak harvesting of District 1 valencias has begun no later than a month following the end of peak production of navels. In Southern California in the 1950's, a lag of three months, from early April to early July, commonly occurred between the end of the peak navel shipments and the beginning of the most intense period of valencia picking. See Ibid.

vest labor market. Because exported fresh fruit gets a high price²¹ and does not lower the exporter's share of domestic allocations, growers are extremely anxious to take advantage of the opportunity to sell in this volatile market. The expansion of valencia exports in the 1970's motivated growers to accelerate their gains in per-acre yields, making for more attractive (easier) picking conditions due to a denser fruit set, denser even than that of Central Valley navels. Contrariwise, the volatility of overseas demand often requires a rapid harvest and subjects crews to the exhausting regimen of a round-the-clock pick at certain short periods of peak demand. Thus, growers who produce for export markets often need more flexible harvest crews--those less able to make and enforce demands for better working conditions.

Changes in lemon production have not affected the market for harvest labor as drastically as have changing orange trends, mainly because the principal lemon producing district remains, as always, in Southern California. Although lemon growers export a greater percentage of their crop than do orange producers, the fact that lemons do well or improve their quality in storage (oranges do not) makes unnecessary the frantic harvesting activity for export that occurs in orange production. As in oranges, the rise in per-acre lemon yields has meant faster picking (more boxes per hour) for the harvesters. However, because the greatest productivity gains in lemons have accrued to the Southern California

21. In 1980, industry observers reported profits for exported oranges at \$7.50 per carton, or more than 100% of the cost of production, excluding depreciation and transportation to destination. Interview with Chuck Addis, field boss for J & J Citrus Company, Edison, California, December, 1980. Costs of production estimated from Sunkist Statistical Bulletin, 1981, Table 16, p. 12.

district, yield improvements have served to keep harvest jobs attractive in the traditionally leading district, rather than attracting workers to new producing areas.

Changes in the lemon industry have, nonetheless, had some effect on the harvest labor market. The expansion of Desert Valley picks to nearly 30% of total production in the five most recent crop years has permitted the development of a new migration pattern. This new distribution of lemon production has developed a core of Mexican lemon pickers using both major lemon-producing districts as a source of employment. Many of them join the Desert Valley harvest in the early fall and remain through its peak period, late September to early February; they then move to District 2 (especially Ventura County, which harvests about 70% of the district's lemon acreage) for its peak harvest from mid-February to early June; finally, they work during the summer months in other crops grown in the San Joaquin Valley.²²

Changes in both orange and lemon production have affected many dimensions of the harvest labor market besides area and season of harvest. The institutions, working and living conditions, and productivity of workers have all undergone transformation during the past 35 years. To understand these changes, however, requires a basic familiarity with the industry's organization of production and marketing functions.

22. Interviews with citrus pickers, from all four crews interviewed (see Analysis section, p. 95, of the present report).

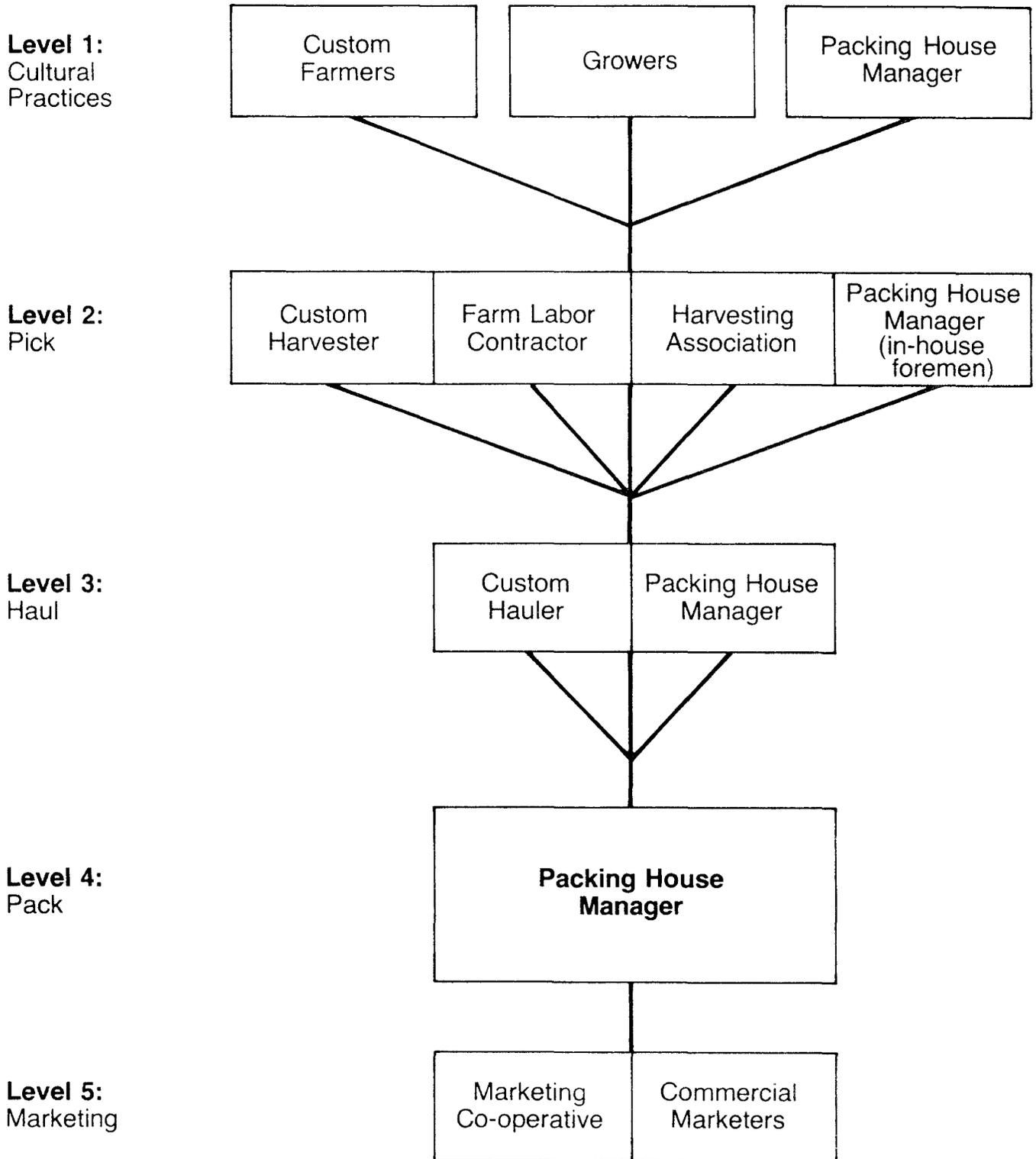
Organization of Production and Harvest--Structures

The packing house is the real nerve center of the citrus industry (see Chart 1). It performs essential functions with expensive machinery which cannot be easily moved. As we noted above, the high costs of production render the sale of fresh fruit the only effective means of making a profit from citrus growing in the California-Arizona region. The administrative committees, which assign shares of the domestic fresh fruit market to producers on a weekly basis, make their allocations, not to growers, but to packing houses. The packer pools the fruit of its grower affiliates and gives to each a share of net returns proportionate to the percentage of fresh-quality fruit and other, lesser-paid grades which that grower contributes to the house's total. Thus, the grower must have a packing house affiliation in order to obtain a share of the lucrative fresh fruit shipments and has no control over when the harvest takes place, since the house must coordinate picking based on weekly prorated allocations and marketing possibilities. The packing-house manager controls the timing of the harvest, and the grower must simply make sure that cultural practices (irrigating, pruning, spraying, etc.) do not interfere with the pick.

In years past, the house manager often controlled the crops from cultural practices through the pick, haul, pack, and marketing. Today, specialists in each area usually discharge the various tasks, although some houses, especially those with their own orchards, still control all aspects of production. Most growers now contract with land management firms to provide cultural care for their orchards, thus delegating even

CHART 1

PACKING HOUSE MANAGER: NERVE CENTER OF THE CITRUS INDUSTRY



this measure of control over their businesses to an outsider.²³ Trucking firms normally receive contracts for hauling operations. Despite the growth of firms which specialize in each task needed by the industry, the packing house must coordinate the pick, haul, pack, and marketing of the fruit; the house manager thus remains at the center of the industry.

The organization of the harvest varies among several institutional forms. In some cases, the packing house itself employs a salaried in-house foreman who recruits and supervises harvest workers. The house pays wages and all overhead costs (e.g., equipment, administration, non-wage benefits, etc.) and charges the grower a per-box rate for the harvesting service. In a second system, in which a labor contractor or custom harvester employs the pickers, the packing houses pay the harvesting bill to the growers, who then transfer the funds to the contractor. The contractor and crew leaders, who recruit and pay the workers, receive payment on a per-bin basis. Under this system, the packing house establishes a legal distance between itself and the employment of harvest workers, though it still absorbs overhead costs, directly or indirectly. The third major method of organizing the pick, the cooperative harvesting association, also removes the harvest from the direct, legal purview of the packing house. Growers form a non-profit association which recruits harvest workers and pays piece rates to pickers and straight salaries to foremen. The association, which supplies fruit to

23. Interviews with Steve Highfill, former manager of S & F Growers Association, November, 1980, and with Robert M. Burns, University of California Cooperative Extension Service agent, September, 1980.

one or more packing houses, assesses its grower-members a per-box charge for labor and overhead costs. Members may use the association or otherwise arrange to harvest their crops, as they see fit.

In all three systems, workers receive a determined rate of pay per container of standard volume (box or bin)²⁴ which they fill with clipped fruit.²⁵ Traditionally, the pickers and the foremen subjectively judged the orchard to be picked and decided on a piece rate, which the labor contractor and/or house superintendent also influenced through their knowledge of the local going rates. If the workers considered the rate to be too low, they either walked off the job or failed to appear for work the next day. Where the labor contractor or in-house-foreman systems are in use, this method of setting wages still prevails.

In some areas (especially Ventura County), workers have for some time received wages in accordance with a pre-established rate sheet which seeks to set objective standards for evaluating the variables that affect the rate of pick and, therefore, average wages. The rate sheets, first introduced in Ventura County's lemon orchards in the early 1940's and recently adopted by growers in Arizona, tend to reduce the tension

24. The internal volume of a box is 2,926 cubic inches; that of a bin is 49,603 cubic inches.

25. Because the preferred destination for California-Arizona citrus is the fresh market, the fruit cannot be simply pulled from its stem. Pulling the fruit tends to damage the skin and to remove the "button," a small disc at the stem end of the fruit which protects the interior from infection. To reduce the resultant decay (which would make the fruit unsaleable), producers require pickers to remove the fruit by cutting the stem with a pair of clippers. In order to eliminate stem pieces, which can gouge the fruit sitting in boxes or bins, the picker must clip the stem completely off, i.e., leaving only the button.

and conflict surrounding the establishment of pay rates and stabilize workers' hourly pay (see following page).

Under either wage regime, workers are paid according to the difficulty of picking a given orchard. Lemon picking earns a higher piece rate than orange picking, because the smaller size of the fruit makes necessary more clips to fill a box or bin, because lemons are more frequently size-picked (small fruit is left on the tree),²⁶ and because the tree is thornier. The rate sheets further attempt to set objective standards within varieties by setting fixed premiums for picking tall trees (adjusting for the slower ladder picking they require), for small fruit (compensating for a higher number of clips per box or bin), and for a sparser fruit set (offsetting a low number of fruits per tree, which implies more searching for fruit and walking time). Despite the rate sheet's stabilizing influence on wages and therefore on labor relations, not all employers use it, and when they do, many often do not follow it strictly, but use it as a "guide" by which to set piece rates.²⁷ When this occurs, subjectivity again enters the equation of wage determination, and with it, tension and mistrust; the industry thus loses the stabilizing effect of the objective standard.

26. In order to enforce a size minimum (and thus, the harvest of larger fruit, which receives a higher price), growers often require that pickers measure the fruit with a sizing ring. If the fruit passes through the ring, it is deemed too small and left on the tree.

27. See below, p. 97.

Scale to be used by Growers to establish price per box for picking lemons.

Tabla que usaran los cosecheros para calcular el precio por caja de limones.

LEMON PICKING RATES IN CENTS PER FIELD BOX OF 2926 CUBIC INCHES WHEN FILLED LEVEL TO TOP OF END CLEATS
(note: one bin equals 18 boxes)

ESCALA DE PRECIOS EN CENTAVOS A BASE DE CAJA DE 2926 PULGADAS CUBICAS CUANDO SE LLENA CON LIMONES AL RAS DE LA PARTE DE ARRIBA DE LOS BARROTES
(nota: una tina equivale 18 cajas)



A-B-C-D-E-F

J-K-L-N-Q-R

S-T-V-W-X-Y-Z

GA-GB-GK-GL-GM

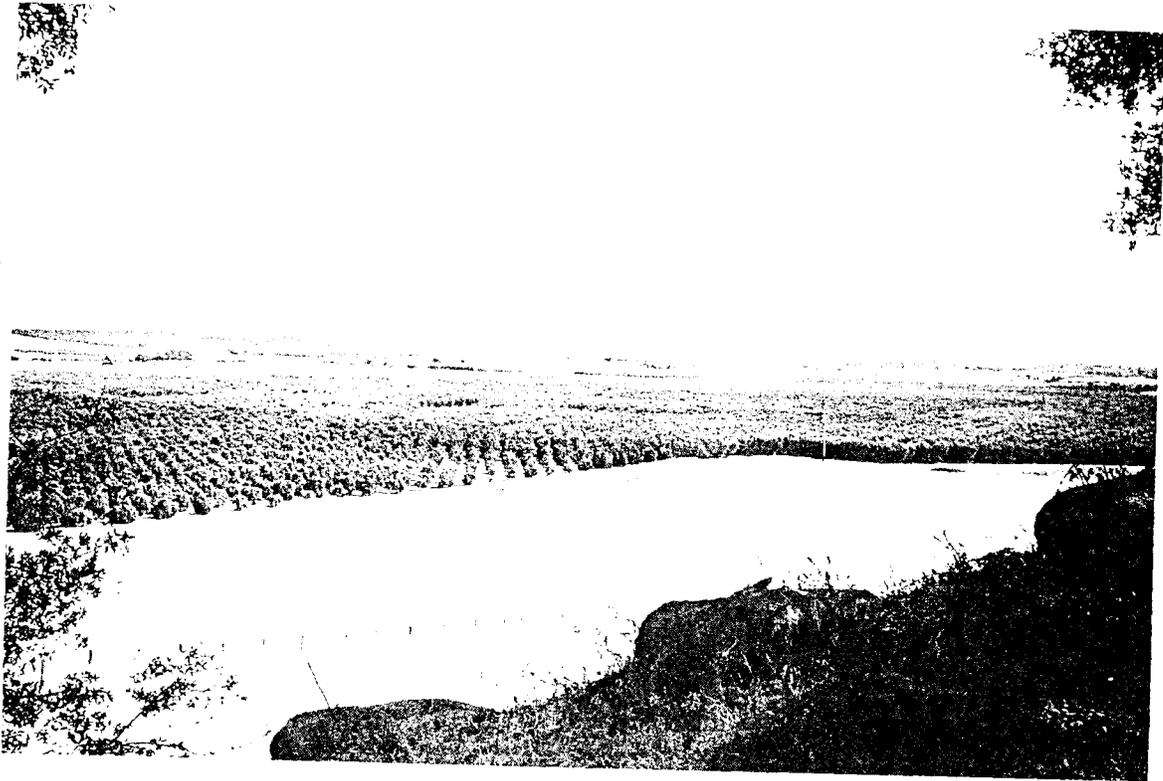
GO & GP

EFFECTIVE: MAY 8, 1980
EFFECTIVO EL 8 DE MAYO DE 1980

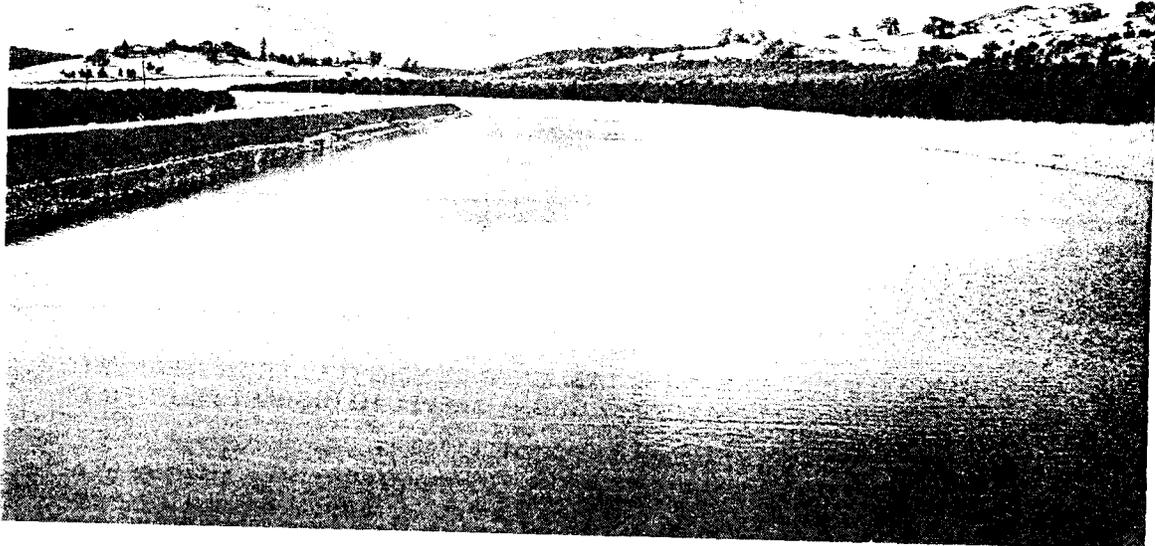
AVERAGE YIELD OF FIELD BOXES PER TREE: PROMEDIO DE CAJA POR ARBOL: from: to: DE: A:	CLASE 1 NO LADDER			CLASE 2 FRUIT UNDER 9½ FEET			CLASE 3 FRUIT 9½ TO 12 FEET			CLASE 4 FRUIT OVER 12 FEET		
	SIN ESCALERA			FRUTA A MENOS DE 9½ PIES DE ALTO			FRUTA DE 9½ A 12 PIES DE ALTO			FRUTA A MAS DE 12 PIES DE ALTO		
	Lemons per box Limones por caja			Lemons per box Limones por caja			Lemons per box Limones por caja			Lemons per box Limones por caja		
	(under) menos de 240	240 a (to) 300	(over) mas de 300	(under) menos de 240	240 a (to) 300	(over) mas de 300	(under) menos de 240	240 a (to) 300	(over) mas de 300	(under) menos de 240	240 a (to) 300	(over) mas de 300
0 - 0.24	1.05	1.16	1.24	1.19	1.28	1.44	1.24	1.38	1.61	1.41	1.53	1.79
0.25 - 0.49	.90	.97	1.11	1.09	1.14	1.35	1.16	1.35	1.48	1.28	1.41	1.53
0.50 - 0.74	.82	.91	1.04	.95	1.09	1.22	1.05	1.25	1.35	1.19	1.30	1.41
0.75 - 0.99	.76	.88	.91	.88	1.00	1.09	1.01	1.13	1.26	1.14	1.17	1.35
1.00 - 1.49	.71	.81	.86	.82	.90	1.02	.92	1.05	1.22	1.09	1.11	1.31
1.50 - 1.99	.65	.69	.74	.72	.82	.93	.86	.95	1.11	1.00	1.06	1.19
2.00 - 2.99				.66	.79	.89	.80	.88	1.00	.90	.93	1.11
3.00 and Up					.70	.81	.69	.75	.84	.80	.82	.88

CLASSIFICATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED BY HEIGHT OF FRUIT MEASURED VERTICALLY FROM LOWEST GROUND LEVEL TO HIGHEST FRUIT TO BE PICKED.

LAS CLASIFICACIONES SE ESTABLECEN TOMANDOSE LA MEDIDA VERTICAL DESDE EL SUELO, HASTA LA FRUTA MAS ALTA QUE SE DEBE COSECHAR.



Orange Belt. Tulare County.



The Friant-Kern Canal made the Orange Belt possible.



A woman picking oranges.

(Photographs by Arby Keown)

The preceding examination of the organization of harvest activity in fresh citrus fruit has attempted to describe the pivotal role of the packing house in the production of fresh citrus. In addition to the institutional relationships outlined above, packing houses have involved themselves in many activities, such as the supply of pickers, experimentation with labor-saving and merchandizing devices, and improvements in packing-house technology, which have transformed the pick and the harvest labor market. These will become more evident below as we discuss the history of legal and institutional structures of harvest labor in the citrus industry.

Organization of Production and Harvest--History

In the earliest years of commercial citrus production in the California-Arizona region, Chinese workers dominated the harvest labor force, although many other groups also participated.²⁸ In the 1880's and 1890's, however, anti-Chinese violence and the Chinese exclusion acts took their toll on Chinese workers in the citrus industry, as elsewhere. Around the turn of the century, Japanese workers began replacing them as the predominant group of citrus pickers.²⁹ During the same period, the industry's efforts to stabilize markets led to a shift from grower to packing house in the locus of control over harvesting activi-

28. Charles C. Teague, Fifty Years a Rancher (California Fruit Growers Exchange, 1944), p. 30, and Paul Garland Williamson, "Labor in the California Citrus Industry" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1947), pp. 29-30.

29. Ibid., pp. 31-34.

ties,³⁰ leaving the industry more vulnerable to worker organization for better pay and conditions. Starting around 1910, Japanese workers undertook such efforts, and employers, antagonized by wage demands and by the success of some Japanese as competing growers, began to replace them with Mexican workers.³¹ Because they could cross the international border with very little immigration restriction during the first three decades of this century, Mexicans became, by the 1930's, the predominant group in the citrus labor force. This feature of the industry has persisted, with one short exception, to the present.³²

To control the new labor force, employers used a dual strategy, the first part of which involved the elimination of the labor contractor. Until the Mexican worker came to dominate the harvest labor force, Chinese and Japanese labor contractors supplied most of the industry's harvest labor and occasionally supported their crews in labor disputes. Because of this ethnic clannishness, employers regarded the contractors as too independent and unreliable, and as they replaced their Asian workers with Mexicans, they simultaneously made inroads against the contractors.³³ By the late 1930's, only a few contractors remained in

30. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

31. Ibid., pp. 39-41.

32. Ibid., pp. 47-48; telephone interview with Robin Cartwright, former manager of SP Growers Association, March 1981; interview with Jack Lloyd, manager of Coastal Growers Association, May, 1981. See below, p. 37.

33. Labor contractors were unpopular among workers as well; during the 1920's and 1930's, several job actions by citrus pickers aimed at eliminating "contractor abuses." Williamson, "Labor in the California Citrus Industry," p. 113.

Orange County, and Ventura County producers had eliminated them completely.³⁴ Under the new harvest regime, packing houses provided their own foremen, and the industry depended for its labor supply on established patterns of seasonal migration from Mexico.

As the second element of their stabilization strategy, employers began to improve the dismal living conditions of their workers. Packing houses throughout Southern California began in the 1910's to replace substandard single male camps with family housing, much of it quite modern for its era, with running water, cooking facilities, and electric lights.³⁵ Although these new strategies did not eliminate attempts by workers to organize, such attempts became rarer, and until the 1930's, employers put an end to them quickly and easily.³⁶

But the stability and security of a labor force can be measured by its efforts to organize for better working conditions and higher wages; the 1930's and early 1940's demonstrated that the citrus industry had quite successfully established a stable work force. In the 1930-39 period, the industry experienced seven strikes, involving 4,266 pickers; the Confederación de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos del Estado de California, formed in 1933 with the assistance of the Mexican

34. Suzanne Ludlum, "Labor Working Paper" (unpublished draft, 1980), p. 7, and private correspondence with Dr. Roy J. Smith, June 1981.

35. Williamson, "Labor in the California Citrus Industry," pp. 90-98.

36. Ibid., pp. 112-116.

Consul, led most of these actions.³⁷ The depression-era struggles included the largest strike in the history of the citrus industry, a 1936 work stoppage involving more than 2,000 workers; and in 1941, Ventura County producers endured a strike of nearly six months, a walkout of unprecedented length in the history of citrus production.³⁸

Although worker struggles of the era typically ended with small wage increases and other concessions, employers uniformly refused to recognize the workers' organizations and broke the strikes with imported strikebreakers and by evicting strikers from company-owned housing.³⁹ Furthermore, the strikes brought employers together in their efforts to fight the job actions, a development which proved to be a distinct advantage with the introduction of foreign contract laborers in the 1940's.⁴⁰ Thus, while employers paid for increased labor market stability with greater worker militancy, they suffered no long-term losses as a result.

At the onset of the Second World War, agricultural interests succeeded in lobbying for a program of guest-worker importation from Mexico to counterbalance relative shortage of workers, caused by an outflow of workers to defense industries and the military. Despite the fact that Southern California citrus producers employed mainly Mexicans (who did not typically move into such sectors), they became the heaviest users of

37. Ibid., p. 116.

38. Ibid., pp. 118-154.

39. Ibid., pp. 118-158.

40. Private correspondence with Dr. Roy J. Smith, June 1981.

this so-called "bracero" program, which lasted from 1942 to 1964.⁴¹ Through this institution, citrus producers in the district continued to avoid using farm labor contractors. Packing houses supplied their own supervisory personnel, built numerous, large camps for single males (to satisfy the program's legal requirements for housing), and contracted for guest workers through associations formed initially to counter pre-WWII strike activity. While this labor supply system carried with it as a consequence the breakdown of the family-based system built up over the preceding thirty years, it also initiated a period of two decades in which the industry could import easily controlled, dependable labor under government sanction.

Notwithstanding the program's attractiveness from the standpoint of labor control, the experience of the Central Valley differed significantly from that of Southern California; by the mid-1950's, when the San Joaquin district began producing large citrus crops, the bracero program had come under attack from farm worker organizations, social welfare and church groups, and government agencies. In 1957-58, the Department of Labor (DOL) began stricter enforcement of the program's housing and wage regulations. These conditions combined to make bracero use much less attractive, and Central Valley growers responded by making extensive use of farm labor contractors in order to avoid the legal requirements of the guest worker program. The program, nonetheless, indirectly supplied most of the district's workers, as contractors induced Southern

41. Williamson, "Labor in the California Citrus Industry," pp. 51-56, and Franz Dolp, "Decasualization of Seasonal Farm Labor (University of California, Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics, No. 68-1, 1968), p. 30.

California braceros to "skip" their contracts by offering higher wages. They recruited the balance of the work force either from ex-braceros and other Mexicans who crossed the international border illegally or from among the growing number of Mexicans with legal permanent resident status--the "green card" workers.⁴²

When the Agricultural Workers' Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO) launched an organizing drive in the San Joaquin Valley in 1960 -- and Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers (UFW) continued the unionization movement later in the decade -- the producers' motivation to remain separate from the harvesting function increased. The passage in 1964 of the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act (a government monitoring program to reduce contractors abuses) provided an additional pressure in the same direction. As a consequence, San Joaquin Valley employers have continued to rely on an ever-mounting number of labor contractors, who seek workers in old, established migration networks as well as among new migrants entering the country without legal documents--a group whose numbers have mushroomed in the last 15 years. At present, according to industry observers, contractors control between 50 and 90 per cent of the District 1 citrus harvest.⁴³

42. Interviews with John Pehrson, December, 1980, and with Natalio Alamillo, citrus picker, December 1980.

43. Interview with Stan Gillette, Manager of Nash de Camp, February, 1981, and with Grant Kuchel, Manager of Mid-Valley Citrus Exchange, Visalia, February, 1981.

Increased stringency of control over wages and conditions of bracero labor affected the Southern California district as well. This factor may have contributed in part to the continued shift of orange production throughout the bracero era--a shift which can be seen as both geographical and institutional--to the Central Valley and to the farm labor contractor. Yet in lemon production, in which Southern California never lost its leadership, producers persisted in their traditional resistance to labor contractor use. They solved the problem of rising costs due to increased enforcement of wage and benefit regulations by raising the bracero's productivity as his hourly wage increased. By initiating technological and institutional changes, producers allowed harvesters to increase the rate of pick during the waning years of the bracero program, thus lowering per-box picking costs in the face of increasing hourly wages and stricter DOL enforcement of housing and feeding regulations for braceros.⁴⁴

Increased costs did not constitute the only threat to bracero users. The AWOC drive to eliminate bracero labor in 1960 visited the Southern California lemon-producing district in the form of pickets at a packing house. This threat of labor action rekindled a latent interest in establishing a legal buffer between the houses and the employment of harvest labor. The industry created the cooperative harvesting association in direct response to that threat. At first little more than a legal fiction with a manager who served as a housing director, the

44. Roy J. Smith, Daniel T. Seamount, and Bruce H. Mills, "Lemon Picking and the Ventura County Tree Production Incentive Wage System" (California Agricultural Experiment Station, Riverside, Bulletin 809, 1965), pp. 34-41.

harvesting associations gradually gained control over harvesting operations, receiving an important impulse with the termination of the bracero program, after which they gained importance as recruiters and "legalizers" of harvest workers.⁴⁵

The heyday of the harvesting cooperatives really began with the termination of guest-worker contracting. In the first year following the termination of the bracero program, the citrus harvest underwent complete disruption. Employers replaced Mexicans with the impoverished unemployed from many areas of the U.S.; the rate of worker turnover reached astronomical proportions, and the industry responded by accelerating its efforts, initiated when the demise of guest-worker contracting became apparent, to somehow mechanize the harvest. With the supply of harvest labor thus disrupted, it fell to the associations to reestablish a dependable labor supply. To do so, they recruited workers in Mexico, revived many of the pre-bracero era stabilization strategies, and introduced some new ones. In addition to providing the letters that allowed Mexican workers to obtain legal status, many of the associations built family housing or converted bracero camps for family occupancy; those that continued to run all-male camps made continuous improvements and offered subsidized meals.⁴⁶ Vacation benefits, pensions, and company-furnished equipment (or equipment allowances) and transportation

45. Interview with Jack Lloyd, Manager of Coastal Growers Association, May, 1981.

46. Citrograph, September, 1969, p. 442; interview with Jack Lloyd, May, 1981.

began to appear as benefits for association employees.⁴⁷ The decline in the harvest mechanization research projects, from 31 in the early 1960's to 7 in 1978, attests to their success at stabilizing the labor supply.⁴⁸

Just as it had in the earlier era, the creation of a self-confident, stable labor force led to worker militancy. The 1970's witnessed numerous labor disputes, some of which resulted in the awarding of some of the benefits listed above; but some employers reacted as they had in the pre-bracero epoch, with evictions from company-owned housing and the hiring of strikebreakers (usually undocumented Mexicans recruited locally). In 1974, however, the California Legislature passed the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), which radically transformed labor relations by extending to agricultural workers the right to collective bargaining and unionization. After some delays due to funding disputes for the implementing agency, the UFW began to organize the harvest workers in the Southern California lemon district, and the workers at every association, even the most progressive, voted for union representation.

We will elaborate further on many of these developments in the following case history of Ventura County. Generally, the net result of higher wages, improved benefits, and unionization under the harvest association has been to so raise costs as to drive association members into the arms of labor contractors. The associations appear to be in a

47. Interview with Alfonso Guilin, January, 1981.

48. Citrograph, January, 1978, p. 51.

state of decline, and workers displaced to labor contractors will find organization under the ALRA much more difficult since the labor law does not recognize the contractor as an employer of agricultural labor. Unionization efforts will thus have to focus on the numerous, dispersed growers who ultimately employ harvest workers.

THE EVOLUTION OF LABOR MARKET INSTITUTIONS IN VENTURA COUNTY--
THE SEARCH FOR A STABLE LABOR SUPPLY

Ventura County represents a microcosm of the citrus industry. It has a strip of lemon orchards near the fog-cooled coast, and, following the Santa Clara Valley inland, ample orchards of navels, valencias and grapefruit. In 1980, the county had 25,000 acres of lemons, 17,000 acres of oranges, and 1,700 acres of grapefruit. While citrus plantings in other counties have risen or fallen dramatically in the last four decades, overall citrus acreage in Ventura County has remained relatively stable. The county has all the varieties of picking and packing institutions in the industry, including one large ranch, the Limoneira Company, which does its own picking and packing. Some of the packing houses have their own in-house crews, some hire labor contractors, some hire non-profit harvesting associations, and a few growers hire their own crews directly (see Table CH, p. 68). Competition among the different picking institutions is most acute in Ventura County, although it is also occurring in the Coachella Valley and, to a limited extent, in the San Joaquin Foothills.

In both picking and packing, Ventura County has remained at the center of the citrus industry. Since 1965, Ventura County has had 13 packing house organizations with 17 packing houses. In lemons, the county has the largest houses anywhere. Its lemon houses, beginning in the late 1960's, have expanded the amount of fruit they pack by importing high proportions of their lemons and some of their valencias from the Central Valley and desert areas. Ventura County producers also ship

some navels north to be packed in the San Joaquin Foothill region. Some Ventura County lemon houses actually pool, for purposes of the marketing order, the winter fruit of their Central Valley growers with the spring Coastal Lemons of their Ventura County growers.

The Bracero Years

Ventura County faced in 1941 the longest citrus strike in U.S. history up to that time. The citrus pickers were then a settled population, some of whom lived in industry-subsidized housing. As occurred in a later period, this stable population provided the leadership for demands for improvements in wages and working conditions during the six-month labor dispute. The employers, unified by the labor unrest, eventually broke the strike by evicting the striking workers from company-owned housing and filling their places with dust-bowl migrants imported from the Central Valley.

Employers emerged from the strikes of 1941 determined to control the labor market situation in Ventura County. They established the "Committee of Twenty-two," which owed its name to the number of packing houses in the area at the time. In 1947, this organization became the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee (VCCGC) and took the lead in establishing a centralized control over citrus picking in the county. The VCCGC, under the leadership of William Tolbert, became the prime contractor of and the leading lobbying group for Mexican contract laborers (braceros) in Ventura County. The VCCGC received the braceros, assigned them to packing houses, and had the right to relocate them at other packing houses without paying a recontracting fee. The committee

obtained discounts on Workmen's Compensation and off-the-job insurance for the pickers by holding a master contract for the whole county's citrus crews. Soon bracero labor dominated the industry in Ventura County, and the committee further emphasized its leading role by successfully spearheading a drive to institute a uniform rate sheet, which set wages for the entire county.

Table BRAC

Average Peak Number of Mexican Nationals

	1958	1962
Oranges		
Counties		
Tulare, Kern	520	0
Orange, L.A.	1980	1410
Ventura	940	1350
Lemons		
Tulare, Kern	70	0
Orange, L.A.	820	640
Ventura	3670	3270

Source: V. Fuller, J. Mamer, & E. Thorn, "Seasonal Labor in California Agriculture," University of California, College of Agriculture, 1963.

In the first 15 or 20 years of the Bracero Program, the packing houses themselves took direct responsibility for housing, contracting for food, and transporting pickers to the orchards. This required opening numerous new camps. In addition, the packing houses had their own in-house foremen who supervised the quality of the pick.

Table PRCCosts, Rates of Pick and Wages Selected Years in Ventura County

	Year (mo.)	Boxes/hour	\$/hour	Costs per box		
				Direct Pick	Over-Head	Total
	1945	2.92(a)				
	1947		\$.95(b)			
	1959	2.59(a)	\$.97(c)			
Industry-wide Data	1962 (Jan.)	2.74(b)	\$1.12(c)	\$.323(d)	\$.117	\$.44
	1962 (May)	3.49(b)	\$1.18(b)			
	1963		\$1.20(c)			
	1964		\$1.30(c)			
	1965	3.12	\$1.77	\$.53	\$.098	\$.628
	1967	3.38	\$2.15			
Data for CGA only (e)	1969	4.66	\$2.47			
	1971	4.76	\$2.57	\$.576	\$.159	\$.7353
	1975	6.27	\$3.61	\$.576	\$.282	\$.858
	1980	8.67	\$6.54	\$.7546	\$.5196	\$1.2742

a- Citrograph, April, 1961, p. 174.

b- California Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 809, "Lemon Picking and the Ventura Co. Tree Production Incentive Wage System," Roy J. Smith, et al., p. 36.

c- Ibid., p. 34.

d- Ibid., p. 55.

e- All data is from the Coastal Growers' Association (CGA) office files.

In these early years of the Bracero Program, the rate of pay changed very little. Between 1947 and 1959, the Mexican Nationals were apparently given no significant wage increases (see Table PRC, p. 33). However, in the early 1960's, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) began to tighten up its minimum wage standards for Bracero labor in Ventura County. Employers, confronted with rising hourly wages, had to choose between two options: pay more per box, or speed up the pick--they chose the latter.

Several seemingly exogenous external factors facilitated the speed-up for the growers. First, the prorate system, the institution for controlling the flow of fruit to market, underwent a significant change in the 1950's. Under the earlier system, the prorate for each packing house was based on the amount of fruit it held in storage. This created an incentive to harvest as much green fruit as possible. Packing house managers, supplied with low-cost Bracero labor, continued frequent picks of the orchards, sometimes every two weeks, in order to keep up the prorate allocation.⁴⁹ Also, since all fruit was stored and not diverted immediately to products, it was necessary to insist on a careful pick so that poor-quality fruit would not occupy storage space. The new prorate system, begun in 1955, allocated quotas based on the average volume picked during the preceding weeks.⁵⁰ The new system allowed less frequent picking without affecting the volume of the pick, thus saving labor. Less frequent picking speeds the work of the picker, since he is

49. Interview with Stan Gillette, February, 1981.

50. Private correspondence with Dr. Roy J. Smith, March, 1981.

harvesting orchards with more fruit per tree, making it easier to fill his bag.

Other factors also contributed to a speedier harvest. Growers reduced the height of their trees, which decreased the amount of picking done from ladders; the increasing proportion of fruit destined for products (especially lemonade) allowed a less careful pick, in terms of both size and damage to fruit cause by poor clipping.⁵¹ Finally, increased use of chemicals significantly reduced losses due to molds which grow on damaged fruit.

These changes allowed managers to speed the pick in several ways during the waning years of the Bracero Program. Picks per tree declined from about eight to six a year; quicker emptying of the bags into boxes was permitted, despite the danger of harming the fruit. More poor clips were permitted. Ground fruit could be gathered and a smaller ring was introduced, allowing for a less selective pick.⁵² Finally, the exclusion of small green fruit was less stringently enforced by foremen.⁵³

At the same time that the DOL was stiffening its enforcement of minimum wage, housing, and feeding requirements for braceros, the AFL-CIO decided to launch a major organizing drive among farm workers. In 1960, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) adopted a strategy of removing braceros from the fields through the declaration of

51. See note 25.

52. See note 26.

53. Smith, Seamount, and Mills, "Lemon Picking and the Ventura County Tree Production Incentive Wage System," p. 34.

a labor dispute at a given ranch or company.⁵⁴ The increased sensitivity on the part of government agencies, especially California's state employment service, to abuses of the Bracero Program enhanced AWOC's strategy. Many braceros were prevented from working on ranches declared to be the sites of labor disputes. When AWOC entered Ventura County in 1960 and carried out some limited union activities, industry leaders hired lawyers to draw up a document which allowed the chartering of harvesting associations as legal "buffers" between packing houses and union organizers. By 1965, SP Growers, F & P Growers, S & F Growers, L & O Growers, Buena Foothill Growers, and Coastal Growers Associations had been formed.

In their early years, these associations did little more than officially pay the pickers, while control over the harvest and workers remained totally with the packing houses. The in-house foreman system remained intact. The only substantive change was that the labor camps were now managed independently by the associations. Legally, however, the packing houses no longer directly employed citrus pickers and as a consequence were not subject to union or DOL action against them.

54. The bilateral international agreement which permitted the importation of guest workers contained a clause prohibiting the use of braceros as strikebreakers. As early as 1951, farm labor unions began declaring strikes in an attempt to utilize this clause as a means of removing contract laborers, whose presence tended to impede union organizing. This strategy had little success until the late 1950's, when increasing public concern and DOL enforcement led to the frequent removal of braceros from areas where strikes had been declared. Ricardo Anzaldua Montoya, "Organized Labor in the U.S. and the Bracero Program: The Politics of Collaboration with Respect to Agricultural Contract Labor, 1942-1965" (unpublished, 1980), pp. 17-18, 42-43.

On January 1, 1965, when the Bracero Program ended, a new day dawned for the associations. Ventura County had become so dependent on Mexican Contract Labor that recruitment presented enormous difficulties (see Table BRAC, p. 32). In 1965, the industry brought in many groups of workers, including American Indians, Apalachians, Blacks, and Los Angeles derelicts. The turnover was enormous; in one year, 24,000 people picked citrus in the county, which had a peak demand of only 2,000 pickers. The average turnover time at CGA, for example, was two weeks.⁵⁵ William Tolbert of the VCCGC took out advertisements on the radio and in the newspapers of the traditional sending areas in Mexico's Central Highlands. Alfonso Guilin, personnel manager at Limoneira ranch, personally visited villages and small towns in rural Michoacan in 1966 to develop a closer relationship with his picking crews. As word of a labor shortage in Ventura County citrus spread, many former citrus pickers of the bracero period came north, albeit without documents. This period of labor uncertainty saw the expansion of the granting of permanent resident status (green cards) to ex-braceros by all the citrus employers in Ventura County. All that was needed to secure a green card in the 1951 to 1968 period was a letter from an employer requesting that a given worker be allowed to work for the employer. Mexicans, as residents of the Western Hemisphere, could enter the country without quota limits by satisfying this simple labor market requirement.

55. Interviews with Jack Lloyd, May 1981, and with Robin Cartwright, March 1981.

56. Interviews with Alfonso Guilin, January, 1981, Jack Lloyd, May, 1981, and William Tolbert, former Manager of the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee, April, 1981.

This period of confusion enabled the managers of the harvesting associations to win some independence from the packing houses. In the post-bracero period, the packing house superintendents who gave orders to the in-house foremen were presented with serious recruitment, training, and discipline problems. The braceros had been easily manipulable workers due to their contract labor status, and that institution made labor control "as easy as turning on and off irrigation valves," according to one industry leader; control of the non-Mexican and legal Mexican replacements after 1965 was not so simple. Increasingly, the packing houses began delegating their control over harvest labor to the harvesting associations, which in turn attended to the details of stabilizing the labor supply and dramatically enhanced their own importance in the process.

The experience of Coastal Growers Association (CGA) is illustrative in this regard. In 1966, when CGA expanded its service from three to seven packing houses, association manager Jack Lloyd obtained a computer to speed up his payroll and slowly began expanding his prerogatives. In 1969, he began to issue picking equipment; in 1970, he took over the transportation of the workers; and in the early 1970's, he took over the direct supervision of the foremen or crew leaders, who for the first time became independent of the packing houses. The superintendents at the packing houses, by and large, did not mind giving up direct responsibility for the pick, counting this loss of responsibility as freedom from the function of disciplining the workers and of staying informed about the legal requirements toward the work force. The other, smaller

associations usually followed the example of the Coastal Growers Association and hired a personnel manager. In some cases, the old superintendent took on the job.⁵⁷ By the early 1970's, the independent, formalized association using overwhelmingly legal Mexican workers to bring in the citrus crop had emerged as an established institution of the citrus industry.

Stabilization and Conflict, 1970-78

With the end of the bracero program and the ascendancy of the harvesting association, it became obvious that the survival of the Ventura County citrus industry would depend on its ability to maintain a stable force of Mexican citrus harvesters. To achieve this end, the associations adopted two different strategies, each of which focused on a different approach to providing subsidized housing for harvest employees.

CGA, Buena Foothill Growers, F & P Growers, and L & O Growers opted for employing shuttle migrants, continued to operate only all-male camps, and encouraged a pattern of repeat (circular) migration. CGA management encouraged repeat migration by cultivating close personal relationships with employees, providing, among other benefits, birthday celebrations and awards for good work.⁵⁸ Most importantly, CGA maintained contact with the worker when he returned to Mexico; the association sent Christmas greetings and an invitation to return to work the

57. Interview with Jack Lloyd, May 1981.

58. Ibid.

following season.⁵⁹

In contrast, employers such as Limoneira Ranch, Rancho Sespe, SP Growers, and S & F Growers in the late 1960's or early 1970's established or expanded family housing in addition to their camps for single males. This strategy aimed at securing workers by basing the family unit at the place of employment. Although this system had enjoyed widespread success before the bracero era, personnel managers found mixed interest in family housing until the mid-1970's, when rents in Ventura County and the cost of living in Mexico underwent dramatic increases.⁶⁰

Strategies for subsidized housing did not constitute employers' only attempt to stabilize their labor market. In the late 1960's, CGA and Limoneira added vacation pay and pension benefits to the health insurance provided by all employers,⁶¹ and the provision of free picking equipment and transportation to the fields began to spread. At the same time, average real wages began a slow ascent. By the end of the 1969-70 season, partly in response to a two-week strike by valencia pickers at F & P Growers, all Ventura County employers offered vacation benefits to

59. Donald Rosedale and John Mamer, "Labor Management for Seasonal Farm Workers: A Case Study" (University of California, Division of Agricultural Sciences, Leaflet 2885, 1974, passim).

60. Interview with Alfonso Guilin, January, 1981. While workers at Limoneira exhibited little interest in subsidized housing until about 1974, there is now a long waiting list for the accommodations; workers at S & F, SP, and Rancho Sespe began to reside in company housing somewhat earlier.

61. Employers provided insurance through the Citrus Trust and Insurance Fund, set up by the Agricultural Producers Labor Committee.

their citrus pickers.⁶²

The improvement of wages and benefits to stabilize the work force raised costs (especially overhead costs) to employers and would, in the absence of any change in worker productivity, have raised the per-box cost of picking. Productivity, however, did not remain constant, at least in the lemon harvest, in which accessible data are most complete. Although the quality of the pick may have deteriorated somewhat during the era, the quality of the pickers improved, and the rate of pick increased. Through the use of an incentive wage system, the associations and ranches succeeded in weeding out poor pickers and attracting and legalizing the most qualified braceros and their relatives, who, with several seasons of experience, became expert, professional lemon pickers. The county-wide average number of boxes of lemons picked per hour rose from three in 1965 to nearly six by the mid-1970's and has continued to increase in recent years (see Table PRC, p. 33).

The increasing skill of workers, however, did not by itself account for the increase; technological factors deserve some of the credit. In the late 1960's, the industry added a strap to the lemon clipper, so that carrying the tool no longer required grasping it. Shortly afterwards, the Sunkist corporation began to market a clipper with a curved blade, which facilitated separation of the fruit from its stem with a

62. Ventura County Star-Free Press (hereinafter cited as VCSFP), September 17, 1970.

single clip.⁶³ In the 1972-73 season, the 18-bag bin was introduced and quickly displaced the old field box. Pickers had previously spent time arranging and settling the fruit below the fill line, then had to prepare another box for filling. The introduction of the much larger bin saved perhaps 45 seconds per bag in emptying time.⁶⁴ Finally, two factors combined to allow less careful picking: the development of more effective chemicals to prevent decay in fruit slightly damaged in the pick, and less rigid enforcement of the minimum size restriction.

Productivity increases allowed Ventura County employers to absorb fairly painlessly the increased costs of a stable workforce, but the stabilization of labor supply did not imply calm labor relations. Rather, increasingly secure laborers demonstrated growing militancy in their determination to raise their social status, and the most stable group among them--those who were raising families in the U.S.⁶⁵ --led the struggles.

63. Private correspondence with Dr. Roy J. Smith, June, 1981, and interview with Victor Palafox, CGA picker, February 1981. Dr. Smith maintains that a single-cut clipper had been available for many years, but the industry did not adopt its use because of its refusal to buy the patent on the tool. Sunkist Growers bought the slightly different design of the clipper introduced in the late 1960's before adopting and marketing it.

64. Citrograph, November, 1973, p. 26. Dr. Roy Smith disagrees that the bin increased productivity very much. He argues that the time advantage gained by using the larger container is offset by increased worker fatigue. He theorizes that the time spent settling fruit is crucial for the recuperation of the picker's energy and, therefore, the maintenance of his picking speed. Private correspondence with Dr. Roy J. Smith, June, 1981.

65. See below, pp. 75-76.

In the 1970 F & P Growers' walkout noted above, Ben Aparicio, a young college student reared in a Ventura County citrus-picking household and occasional picker himself, emerged as spokesman for the strikers. The above-mentioned payment of vacation benefits was a major issue in the dispute but was not the most important; until Aparicio led the strikers into the UFW and added recognition of the union as a demand, the workers' highest priority was that they be advised of piece rates at the start of the work day. Additionally, the workers demanded a minimum hourly guaranteed wage, improved sanitary conditions, and the appointment of an "assistant field boss" to improve communication between workers and the association's management.⁶⁶

Strong at the outset, the strike ended in dismal failure. Within a few days, strikers numbered over 200 and could count perhaps 300 more in a sympathy walkout which included many crucial employees of packing houses supplied by the association. In five days, the strike closed one of the packing houses served by F & P, but after a week, the action began to crumble. Aparicio and other leaders alleged that F & P Growers had brought in undocumented workers to break the strike, but the fact remained that the strikers had failed to call the whole picking force out of the fields. Despite the appearance of Cesar Chavez on the picket lines, the Fillmore camp residents who spearheaded the walkout could not convince the single males who lived at the association's Piru camp to join them. Eight days after the action began, Fillmore workers began to break ranks and return to work. The strike ended in disarray, and the

66. VCSFP, July 17, 19, 22, and 29, 1970.

"settlement" which marked its termination was based on a citrus industry employees' pamphlet, printed months earlier.⁶⁷ The strike doubtlessly speeded the payment of vacation benefits by F & P and other employers who had lagged in providing this benefit, but the fact that the vacation package had been included in the pamphlet indicated that the industry's employers had already decided to extend such a benefit to their employees. F & P Growers, perhaps attempting to induce the strikers to return to work, began to compute vacation credits even before the settlement was reached.⁶⁸ The strike's most important result, in fact, may have emerged a couple of months after it ended, when lemon producers, fearing a concerted UFW organizing drive, formed their own organization to combat unionization in the lemon harvest.⁶⁹

Later in the 1970's, workers living with their families continued to lead agitation for improvements in wages, benefits, working conditions, and formal relations of employment. On January 25, 1974, employees of SP Growers Association left their jobs in a dispute over wages, thus launching what became the longest and bitterest series of labor disputes in industry history. The strikers, residents of SP's complex of mixed family and single-male housing in Santa Paula, walked out of the orchards in protest over what they perceived as an attempt to cheat them under the guise of changing from a per-box to a per-bin system of

67. VCSFP, July 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, and 29, 1970.

68. VCSFP, July 28, 1970.

69. VCSFP, September 17, 1970.

payment.⁷⁰ Within a day, the walkout had the practically unanimous support of the more than 200 pickers residing in the camp, where a sense of community and settledness greatly aided the workers as they closed ranks. For example, George Castañeda, a local grocer and neighbor of the camp, was friendly with many of the strikers and somewhat better educated, so he assisted them and agreed to speak to employers on their behalf. Community contacts sustained the strike, as social welfare groups, student organizations from nearby colleges, and farm worker support groups initiated emergency assistance drives. Finally, within the camp itself, a recreation lot behind the dwellings served as a meeting place for strikers to plan, air grievances, and build solidarity. When SP Growers manager Robin Cartwright visited the workers on January 28 to request that they return to their jobs, he met them on this ground.⁷¹

SP's board of directors (made up of representatives of the two packing houses, Briggs and Mupu, to which the association supplied fruit) had split on the issue of allowing a third party to speak for the workers; Cartwright, arguing against permitting such an advocate to enter the scene, carried the day. Thus, when Castañeda came forward to speak for the strikers, Cartwright left the meeting rather than deal with an "outsider." The protesters responded by appointing Castañeda and two Legal Aid attorneys to their strike committee and submitted their list of demands to the new manager of the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee, Lee Chancey, rather than to SP management. When the SP board

70. VCSFP, January 26 and 27, 1974.

71. VCSFP, January 29 and February 2, 1974, and interview with Robin Cartwright, March, 1981.

met again, Robin Cartwright found himself out of a job.⁷²

Negotiations resumed as the strike entered its second week, with workers rejecting management's offer of an \$8.16 per bin minimum, up from \$7.14 when the strike began. The workers voted to invite the UFW to represent them if negotiations broke down again; they appeared to have prepared for a long fight, but on February 7, the two sides came to an agreement, and the strike abruptly ended.⁷³

The agreement guaranteed a minimum piece rate of \$8.33 per bin, payment for idle time spent waiting for orchards to dry ("wet time"), and notification of piece rates within three hours of the beginning of the pick; in addition, the pact provided for a \$50 advance on wages, a deferral of rent payments, and a one-year rent freeze on company housing. Moreover, non-economic considerations, especially formal procedures to improve communications between workers and management, occupied a prominent place in the document. The accord provided for distribution to employees of a written statement, in English and Spanish, of all terms of employment, including benefits and working conditions; it established a grievance committee and procedures and promised to notify workers of opportunities for advancement within the company; and it promised language training (in Spanish) for all field foremen and (in English) for the workers' representatives to the grievance committee.⁷⁴

All the same, while the agreement ended the walkout, it did not buy

72. Ibid., and VCSFP, January 29 and 30, and February 2, 1974.

73. VCSFP, February 1 and 5, 1974.

74. VCSFP, January 31 and February 8, 1974.

peace.

Six months later, amidst another strike by SP workers, Legal Aid attorney Steve Harvey (who had helped negotiate the February accord) revealed that "continual unrest" had followed the agreement. During the second walkout, workers complained that despite having been trained in Spanish, field bosses insisted on communicating only in English; that management informed pickers of company job opportunities only after the deadlines for application had passed; that the promise to pay wet time lost its meaning when the company simply announced that work would not begin until 11 a.m. on damp mornings; and finally, that management failed to disclose rates of pay until the day following the pick. The summer harvest, moreover, had engendered new grievances, centering on the allegedly racist attitudes of one of the field supervisors and on the transfer of lemon pickers to the less remunerative orange harvest. When the workers' representative approached Briggs Lemon manager James Beekman to protest the transfer, Beekman told the envoy that the workers would pick oranges or lose their jobs. On August 20, 120 workers walked out and demanded a 25% rate increase for orange picking.⁷⁵

For two weeks, negotiators made very little progress in resolving the dispute. The strikers grew in number to 180 as negotiations stalled in the last days of August, and Cesar Chavez visited them on September 4, exhorting them to "hold the line." Finally, on September 5, SP Growers took a step to break the impasse; its Anglo managers stymied, the association hired a Mexican and former assistant manager from

75. VCSFP, August 21, 22, and 27, 1974.

Coastal Growers Association, Ralph de Leon, as its new manager. On September 10, de Leon concluded an agreement with worker representatives which raised some wages immediately and promised an across-the-board increase of 8% on November 15. Additionally, it improved vacation benefits, made changes in rental agreements, and transferred the unpopular field supervisor to another job with Briggs Lemon.⁷⁶

The strike had two additional consequences. First, Mupu Citrus Association management, irritated with the continual labor disputes, pulled out of its agreement with SP Growers and organized its members' harvests internally, using an in-house foreman and direct payroll, a system it has maintained to the present.⁷⁷ Secondly, SP's workers developed much closer ties to the UFW; the extent of their involvement with the union became evident when most of the workers, despite the opportunity to resume work on September 12, delayed their return until September 16 so that they could participate in UFW boycott demonstrations and fund-raising rallies.⁷⁸

In February, 1975, the effects of increased worker militancy reappeared. Workers began to complain that piece rates paid did not always agree with those posted, that management had eliminated the higher rates for picking the tallest trees as well as the premium for working in badly pruned orchards, and that their wives had not been rehired when

76. VCSFP, August 30 and September 5, 6, and 11, 1974.

77. Interviews with Javier Pardo, Ventura County farm labor contractor and former SP Growers employee, April, 1981, and with Ralph de Leon, November, 1980.

78. VCSFP, September 12, 1974.

the new season began. De Leon claimed that new insurance regulations prohibited picking the tallest trees and refused to meet with the grievance committee, alleging that it no longer represented the pickers. In the last week of February, 1975, the workers struck.⁷⁹

Within a few days, de Leon began hiring replacements for the strikers, who immediately charged that the replacements were undocumented Mexicans.⁸⁰ On March 4, Border Patrol agents, acting on a "tip," raided the Santa Paula camp, arresting 25 persons, including six children, not from among the strikebreakers, but from the ranks of the strikers themselves. Because the agents had gone directly to the homes of the illegals and had not conducted a search, the protesters concluded that management had provided the "tip."⁸¹

As the strike neared the end of its second week, de Leon publicly disputed the workers' allegations that 200 of their number were off the job, pointing to the fact that his picking force was fully staffed. In response, Legal Aid attorneys collected check stubs from 196 strikers, which showed that de Leon had fired them after the beginning of the job action. On March 12, the lawyers, acting on the strikers' behalf, filed

79. VCSFP, February 27 and 28 and March 4, 1975.

80. One week into the walkout, one of the strike leaders was shot at in front of his Santa Paula home, and another was severely beaten after leaving a strike meeting. A break in the dispute appeared near on the day this violence occurred, as de Leon offered to talk if the workers would return to their jobs. The strikers, at first favorable to the suggestion, voted to continue the walkout when they learned that de Leon planned to rehire them without their seniority and accumulated benefits. VCSFP, February 28 and March 2, 3, and 4, 1975.

81. VCSFP, March 5, 1975.

a class action suit against SP Growers, Briggs Lemons, the VCCGC, and three farm labor contractors alleged to have supplied the association with strikebreakers. The action sought \$550,000 in damages for violations of the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act, including failure to register, failure to notify new employees of a labor dispute in progress, and employment of workers without legal residence papers. That afternoon, SP Growers issued eviction notices to all striking residents of the Santa Paula Camp.⁸²

At this juncture, the strike moved from the fields to the courtroom, and for the residents of the camp, it was lost. The strikers' attorneys attempted to block the evictions as retaliatory, but as the legal struggle dragged on, the strikers began to move out of their homes, though some of them held on tenaciously (in February, 1976, thirteen of them still lived at the Santa Paula Camp). The Supreme Court of California finally ruled the evictions illegal in 1977, and in 1980, the workers won their award in the damage suit.⁸³ The protracted court

82. VCSFP, March 6, 7, 10, and 12 and April 11 and 29, 1975.

83. VCSFP, April 29, 1975, February 17, June 17, and October 5, 1976, and telephone interview with Robert Miller, California Legal Aid attorney, March, 1981. An interesting event associated with the dispute took place during the early development of the legal battles. Lawyers for the strikers convinced four of the undocumented workers who had gone to work as strikebreakers to surrender themselves to the INS in order to testify against SP Growers. The association claimed that it had screened all of the strikebreakers for their legal status, and the four workers were prepared to testify that supervisors had hired them on the spot, without asking for any documents. The local INS manager granted the amnesty required for any undocumented worker involved in litigation. The workers lost their jobs, and lawyers for the strikers were unable to secure their reinstatement, because the judge hearing the suit ruled the move inconsistent with the strikers' case. (Their argument alleged in part that SP Growers failed to screen workers for their legal status, a violation of the Farm Labor Contractors Registration Act--FLCRA--if

battle wearied SP Growers as well. In the autumn of 1975, many of the growers wished to leave the association, and SP Growers dissolved, with Ralph de Leon leading the remaining members in the formation of a new cooperative, Inland Growers Association. The new organization functioned for less than a year; in July, 1977, de Leon purchased the group's buses and equipment and incorporated as a commercial farm contractor, Sistemas Agrícolas Mexicanos (SAMCO).⁸⁴ We will take up the history of SAMCO in a subsequent section, in which we examine the emergence of farm labor contractors.

Many of the issues and developments which arose in the SP disputes reappeared soon after that conflict began, in what became perhaps the most celebrated of the labor struggles in the citrus industry of the 1970's, the movement by employees of S & F Growers. Residents of Cabrillo Village, an S & F labor camp and one of the oldest family housing developments for citrus pickers (built in 1939),⁸⁵ walked out of the lemon orchards in a dispute over wages on October 9, 1974. By the second day of the strike, the Cabrillo Village protesters had organized a workers' committee to lead the action and had convinced residents of S & F's single-male camp in Fillmore to join the walkout, raising the number of strikers to over 350. During the three-week dispute, the

indeed the association fell under its purview). The judge, finding the arguments on the actual violations persuasive, never allowed the undocumented workers to testify. Instead, he asked for briefs on the applicability of the FLCRA and, after a long delay, ruled in favor of the strikers. VCSFP, March 26 and 27 and April 1 and 8, 1975, and June 17, 1976.

84. Interview with Ralph de Leon, November, 1980.

85. VCSFP, October 29, 1975.

strikers demonstrated remarkable solidarity. None of them, according to their spokesman, returned to work, and while many of the Fillmore camp workers went north to look for jobs or returned to Mexico, only one Cabrillo Village family (out of 90) left the area during the walkout.⁸⁶

The strike had begun spontaneously when workers demanded a ten-cent-per-box wage increase; management countered with an offer of seven cents, and the pickers left the fields. The apparent simplicity of this scenario, however, belied the complexity of the underlying issues in the dispute. The workers, after all, received wages in accordance with a standard rate sheet in use throughout the county. Yet many industry observers, including the author of the pay schedule, had complained that some employers "cheated" on fruit counts and in estimating tree height. Furthermore, although they had no access to the sheet, workers knew that the vast majority of the harvest earned piece rates in the lowest ranges of the schedule, so the claim that the sheet compensated for picking difficulty seemed false. The set of demands issued by the S & F strikers underscored the significance of these facts. The principal point of contention emerging from the dispute was not the wage increase (although the workers did make such a demand, and employers found it easy to grant), but the demand by workers that they know the piece rate before they pick, rather than the next day, as had become common practice. They also insisted that management keep them posted on the amount of

86. VCSFP, October 10, 11, 14, and 30, 1974.

picking with which they had credited each worker.⁸⁷

After the strike committee organized, it formulated additional demands: improvement of vacation benefits; payment of a \$2 hourly wage for wet time and for time spent traveling between orchards, and exclusion of such travel from rest periods; and recognition of the workers' committee as the strikers' bargaining agent. Additionally, the workers asked that their employer provide picking gloves and replace unsafe wooden ladders with aluminum ones, and that the association charge no rent on company-owned housing while workers were away on vacation.⁸⁸

For ten days, the strike remained at an absolute standoff, with S & F management refusing to meet with strike leaders and workers alleging, along with Legal Aid attorneys, that the association had hired undocumented Mexicans to break the strike. Finally, on October 20, S & F Growers, following the example of SP Growers the previous month, fired its Anglo manager and hired a Mexican, Miguel Ramos, to break the impasse. After some initial mistrust on the part of the strikers, Ramos got bargaining sessions underway, and on October 30, negotiators reached an agreement. The association agreed to advise workers of the piece rate within three hours of the start of the pick and granted all other demands (except recognition of the workers' committee), including one for a grievance committee, which negotiators had added during the bar-

87. VCSFP, October 10, 11, 14, and 16, 1974.

88. VCSFP, October 11, 1974.

gaining sessions.⁸⁹

For a year, labor-management relations at S & F remained calm; in February, 1975, a few crews undertook a three-day walkout in protest over the hiring of undocumented workers, but they returned after the Border Patrol arrested workers from two crews, and Miguel Ramos promised to screen every worker on the payroll for legal residence status.⁹⁰ By the fall of 1975, despite the outward calm, conditions had developed at Cabrillo Village which would shake the structure of the association. In August of that year, manager Ramos resigned, pleading ill health; in September, 80 Cabrillo Village residents filed grievances with S & F management; and on October 12, S & F Growers president Robert Dudley announced that state officials had condemned the camp, and he issued 30-day eviction notices to all village residents.⁹¹

Accusations and denials flew quickly, and protests followed. Quinton Jones, speaking for the State Division of Building and Housing Standards, which had conducted the housing inspection (as it did routinely every second year), denied the allegation that the agency had condemned the camp. As was normal following such inspections, the department had issued to the owners a list of housing code violations and an order to rectify them. In this case, the owner was Saticoy Lemon Association, a packing house supplied by S & F Growers, which leased the camp from the packing cooperative. Spokesmen for the owners claimed that to comply

89. VCSFP, October 16, 21, 29, 30, and 31, 1974.

90. VCSFP, February 21, 1975.

91. VCSFP, October 13 and 14, 1975.

with the Housing Department's directive, Saticoy Lemon would have to demolish the camp and rebuild it. Jones countered that he knew of no case in which an upgrading order had ever resulted in the closing of a camp, but he promised to do just that if Saticoy Lemon had not begun compliance efforts within the 30-day grace period allowed by law. No one denied that the order would require costly renovations, and local housing authority officials publicly doubted that the packing house could afford to continue operating the facility.⁹²

Cabrillo Village workers, meanwhile, felt no doubt that a desire to suppress UFW organizing activity had inspired the evictions. In the 1974 S & F Growers dispute, formal union representation had not arisen as an issue, despite the fact that UFW organizers addressed the strikers several times and took the opportunity to launch a recruiting drive, which the strikers reportedly received favorably. By October of 1975, the UFW could count 80 members among the 90 Cabrillo Village households and was preparing a petition for a certification election under the newly enacted ALRA. Saticoy Lemon manager Carl McKnight could not have been ignorant of these facts nor of the 80 grievances filed in the month preceding the eviction order. Thus, there existed a strong circumstantial case for interpreting the upgrading order and its cost as convenient excuses for mounting a preemptive attack on the union. When the association laid off all harvest workers four days later with the claim that no fruit needed harvesting, the move strengthened the workers' con-

92. VCSFP, October 13, 14, 15, and 29, 1975.

viction.⁹³

Local government officials soon entered the melee; housing officials pleaded their inability to place the families, even with the \$500 relocation allowance offered by S & F Growers. On October 21, county supervisors, fearing the impact on the local housing market of the sudden addition of 90 low-income (now unemployed) families with 400 members, requested a delay in the enforcement of the housing code. Saticoy Lemon, however, did not await the result of the county appeal and ignored the protests of village residents; on November 5, its crews began demolishing vacated buildings at the camp, including the mess hall and several unoccupied houses. Even after the November 17th announcement that, to allow time to solve the housing crisis the state housing department had granted a 30-day extension on its order to clear the camp, the packing house continued to demolish vacant buildings as a matter of policy. On November 25, women and children from the village placed themselves between a bulldozer and a house used as a day nursery; and when a few families found alternative accommodations and moved out, other residents occupied their homes as squatters. Saticoy Lemon initiated court action to evict them.⁹⁴

In late November, state inspectors again visited Cabrillo Village, this time with the goal of salvaging the housing, perhaps with state funds. From that juncture forward, all efforts to resolve the housing dilemma turned toward somehow saving the camp. Saticoy Lemon attempted

93. VCSFP, October 13, 14, and 17, 1975.

94. VCSFP, October 22 and 29 and November 1, 6, 19, and 25, 1975.

to sell the village to an experienced operator of farm labor camps, Herculeano Villaseñor, who had entered the business in the 1930's as a cook-caterer and had become quite well-known during the bracero era. By the time Villaseñor was prepared to close the deal, however, village residents had initiated a plan to buy the camp themselves, and with threats dissuaded the cook from concluding the purchase. On January 7, 1976, the residents formed a non-profit corporation, and on January 13, they purchased Cabrillo Village's 18-1/2 acres of land and all buildings thereon for \$80,000.⁹⁵

The purchase price of \$4325 per acre was low, but in the range of fair market value for agricultural land in that era (\$4-6000 per acre). The buildings on the land, appraised at \$60,000, actually were worth almost nothing, since to continue running the community as a camp would have required, according to Saticoy Lemon, an investment on the order of \$1.25 million. The possibilities of selling the land to a developer at \$8-10,000 per acre must have been considered by Saticoy Lemon, but the value of the political peace which the packing association purchased by selling the site to its residents cannot be discounted. The image of poor farm workers defending their homes against demolition crews had aroused widespread sympathy from both government officials and social welfare groups.⁹⁶

95. VCSFP, November 25, 1975, and January 2, 4, 5, and 14, 1976.

96. VCSFP, January 25, 1981.

The financial support which came to the community after the sale best measures the depth of sympathy which the villagers had won during their struggle. Although the sixty-two families who initially formed the cooperative financed most of the original sale with savings and personal loans, they also received assistance from the Catholic Church's Campaign for Human Development, which provided a \$100,000 grant for a sewer hookup. An ex-seminary student came to the camp as temporary manager and funding director, and after two years, the community had received over \$160,000 in loans and CETA⁹⁷ funds, and over \$1.5 million in grants from agencies as diverse as the United States Department of Agriculture and the Rosenberg Foundation. With these funds, the villagers undertook renovation and repairs, construction of new housing, and vocational training projects so that they could do the work themselves.⁹⁸

The village continues today as a model community cooperative, housing about 500 people, and it plans to increase the number of its residents by nearly 100%.⁹⁹ However, from the point of view of the village's UFW supporters, the victory was tarnished. If the intentions of S & F Growers and Saticoy Lemon had indeed centered on impeding the UFW's certification drive, they succeeded. A month after the purchase agreement, the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) closed for lack of funds, before union members had a chance to organize for a

97. Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

98. VCSFP, January 4 and 14 and May 30, 1976, August 30, 1977, March 4, 1978, and March 15, 1981.

99. VCSFP, March, 15, 1981.

certification election. They did mount a last-ditch effort just days before the ALRB office closed, but they fell short of the necessary 200 signatures to force an election¹⁰⁰ -the only case in Ventura County citrus where the UFW suffered such a setback. (Of the 400 S & F employees, less than half lived at Cabrillo Village.) The Cabrillo Village dispute was thus a crucial factor in delaying unionization at S & F until 1977. Undeterred in its resistance to the union following the signing of a contract in May, 1978, S & F Growers began transferring harvest work to labor contractors; in 1981, its members voted the association out of existence.

The Rise of the United Farm Worker

Labor disputes related to unionization efforts began to spread as the ALRB prepared to reopen its offices late in 1976. On September 22 of that year, more than 150 workers at F & P Growers staged the decade's second major walkout against that association in an effort to raise wages and improve fringe benefits. Cesar Chavez, speaking in Ventura County that evening, advised the strikers to return to work the next day and sign union authorization cards in anticipation of the reopening of the ALRB on November 1.¹⁰¹ The protesters followed his advice, but the union took nearly two years to call a certification election, which it won, in June, 1978.¹⁰² Yet F & P employees still do not have a contract as of this writing; managers of the association assert that the UFW has

100. VCSFP, February 5, 1976.

101. VCSFP, October 19, 1976.

102. VCSFP, June 17, 1978.

simply failed to follow up on the vote and seriously seek contract negotiations.¹⁰³

The UFW renewed its organizing drive in Ventura County citrus, but at first had little demonstrable success. Relative to other agricultural workers, Ventura citrus pickers received high wages and enjoyed extraordinary benefits. Despite the fact that some workers, especially the most settled ones, had shown a willingness to agitate for improvements in wages, benefits, and conditions, their employers remained quite confident that they would reject unionization; indeed, during the first year of resumed operations by the ALRB, the UFW won only one election in the county's citrus orchards, the one at S & F Growers, and did not succeed signing a contract for ten months afterwards. Conditions during the 1977 and 1978 harvests, however, precipitated the economic circumstances that led to rapid unionization.

In the 1976-77 crop year, Ventura County produced a "bumper crop" of lemons, which sent prices tumbling; when profits began to fall, employers decided not to increase the rate sheet for the first time in several years. Furthermore, pickers received orders to pick more carefully; some employers insisted on leaving even ripe fruit on the trees when undersized. With their picking speed thus slowed, workers' hourly wages suffered. Meanwhile, the cost of living in the U.S. and in Mexico raced ahead at record rates for the postwar era. The following year, another large crop prevented prices from recovering very quickly, as

103. Interview with Bill Winters, Personnel Manager of F & P Growers, February, 1981.

they failed to reach the level of any year since 1965, and a slow start to the harvest kept profits low. Employers continued to scrutinize their costs, and with a spate of bad weather restricting the harvest early in the season, workers' frustrations built.¹⁰⁴ By March of 1978, tensions had reached the flashpoint.

Ironically, the confrontation began at Coastal Growers' Association, the largest and perhaps the most progressive employer in the industry, celebrated as a leader in agricultural labor relations. On March 27, workers in one of its crews had a dispute with their foreman over the height classification of the orchard being picked. The next day, thirty-odd pickers, demanding a wage increase and UFW representation, blocked the gates to the association's staging area, bottling up company buses and more than 1000 workers in the yard.¹⁰⁵ CGA manager Jack Lloyd, exemplary in his treatment of the workers and confident that they would therefore reject the union, decided to suspend operations until the issue could be settled with a vote. The results of that ballot on March 31 stunned him: CGA workers voted 897 to 42 in favor of UFW representation.¹⁰⁶

104. Sunkist Statistical Bulletin, 1981, and VCSFP, March 31, 1978.

105. Interviews with Victor Palafox and Norberto Chacon, CGA pickers, February, 1981, and VCSFP, March 30, 1978.

106. VCSFP, March 31 and April 1, 1978, and interview with Jack Lloyd, May, 1981.

Anxious to resume the harvest, Lloyd announced that CGA would negotiate with the union, foregoing its right to contest the election; CGA and the UFW jointly requested that the ALRB speed the certification process so that the workers could return to the orchards. On April 6, the workers resumed work, but a week later, the pickers again stopped working, this time amidst charges of bad faith and unfair labor practices. While contract negotiations were underway, workers had instituted the plan marrano, a scheme to deliberately do bad work, pulling rather than clipping fruit, mixing leaves and stems in with the picked lemons, and thus damaging both the fruit and the trees. Lloyd called off the harvest, and union negotiators filed charges that CGA was stalling the bargaining sessions.¹⁰⁷

Relations between the union and CGA gradually warmed during the ensuing weeks, but while contract talks resumed, workers still received no paychecks. As negotiations continued, the idled pickers attempted to collect unemployment compensation, a move which culminated in a sit-in demonstration at the local office of the Employment Development Department (EDD) on May 5.¹⁰⁸ The protestors vacated the office after the EDD

107. VCSFP, April 1, and 14, 1978, interviews with CGA workers, 1981, and interview with Jack Lloyd, May, 1981.

108. The Employment Development Department (EDD) office at Oxnard ruled that only those workers who had not damaged trees could receive benefits, and the union asked for a list of the ineligible in order to provide them with emergency assistance. By May 5, the EDD had delivered neither that list nor any benefits, and 1000 workers responded with a sit-in demonstration at the Oxnard office. They vowed to remain in the office until the Sacramento bureaucrats handling the matter sent their decision, and the office manager promised to have police remove them if they had not cleared the building by 5 p.m. The protestors remained, without any major incident, until six in the evening, when the EDD ruled that only 340 of the 935 applicants would receive unemployment compensa-

ruled that only about a third of the nearly 1000 applicants were eligible for unemployment compensation, but agreement that evening on the terms of a three-year contract overshadowed their defeat on the unemployment issue. The pact included an immediate twelve per cent raise and a five per cent increase during each of the two subsequent years, and it replaced CGA's insurance plan with the union's Robert F. Kennedy health program. CGA employees ratified the pact, 872 to 18, the following day, and ecstatic union officials announced that they would attempt to make the contract a model for the citrus industry.¹⁰⁹

They had, by that time, other contract negotiations on which to try out their strategy. Negotiations at S & F Growers, dragging into their eleventh month, concluded with the ratification of a contract similar to CGA's on May 25.¹¹⁰ Two other harvesting associations where workers voted for UFW representation in April, L & O Growers and Buena Foothill Growers, quickly followed suit. At Limoneira Ranch, workers had voted for UFW representation on April 21, apparently the only case in which workers were inspired to do so by union organizers not employed by the affected company. The ALRB certified the vote on May 3, and contract negotiations began later that month. By mid-June, the talks had stalled over the issue of wages, and on June 20, Limoneira workers walked off the job as negotiators broke off bargaining. The strike lasted more than five weeks, but Limoneira imported no strikebreakers, and the

tion. VCSFP, May 5 and 6, 1978.

109. VCSFP, May 6, 7, and 16, 1978, and interview with Jack Lloyd, May, 1981.

110. VCSFP, May 26, 1978.

relatively peaceful dispute ended with a July 27 contract agreement that called for wages slightly better (less than 1% higher) than those at CGA, but in other respects, the pact was nearly identical.¹¹¹ The UFW had also won elections to represent workers at Rancho Sespe, F & P Growers and the Ventura County Fruit Growers Association by the middle of 1978, thus winning the right to represent perhaps as many as 90 per cent of the harvest workers in Ventura County citrus. Since then, the UFW's position has steadily eroded; for undisclosed reasons, as we mentioned above, the union has never seriously bargained at F & P, where four crews had enjoyed pensions, health plans, and other benefits before unionization, and at Sespe, contract negotiations broke off in January, 1979, when the property changed hands.¹¹²

Following the now familiar pattern for controlling militant workers, the new owners of Rancho Sespe attempted to evict the unionized force from company-owned housing, indicating their intention to demolish the camp. The workers have resisted this action, and some of them continue to occupy the premises at this writing, while the UFW fights protracted legal battles on their behalf. But their numbers are dwindling, and there is no contract, and no work--Rancho Sespe (now Rivcom) management harvests its fruit with the aid of a contractor from outside the county. The Rivcom dispute takes its place in a recurring sequence of events observed in Ventura County. In 1941, at Limoneira and other ranches, in 1975 at the Santa Paula Camp of SP Growers and at S & F's

111. VCSFP, May 4 and July 28, 1978, and interviews with Limoneira pickers, 1981.

112. VCSFP, January 17, 1979.

Cabrillo Village, and finally, at Rivcom in 1978, employers have responded to worker organization with attempts to eliminate such workers by evicting them from their housing. The process follows these steps: workers, partially through employer encouragement, tend to settle and bring their families. This experience leads to a rising consciousness of their rights and a need for higher incomes due to greater living expenses. However, when worker demands lead to organization and strikes, employers turn to eviction procedures as one of their anti-organizational tactics.

The Rise of the Labor Contractor and the Erosion of Formalized Labor Market Structures in Ventura County

The victories of the United Farm Workers pushed the Ventura County citrus harvest labor market to a higher level of formalization. Pension plans, paid vacations, health care coverage and other benefits spread to larger numbers of workers. By the end of 1978, approximately 70% of the 103 citrus picking crews were under union contract (see Table CH, p. 68). However, the UFW victories fed into a countertendency which was occurring already in Ventura County--the rise of the labor contractor. Labor contractors had not been seen in Ventura County citrus for several decades. However, as the picking force stabilized and increased its demands, the overhead costs of the formal labor structures in the County reduced the structures' attractiveness to employers. (Detailed overhead comparisons appear below in the section titled "Analysis.")

The revival of the labor contractor system in Ventura County emerged from the breakup of the SP Growers harvesting association. The long, simmering strike at SP Growers had brought Ralph de Leon forward to fill a leadership vacuum and culminated with his purchase of the equipment with which to form a commercial harvesting company. DeLeon was able to be more flexible than the associations in taking his crews to the Central Valley and desert regions to bring back fruit. He exposed Ventura County crews and crew leaders to the labor contractor system of the Central Valley, and two of his former crew leaders, Lorenzo Vega and Antonio Pardo, soon broke off to form their own contracting firms in Santa Paula. A freighting contractor, Manuel Ortiz, who had been bringing lemons into Saticoy Citrus Association from the San Joaquin Valley for several years, also decided to follow the example of the Central Valley contractors and formed his own picking crews.

The contractors were able to grow in size because the formalized associations were declining. The growers, reacting to continually rising overhead costs and to the 1978 victories of the United Farm Workers, began to withdraw from the associations. The largest association, CGA, with over half of the unionized crews, lost a very large grower, Gus Ferro, and a whole packing house, Paramount Citrus Association. In the first three seasons following unionization, its 1975-77 average annual harvest of 8.1 million boxes of lemons fell to 5.5 million, and its number of peak season crews declined from 38 to 30.¹¹³ The second largest association, S & F Growers, lost 60% of its growers between 1978 and

113. CGA office data.

1980.¹¹⁴ Moreover, other associations have lost members to labor contractors through attrition. As ranches were sold or affiliated with different packing houses, their owners tended to shift to labor contractors.¹¹⁵ The displacement of union workers by an out-of-county contractor at Rancho Sespe, the largest ranch in the county, exemplifies another form that the expansion of the labor contractor system can take.

114. Interview with Steve Highfill, April, 1981.

115. Interview with Wilbur Mayhew, Manager of Buena Ventura Citrus Association, January, 1981.

Table CH

Citrus Harvester	Type of Harvester	Type of* Fruit	Peak Season Crews (30 men) 1980-1981		Union/No Contract
			Ventura	Out of County	
Coastal Growers	Assn.	L	31		Union
S & F	Assn.	L	7		Union
L & O	Assn.	LO	5		Union
Buena Foothill	Assn.	L	5		Union
F & P	Assn.	O	10		no contract
SAMCO	Contr.	LOG	8	8	no contract
Vega	Contr.	LOG	4		no contract
Ortiz	Contr.	L	5	3	no contract
Pardo	Contr.	LO	6		no contract
Molina	Contr.	L	3		no contract
California Harvest	Contr.	LOG	4	8	no contract
Limoneira	Ranch	LO	6		Union
Ventura Co. Fruit Growers	Packing House	OG	4		no contract
Mupu	Packing House	OG	5		no contract
Total			103		

* L = Lemons

O = Oranges

G = Grapefruit

Between 1975 and 1980, about 30 crews of citrus pickers shifted to labor contractors (see Table CH, p. 68). The principal cause for this shift is the lower overhead contractors incur, which is more important than the differences in the direct picking cost of the fruit or the piece rate paid. The overhead charged by the contractors varies between 30 and 50% of the direct picking costs, while the associations and the unionized ranch charge about 60% overhead. These extra overhead costs can mean that each box of fruit picked may cost an extra 15 to 20 cents. These costs come directly out of profits, and, as a consequence, growers are tempted to shift to contractors. For example, Gus Ferro, who withdrew 1,000 acres of prime lemon orchards from the CGA, is calculated to be saving over \$100,000 a year as a result of his shift to a labor contractor.

Other factors have hurt the associations. In several recent years, the price for by-products for lemons has fallen below cost, making older orchards unprofitable.¹¹⁶ The orchards now being planted to replace removed acreage do not yet produce, and while harvesting associations controlled the pick on most of the old acreage, it is uncertain which kind of harvesting institution the owners of the new acreage will turn to when it comes time to harvest their fruit. Acreage losses do not represent the only threat to the associations. First, the seniority system used by the associations under union contract requires that the pickers return early from the desert citrus harvest, despite higher earnings in the Coachella Valley and the Yuma area. Many pickers,

116. Interview with Jack Lloyd, May, 1981.

irritated by the system, have forfeited their seniority and switched to contractors for employment. Secondly, a severe freeze in 1979 forced the associations to lay off many workers who then switched to contractors.¹¹⁷ Finally, many of the withdrawing growers have the best, easiest-to-pick orchards, and pickers used to harvesting these orchards have often moved to the new employers who have obtained contracts to pick this fruit.

In February, 1981, S & F Growers Association members voted 82 to 2 to disappear as an entity, and the 15-year-old organization ceased to exist on May 30, 1981. The most important consideration in this decision was the 15 cents or more per box in savings that the 120 growers could achieve by shifting to labor contractors to harvest their 1.7 million boxes of lemons. At least one of the ex-foremen at S & F has applied for a contractor's license and will probably win some of the business created by the dissolution of the non-profit harvesting association.

Not all developments have tended toward the associations' demise. When growers withdrew from CGA, S & F, and Limoneira, the UFW filed a complaint alleging that the withdrawal was a violation of the union contract, and the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) hearing officer ruled against the union. The UFW appealed this decision to the then three-member ALRB, which upheld the decision by a vote of two-to-one. However, when S & F Growers Association voted to dissolve itself, the UFW filed another appeal, charging that the dissolution of the

117. Interviews with CGA pickers.

association changed the circumstances of the decision. In the interim, Governor Jerry Brown had appointed two new Board members who are considered favorably disposed to the union. The full five-member board voted to reconsider the withdrawal and dissolution issues. The growers, who fear the "make whole" provision in the ALRA (which would require them to pay full back wages if they lose the suit), are still cautious about withdrawing from the associations, despite the temptation of avoiding higher overhead costs. In June, 1981, after S & F had disappeared, the union petitioned the ALRB for two representation elections, in which the ex-S & F Growers were considered the bargaining units. One election was for the harvest crews of the growers, and the other for the non-harvest employees of those growers having such workers on their payrolls. The results were impounded pending the decision of the ALRB and the courts as to whether it was legal for S & F members to withdraw and to vote themselves out of existence. The wait may be years.

Since the union contracts were signed, two of the employers have experienced decertification drives (which legally must be begun by the pickers themselves). S & F Growers had two--one in the Spring of 1980, and another in the Winter of 1981--and neither came to a vote. Limoneira Company experienced a decertification drive that actually led to a vote in the Winter of 1981, amidst allegations of duplicity. The leader of the drive, a veteran picker at Limoneira and former union supporter, was apparently a sincere opponent of the union, although one of his collaborators was accused of deceptive tactics. On the other hand, the leader of the drive claimed that some threats were made against him. In the end, the union sent spokesmen to defend the union position, and

the decertification drive failed. The union, though it is susceptible to being undermined by institutional change from without, apparently cannot, under present ALRB regulations, be easily dislodged by a direct confrontation within an institution where it holds sway.

The expansion of the labor contractor system has seen the melting away of formalized labor market structures in Ventura County. The Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee (VCCGC) from 1942 to 1976 provided health insurance for the whole county. Now, health coverage varies from nothing to quite adequate insurance plans. A county-wide rate sheet to regulate wages was in force until 1974, when industry lawyers decided it showed too much collusion among the associations. Now, every association and contractor has a different rate sheet, and some employers measure in bins, others in boxes. Moreover, the number of employer-run labor camps has shrunk. In 1963, there were 22 camps in the county; in 1974, there were 12; and today, there are only five.¹¹⁸ Even in the remaining camps, fewer men live now than did so previously: the CGA camp in Oxnard, for example, has suffered a continuous attrition since the end of the Bracero Program. Finally, the transportation system is changing. Previously, almost all pickers went to the orchard in company buses; now, a growing number use car pools. The growers, who used to object to the pickers' parking their cars in the orchards, are adjusting to this change; the largest labor contractor in the county, SAMCO, is selling its buses. The system is now more flexible, and conditions

118. For 1963, interview with William Tolbert, former Manager of the VCCGC; for 1974, VCSFP, January 28, 1974; and for 1981, telephone interview with Ray Mera, VCCGC safety engineer, May, 1981.

among employers vary much more than in the earlier period of county-wide institutional norms. The present system is better adapted to the younger, more recent migrant from Mexico who prefers not to live in housing or go to work in buses that are easily identified by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

This evolving system of fragmented labor market institutions has not defeated the union directly: the UFW has not lost a single election in the county. However, the unionized associations and formalized labor structures on large ranches are being undermined as institutions. The associations are losing their members, and at least one farm with formalized structures, Rancho Sespe, has shifted to the labor contractor system. These changes have placed the union on the defensive. Despite the expiration of the contracts at the CGA and the approach of the expiration date of the other contracts in 1981, union activity in the county remained surprisingly quiet. Moreover, the UFW is experiencing similar difficulties in the desert regions. Coachella Valley labor contractors are also expanding at the expense of the union, as growers there try to avoid union contracts by withdrawing from unionized associations.¹¹⁹

119. Interview with Nancy Kirke, ALRB attorney, June, 1981.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The historical period under present study can be viewed in two contexts: in the context of confrontation, we see that growers' associations and labor contractors are vying for harvest work in Ventura County, and the United Farm Workers are confronting the associations and the growers to retain their contracts. However, this period can also be viewed in the context of structural change within which the confrontations are occurring. There are new waves of migrants entering Ventura County and causing a relative surplus of workers unaccustomed to U.S. labor-management practices. Also, there is a growing interdependence between labor surplus areas of Mexico and certain job markets in the U.S. These two developments very much influence the outcome of the present confrontation in the County.

Segmented Labor Market and Dependency Hypotheses

The segmented labor hypotheses are useful tools for understanding events in Ventura County. The essence of the hypotheses is a categorization scheme to explain the functioning of the labor market. In a simplified version, theorists define two sectors, primary and secondary, for a given industry or area. The primary sector consists of unionized and/or well paying jobs with good working conditions, benefits and promotional opportunities. The secondary sector has unstable work patterns, low pay, poor conditions and benefits and little chance for advancement. A basic element in the theory is that, due to discrimination or cultural and attitudinal differences between the groups that

work in the two sectors, it is difficult for those working in the secondary sector to move to a primary sector job.¹²⁰ The existence of the secondary sector is often explained as functional to the U.S. economy, which continually has new or struggling product markets that do not attract investments in expensive equipment and a stable labor force. Employers producing for an uncertain market will use secondary sector conditions to hold down costs.¹²¹ This explanation is inadequate for an established sector like the citrus industry.

In the case of the citrus harvest of Ventura County, the two segments use the same technology and produce for the same product market. Therefore, the argument that technology determines the distinct conditions in the two sectors cannot hold. Still, it is not clear whether the characteristics of the people in each segment cause the differentiation of conditions or whether the different conditions attract people of different characteristics. There are two easily distinguishable segments among the Mexican Nationals that pick citrus in Ventura County. The upper segment is composed of people who have most of the traits of the domestic working class. They maintain and reproduce their families in the U.S., entirely with U.S. earnings, and are not dependent on the Mexican economy. Their children go to U.S. schools and learn about attractive alternatives to picking citrus, so the upper segment does not reproduce itself as a class of citrus pickers. The lower segment of

120. See Glen G. Cain, "The Challenge of Segmented Labor Market Theories to Orthodox Theory: A Survey," Journal of Economic Literature, 14:4:1215-1257 for a review of these theories.

121. Michael Piore, Birds of Passage (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 35-39.

people involved in the citrus pick is a class that cannot reproduce itself and maintain families in the U.S. This segment's earnings and benefits are inadequate to survive at its accustomed standard of living without relying on earnings from Mexico and on Mexico's relatively low cost of living, especially its low cost of housing. Since lower-segment family units are reproduced in Mexico, its children are raised in a traditional rural setting. They learn the traditional tasks of rural Mexico, which they see as their alternative to picking citrus. This segment thus reproduces itself as a citrus-picking class in a binational setting with the wife and children living in Mexico while the husband earns his living, at least partially, in the U.S. ¹²²

The two segments of Mexican Nationals coincide in a very approximate manner with two sectors in the Ventura County citrus harvest labor market. There are fourteen major employers, among whom prevail a spectrum of working conditions (see Table CH, p. 68). In the 1980-81 season, there were four associations and one large ranch that were unionized; employers using non-union crews included six commercial labor contractors or custom harvesters, two packing houses which ran some or all of their own crews, and one harvesting association. In the primary sector, composed of the unionized employers, the workers have seniority, benefits, and some chance of advancement to the position of foreman or checker. In the secondary sector, conditions vary, but in all cases,

122. A similar phenomenon in a lower segment population exists among those U.S. individuals dependent on welfare. They, too, find it impossible to reproduce and maintain their families on their U.S. income. Their children, however, are raised here and shun arduous jobs like citrus picking.

workers receive less attractive benefits as a whole than do the unionized crews. Furthermore, since seniority and legal status limit entry into the primary sector, it is quite difficult for a lower-segment individual picking in the secondary sector to move to the primary sector. Between the most and least desirable employers, there is considerable variation. Still, in general, the unionized employers offering employment with primary sector traits tend to have a high percentage of upper-segment individuals, while the labor contractors and in-house foreman systems employ predominantly lower-segment individuals as defined above.

So long as a sufficient proportion of its workers were lower-segment individuals whose children were raised in rural Mexico, the Ventura County citrus industry possessed a reproducible labor force with a constant inflow of young men already conditioned to citrus picking by their communities of origin. As explained above, former braceros and their children, legalized by their employers, formed the core of this labor force. But in the 1970's, two contradictory tendencies came into play. First, the former bracero pickers and their sons began to settle, partially with employer encouragement, in Ventura County. This phenomenon created large numbers of upper-segment (settled) individuals, which presented employers with two problems. On the one hand, fewer children of the pickers now wanted to pick citrus, and on the other hand, the pickers needed better pay and benefits to pay their higher living costs in the U.S. The settled harvesters began demanding primary sector conditions. Secondly, an expansion of the migrant network took place; large numbers of migrants, either from new sending areas or from

old sending areas but without relatives legally residing in the U.S., began to appear in Ventura County. These newer networks of migrants were attracted to Ventura County in part because of the improvements in working conditions there. As a consequence, the labor market was pulled in two opposite directions simultaneously. Unionization became easier due to the settled migrant population of upper-segment Mexicans, and recruitment for the secondary sector labor contractors became easier due to the presence of large numbers of lower-segment individuals (those whose families lived in Mexico).

Dependency theorists have noted that as a modern economy spreads to traditional areas, the more backward areas are drained of their resources and brought into a condition of subsidizing the more advanced areas.¹²³ The lower-segment individuals picking fruit in Ventura County transfer such an informal subsidy. Their place of origin underwrites in great part their health care expenses, their unemployment insurance, their retirement benefits, and most importantly, the cost of raising children. The lower cost of their labor in wages and benefits subsidizes the citrus industry indirectly.

The upper-segment or settled groups found in Ventura County are of two types. The U.S provides most of the income for both types of migrants, who are primarily holders of legal residence cards, and the Mexican sending area serves mostly as a rest and recreation area for them. The first type we will call the green-card shuttle community.

123. See Alejandro Portes and Harley L. Browning, Current Perspectives in Latin American Urban Research (University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 6-7, for a review of the dependency position.

The majority of its members, despite permanent resident status, return annually to their place of origin, where they enjoy relatively high levels of consumption.¹²⁴ The second type, the permanent-settler core community, has a much larger percentage of individuals who visit their home towns only occasionally and tend to buy homes, furniture, and cars in the U.S. The green-card shuttle community has, until recently, predominated among the settled part of Ventura County citrus pickers and represents a transitional form between lower- and upper-segment communities. Its children are raised in the rural Mexican setting, but the community derives its income almost entirely from the U.S. In recent years, many of the individuals from green-card communities have foregone their annual trip home and have brought their younger children to Ventura County. This process of maturing from a community made up of entirely lower-segment to mostly upper-segment individuals represents the Mexican side of the process of demanding wages and benefits capable of sustaining comfortable U.S. living standards.

One hypothesis of this report is that a self-feeding process occurred in Ventura County, whereby a more settled group of citrus pickers emerged because the pickers became more accustomed to U.S. labor-management practices and demanded better conditions. Pickers also demanded better conditions because, as they began to bring their fami-

124. See, for example, the work of Joshua Reichert and Douglas S. Massey, who studied the home town of a similar network sending workers to Ventura County: Reichert and Massey, "Patterns of U.S. Migration from a Mexican Sending Community: A Comparison of Legal and Illegal Migrants," International Migration Review, 13:4:599-623; and Reichert and Massey, "History and Trends in U.S. Bound Migration from a Mexican Town," International Migration Review, 14:4:475-491.

lies and limited their dependence on the Mexican economy, they needed higher U.S.-side incomes to maintain their standard of living. To look at the same phenomenon another way, the pickers were able to bring their families because U.S.-side income was increasing. Whether the immigration of the families or the rise in income came first is less important than the fact that the pickers became dependent on improved working conditions to maintain their families in the U.S. Another hypothesis of this paper proceeds in part from the same process. As conditions in Ventura County improved, word got back to the sending areas, and ever more families became involved in the citrus pick. However, the newer migrants, although they may be relatives of the first wave of migrants, often lack legal residence papers and familiarity with U.S. labor-management practices. These newer migrants have allowed employers to turn to a new institution in Ventura County--the labor contractor--to avoid meeting the demands of the older, more settled group.

Methodology

The hypotheses presented above have already been placed in an historical context. The historical material was gathered by reviewing newspapers, magazines, and industry, academic, and government publications. Also, extensive interviews were conducted with participants at all levels of the industry. In order to study the impact of the historical changes on the workers and to test our hypotheses, four citrus crews working in Ventura County were chosen for closer scrutiny. The four crews were each of a different type; two were unionized and two were not. In addition, personnel managers, labor contractors, and crew

leaders (foremen) associated with the crews were interviewed. In all, 92 pickers were interviewed by the researchers. It was necessary to pick alongside the men in all four crews to gain their confidence. Two researchers picked on 15 different occasions to achieve rapport with the crews.

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The crews analyzed here represent some of the variety present among Ventura County citrus picking crews. Two of the crews, one working for Limoneira Company and the other for Coastal Growers Association, offer some of the best conditions in the county. One crew, which works for a small local contractor, has intermediate conditions. The final crew, working for an out-of-county contractor, provides some of the worst conditions in the county. The two contractors will not be mentioned by name and the four crew leaders have been given fictitious names to protect their privacy. The four crews will first be described in general terms. They will then be compared as to their migration and work options, their wages and working conditions, their overhead costs, and their attitudes toward unions. It was not possible, given the apprehensiveness of informants, to gather data on all topics about all four crews. The Local Contractor was the least studied of the four employers.

The analysis of the four crews during the 1980-81 season is a static exercise. Nevertheless, if it is recalled from the historical section that the share of the labor market controlled by labor contractors is increasing, this comparison reveals the direction in which the labor market for citrus pickers is evolving in Ventura County.

A Description of the Four Crews

Juan Venado recruits and works a crew for a contractor whose base of operations is the San Joaquin Valley. The contractor employs about 12 crews at peak season, four of which work in Ventura County. Juan is 30 years old; he picked citrus for about 13 years and has had his own crew for a little over two years. The crew's composition changes throughout the year as pickers come and go. There are usually about 25 men and two women in the crew; occasionally, underage individuals and babies are present in the camp. Virtually none of Juan's workers--predominantly young, unmarried males--reside for long periods in the U.S. (see Table CC, p. 84). The crew is composed almost exclusively of migrants from the vicinity of the village of San Gerónimo, Oaxaca, who speak a Native American language (mixteco). For the past two years, Juan has spent the navel season, October to May, in Tulare County, and the valencia season, May to September, in Ventura County. In Ventura County, he supplements his Oaxacan crew with "mestizo" Mexicans recruited locally.

Pedro Puentes works for the local contractor. His boss was a picker himself for many years and took out a contractor's license only in recent years after a stint as a foreman. Pedro's boss has four or five crews at peak season. They pick mostly in the Ventura-Santa Barbara area but occasionally cross the Tehachapis and pick in Kern County. Pedro is 45 years old and has picked citrus and strawberries for over 20 years. He, too, became a crew leader about two years ago. Pedro's crew consists entirely of men, with the exception of one woman married to a

crew member. His men are split approximately equally between those with legal papers and those without; over half of his men are single. The crew lives in the Santa Paula area in Ventura County, but on occasion the workers must commute as much as two hours to work.

Table CC
Comparison of Four Crews

<u># of Pickers Inter-viewed</u>	<u>Name of Employer</u>	<u>Type of Employer</u>	<u>Fictitious Name of Foreman</u>	<u>Avg. Age</u>	<u>Avg. Yrs. Worked</u>	<u>% Legal</u>
17	Coastal Growers Assn.	Non-profit, coop. harvesting assn.	Julián González	38.2 (17)*	8.9 ^a (17)	100 (17)
33	Limoneira Company	Large, private ranch	Santiago Guzmán	34.4 (32)	7.8 ^a (33)	80 ^c
27	Local	Small, Commercial contractor	Pedro Puentes	28.6 (27)	4.0 ^b (27)	48 (27)
15	Out-of-County Contractor	Medium-sized, commercial contractor	Juan Venado	23.8 (15)	2.5 ^b (13)	0 (15)

*Figures in parentheses indicate size of sample.
(a)Number of years worked for company
(b)Number of years worked in citrus
(c)Exact figure unknown

Source: Interviews with citrus pickers.

Santiago Guzmán, aged 35, works for Limoneira Company. This ranch, established in the 1880's, has been a leader in the citrus industry

since that time.¹²⁵ Santiago also began as a picker but moved up to foreman 10 years ago. His crew, 100% male, overwhelmingly married, and legally residing in the U.S., picks only in the immediate vicinity of Santa Paula. The crew's composition varies slightly through the year, but it is made up primarily of veteran Limoneira pickers. Twenty-six of the 33 interviewees on this crew were veteran pickers at Limoneira.

Julian Gonzalez, 58, is a foreman for Coastal Growers Association. The CGA is the oldest harvesting association in Ventura County and, like Limoneira, has a union contract. Julian has not picked for many years and is one of the oldest foremen at the company. On his crew of about 30 men, almost all have considerable experience picking lemons. Their average age is 38.2 and the average man has picked for CGA for 8.9 years; all are legal residents of the U.S. They pick only in the coastal strip of lemon orchards near Oxnard, California.

Network Comparisons

The central thesis of this paper, that Ventura County labor market institutions have been formalized and undermined at the same time, is best explained by network analysis. Network migration from rural Mexico depends on a word-of-mouth system of job and migration contacts among friends and relatives from a given sending area. This migration structure evolved from traditional networks of mutual exchange necessary for survival in a poor rural environment.

125. Teague, Fifty Years a Rancher, passim.

Almost all citrus pickers in Ventura County originate in rural Mexico, overwhelmingly from a triangle formed by the cities of Zamora and Morelia in Michoacán and Irapuato in Guanajuato--an area of only about 2,500 square miles, or roughly half the size of the state of Connecticut (see Figure 2 and Table ST, below). The majority--the core--of the picking population either picked citrus in Ventura as Braceros or are the children of these men.

Table ST

Percentage of the Crews that Originate in the Triangle Bounded by Irapuato, Guanajuato, and Morelia and Zamora, Michoacán

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number of reliable responses</u>
CGA	71%	17
Limoneira	73%	33
Local Contractor	50%	16
Out-of-County Contractor	0%	15

Source: Interviews with pickers

This core group of workers became legalized and subsequently legalized their children. However, in recent years, two phenomena have occurred in the Mexican sending networks that send pickers to Ventura County. First, the original sending areas have deepened their migratory commitment: each year, new families from a veteran sending area join the flow into Ventura County. Secondly, the source of networks has widened:

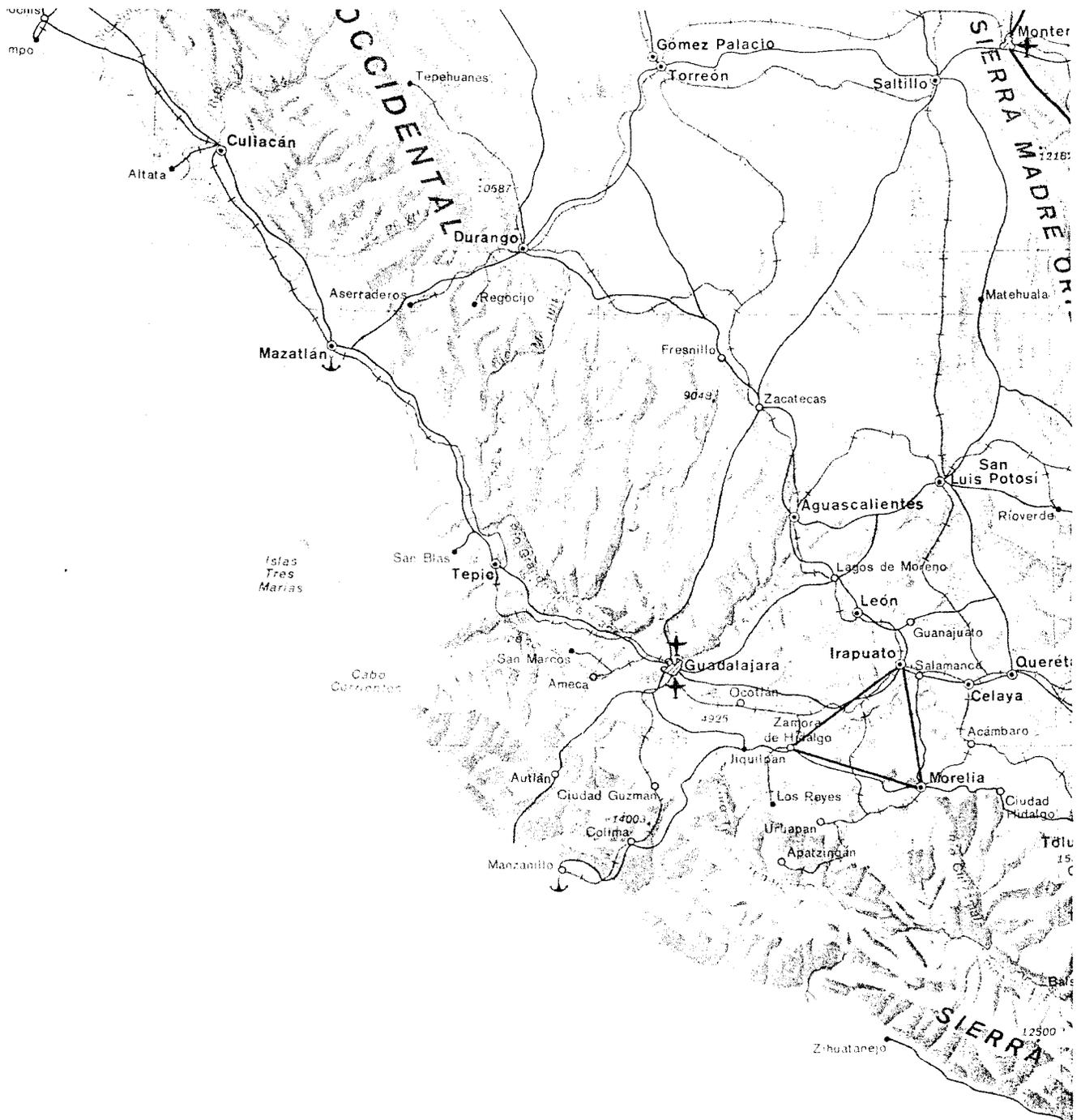


Figure 2: Western Mexico, showing Michoacán-Guanajuato region which serves as principal sending region for Ventura County citrus (bounded, roughly, by the triangle formed by the cities of Zamora, Morelia, and Irapuato).

completely new networks, without previous ties in the U.S., are appearing in Ventura County. An analysis of the four crews, according to the types of networks of which they are composed, follows.

The Out-of-County Contractor: This crew has very few contracts or options in the U.S. The network of people originating in San Gerónimo, Oaxaca includes no one with legal-resident status in the U.S. Only a few families have permanently settled north of the border. They have no one to offer them a safe haven or good job advice, as do the members of more mature migratory networks. San Gerónimo has for many generations been a migratory community. However, until recent years, its migrants were limited to Mexican job destinations. Among the older members of the crew, some recall having cut sugar cane in Veracruz in the 1940's and 1950's; in the 1960's and 1970's, migrants from San Gerónimo shifted to picking tomatoes in Sinaloa and Baja California. In the early 1970's, a few men began picking tomatoes and strawberries in the fields of northern San Diego County. Many of them still work in that area, and almost all San Gerónimo men entering the U.S. arrive there first. In 1975, a labor contractor took a few San Gerónimo men north from San Diego County to work in Riverside County's orange harvest. When the word spread in the community that orange picking in Riverside County was relatively lucrative, the network became permanently diverted to citrus picking. Now, four or five contractors in the Riverside area provide jobs for most San Gerónimo men working in the U.S. (see Table JV, p. 88).

In 1978, Juan Venado, who was working for the Out-of-County Contractor as a machine operator in Riverside County, decided to form his own crew. He recruited almost entirely from the San Gerónimo network working in Riverside County. He took many of them to Tulare County, where he is based, and later to Ventura County, when his boss received a contract to pick fruit there.

Table JV

The Location of Juan Venado's Present Crew Over Time

<u>Year</u>	<u>Riverside</u>	<u>Tulare</u>	<u>Ventura</u>
1975	2		
1976			
1977	3		
1978	6	2	
1979	10	4	2
1980	3	14	12
1981		11	5

Source: 15 interviews--each man is counted once in each place he picked each year.

The workers in Juan's crew are totally dependent on him for their survival in the U.S. He takes them to buy groceries and to do their laundry; he cashes their checks and gives them rides from areas just north of San Diego County to their work sites. Workers in this network call a contractor immediately upon crossing the checkpoint; they are unable to find work on their own, and they fear leaving the work camp unless accompanied by an experienced person.

The members of Juan's crew know their options. They must migrate from San Geronimo because the village is extremely resource-poor. They can work at picking tomatoes in Sinaloa or Baja California at \$5.38 a day; they can harvest in northern San Diego County at minimum U.S. wages but must sleep under plastic sheets, buy their food from traveling grocers who engage in price-gouging, and cook over open fires, despite the scarcity of firewood. Or they can pick citrus in Riverside County, where they earn slightly less than they do when working for Juan and also usually live in the fields or in inadequate shacks. By comparison, for a person in this network, working for Juan offers relatively good conditions. It is true that, when they pick valencias in Ventura County, they have no light or furniture in the shacks in which they live, but there is water outside and ample firewood for cooking. In Tulare County, the navel-picking crew, including women and children, is crammed into two rooms of the house where Juan's father lives. There are lights and bunk beds without mattresses. Cooking and lavatory facilities are again out in the yard. However, Juan charges nothing for the accommodations in Ventura County and only 50 cents a day for the bed in Tulare County. Moreover, he has a reputation for charging less for rides than do other labor contractors who deal with this network. Juan does sell the picking equipment, most of which he apparently obtains free from the packing house, to his workers. However, these men are accustomed to paying for their equipment and notice no malfeasance towards them.

Although the men may view their living conditions in Tulare County as tolerable, they consider their work schedule burdensome. Juan is extremely fearful of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), since he often loses men to their inspections, and each man he loses represents a large recruitment cost, because he usually has to drive long distances to pick up the men as they pass the checkpoints in Southern California. As a preventive measure, during the stay in Tulare, he leaves before dawn every morning and returns from the fields after dark, thus avoiding harassment from the INS on the highways. Consequently, the men must normally wake up at 4:00 a.m. and return to Juan's house in the evening after 8:00 p.m. By the time they wash and eat, they are left with only six hours of sleep each night, and Juan himself must submit to the same demanding schedule. The INS, though it does not stop the undocumented crew from picking citrus, effectively lowers their living conditions to inhuman levels.

The options facing the network migrants from San Gerónimo demonstrate, perhaps in an extreme way, the limitations that exist on the lower segment of citrus harvesters in Ventura County. Their poverty and their limited chances for settlement in the U.S. condition certain life choices. Men in the San Gerónimo network, by and large, look forward to retiring from the citrus pick in middle age and returning to the village. Their chances for long-term survival hinge on their children, who will replace them in the U.S. citrus pick and remit money to them, and on their possibilities of starting an economic activity in their hometowns. Their goals are, first, to work 10 to 20 years in the U.S. in order to save money with which to begin a business endeavor in the

village, and secondly, to place their children in U.S. jobs so that U.S. income will continue to flow into the household after they are too old to pick. These lower-segment migrants do not view job security, seniority, and other benefits as primary employment objectives. The option of being part of Juan's crew appeals only to those whose other options are even worse. All those present on Juan's crew in 1980 were members of new networks with few options or stray individuals from older networks that had lost contact with their better-placed relatives in the U.S.

The Local Contractor: Pedro's crew is composed of a mixture of the core group--legalized ex-braceros and their children--and newer groups. The shrinking of the unionized associations has freed many of the veteran pickers for work with contractors. Of the 27 interviewees on this crew, 13 were veteran pickers or close relatives of long-time pickers. Six of the interviewed pickers originated in a new migratory area that, until recently, had sent no significant numbers of migrants to the U.S. The crew was very evenly divided between the half who were older, settled, married, and legal, and the half that were younger, temporary, single, and undocumented.

The undocumented group in Pedro's crew is different than that of Juan's crew and probably more similar to most of the young, undocumented citrus pickers in Ventura County. They are all mestizos, live in apartments in town, and arrange their own transportation to work, mostly through car pools with legal pickers. The young men are, on average, better equipped to survive in the U.S. than are the members of Juan's crew. Most of the individuals in this group had some contacts in the

Mexican community in Ventura County and were more able to seek other options if they were displeased with working conditions. Many of the undocumented men in Pedro's crew had taken advantage of the option of picking fruit in the desert or the Central Valley, whereas few workers on Juan's crew have the wherewithal to travel to strange places in the U.S. to seek work. The lower-segment group in Pedro's crew, though less dependent on one labor contractor for survival, still face constraints similar to those confronting the members of Juan's crew. As seasonal agricultural workers unable to bring their families and settle in the U.S., they have to look for their long-run security in Mexico and view the U.S. as a place to save money and find work for their children.

The Limoneira Crew: Santiago's crew, of the four crews studied, is the most settled in the U.S. and the least committed to Mexico. Limoneira provides work in lemons and valencias, so that most of the crew work year-round. Last year, for example, the 26 veterans on the crew averaged 10.6 months of work at Limoneira. They remit less money to Mexico, earn less money south of the border, and spend less time in their native land (see Table CM, p. 93).

In addition to nearly year-round work, Limoneira offers subsidized family housing (a three-bedroom apartment rents for \$36.93 per month). As a consequence, 68% of the married men on the crew live with their wives in the Santa Paula area, where the ranch is located. The overwhelming majority of Limoneira employees have lived on the ranch

since the mid-1970's.¹²⁶ Besides subsidized housing, another incentive for the wives of pickers to settle at Limoneira is the high rate of employment among them while in the U.S.--about half of the crew members' wives were working at the time of the interviews.

Table CM
Indices of Commitment to Mexico

	%Who Re- mit \$50+ per month to Mexico	% Earned \$200+ in Mexico (1980)	Avg. Stay per yr. in Mexico (months)	%Who own house in Mexico**	%Who Own 3 ha.+ of land in Mexico**	%Who Own 10 ha.+ of land in Mexico**
Coastal Growers	86% (14)	13% (15)	2.9 mos. (17)	93% (14)	28.6% (14)	7.1% (14)
Limoneira Company	55% (22)	3% (33)	2.3 (26)	92% (26)	46% (26)	23.1% (26)a
Local Contractor	75% (12)	7% (27)	3.2 (22)	100% (6)	50% (6)	33% (6)
Out-of- County Contractor	100% (15)	47% (15)	4.1 (15)	75% (24)*	46% (24)*	0% (24):

The number in parentheses indicates the size of the sample.

*The sample of 24 includes 6 pickers (over 20) and 18 other siblings, parents, siblings-in-law or parents-in-law (over 20), of the 15 interviewees.

**Includes only those 21 years of age or older.

Santiago's crew is made up predominantly of legalized ex-braceros and their children. Out of 26 men who answered this question, only eight were neither braceros nor the children of braceros. Moreover,

126. See p. 27 and note 60, above.

many of Limoneira's pickers have relatives who work on the ranch. Several crew members have fathers, brothers, sisters and children that pick fruit or work in the packing house. Also, only a few sending areas provide the majority of the harvest laborers: 73% of them come from the core sending triangle (see Table ST, p. 86). The networks to which they belong are also more oriented toward the U.S. than are those of the other crews interviewed. Two-thirds of the crew members' brothers and nearly half of their fathers still work and live predominantly in the U.S. (see Table UL, below).

Table UL

Usual Residence of Interviewees' Close Relatives, Aged 16 or Over
(Percentage with Predominant Work/School Commitment in U.S.)

	<u>Brothers</u>	<u>Sisters</u>	<u>Fathers</u>	<u>Wives</u>
Coastal Growers	63% (32)*	21% (34)	27% (11)	42% (12)
Limoneira	67% (93)	26% (68)	46% (24)	68% (25)
Local Contractor	49% (57)	21% (33)	38% (13)	42% (12)
Out-of County Contractor	50% (16)	0% (7)	30% (10)	0% (4)

*Figures in parentheses indicate total number of reliable answers in the sample.

A majority of the men are now raising their children in the U.S., and as the preceding analysis suggested, their children do not want to pick citrus. Limoneira's crew is an example of citrus harvesters who are not reproducing themselves as citrus pickers. However, since the majority of the pickers' sisters are raising their children in Mexico, the

nephews of crew members are a potential source of pickers for Ventura County. Since these young men are not children of legal immigrants, they are entering and will enter the U.S. illegally.

The Coastal Growers' Association Crew: Julián's crew at the CGA originates from similar and in many cases the same networks of migrants as do the Limoneira crew. Seventy-one per cent of the pickers come from the core sending area (see Table ST, p. 86). Out of 17 pickers who gave reliable information on this point, 12 were ex-braceros or sons of ex-braceros. However, in contrast to Santiago's men, less than half of the married men on Julián's crew have been bringing their wives to the U.S. Different conditions at the two companies explain the difference in propensity to bring one's wife and children. CGA does not offer subsidized housing for married couples. Moreover, the average yearly length-of-stay at the harvesting association is only 4.8 months--CGA crews pick only lemons (see Table WW, p. 100). In fact, many of Julián's crew participate in a triangular migration pattern. From February to June, they pick lemons for the CGA; from June to September, they pick deciduous fruit in the Central Valley; and from September to February, they pick lemons in the desert area. It is, of course, less feasible to bring a family, especially with small children, when frequent moves are necessary. As a consequence of the pattern of migration adopted by over half of the legalized CGA pickers, a generation of their children raised in Mexico will be interested in picking lemons in Ventura County and will be eligible, since they have permanent-resident parents, for legal status.

The legalized workers at CGA feel much freer to travel the triangular route in order to maximize their earnings than do the undocumented "new migrants" on the labor contractors' crews. In fact, many of the CGA crew work at union jobs when they travel to the Central Valley or to the desert. Another option, taken by some relatives of CGA pickers who have working minor children, is to harvest citrus in Florida, where child-labor laws are less stringently enforced.

Despite their legal status, the CGA pickers are not assimilating into the mainstream of U.S. society. Even the more settled workers who bring their families have few contacts with the larger society. Although the legal picker has many more options than the undocumented worker, he still is quite limited in his alternatives. He, with few exceptions, speaks no English, has little formal education, and has few non-farm skills. His freedom of movement is great, but his experience typically limits him to a lifetime of tedious agricultural tasks.

Wages and Working Conditions

Observers agree that pickers' wages have fallen behind inflation in recent years. This decline is demonstrated by the fact that CGA, which has the best-paid workers in the county, has raised its charge for room and board at its male-only camp faster than wages have gone up (see Table CL, p. 97). The workers unanimously complain that the wages they earn in Ventura County, at one time sufficient to generate savings, now only sustain survival. They stress that the higher wages paid in the desert citrus harvest permit them to save some money, and that they cannot do so in Ventura County.

Table CL
Comparison of Average Wages
and Room and Board Charges at CGA

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Earnings</u> (dollars/hour)	<u>Charge for Room</u> <u>and Board at</u> <u>All-Male Camp</u> (dollars/day)
1970	2.57	2.50
1975	3.61	3.75
1978	5.63	4.50
1980	6.54	7.25

Source: Coastal Growers Association, Office Records

The decision as to what a worker is paid on a given day varies a great deal among the different crews working in Ventura County. On the two unionized crews, the rate sheet is enforced. Fruit is counted each day to determine the size of the fruit and the trees are counted to measure the yield. The height of the trees is also measured if there is any dispute about it, and wage premiums are paid if the orchards present any unusual problems. The Local Contractor also has a rate sheet, but he freely admits that he uses it only as a guide. The rate can be adjusted according to grower or picker demands, but no counts of trees or fruit were observed on Pedro's crew. On April 22, 1981, without consulting his crew, the Local Contractor lowered the per-bin rate from \$13.50 to \$12.60 without a change in orchard conditions having occurred. Furthermore, Pedro's crew is subject to the interference of the owner of the orchard on the job site. A few days before the piece rate was

lowered, the owner was observed in the orchard demanding that Pedro be stricter regarding fruit left on the trees and on the ground. Grower involvement at this level is unheard of at Limoneira or Coastal Growers. The Out-of-County Contractor has no rate sheet; the rate of pay is set by the field superintendent of the packing house. If the men are unhappy, they complain to Juan, and he may or may not try to raise the packing house's rate. On one occasion in January, 1981, Juan showed up to work with a very small crew; the rest of the men were home with a hangover. The superintendent, on making his rounds, inquired as to the whereabouts of the rest of the crew. Juan feigned that they had deserted him for another contractor because of this packing house's low piece rates. The next day, the crew's wage was raised from eight to nine dollars a bin.

The rate sheet used in the unionized crews, although it is honestly enforced, is not popular among the men. They complain that, most of the time, the rate paid them is at the bottom left, the most poorly paid part of the schedule. As a consequence, the rate sheet is to many workers a sham. This perception of the workers was borne out by an analysis of the price paid to workers on Santiago's crew at Limoneira between January 1 and April 30, 1981. The workers received the minimum of 66 cents per box for 61.3% of the picks and were paid 70 cents per box or less for 88% of the picks. At CGA, members of Julián's crew were very disdainful of the rate sheet with respect to categorization by size. The CGA pickers claim that, since the fruit is size-picked, the borderline for what is considered small fruit is set too high. This perception was also borne out by analyzing CGA office data. There are three

possible size categorizations on the rate sheets. It was observed that for the year 1977, well over 90% of the picks at CGA were in the two largest size categories. For the smaller trees, over 50% of the picks were in the largest category. As perceived by the pickers, the rate sheet appears to be stuck in the lower-paying categories.

Despite the differences in setting the rate, the cash wage paid per box or bin does not vary greatly among the crews. However, working conditions do vary. The union crews, for example, insist on compensation for wet time, while the labor contractors, even SAMCO, the most progressive, do not compensate wet time; as a consequence, contractors' crews enter much more quickly into the orchards. Wet time has traditionally been desired by the employer to protect his fruit from mold as well as by the worker trying to protect his health and maximize his earnings per unit of effort. Chemicals that protect the fruit from deterioration and the falling proportion of the fruit shipped fresh have reduced grower interest in a strictly enforced and compensated wet time. A similar difference exists between the unionized and labor contractors' crews; the latter, anxious to make money quickly, will enter wet fields despite the fact that fruit low on the trees makes for uncomfortable, muddy picking conditions. The unionized crews with more job security can space their assured earnings over a longer period. Hence, they can afford to let the fields dry thoroughly and refuse to enter muddy fields. The unionized crews have other advantages in working conditions. They receive the legal minimum wage for long commutes to work and for waiting for bins if the packing house fails to coordinate correctly the delivery of bins to the orchards. In contrast, pickers on

Pedro's crew complained that short days of work are common, even when long, unpaid commutes were required.

Table WW

Comparison of Wages and Employment on the Four Crews Interviewed

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Wet-time Paid?</u>	<u>Avg. Wage Per Hour</u>	<u>Estimate of Annual Income with Crew*</u>	<u>Avg. Months per Year with Crew</u>
Coastal Growers	Yes	\$6.35 (17)**	\$4,034 (17)	4.8 (17)
Limoneira	Yes	\$6.50 (32)	\$8,419 (32)	8.2 (33)
Local Contractor	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Out-of-County Contractor	No	\$4.76 (11)	\$5,668 (11)	6.3 (11)

*Each worker's yearly earnings were calculated by multiplying his per-month earnings in 1981 by the average number of months worked for that employer.

**Figures in parentheses indicate number of respondents.

Per-bin wages do not favor the unionized crews. In fact, the Local Contractor's minimum of \$12.60 is higher than the minimum rates paid for lemon-picking at Limoneira and Coastal Growers. Juan Venado's crew earned \$15.00 per bin in Tulare County during the 1980-81 season. It must be remembered, in this regard, that in the absence of a comparable rate sheet, it is difficult to compare per-bin rates, because orchard conditions may vary greatly. Still, it can safely be asserted that the labor contractors are not paying less per bin than are the employers of unionized crews. Nonetheless, wages-per-hour do appear to be higher

among the unionized crews; more precisely, wages-per-hour among experienced pickers are higher than among inexperienced pickers. For example, male pickers on the Out-of-County Contractor's crew earn only about 74% as much per hour as do men on the unionized crews (see Table WW, p. 100). In fact, the fastest picker on Juan's crew earns less than the average picker on the unionized crews.

The wage data for the unionized crews was gathered in the offices of the two companies, in contrast to that for Juan's crew, for which it was necessary to persuade the men to keep records of their hours, wages, and production. These records were frequently reviewed and cross-checked whenever possible with check stubs obtained from the pickers. The average wages hide the variety of picking speeds on the three crews for which data were gathered. At Limoneira, the top picker earned \$8.40 per hour, the slowest \$4.26; at CGA, the top was \$8.09, the slowest \$5.25; and on Juan's crew, the fastest picker earned \$6.13, and the slowest, \$3.25 per hour. The lower-segment portion of the Local Contractor's crew also has many inexperienced pickers, who likely resemble Juan's crew members in their hourly wages.

The wages and working conditions for Juan's crew were different than those of the unionized crews in several other ways. Every one of the 11 men who kept records fell below the minimum wage on at least one day, and one young man earned below the minimum on 27 (39.1%) of the 69 days for which he kept records. Another characteristic of Juan's crew is that some men pick with their wives or minor children. The three pairs of pickers who kept records averaged \$7.01 per hour. Two of the

women were pregnant while they were picking, and one picked with an infant stored under the branches of the tree. Furthermore, among Juan's men, attachment to the crew is of a different nature than among men in the unionized crews. On the CGA crew, men generally work straight through from February to June, at which time they move on to other remunerative work in U.S. agriculture or return to rest in Mexico. The Limoneira crew members tend to work eight or more months at the ranch, then go back home for a vacation. For Juan's employees, the stay with the crew varies from a few days among those few individuals who do not adapt to citrus picking to a whole year or more for those who want to save large sums of money. Since Juan can provide work in all seasons and the men are incapable of finding work on their own, they normally stay with him until they are ready to go back to Mexico. However, unlike the unionized pickers, the members of Juan's crew generally return to Mexico to work, not to rest. As a consequence, they may leave Juan's crew during a peak picking period because they are needed in the village to undertake some traditional task. One final characteristic of Juan's crew is their phenomenal lack of mobility while in the U.S. Juan likes to keep the crew assembled in one place to protect them from the INS and to facilitate their transportation back and forth to work every day. The only non-work activities that the crew have time for are listening to their transistor radios and drinking beer. Their life in the U.S. is limited entirely to working and saving money, and their normal lives are in suspension.

Another way to view the lower hourly wage of Juan's crew is to see it as a slower rate of pick. Since on Juan's crew the piece rates are as high as or higher than those of the unionized crews, and his pickers' hourly wages are only 75% as great as those of union workers, it follows that the rate of pick is no more than 75% as great. This discrepancy can be explained in part by observing that Juan's crew is younger and less experienced. Furthermore, work on Juan's crew is much more irregular than on the unionized crews. There was a period in July and August, 1980, when Juan's crew sat idle for 24 days. On the other hand, his crew worked on at least 14 Sundays during 1980, and when the packing house sent out an order, Juan's crew reacted flexibly, often working 10 or 11 hours per day. The fastest pickers on Santiago's and Juan's crew were compared, each for the first month for which data were available. Juan's fastest picker averaged 9.93 hours and \$60.80 per day, while Santiago's leading picker averaged 6.8 hours and \$53.80 per day. The average variation from day to day (the standard deviation) was \$20.18 for Juan's worker and only \$8.63 for Santiago's. The long and irregular hours and the uncomfortable living conditions tolerated by Juan's crew undoubtedly lead to fatigue and a slower rate of pick.

Overhead Costs

Direct picking costs do not figure prominently in differences in total costs among crews. The employers showing a preference for labor contractors are reacting to lower prices for overhead benefits charged by these employers, even though some of the contractors' overhead costs are actually higher. This is true because they have less efficient

crews with inexperienced pickers that often stay for short and irregular periods. Since the rate of pick is slower for these crews, more men are needed to pick the same amount of fruit. Some overhead costs, such as recruitment, training, housing, transportation to the orchards, equipment, and health insurance are generated by each picker, irrespective of his rate of pick. However, if the worker pays these costs out of his own pocket, then the increased overhead is not felt by the grower. With the exception of health insurance (which is not provided by all the labor contractors in Ventura County) and the cost of extra ladders, workers employed by contractors, sometimes sharing the expense with their crew leaders, absorb their own overhead costs. The detailed comparison of three crews that follows shows how, in each category, the worker himself or the labor contractors' crew leaders subsidize the citrus industry by paying overhead costs out of their own pockets. Table PC pinpoints the low-cost overhead benefits offered by the labor contractors relative to the harvesting associations. Below, the estimated overhead costs are compared among the crews for which adequate data were available; the analysis will refer to the data presented in Table PC (page 105).

While the piece-rate paid per box of lemons is comparable for the three harvesters, the Out-of-County Contractor actually paid higher wages per box for lemons in 1981. However, for Coastal Growers, other expenses quickly mounted. The foremen or crew leaders (including the checkers for the association) are much more expensive at CGA, according to the association's own 1980 cost figures.

Table PC

Estimate of Total Costs for Picking Lemons in 1981 (cents per box)

	<u>CGA</u>	<u>Local Contractor</u>	<u>Out-of-County Contractor</u>
Cost of Picking	77.7 (a)	77.7 (a)	83.3 (b)
Wet and Travel Time	3.1 (c)		
Foremen and checker wages	7.5 (c)	3.6 (d)	3.9 (e)
<u>Total wages</u>	<u>88.3</u>	<u>81.3</u>	<u>87.2</u>
Workmen's Compensation	10.0 (f)	6.0 (g)	6.5 (g)
Social Security Taxes (h)	5.9	5.4	5.8
Unemployment Taxes	3.5 (i)	2.4 (j)	0.4 (k)
Picker, Foremen Medical Insurance	4.6 (c)	0.5 (l)	2.4 (m)
Pension, vacation, holidays	10.5 (c)		
Transportation	2.7 (c)		
Equipment	1.4 (c)	0.5 (n)	
Camp, Real Estate	1.8 (c)		
Office Overhead	6.0 (c)	8.0 (p)	8.0 (p)
<hr/> Total picking and overhead cost	134.7	104.1 (q)	110.3 (q)

(a) based on \$14.00 per bin

(b) based on \$15.00 per bin

(c) based on "Operating Costs of CGA in Fiscal Year 1980"

(d) based on \$5.50 per hour and \$.10 per bin; nine hour day (\$55.90/day)

(e) based on \$.70 per bin straight piece rate paid to the crew leader

(f) based on \$7.44 per \$100 basic rate. CGA mod rating in 1981 is 1.52

(g) based on a 1.00 experience mod rating

(h) invariable at 6.65% of the payroll

(i) assumed that CGA will pay full 4% premium of payroll.

(j) assumed that the local labor contractor who had a crew of half legal and half undocumented workers will pay a lesser 3% premium of payroll

(k) assumed that this contractor will pay the lowest rate allowed.

(l) based on Plan 22-V of Pan-American Underwriters Insurance Co. This contractor pays only half the monthly premium of \$55.90 and the worker, if he wants insurance, pays the other half. For the 29 pickers and one crew leader interested, the contractor pays \$209.62 per month in premiums. At 63 boxes per day for 22 days for the 29 men, we calculate that the contractor pays only \$.005 per box picked for medical insurance.

(m) based on payment of premium for Plan 22 (Pan American Underwriters) for all 30 men, at a cost of \$32.50 per month.

(n) the local contractor provides workers just one set of equipment per year.

(p) assumed 25% more than CGA, due to diseconomies of scale

(q) figures do not include contractors' profits

This is due principally to year-round work guaranteed to the foremen and to the better benefits they receive. The contractors pay foremen either by the bin (Out-of-County) or by a wage plus a bin incentive (Local) and pay them nothing for days not worked. Secondly, Workmen's Compensation payments are higher for CGA (see Table WC, below).

Table WC

Workmen's Compensation Insurance Experience

Mod Ratings for Citrus Harvesters

<u>Commercial Labor Contractors</u>		<u>Cooperative Harvesting Associations</u>			<u>In-Packing-House Crew</u>	
		<u>Unionized Assns.</u>		<u>Non-union Assns.</u>		
Vega	1.05	Buena Foothill	1.44	F & P	1.54	Ventura Co. Fruit Growers
Ortiz	.95	CGA	1.52			1.07
SAMCO	1.34	L & O	1.50			
Pardo*	1.00	S & F	1.77			
Molina*	1.00					

*Pardo and Molina pay basic rate since they have been in business less than three years.

Source: Workmen's Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau of California.
Basic Rate for orchard workers is \$7.44 per \$100 payroll.

This is true because the undocumented men on the contractors' crews fear reporting health problems and do not want to lose work time. Also, workers at CGA are older and more accident-prone than those of the contractors' crews. Finally, the contractors have an incentive to discourage their men from using Workmen's Compensation, since their premiums are pegged to the rate of use of the program. The contractors

pay a set rate for their off-the-job insurance and therefore have an incentive to encourage workers to use the off-the-job medical insurance whenever possible, rather than Workmen's Compensation insurance. The United Farm Workers (UFW) has just the opposite set of incentives. If a worker is hurt or sick, it is in the UFW's interest that the worker use Workmen's Compensation, for which the association pays, rather than the RFLC union health plan, which is a direct cost to the union.

Social security taxes are the same for all employers, but Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes are lower for crews made up of undocumented workers, who rarely use UI. The Out-of-County crew is entirely undocumented and therefore pays close to the minimum UI assessment, which can vary between 0.5% and 4.0% of the payroll. Off-the-job medical insurance is also more expensive for CGA. All CGA workers and their dependents receive better coverage than that provided by the other two harvesters. The Local Contractor pays very little for insurance, since he will pay half the insurance premium only after the other half is paid by the worker. Only about half of his employees, mostly the older, legal workers, have elected to buy the insurance. The Out-of-County Contractor pays more for insurance since he insures everyone, but he purchases a less comprehensive policy. The contractors, furthermore, provide no pensions, vacation, or paid holidays, nor subsidized housing or food. Their workers are paid neither wet nor travel time, nor for their transportation to the job, and they do not earn seniority privileges. Workers in the Out-of-County crew pay for their own equipment, and in the Local Contractor's crew, the employer provides the initial equipment, but as it wears out, the workers are generally

responsible for replacing it. The only operation that the association can do more cheaply than the contractor can is the office work, since it can use a computer and benefits from economies of scale.

The preceding comparison, although very approximate, underlines certain problems that the industry faces. By using workers who do not demand seniority, good health insurance, unemployment insurance, pensions, paid vacations, wet and travel time, and equipment, contractors can save the employer over 20% in harvest costs. The benefits are most keenly appreciated by the older pickers who are nearer retirement, more apt to use health care and who have more family responsibilities. The young, undocumented picker is attracted by the short-run benefits of the competitive piece rates paid by the contractors. But this system encourages a cyclical pattern, whereby one wave of migrants from Mexico comes to Ventura County, learns citrus picking, acquires seniority and benefits, and then is displaced by the next group of younger migrants.

Attitudes Toward the Union

In Pedro's crew, three of the more experienced pickers had previously worked on union crews and had switched to labor contractors. Since they had chosen or had been forced to leave their union jobs, their criticism of the union was not unexpected. They were critical of the union seniority system because it forced them to return early from the desert, where per-bin rates are considerably higher (in the Blythe area, a \$16.50 minimum was normal for 1980-81). They disliked paying dues and going to meetings, and they claimed that the field representatives of the union did not protect them from overbearing foremen. In

fact, they claimed that the companies used the rigidities in the union contracts to demand a higher-quality pick. The general expression used by these men was that they wanted to be "free agents" ("quiero ser libre"). These pickers did not seem to value pension plans, vacation pay and other benefits.

The unionized pickers gave a more favorable account of the union. Many listed abuses that the foremen committed before the contracts were implemented. The foremen allegedly sold food for a profit, cheated on the rate sheet, and disciplined and discharged workers arbitrarily. When asked if the foremen treated the men differently under the union contract, 20 out of 29 unionized workers who gave reliable answers affirmed that treatment of pickers by crew leaders had improved since the entry of the United Farm Workers.¹²⁷ One picker noted that before the contract, workers rarely used the informal second person form of address when speaking to a foreman. Now this practice is nearly universal on unionized crews. One union program that union workers dislike is the medical plan. They complain that it pays slowly in the U.S. and especially resent that fact that, except for life insurance and maternity benefits, the plan covers no claims in Mexico.

The reluctance of rural Mexicans to believe in collective ideologies presents enormous difficulties for the union. Traditionally, rural Mexicans have relied on a system of one-to-one mutual exchange of favors, either with social equals or with superiors. Many unionized

127. Alfonso Guilín noted in this regard that the union has channeled frustration by natural leaders into open complaining instead of a damaging undercurrent. Interview with Alfonso Guilin, January, 1981.

citrus pickers expect the union to serve as a social welfare agency toward them. As these pickers view it, they are doing a personal favor to the union leaders by voting for the union; they expect personalized attention in return. On the other hand, many pickers recognize that the union has widespread responsibilities and cannot attend to each member personally. This tension, between traditional norms of exchanging favors and the new collective ideology to protect mutual interests, will persist.

CONCLUSIONS

The issues usually associated with Mexican migration to the U.S. are the use of services by illegal immigrants and the displacement from employment of U.S. citizens by illegals. This study of the citrus harvest labor market demonstrates that, at least in this sector, these are minor issues.

The crucial process which is occurring in Ventura County results from the entry of a wave of new, relatively young, and inexperienced Mexican migrants into a labor market dominated by an earlier wave of Mexican Nationals. There are virtually no U.S.-citizen pickers involved in this process. The migrants of both the new and the older migration waves are quite similar in language, dress, and even place of origin. By and large, there is very little hostility between the two groups, who do not see each other as competitors. In many cases, individuals in the two groups are relatives.

The presence of a settled group and a newer group in Ventura County has led to conflict and institutional change. When the more settled groups began to demand more privileges and obtain union representation, the newer migrants allowed employers to seek alternatives. In fact, employers have turned away from formal structures and union contracts toward the labor contractor system. This process, exemplified by the dismissal of the union crew at Rancho Sespe and the withdrawal of Gus Ferro's 1000 acres of lemon trees from Coastal Growers Association, has permitted employers considerable flexibility in the use of labor.

Although the "new migrants" represent perhaps only 15 to 20% of pickers in the county, they make up half of the labor contractors' crews. The new migrants' insecurity allows contractors to transport their crews without protest to Santa Barbara, Kern, and Riverside counties. The contractors, who have yearly contracts with growers, compete with each other to offer the lowest harvest price. They use the rate sheet in a flexible manner and keep overhead expenses low in order to stay competitive. Although the "new migrants" themselves do not bid down the levels of wages and working conditions, the contractors who use large numbers of the newer migrants do.

In recent years, government policies have sought to encourage agricultural employers to hire fewer and more professional workers by penalizing those who have high rates of unemployment and by requiring expensive record-keeping of workers' hours and wages. Although these policies may have initially had the intended effect, they are presently having the opposite effect, at least in the Ventura County citrus industry. Tax laws tend to encourage employers to hire "new migrants" rather than the settled Mexicans. Since these newer migrants rarely use Unemployment Insurance nor take advantage of Workmen's Compensation benefits, the employers pay lower premiums to these government insurance programs (see Table PC, p. 105).

It is often argued that long-term, experienced workers are better and imply a lower cost in the long run to employers. This argument may have validity under some circumstances, but it does not apply to the Ventura County citrus harvest in 1981. A new group of immigrants wil-

ling to pay for their own training and overhead costs are less expensive for employers. Juan Venado's crew, discussed above, is an example of a group of men whose training and current overhead cost employers almost nothing, yet 15 or 20 of them are already experienced, fast pickers. Furthermore, since they raise their children in Mexico, they are rearing a replacement force which will mature as the men reach middle age. In four or five years, new networks of migrants can learn the citrus picking trade at their own expense. Ultimately, it is misleading to assert that formalizing the labor market is identical with serving employer interests. Employers can minimize their costs by continually replacing pickers--who are not old but past their peaks of productivity--with self-training groups of younger, less secure pickers. It is in the best interest of citrus employers to have a stable supply of labor, but they can improve their balance sheets if the changing individuals that make up that supply have an insecure status in the U.S. Since the direct contact with the labor force is done by labor contractors, employers may not be aware of this process.

Although it is more costly to have a formalized labor market, it can be argued that the cost is relatively modest. According to University of California Extension Service data, it cost \$2.59 per box in cultural practices and cash overhead to produce lemons at production levels of 350 boxes per acre in 1979.¹²⁸ A more efficient operation which produces 700 boxes an acre would have similar per-acre costs and be able to

128. University of California Cooperative Extension Service, "The Cost of Producing California-Arizona Citrus for the 1978-79 Season," July, 1980, passim.

reduce its per-box costs to \$1.30. Compared to the 20-cents-per-box difference between the formalized and labor contractor systems, the gains possible through efficient operation are formidable and could easily counterbalance the costs of formalized labor market practices. The expense of a formal labor market can be thought of in another way. In the Central Valley, it cost an average of \$9.00 per bin or 42 cents per carton to pick oranges in the 1980-81 season. If the rate of pay were increased by 20% to compensate for the added cost of a formalized system, the new cost of picking would be \$0.504 per carton. At the same time, if we assume that a carton of oranges is sold by the packing house for \$5.50, the added \$0.084 per carton would raise the f.o.b. price offered by the packing house by only 1.5%. Even if we take into consideration that a large proportion (though less than 50%) is sold to low priced products markets, these increased labor costs should only raise the f.o.b. price by about three percent. Considering that the demand for fresh citrus at the f.o.b. level may be inelastic (i.e. an increase in price leads to greater revenues), it is not clear that a small industry wide price rise will result in revenue losses to the packing houses.¹²⁹

The harvesting associations and other formal labor structures in Ventura County citrus appear to be entering a period of secular decline, while labor contractors are expanding and multiplying. Traditionally, progressive forces within the packing houses have pressed for protections for the harvest crews. Coastal Growers Association and Limoneira

129. Sidney Hoos, "Lemon Industry in California," California Agriculture, Vol. 10 (1956).

are two employers that have used such advanced labor management practices. However, if the fragmentation of the labor market institutions continues, progressive employers will face a difficult task in maintaining minimum worker protections; success in that area will most likely depend on an effective counterstrategy by the United Farm Workers.

It is in the short-run interest of employers to use the "new migrants" to harvest their fruit. It is definitely less costly, but the question remains, who is subsidizing the lower labor costs? First, the experienced older migrant will pay for part of this cost by forfeiting his seniority and benefits. And all pickers who pay for their own overhead, recruitment and training will pay for part of the savings. Lastly, the sending areas in Mexico, which pay for the workers' retirement, support him when he is unemployed, pay for his medical bills when he is sick, and underwrite the cost of raising his children, will be providing a direct subsidy to the citrus industry. The shift in costs to the picker and the sending area will tend to make the economic development of rural Mexico more difficult over the long run. Unquestionably, the present shift in labor market institutions in Ventura County will result in lower production expenses; it is questionable whether the short-run savings justify the long-run social costs.

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